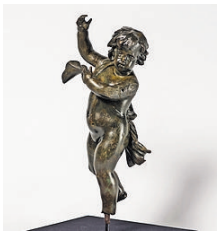


4 THEATER REVIEW

The newlyweds’ dream house comes with a nightmare.

4 CULTURE

Items salvaged from the Titanic may not be sold . . . yet.



5 FILM

A Gen Z director writes about what he knows all too well: existential anxiety.

NEWS | CRITICISM

Arts

The New York Times

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 2026 C1

Y

LINDSAY ZOLADZ | AN APPRAISAL



PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES

Her Voice And Essence: Earth Angel

Dolly Parton gave hopeful expression to songs about the hard times and hard-won triumphs.

Dolly Parton, above in 1977, died on Tuesday at 80. Some of Parton's most celebrated songs recounted scenes from her life, told with cinematic detail.

USUALLY WHEN WE SAY SOMEONE has the voice of an angel, we mean that they don't quite sound human — that they have an airy, clarion, pristine falsetto hovering far above mortal concerns. Dolly Parton, who died Tuesday at age 80, had the voice of an earth angel. She knew all about the dirt and the muck and the ugliness, the shame of poverty, the chill of sorrow, the burning throb of a jealous heart. That meant she also knew precisely how best to soothe those

MORE COVERAGE

Tributes to the singer with universal appeal, Broadway's plan to continue a musical about her life, and favorite songs. Pages 2-3.

pains in song, composing her own homemade balms for whatever ailed. Her voice was angelic not because it possessed some kind of divine perfection or unattainable beauty, but because it seemed to be personally invested in the well-being of

anyone and everyone who listened to it, illuminated from within with an almost otherworldly benevolence. How many singers in the history of popular music have told us some variation of “everything’s gonna be all right / it’s gonna be OK”? When Dolly did it, though, as on her soaring 1977 single “Light of a Clear Blue Morning,” the sentiment somehow transcended cliché. Dolly made you believe. To speak of her in the past tense still feels wrong. Dolly Parton was an American icon

who seemed taller than death itself, a Paul Bunyan in a beehive wig and rhinestone stilettos. That stature came in part because she wrote her legend over and over, wittily but with a savvy control over her own image, in the so-called Dollyisms that she peppered throughout interviews, stage banter and public appearances. And so we know from her own lips that her parents were so poor that they paid the doctor who delivered her in cornmeal, and

CONTINUED ON PAGE C3

A Quiet Writer Surprised By Big Sales

The novelist Peter Grainger moves past self-publishing.

By SARAH LYALL

Last year, the wildly successful British writer Peter Grainger sent a draft of his latest novel to his new agent, Emma Parry at Janklow & Nesbit. Grainger, 73, had been self-publishing his novels — police procedurals set in Kings Lake, a fictional English town — for more than a decade, and had already sold more than a million copies on his own. But this was the first time he was being published by a conventional publisher. “He wasn’t that interested in editorial feedback, and I wasn’t looking to give a lot,” Parry said. “But I had read enough of his work to know that the ending of the book was oddly abrupt.” Tentatively, she brought it up, only to be met with “steely silence.” Like his main character, the independent-minded detective D.C. Smith, Grainger dislikes being told what to do. He’s also skeptical of technology, and, as it turned out, had sent Parry a file that cut the novel off mid-action, before the ending. “I’m not very good at making sure I’ve sent the right one,” Grainger said. It was early in the summer, and he was at home in Sutton, a rural hamlet in Cambridgeshire, CONTINUED ON PAGE C6



ELLIE SMITH FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Peter Grainger, who writes police procedurals, at home in Sutton, England.

Musicians Stay Put And Let Fans Travel

Residencies have taken over because they cut tour costs.

By BEN SISARIO

When Harry Styles took the stage at Madison Square Garden on Wednesday for the first of 30 performances in his residency there, it was the latest and perhaps most ambitious example of the concert industry’s favorite trend: putting on more shows in fewer places. Last year, Bad Bunny held a 31-date residency in Puerto Rico, brimming with local pride. In 2024, Billy Joel completed a 10-year run at the Garden, selling out 104 nights. This year Jay-Z is celebrating landmark albums with stadium shows in New York, London, Paris and Los Angeles. And in Las Vegas, the cutting-edge tech of Sphere has upped the multimedia ante for concerts everywhere. For artists and their promoters, these concentrated runs have come about through a combination of budget-crunching math — the savings on trucking and fuel alone can be substantial — and a desire to level up the razzle-dazzle, according to touring and talent executives. “Longer engagements allow artists to create experiences that simply aren’t practical when a production is constantly moving,” said Omar Al-joulani, the president of touring at Live Nation. The company is CONTINUED ON PAGE C5



THE NEW YORK TIMES

Harry Styles performing during his 2022 Madison Square Garden residency. Many artists say residencies allow them to make their shows more creative.