

The New York Times

October 4, 2009

LOCAL STOP | NEAR YANKEE STADIUM **Where Baseball Isn't Everything**
by DAVID GONZALEZ



Yankee Stadium peeks from beyond the elevated subway platform at 161st Street.

Photo: Béatrice de Géa for The New York Times

Pinstripe fanatics who hustle from their cars to their seats for playoff games this month may not realize it, but there are plenty of things to do near [Yankee Stadium](#) that don't involve beer, booing or going broke. Concourse Village — taking its name from the Grand Concourse — has museums and theaters that put the lie to the outdated image of a South Bronx aflame. Better yet, they don't require a week's salary (or millions in tax-free bonds) to finance a family outing. Parts of the South Bronx were still smoldering more than 25 years ago when arts administrators and civic boosters began building the **South Bronx Cultural Corridor**, showcasing local and international artists, all near the 161st Street stop on the No. 4 or the D train.

10:30 A.M. The gleaming white Lorelei Fountain inside Joyce Kilmer Park, 161st Street and Grand Concourse, is a testament to the borough's welcoming spirit. Originally built to honor Heinrich Heine, his hometown of Düsseldorf said "no thonx" in the late 1800s. German-Americans in New York bought the fountain and brought it to the park amid great fanfare in 1899. Like some other residents of the borough, it took a beating and moved around a bit, but in 1999 it was repaired and restored to its original spot, on a knoll across the street from the County Building.

11 A.M. From the brassy bands of the Mambo craze to the smooth street-corner vocals of the doo-wop era, the Bronx has made its share of contributions to popular culture. This fall, the Bronx Museum of

the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse, (718) 681-6000, has an exhibit titled “Urban Archives: That Was Then, This is Now,” featuring photographers, filmmakers, graffiti writers and hip-hop heavyweights who were part of the scene in the 1970s and those who still find inspiration in the borough (\$5, free on Fridays).

12:30 P.M. Back down the Concourse, grab a panini (\$6.45), smoothie (\$4) or both (\$8.95 special) at the Juice Factory, 81 East 161 St., (718) 618-7228, a cafe started by Tony Rivera, a local kid who decided to invest in his old neighborhood. Weekdays, Z’Novia, 888B Grand Concourse, (718) 585-5550, offers a healthy take on soul food. Some weekends, Lou Gehrig Plaza might be buzzing with music courtesy of the new Business Improvement District (which the Yankees have yet to join).

1:30 P.M. What’s up with those yellow and red signs sprouting up on Concourse lampposts? More or less distinguished sons and daughters of the Bronx are honored on a Walk of Fame, including Rita Moreno, Bobby Darin, Robert Klein and Charles Fox. Charles who? He’s a composer who wrote the theme to “Laverne and Shirley” (created by another Walk of Famer, Garry Marshall). Cardinal Hayes High School was once known as the “School that Makes the Concourse Grand,” educating generations of Catholic schoolboys, including Martin Scorsese, Regis Philbin and Don De Lillo. George Carlin called it the coolest school in the Bronx (audio, [nytimes.com /nyregion](http://nytimes.com/nyregion)). He was expelled after three semesters.

2 P.M. For decades, the squat red-brick building that now houses the Pregones Theater, 571-575 Walton Avenue, (718) 585-1202, was home to a refrigeration equipment factory. This fall, it will premiere “Aloha Boricua,” a musical that tells how thousands of Puerto Ricans were relocated to Hawaii to work on plantations. The theater also has a breathtaking mosaic by Manny Vega titled Oshun Tele, rendered in shimmering blue tiles with golden details. At Hostos Community College, 450 Grand Concourse, an exhibit honors Tito Puente, whose archives are housed there. Some of the top acts in Caribbean music perform at the college’s theater, with ticket prices a fraction of what they would be downtown.

5 P.M. Stroll back up to the Bronx Central Post Office, 558 Grand Concourse, where the lobby walls are covered with 13 large murals with heroic depictions of American workers, painted by the social realist Ben Shahn in the 1930s. The sentiment above the clerk’s windows sums up the borough then and now: “After the rest is done and gone, we remain. There is no final reliance but upon us.”

5:30 P.M. Now, get dinner and a drink at G-Bar, 579 Grand Concourse, (718) 402-6996. If there is no game, you might spot a ballplayer. Like you care.