



## EYE ON THEATRE

## One Overrated, One Spectacular

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everything (forgotten stores, forgettable movies), but not, unfortunately, its value. Could there be something wrong with his air conditioning?

“Maurice Hines: Tappin’ Thru Life” is really a dance performance and not a strictly theatrical show. But while it is chiefly about tap dancing, it does include some sufficiently theatrical aspects. It is really an autobiography of Maurice Hines, the surviving member of the great fraternal tapdancing duo, Greg and Maurice Hines, with added theatrical trappings, but far better than most of what these days tries to pass for genuine theater.

Maurice Hines, 72 and onstage almost throughout, superbly tap dancing, nicely singing golden (and not-so golden) oldies, and changing snazzy jackets two three times, exudes an admittedly somewhat self serving but incontestable jollity that no one could begrudge him. Superlatives

defy suspicion.

There is some somewhat perfunctory scenery by Tobin Ost, which does however serve well as screens for Darrel Maloney’s charming projections, showing Maurice and Greg at all ages (not as many for the brilliant Greg who died prematurely), as well as their performances, surroundings, and parents, above all their lovely and loving mother. Taken together, these constitute as good a photo gallery as any I’ve ever seen.

Providing an accompaniment that is a concert in itself are Sherrie Maricle and The Diva Jazz Orchestra, nine expert musicians who offer an evening of jazz as good as anything you could wish for or dream about. They are on also for undanced concert numbers, featuring solos by each of the grand instrumentalists on trumpets, trombone, bass, drums (Ms. Maricle), piano, and saxophones of every stripe save soprano. And what



Leo Manzari, Maurice Hines, John Manzari in TAPPIN’ THRU LIFE.

Photo: Carol Rosegg

pleasant-looking players!

Now for the tappers. Besides the ever-youthful Hines, who is fun to watch in any jacket, there are, first, the Manzari Brothers. These two young African Americans take your breath away almost as much as if you too were dancing, not merely watching.

Brothers John and Leo, one with dreadlocks and one close-cropped, but otherwise in perfect symbiosis, beggar description. Marvelous? Magnificent? Memorable? In duets, solos, trios with Maurice, anything starting in M. Their feet outpace even rappers in eloquence, never mind mere tappers. Not just

tappin’ thru life, but also tappin’ true to what they turn into high art.

There are four other performers alternating on different evenings: two women and two men. The program is unclear about a white youth in black (the others are in mostly white) who managed to be as dazzling as the others, whether he was Dario Natarrelli or Luke Spring. It was visually fascinating to see this symphony in black and white, as comfortable together as the black and white keys of the piano.

What else can I say? Only, perhaps, the categorical imperative: Go!

John Simon has written for over 50 years on theatre, film, literature, music and fine arts for the Hudson Review, New Leader, New Criterion, National Review, New York Magazine, Opera News, Weekly Standard, Broadway.com and Bloomberg News. He reviews books for the New York Times Book Review and for The Washington Post. To learn more, visit his website: [www.JohnSimon-unsensored.com](http://www.JohnSimon-unsensored.com)

## TRAVEL

## “Champagne Vacations” on a “Beer Budget”!



By Richard Levy

I thought I knew most of the ways to economize on travel without sacrificing quality during my jaunts around the world, but I learned even more at the 2016 NY Times Travel Seminar given by Matt Kepnes, author of “How to Travel Around The World on \$50 a Day”. I’m sharing our best ideas to make this story as helpful as possible.

Are you having “Champagne Vacation” dreams despite your Beer Budget? Don’t despair! With flexibility, creativity and a little advance planning, you can still have the vacation of a lifetime without breaking the bank.

Kepnes says that “Flexibility” is the key to traveling well, while spending less, and I agree 100%. Be open-minded when choosing your destination: Instead of going to Paris, London or Rome, consider going to less frequented cities like Bordeaux, Bath or Bologna. Portugal, Iceland,



Scotland, Hungary, Holland and the Czech Republic are also lovely, affordable and not overflowing with tourists.

If you are currently craving a long weekend in the sun, Florida has great package deals, as long as you stay away from the touristy places. (My favorite Caribbean escape is the lovely and very affordable Dutch island of Curacao.) And don’t forget about our neighbor, Canada. A vacation in Quebec is like having a delicious taste of Paris right next door – and they also speak English!

Think out of the box when

selecting your travel dates and plan that visit “off season” for savings of up to 50%. For example, winter in Rome is very beautiful, very affordable and has fewer tourists. The best hotels are 40% less and some will give you a free night.

By adapting your travel schedule to fly during the least busy weeks, days and departure times for your desired destination, you can economize on flight costs, so fly when nobody else is flying. Remember, being flexible equals saving money on every facet of your vacation.

Be on the lookout for those

special promotional fares airlines have when announcing flights to new destinations. For instance, on the day this story was researched, Norwegian Air had a special fare of only \$99 one-way to their new Caribbean destinations of Guadalupe and Martinique. And you better believe the money saved on airfare went a long way toward fine dining and a stay in a luxury hotel, for those who took advantage of this incredible rate!

When planning a European vacation, be creative! Consider flying Norwegian Air to Oslo, their least expensive European destination and Norwegian Air frequently has the lowest fares of any airline. Spend a day in Oslo, then, take the train to any number of fabulous countries nearby. (My insider sources are saying Norwegian Air might be announcing a limited promotional fare of \$69 one-way to Europe so go to their website and sign up for the free online newsletter that announces all their special fares and deals.) Also be sure to take advantage of your accumulated air miles.

Kepnes advises, “arming yourself with the best tools... especially the

best credit cards for taking any trip,” and his point is well taken. My favorites are The Chase Sapphire Card, Chase United Mileage Card and American Express Gold cards. All give you 50,000 free miles when you apply for a new card and have “no 3% foreign transaction fees” that can add up fast. The Chase Sapphire and United Mileage cards offer one free checked bag on every flight, priority boarding, two First Class Lounge passes and no annual fee for the first year. Depending upon the card, you must spend \$1,000 to \$4,000.00 on the card over the first three months. For three months, I put away my other cards and put every expense on this card. You need 60,000 miles for a free Round Trip ticket to Europe and if you come up short, it costs only \$25 for 1,000 miles. Also, most airlines have International “sister airlines” where you can use your miles, so check them out as well.

You can make your vacation dollars go even further by never changing money at airports: get local currency from bank ATM’s and never from free standing or store ATM’s.

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Always try to pay with the local currency and use your new credit card for restaurants and hotels.

When planning your trip, the very first thing you must do is go to at least four of the top travel websites to find the best airfare deals. The first one I visit is [Flights.com](http://Flights.com), where you can very quickly see a graphic showing the lowest airfare costs at the moment from New York to everywhere in the world. Kepnes recommends the following websites for finding the best travel deals: [HolidayPirates.com](http://HolidayPirates.com), [SkyScanner.com](http://SkyScanner.com), [Momando.com](http://Momando.com), [Kayak.com](http://Kayak.com) and [TheFlightDeal.com](http://TheFlightDeal.com).

Some airlines like British Air, Emirates, Japan Air, Turkish Airlines and others offer a free city stopover, so check out which airlines offer a free stop-over in other cities on the way to your prime destination. Take my advice and go online to [AirfareWatchDog.com](http://AirfareWatchDog.com) right away and enter any destinations you're considering. This site will continuously alert you to the lowest fares as they develop. (*Be prepared to grab the OMG ones, they go fast!*)

When considering a multi-city vacation in Europe, take the comfortable and economical European trains or one of the European budget airlines like Ryan Air or Wings.

If time is not a factor, rent a car to see all the enchanting little countryside towns between the major cities that you miss on trains and planes. For safety's sake, always check out driving regulations for the countries you will visit while you are still in the states. Remember that picking up hitchhikers anywhere is a bad idea and doing so can also void your car rental /insurance agreement. If you are renting a car in Italy or Germany, consider splurging for a few days and spring for the BMW or an Alpha Romeo. Let your hair down and have some fun, you're on vacation! By the way, there are no speed limits on the Autobahn in Germany or Autostrade in Italy.

Within the U.S., I always fly Jet Blue for several reasons. They usually have the lowest fares, the best in flight service and super low-priced Jet Blue Getaway packages that include air and hotel.

Be sure to check out the deals on

Southwest Airline's website because you won't find them on any of the discount travel websites. Instead of booking expensive hotels, Kepnes suggests checking out [AirBNB.com](http://AirBNB.com) where you can stay in an apartment or home for half of what you would pay for a hotel and save a fortune by not having to eat out every meal. He also likes [VRBO.com](http://VRBO.com) and [HomeAway.com](http://HomeAway.com) where you exchange your home or apartment for one in any foreign city. This often includes use of their car (You might have to take care of their pets and water the plants, but worth it.) Another money saving idea is “house sitting” somebody's luxury home in the destination you're considering. Check it out at [MindMyHouse.com](http://MindMyHouse.com).



Be on the lookout for hotels that might give you a free night and also offer free shuttle service to airports. When booking a luxury hotel, instead of booking online, call the hotel directly and very charmingly tell them you'd love to stay at their lovely hotel, but their rate on line is too costly, can they please consider giving you a better price. Many luxury hotels are flexible and very often will accommodate you.

Kepnes also has a short list of

favorite websites for the best budget hotel deals: [Trivago.com](http://Trivago.com), [Dealbase.com](http://Dealbase.com), [Agoda.com](http://Agoda.com), [Tingo.com](http://Tingo.com) and [TravelPony.com](http://TravelPony.com).

Always stay in a hotel that's centrally located – you want to be near the action. Trying to save money by staying in a less expensive hotel “a little out of the way” can often mean you'll miss capturing the pulse of the city, lose valuable time and end up taking expensive taxis.

Planning to “See the USA” this year? Go to [ILoveInns.com](http://ILoveInns.com), with 1,000 charming inns to choose from and in some cases you may get one night free.

I love discovering cozy local restaurants or bistros not mentioned in the Guide Books. I also love splurging occasionally at One-Star Guide



Michelin restaurants. I find they try harder because they can't afford to lose the star and as they are always shooting for their second star. These restaurants are surprisingly affordable if you order their daily specials and house wine. (Make reservations.)

If you are planning to dine in Paris, Rome and other major cities, go to the website [EatWith.com](http://EatWith.com) which both Matt Kepnes and I absolutely love. Just select the city, the night you'd like to go to dinner, the meal that entices you and make a reservation. You will enjoy delicious, regional cuisine in somebody's home, and I promise, you won't be disappointed. The people who do this are sophisticates who love the experience of sharing their fabulous cooking with others from

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## Westchester Broadway Theatre Presents *Always Patsy Cline* Now Through February 28<sup>th</sup>



*Erin McCracken as Patsy Cline. Photo by Mark Turek, Ocean State Theatre.*

Legendary country singer Patsy Cline and major-fan Louise Seger met when Seger showed up 90 minutes early for Cline's gig at a Texas honky-tonk, in 1961. They stayed in touch with phone calls and letters that Cline would sign, “Love ALWAYS...Patsy Cline,” the inspiration for this show's title.

The musical, written by Ted Swindley, in 1988, features 27 of Cline's greatest hits, including “Crazy,” “Walkin' After Midnight,” “I Fall to Pieces,” “Sweet Dreams,”

“Back in Baby's Arms” and more, with some opportunity for audience participation. Erin McCracken stars as Patsy Cline and Susann Fletcher as Louise Seger, who are directed by Aimee Turner.

Tickets for Dinner and the Show range from \$56 PP to \$84 PP plus Tax, depending upon the performance chosen, excluding Beverage Service & Gratuities. For further information, visit the website: [www.BroadwayTheatre.com](http://www.BroadwayTheatre.com) or call 914.592.2222 for reservations.



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around the world. The [eatwith.com](http://eatwith.com) dinner I had in Rome was beyond wonderful and only \$60 a person with wine. The hosts were lovely and graciously gave us names of their favorite places to eat along with the best places to shop.

When looking for a local place to eat, I usually walk five blocks away from any tourist spot and search for a

restaurant that looks cozy and inviting. Neighborhood places must have great food at fair prices or they'll be out of business. Very often in pricey restaurants we tell the waiter we'd like to “Partager” (*the French word for share*). We order two appetizers, one entree, one decadent desert and a carafe of house wine that is always excellent.

For lunch we go to a local food shop, pick up cold cuts, crusty bread,

cheese, fruit, bottle of wine and find a lovely place to picnic. Every city has beautiful parks, gardens and historic squares where you're allowed to linger over a delicious lunch and at the same time capture the unique ambiance, smells and sounds of that city, something most tourists never do. I often ask the owner of an upscale boutique for restaurant recommendations.

When traveling between cities always take trains and be sure to purchase a Eurail Pass. To save money

in most foreign cities as soon as you arrive, buy a Tourism or Museum Card that gives you unlimited admission to all the museums and tourist sites. Since the museum lines are guaranteed to be long, and my stay is limited, I splurge for the special museum pass that allows you to go to the front of the line.

Be sure to go online to [InsureMyTrip.com](http://InsureMyTrip.com) and take out trip insurance.

Even though you may be taking an

“economical vacation”, don't forget to treat yourself to at least one amazing hotel and make dinner reservations at a spectacular restaurant on your last night. Sleep in one morning and order room service, pamper yourself with a massage at the end of a busy day and buy yourself a little something special.

I hope our insider traveling secrets will help you stretch that “Beer Budget” into a “Champagne Vacation” on your next holiday. Bon Voyage!

## LOCAL LORE

# The Penn Station Story: Conquering the Hudson Barrier 2



By Robert Scott

Financial panics were a regular occurrence in New York, which had experienced such setbacks in 1792, 1819, 1837, 1857 and 1861.

At ten o'clock on the morning of Thursday, September 18, 1873, leading Wall Street bankers and brokers gathered at the New York office of Jay Cooke and Co., a highly successful Philadelphia investment, banking house.

During the Civil War, Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase had appointed Jay Cooke as the country's investment banker. Cooke organized a syndicate of the most successful investment houses in various cities. Its 2,500 subagents successfully sold U.S. treasury bonds to finance the war against the rebellion.

Long considered to be one of the country's most successful investment banking companies, Cooke's firm was now almost bankrupt. The firm's problem was with the Northern Pacific Railroad, whose stock it had undertaken to sell.

A railroad-building boom had followed the Civil War. The Northern Pacific was one of the many railroads built during this heady period. Unfortunately--like so many similar railroads--there was simply not enough industrial production or farm produce in the bleak Minnesota and Dakota territories to make the rail line profitable. Nor could the large numbers of German and Scandinavian immigrants who



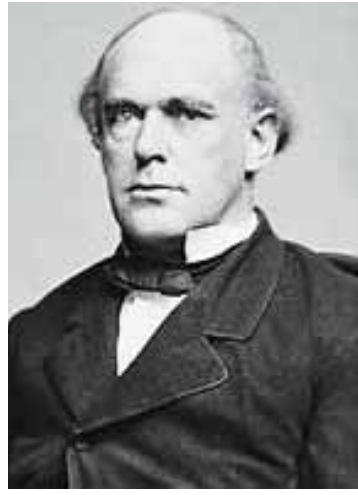
Jay Cooke

poured into the territories make up the difference.

To make the Northern Pacific more attractive to investors, Cooke had planted stories describing the lands along its right of way as a “vast wilderness waiting like a rich heiress to be appropriated and enjoyed.” Reality soon proved otherwise. Northern Pacific stock sales fell precipitously, and the railroad went bankrupt. By 1876, half the nation's railroads defaulted on their bonds and were in receivership.

The post-Civil War railroad-building boom actually had been funded in large part by European investors. In fact, the panic of 1873 started in Vienna, and spread to Berlin before reaching Paris, Amsterdam and London. It then made the jump to New York.

Despite the lingering 1873 financial crisis, investment capital became



Salmon P. Chase

available for a railroad tunnel linking New Jersey and New York. DeWitt Clinton Haskins' Hudson River Tunnel Company began work on a tunnel under the Hudson on Nov. 18, 1874, starting at a location near Fifteenth Street in Jersey City.

It was intended to emerge on the New York side at Morton Street in Greenwich Village. A vertical shaft 30 feet in diameter was begun, planned to be 65 feet in depth.

The tunneling had hardly begun when the New York Central (which had a virtual rail monopoly into Manhattan) and the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad (which owned the land and had a nearby Hoboken terminal) both sued, bringing work to a halt.

After five years of litigation, Haskins prevailed. The tunnel company paid \$13,000 to the DL&W, and work was resumed in September

of 1879. Instead of a single tunnel with two tracks, two parallel single-track tunnels were now planned.

### A Hudson Tunneling Disaster

On July 21, 1880, the northern tunnel of the pair had advanced about 1,180 feet toward Manhattan when a blowout occurred. Haskins' reliance on the supportive power of compressed air extolled in his patent application resulted in 20 fatalities.

Ironically, the accident occurred within a few feet of the airlock through which the workers passed from the vertical shaft into the tunnel. To work at the increased pressure within the tunnel, it was first necessary for the workers to enter the air lock. Doors at each end were closed, and pressure within the air lock was gradually increased until it was at the same pressure as the tunnel itself. The door into the tunnel was then opened, and the men entered the tunnel. To exit the tunnel, this procedure was reversed.

Twenty-eight men, including assistant superintendent Peter Woodland, descended into the tunnel at midnight of July 21. At about 4:30, as 14 workers came back from a half-hour lunch break on the surface, the other 14 workers stopped working and congregated near the air lock. Their inattention to the tunnel proved to be fatal.

As the air lock door to the tunnel was being opened, a sudden rush of air through the roof of the tunnel signaled a leak into the river. Only 15 feet of silt and mud separated the tunnel from the river at this point, a

comparatively thin cover. The usual procedure of inserting a plug of silt or mud into the opening proved ineffectual.

The escaping air only made the opening wider. Then the timbers supporting the temporary thin iron ceiling plates gave way. The plates, intended to be replaced with bricks, came crashing down, making the partially opened door immovable and crushing a worker, Frank Olson. Eight men were still in the air lock; 20 were in the tunnel. Despite their joint efforts, they could not budge the door.

### No Escape

Standing in the tunnel near the door, shift boss Peter Woodland called to the men in the airlock, “Save yourselves if you can, and then see what you can do for us.”

Water and silt began to pour rapidly into the tunnel. To halt the escape of compressed air from the airlock, the eight men stuffed caps, jackets and pants into the opening left by the partially closed door. Then they smashed the thick glass “bull's-eye” window in the other door at the opposite end of the air lock to equalize the pressure and made their way to the surface with the rising water at their heels. Behind them they could hear the screams of the men still in the tunnel.

River water filled the tunnel and rose in the vertical shaft at Jersey City. Plans were made to recover the bodies of the twenty trapped men. Divers closed the airlock door and construction began on a cofferdam, a temporary watertight structure that could be pumped dry. Construction of

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