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METRO MONEY

When Turning Your Living Room Into a Pop-Up Nightclub Seems Like a Good Idea

While many are earning extra cash by renting their bedrooms to strangers, some New Yorkers are transforming their homes into performance spaces



Vladic Ravich, a co-founder of Artery—a digital platform that lets people host performances in their homes—spoke to an audience at a concert at Daniel Schreiner's apartment in the Bushwick neighborhood of Brooklyn last month. PHOTO: MARK KAUZLARICH FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



By

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Thanks to sharing-economy platforms, many of us have grown accustomed to earning extra cash by renting our bedrooms to strangers or boarding their pets in our dens. What's next? Turning your living room into a pop-up nightclub?

Earlier this month, Daniel Schreiner welcomed 23 strangers to a show in his Brooklyn one-bedroom. They'd all bought \$12 tickets to watch a 2-hour performance by him and two other pianists.

He organized the event through Artery, a digital platform that lets anyone host a show in their home.

As guests found seats on his sofas and kitchen-counter stools, Mr. Schreiner said he felt super excited.

"I cleaned all day yesterday," he said. "I Swiffered the floor!"

An Artery rep started the evening with an ice-breaker, encouraging guests to share a "fun fact" about themselves.

"I don't like ice cream," said one.

"I'm an alcoholic," said another.

Mr. Schreiner's performance on his Steinway grand blew me away, starting with several Debussy solos and finishing with "Reservoir," a mesmerizing piece by Irish composer Donnacha Dennehy that was so beautiful I wanted to shout with happiness.

During the break, I asked Mr. Schreiner to show me the sheet music. Try that at Carnegie Hall.



Daniel Schreiner played the piano for concertgoers in his apartment in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn last month. PHOTO: MARK KAUZLARICH FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

“It was really cool,” agreed another guest, who goes by the stage name Trumpet Wom’ (That’s ‘woman’ without the ‘man’ part).

Ms. Wom’ attends many Artery performances. “It’s more personal,” she said of the in-home events. “I talk to more people.”

I checked in with Mr. Schreiner the next day. After subtracting Artery’s 5% cut and splitting the remainder with fellow performers, he made about \$85.

“Not bad,” he said.

To create an Artery show, hosts complete an online profile describing their space and preferences such as acceptable noise level.

Next, they browse Artery artists’ profiles and invite them to perform. The several thousand options in New York City include poets, comedians, a sideshow fire eater, a bass-ukulele player and a composer who notes, “I haven’t played a gig before because I mainly create out of my bedroom. I’m hoping this will change.”

Hosts set the ticket price and negotiate payment with performers. Artery says the average New York City event attracts 16 guests paying \$11 each; hosts typically split the take 20/80 with the artists.

If it’s ok with the host, audience members can bring their own beverages. At the performance I attended, an Artery rep brought a couple of bottles of wine and paper cups.



Guests mingled at a recent piano concert at Daniel Schreiner’s Brooklyn apartment. PHOTO: MARK KAUZLARICH FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

There are other platforms that place performances in private venues, of course.

Sofar Sounds is more hands-on. It decides which artists play which spaces, sets ticket prices and pays performers in New York City a flat \$100, pocketing the rest.

Groupmuse, which specializes in classical music, lets hosts connect directly with musicians, but screens all the performers.

Artery, which launched here a year ago, is more of a peer-to-peer free-for-all, and the only one that allows hosts to pocket a portion of proceeds.

I attended a second Artery show last weekend—a series of Shakespeare scenes in a Brooklyn townhouse.

The \$12 performance attended by 15 guests took place on an Oriental rug in the host's living room, surrounded by chairs and benches. Performers trooped up and down from the basement between scenes.

It was an intimate performance indeed. There's nothing like having a 6-foot tall actor standing directly over you bellowing, "But in your daughter's womb I bury them!"

Afterward, host Hillary Mégroz gave me a tour of her home, which she bought to serve as base for the "Unruly Collective," her creative space for local artists.

A bedroom upstairs has hosted Artery poetry readings and acoustic performances. She's exhibited giant paintings in the backyard.

She's welcomed crowds as large as 60. Artery takes no responsibility for loss or damages, but so far, no one has stolen the bathroom towels or busted into her bedroom.

"It's not the everyone-getting-wasted, debauchery, dance-around type of hipster scene you see a lot of in Brooklyn," she said.



A sign announced the lineup of performers at a piano concert at Daniel Schreiner's Brooklyn apartment. PHOTO: MARK KAUZLARICH FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Artery co-founders Vladic Ravich and Salimah Ebrahim, who met as Columbia University grad students, hope to make money on premium memberships and sponsorships, as well as ticket sales.

But they're also idealists. Platforms like Artery represent a counterrevolution, they say—a return to a time when people had friends and neighbors perform in their homes rather than relying on professionals.

"You are the culture of the city," Mr. Ravich says. "Don't wait for someone else to do it for you."

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