

# The Hub Review



Showing posts sorted by relevance for query voves. [Sort by date](#) [Show all posts](#)

Tuesday, September 29, 2009


## More from the Voice of America


I've been slow to post my thoughts on the second half of the "Voice of America" concert I heard last Friday, but that doesn't mean I wasn't enthusiastic about it. Indeed, this was probably the most rewarding **Boston Modern Orchestra Project** concert I've yet heard. Although I confess I don't often hear this group; to me, there's sometimes a problem built right into their concerts - they're funded by the composers being played. I don't mean to criticize this as a way of getting new music out before the public, and to be honest, what I've heard at BMOP has always been highly accomplished. It just often falls into a certain academic mode (no surprise, as many of the composers are academics) that I'm not always that interested in. You know the (postmodern) drill - a vaguely Asian cast to the piece, exotic timbres and textures, an idiosyncratic, often fractured, structure, and high - sometimes wildly high - technical demands. This is all fine, of course, only it often lacks what "new" music should really be about: an original voice - something *new*.

Pageviews last month

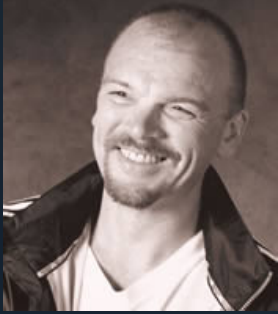
22,731

Recent Popular Posts

- 

I went to see Channing Tatum's butt, but I also got this lousy movie  
From the opening scene of *Magic Mike* . I think I just saved you \$10. I haven't been to a movie in a queen's age, but this weekend I ha...
- 

*Degas and the Nude* at the MFA  
*Degas and the Nude* , the utterly absorbing retrospective at the MFA through February 5th,




But this time around, there was some new music at the end of the program that really sounded new - *Goback Goback*, by Andy Vores (at left), which actually is only new-ish, as it was written in 2003. But then the opening pieces had been culled from works written as early as 1982, the year Ronald Perera composed *Crossing the Meridian*, a late-Britten-like meditation on alienated transcendence that often sparkled, but was perhaps a little too static for its own good, despite the able singing of Charles Blandy and the playing of a very cohesive ensemble. Something of the same sense of stasis hovered over John McDonald's "Speech Made by Music" and "Put These in Your Pipe," both of which were, again, highly accomplished, and somewhat self-consciously ecstatic and/or half-mad. Better was the charming, but

slight, *The Gold Standard*, from Scott Wheeler, a discussion of economics by two sweetly befuddled Buddhist monks that went about where you'd expect it to. Here again, the instrumental ensemble - under the direction of Gil Rose - impressed, although the vocal balance was off: baritone David Kravitz all but overwhelmed tenor Blandy.



Kravitz was back, and in fuller voice than ever, for *Goback Goback*, which I should say partly impressed me because it introduced me to a writer I hadn't known before - **W.S. Graham** (at left), a Scottish poet who has been slowly recalled from obscurity by passionate admirers such as the late Harold Pinter. And no wonder - judging from the verses set by Vores (from "The Greenock Dialogues"), Graham deserves a spot near Philip Larkin's among modern poets writing in English. And Vores has somehow found the perfect "voice" to open up the poems - the rushing harmonic energy of minimalism, but applied to the pastoral English tradition. The results were often transporting, and were suffused with an intuitive connection to Graham's text - a long series of meditations on the approach of death, viewed as if from a dream of mid-life. And Vores's seemingly limitless gift

for orchestration drew an astonishing number of moods from his ensemble - which he needed to match Graham's constantly-morphing poetry, in which mind moves through and *into* landscape at will ("Gently disintegrate me/Said nothing at all," goes one telling line). By the time Kravitz sang the final verse (which explains the odd title), I was wondering whether this wasn't the best piece of new music I'd heard in these parts for some time. Probably.

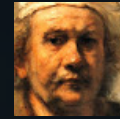
Posted by [Thomas Garvey](#) at 3:05 PM No comments:  [Links to this post](#)

Labels: [Andy Vores](#), [Goback Goback](#)

Saturday, March 12, 2011

## Bolcom, BMOP and the graceful ghost of Ligeti

contains no "official" self-portrait by the com...



Rembrandt was really good, and other things I learned from Kenwood House Detail from Rembrandt's 1665 Portrait of the Artist . I

spent the weekend down in Houston, sweltering in 99-degree heat, doing (happy) ...



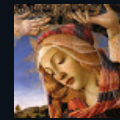
And the Hubbie goes to . . . Yes, it's time for one of my periodic backward glances at the best of what's been on the Hub's boards, in which I bestow the "Hubbie," my

pe...



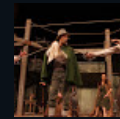
The scoop on *Our Town*: yes, it is unforgettable, and yes, it will sell out completely Therese Plaehn, David Cromer, and Derrick Trumbly in *Our Town* . Photo: T.

Charles Erickson. This is just an early warning to fans of th...



A mostly magnificent *Magnificat* from Handel & Haydn

Detail from Botticelli's *Madonna of the Magnificat* I'd been looking forward to the Handel and Haydn season opener - a Bach orgy focus...



The rest of the best of 2012 To continue my survey of the best of the year, I've once more singled out those local productions that I'd happily have squeezed into ...



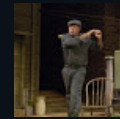
*The Nutcracker* re-booted, and re-born Jeffrey Cirio gives his cadets their marching orders before the Ballet's spectacular new Christmas tree. The Boston Ballet production of...

Ballet production of...



The best of Boston theatre in 2012

Well, what can I say . . . 2012 wasn't the end of the world . So that was disappointing! On the upside, it did prove a solid year...



The Huntington swings for August Wilson's *Fences* . . . John Beasley as Troy Maxson in August Wilson's *Fences* . . . but doesn't quite connect in its new production of this

much-lauded Pulit...



Olivier Cazal plays William Bolcom's "The Poltergeist" rag.

I'm late with my thoughts on the [Boston Modern Orchestra Project's](#) "Bolcom with BMOP" evening last Sunday. Which may have something to do with the fact that I was slightly, but not entirely, disappointed by the program. I was drawn to the concert because I'm a fan of its eponymous star, the distinguished American composer [William Bolcom](#) - or at least I'm a huge fan (like many people) of his piano and vocal music (a favorite selection, "The Poltergeist," above). So I was curious about the less-often-heard orchestral selections conductor Gil Rose had chosen for the concert - Bolcom's early *Commedia* (1971) and his *Symphony No. 3* (1979).

Both, however, proved perhaps more interesting for what they said about the state of modern music - or perhaps Bolcom's relationship to that music - than what they revealed as individual musical statements. Bolcom has always been a man torn between "serious" and "popular" modes - he has probably made his largest mark on the culture with [his brilliant investigations of ragtime](#) (above).

And listening to his work here, it was hard not to consider him a man fundamentally divided. In *Commedia*, for instance, he juxtaposed the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries - quoting from everything from Papageno to Petrushka, in fact - without ever really seeming to settle anywhere; the upshot of the piece seemed to be that every musical style was in effect a kind of harlequin, and the whole of musical history therefore, yes, merely a *commedia*.

Meanwhile, in *Symphony No. 3*, Bolcom seemed to devise a kind of conceptual stand-off between György Ligeti and (believe it or not) Guy Lombardo. The piece is embroidered with a lot of conceptual mumbo-jumbo about the "alpha" and "omega" of existence, and has the high-modern finish to go with that kind of guff; but a hilariously suave fox-trot takes over from the Ligeti-like washes of prettified dissonance in the second movement, and never really lets go. The effect was funny and poignant - but largely because you could feel the composer's own eccentric energies were most at home in the plush, horn-y rhythms of that fox-trot rather than out there in the nebulous space of some gaseous "future."


Of course many BMOP concerts are a bit like listening to the academy hum to itself (the performances are often funded by the composers themselves, most of whom teach in leading music schools). And at this program, much of the humming did seem to be coming from the office of the late Professor Ligeti. Many of the movements on offer derived from the hazy sonic clouds of *Atmospheres*, for instance - only glinting with more blank optimism than exotic paranoia (and cut with intriguing mixes of vaguely Asian percussion). It's a formula I've heard a lot before at BMOP, and though Rose always brings off its technical challenges impressively, I can't say I want to hear much more of it. Still, Sojourner Hodges's "Full Fathom Five" wasn't a bad sample of the form (and featured some lovely singing from soprano Bethany Worrell). And Michael Gandolfi's by-now-familiar "Garden of the Senses"



There was an error in this gadget



#### About Me

 Thomas Garvey

A local reviewer for several years, I was cast from my perch at the *Boston Globe* some years ago, but have yet to find another print haven (and probably won't, as they're vanishing fast). In the meantime, I simply couldn't keep quiet about the state of Boston culture (also, I missed the free tickets). This town needs a smart, unfettered critic who's not interested in tossing softballs to the suburbs (or the academy), and I guess I'm just dumb enough to take the job. You can reach me with invites, praise, screeds, etc., at [hubreview@hotmail.com](mailto:hubreview@hotmail.com).

[View my complete profile](#)

Suite from *The Garden of Cosmic Speculation* was enjoyable enough, even if its sweetly intricate complexities remain somehow unchallenging.

I was most intrigued by local composer Kati Agócs, however, and her gorgeous . . . *like treasure hidden in a field*, even if I felt her music sometimes sounded as if it had been designed to please an unseen faculty committee (she teaches at the New England Conservatory). Much of . . . *like treasure* was a bit generically "spiritual" and uplifting - but somehow, as the piece progressed, the composer's passion came through anyway. You wondered whether her essential problem was that she's got no genuine native tradition to embed her passion *in* - all she's got is the new-age, new-music consensus, which always feels slightly pre-fab. That synthetic quality was only re-inforced in my mind by [her web page](#), in which (coiled sexily on a grand piano), she declares her music is "original, daring and from the heart;" I also noted with dismay her dizzying number of new commissions, all with Hallmark Card titles like "Supernatural Love," "Immutable Dreams," and "Perpetual Summer." Of course being sexy, self-promoting and "spiritual" doesn't mean Agócs doesn't have musical talent; indeed, I think I might already rate . . . *like treasure hidden in a field* as a bit better than *The Garden of Cosmic Speculation*. Like [Andy Vores](#), she may be a local composer to watch.

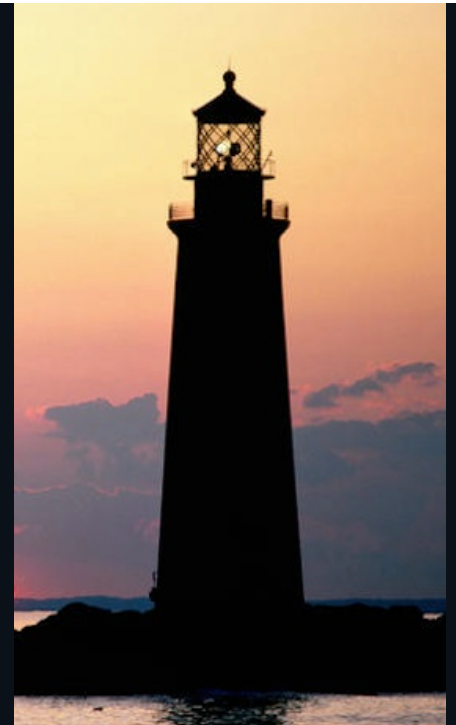
Posted by [Thomas Garvey](#) at 2:47 PM No comments:  [Links to this post](#)

Labels: [BMOP](#), [Gil Rose](#), [William Bolcom](#)

[Home](#)

[Next Posts](#)

Subscribe to: [Posts \(Atom\)](#)



*Graves Light in Boston Harbor*

#### How to reach me

Thoughts, rants, and invitations can be directed to Thomas Garvey at *The Hub Review* at: [hubreview@hotmail.com](mailto:hubreview@hotmail.com).



#### What have people kept reading?

Google analytics allows you to track the readership of individual posts, and I've noticed over the last few months the development of what I guess marketing analysts would call a "long tail" at *The Hub Review*. That is, articles that people keep

reading, via search engines or what have you. Most of these have had to do with pop culture, and I'm not sure they really represent my best writing. But several have been read by thousands of people by now - a few, like "Naked white men and others," probably just because they contain pictures of naked people. Others, however, have had remarkable staying power without any extra help - "Exit through the Banksy Effect," for instance, is read by thirty or forty people every single day. And can thousands of people be entirely wrong? So I thought I'd just share what people keep reading on *The Hub Review* - so without further ado, the most popular posts of its "long tail:"

[Exit through the Banksy Effect](#)

[Sex and Kansas City](#)

[The minstrel goes meta](#)

[Lost in the labyrinth with Christopher Nolan \(Part I\)](#)

[Shakespeare on YooTube](#)

[The madness of "Mad Men"](#)

[When he says "heroic," he means "Harvard"](#)

[Opening the curtain on Emily Glassberg Sands, Part I](#)

[Bum rap](#)

[Naked white men and others](#)

[Kael, Bonnie and Clyde](#)

#### Search This Blog

*The Customs House Tower by night*

#### Blog Archive

- ▶ 2013 (1)
- ▶ 2012 (291)
- ▶ 2011 (287)
- ▶ 2010 (310)
- ▼ 2009 (390)
  - ▶ December (34)
  - ▶ November (35)
  - ▶ October (42)
  - ▼ September (44)
    - Waiting for FEMA
    - No, don't give to Harvard
    - More from the Voice of America
    - And the beat goes on . . .
    - A steady ring
    - The Barber songbook
    - Glenn Beck explains it all for you . . . or doesn't...
    - Shakespeare Expounded
    - And the Rose affair takes down Reinharz
    - The Shepard Fairey boomerang
    - Do the math
    - If you thought the blogosphere could compete with ...
    - Thank heaven for The Savannah Disputation
    - Teachout's reach-out
    - The remarkable production of Madame LeMonde
    - Beyond the Infinite, and the Pale
    - What to see right now
    - The Huntington swings for August Wilson's Fences ....
    - Peter Urban R.I.P.
    - Adrift in the South Pacific
    - Off-topic, but seriously, how can I resist
    - Back to the Forties
    - Superheroines still soar, still have issues
    - A kissable Kiss Me, Kate
    - And more fun with Don Hall . . .
    - Not to gloat, but . . .
    - Sins of the Mother is one of the best of the year ...
    - Is Stratford better than New York?, Part II
    - More from Don Hall! (You know you want it.)
    - Where's Louise?
    - The big picture
    - "I'm not a homophobe, you aging queen!" Chicago's ...
    - Harold and Kumar Run the NEA; or at least Kumar do...

Is Stratford better than Broadway?, Part I

So what do we do as Harvard makes itself ridiculou...

Art out west

Did Tarantino prime us for Cheney, Part III: The I...

Facing the music

Auto-tune the whole damn culture

Off-topic, but a must-read

The best pop movie of the year?

The overreach meme reaches the arts (perhaps appro...

Did Tarantino prime us for Cheney? Part II

Raising the Curtain on Emily Glassberg Sands, Part...

▶ August (20)

▶ July (33)

▶ June (29)

▶ May (26)

▶ April (29)

▶ March (38)

▶ February (37)

▶ January (23)

▶ 2008 (269)

▶ 2007 (241)

▶ 2006 (33)



#### Blogs of Note

- Greg Cook's "New England Journal of Aesthetic Research"
- Debra Cash's "Dancing in the Present Tense" (World Music/Crash Arts)
- Mirror Up to Nature

- Larry Stark's Theater Mirror



### You know I get free tickets, right?

Some bloggers have been huffing and puffing over a new FTC regulation that requires disclosure of freebies. The rule doesn't bother me much in principle (as many bloggers are, indeed, fundamentally dishonest) and I guess technically it extends to press tickets - so can I just use this space as a blanket declaration of the fact that, in case you didn't know, I get free tickets to much of what I review.

Ah - but not all. Thanks to the schemes of Kati Mitchell at the ironically-titled ART, and Company One's Shawn LaCount, a protest has been mounted against my rather provocative honesty regarding the moral and aesthetic lapses of people like Diane Paulus. So I'll be paying for more shows. I'll try not to let that make a difference in my review . . . but it could be hard . . . .



### More evidence for the death of theatre (if you wanted any)

The TKTS booth in Times Square now operates a "plays only" line - and guess what? It's much shorter than the musicals line. As in MUCH shorter, according to the *NY Times*:

*One last tip for theatergoers who are not in the market for a musical: step up to the Play Express line at the Times Square TKTS booth. On a recent day when there were the usual long lines, only two lonely but smiling applicants had queued up for play tickets.*

**Arts attendance is collapsing!**





### Only not as fast as everything else!

The LA Times highlights an interesting fact about the recent NEA arts survey that no one else has mentioned. Yes, attendance at the performing arts has declined somewhat - it's shrunk 4.4% since 1982. What's surprising is that *attendance at everything else has fallen off even faster*. Movie attendance dropped at twice that rate; sporting events *at four times that rate*. Surprised? I'm not, not really. Technology is killing off all live interaction, it seems, but as the arts offer something you really can't get via instant replay or Tivo, they're more resistant to its corrosive effects. Not that we shouldn't be worried about civilization in general. We just shouldn't feel that the arts are the biggest losers in this ongoing war.

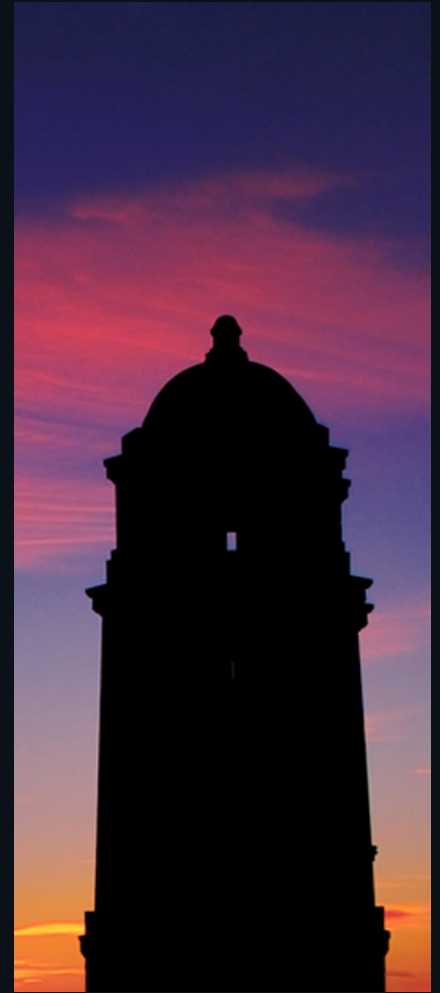


*Look out! She's right behind you!*

### Attack of the Audience Member from Hell!

Ah, the cell phone! Did the performing arts ever encounter a more baleful enemy? We've all had our encounters with crass texters, or those who've "forgotten" to turn off their cells or pagers, but I've never come across someone who actually *made a call* during a performance until this weekend. At Dawn Upshaw's recent concert (which was wonderful, btw), some old bag in a designer suit took out her cell just as Dawn was launching into her final encore, and yes, *made a call*. To her limo driver, no less, telling him she wanted to be picked up NOW. Let's just say I'd never encountered till yesterday a Schubert *lieder* that included the lyrics, "JORDAN HALL, Louie. Yes. She's almost finished, I wanna leave now!" Cell phones are a pet peeve of my partner's, and when the audience began applauding, he turned around and let the old bag have it. "You should be banned from concert halls for the rest of your life!" he screamed, while I mentally added, "Which we hope is short!" But the rich old bitch began shouting back, believe it or not. You just can't reach some

people. We saw her limo on the way out. If there had been some rocks handy, we would have stoned it.



*The Longfellow Bridge at sunset*

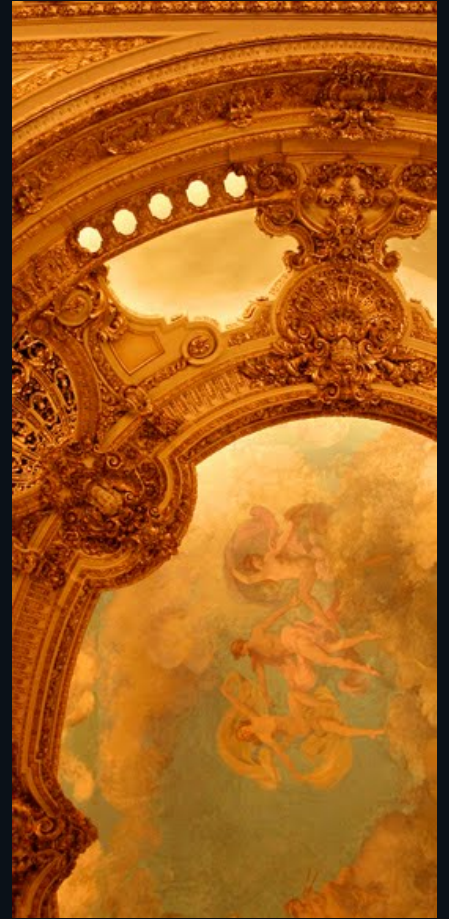
*"If it could be put into words, I wouldn't have to paint it."  
- Edward Hopper*



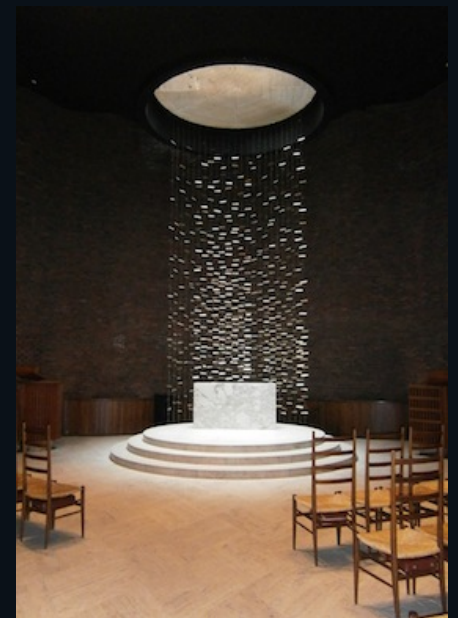
*Because he's my hero, that's why.*

**Featured**

BLOGS.COM



*The ceiling of the Opera House*



*The MIT Chapel*



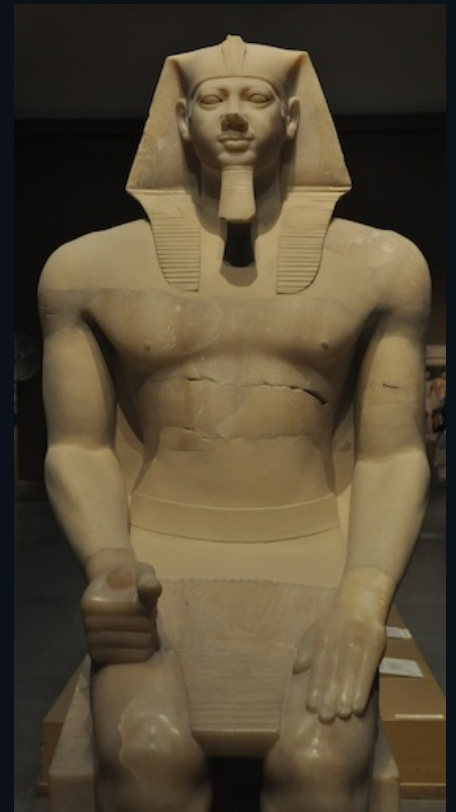
*Guardian of the Boston Public Library*



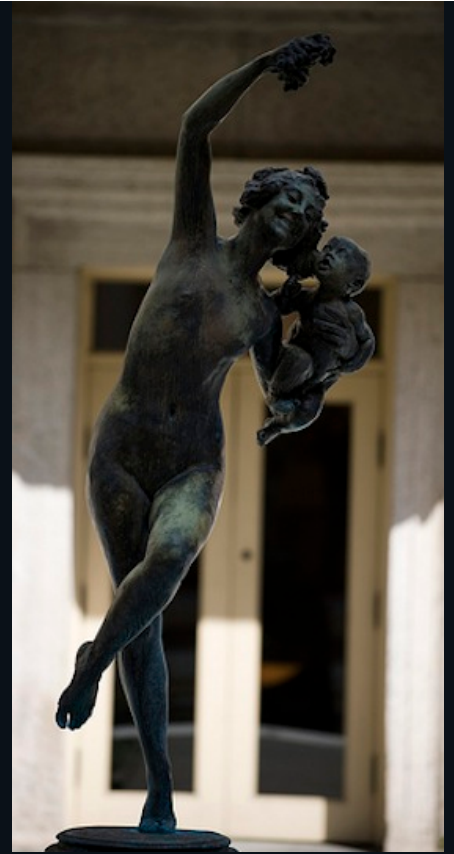
*Above the altar of Trinity Church*



*The Old State House, circa 1901*



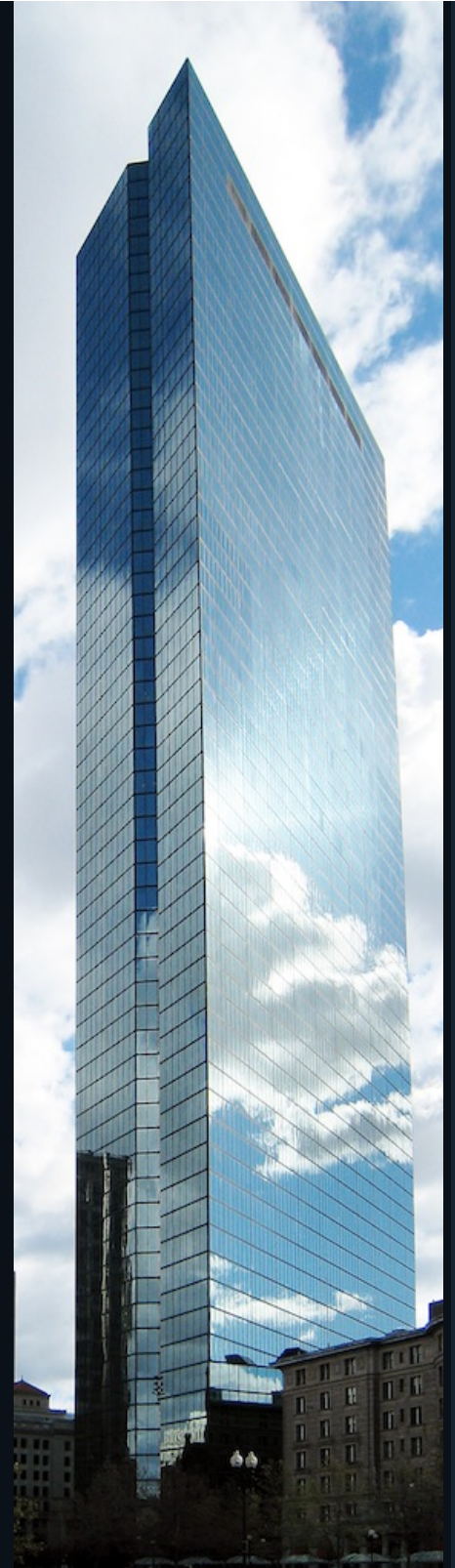
*A long-term visitor at the MFA*



*Bacchante and Faun at Boston Public Library*



*Detail - Sargent's Daughters of Edward Boit*



*You must know what this is.*





Travel template. Template images by [Airyelf](#). Powered by [Blogger](#).