

'Avenue Q' and 'Church & State' Among Hottest Off-Broadway Tickets for 2017

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Published: February 1st, 2017



Many people are unaware that theater in New York doesn't just mean Broadway. Some of the best stage performances happening in New York City are off the beaten path.

The term "Off-Broadway" refers to performances in smaller Manhattan venues, with between 100 and 499 seats. The shows are more intimate than typical Broadway theatres, yet Off-Broadway productions still feature world-class level talent.

It is not uncommon for a successful Off-Broadway show to eventually move to Broadway — *Fun Home*, *Hamilton*, *The Humans*, and *Dear Evan Hansen* are a few recent examples. In those cases, audiences who got to see these shows in their Off-Broadway iterations definitely have bragging rights. They also gave much needed support which allowed the productions to grow and evolve into the Broadway powerhouses they later became.

Here are five of the best Off-Broadway shows happening in 2017:

***Avenue Q* at New World Stages**

This "R-rated" *Sesame Street*-inspired musical enjoyed a successful Off-Broadway run in 2003, and moved to Broadway later that year en route to capturing the Tony Award for Best Musical. *Avenue Q* returned to Off-Broadway in 2009, where it has remained ever since. This filthy — but hilarious — riff on the lessons most children learned from the Muppets can credit its humor for its long-running success, and it is an excellent show to bring people who don't normally enjoy Broadway-style musical comedy. [Avenue Q tickets](#) range from

Cagney at Westside Theatre

Most people think of Hollywood legend James Cagney from his “You dirty rat!” gangster movie persona, but Cagney was also a gifted singer and dancer. His life story – including his singing and dancing – is told in *Cagney*, a musical that has been such a hit that it has been extended several times. Robert Creighton's performance as Cagney in the show is more than worth the price of admission. **Cagney tickets** (https://www.telecharge.com/Off-Broadway/Cagney/Overview?AID=AFF000030000&cm_mmc=TiqIQ-_-affiliate-_-web-_-AFF000030000) are priced at \$89 through Telecharge.

Drunk Shakespeare at The Lounge

One thing is for sure with *Drunk Shakespeare* – you will never see the same performance twice. The show features a revolving cast of actors, one of whom comes onstage inebriated. His or her job is to lead the rest of the cast through a performance of one of Shakespeare's great works while obviously in no condition to perform under regular expectations. You think performing in iambic pentameter is difficult enough sober? Imagine being hammered while trying to do it! The results, of course, are hilarious. **Drunk Shakespeare tickets** (<http://www.drunkshakespeare.com/calendar/>) are \$55-\$89.

The Fantasticks at The Theater Center

It is impossible to write about great Off-Broadway theater without mentioning *The Fantasticks*. The original Off-Broadway productions ran from 1960 to 2006 – earning the Guinness world record for the world's longest-running musical. But *The Fantasticks* couldn't stay out of New York for long – it was revived in 2006 at The Theater Center, where it continues to run today. Audiences have raved for decades about this musical about two fathers who hatch an elaborate ruse to convince their two children to marry, and seeing it is a true right-of-passage for New York theater lovers. **Fantasticks tickets** (<https://ticketmaster.evy.net/c/253533/264167/4272?u=http://www.ticketmaster.com/The-Fantasticks-tickets/artist/891314>) range in price from \$75-\$124.

Church and State at New World Stages

While many shows run on Broadway for years or even decades at a time – *Phantom of the Opera*, *Chicago*, and *The Lion King*, we're looking at you – one of the exciting aspects of Off-Broadway theater is how ever-changing it is, giving new works a chance to shine. One example of that is *Church and State*, a comedy that will be opening at New World Stages in March. The timely play is about a U.S. Senator who decides to speak his mind freely just days before Election Day. *Church and State* has already received acclaim after engagements in Rochester, New York, and Los Angeles. The play was written by Jason Odell Williams, who last had success Off-Broadway with his play *Handle With Care*, which ran from 2013 to 2014 at the Westside Theatre. **Church and State tickets** (https://www.telecharge.com/Off-Broadway/Church-and-State/Overview?AID=AFF000030000&cm_mmc=TiqIQ-_-affiliate-_-web-_-AFF000030000) can be purchased right through the box office, where prices range from \$59-\$89.

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