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Theaters, retailers offer snow day sales

Area businesses hope discounts and promotions can lure audiences and shoppers, who might otherwise stay home and watch TV.

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The frigid temperatures and heaps of snow are prompting some area businesses to turn up the heat on promotions.

Discounts are appearing on and off Broadway to lure people into seats on a night when many might rather watch TV in their warm homes. Shows including *Outside Mullingar*, *A Night With Janis Joplin*, *Machinal* and *Disaster!* are offering lower-priced tickets to fill seats that were unsold or now vacant due to cancellations.

Manhattan Theatre Club is touting \$50 tickets for the first preview of *Outside Mullingar*, a new play by Pulitzer, Oscar and Tony-winning writer John Patrick Shanley which stars Tony-winner Brian F. O'Byrne and Emmy-winner Debra Messing. Tickets are regularly between \$67 and \$125.

Snow day discounts for *A Night With Janis Joplin*, start at \$32. Regular tickets are between \$35 and \$140

Disaster!, an Off-Broadway show, is offering tickets at \$30 while the usual range is between \$49.50 and \$79.50. On Wednesday, the production team began noticing people canceling tickets for today's performances so it opted to offer promotional pricing on Thursday.

"We saw what was happening so we made the pre-emptive strike," said James Wesley, one of the show's producers. "We figured if tourists are stuck here because of the snow they could at least have fun at the show."

Mr. Wesley added that 28 people took advantage of the \$30 promotion at Friday's matinee—a number roughly equal to the amount of tickets that were cancelled. He said the production decided to allow people who couldn't attend to exchange tickets "because it is the right thing to do."

Typically, tickets are not refundable. That may make some theater-goers reluctant to buy tickets during the winter when weather can prevent them from attending a show. To ease that fear, *Mamma Mia!* launched a "Winter Weather Guarantee" which allows tickets for performances through March 30 to be exchanged for any other performance currently on sale. However, the exchange must happen before noon on the day the audience member was originally ticketed to see the show.

Meanwhile, New York area retailers were pulling out all of the stops in an effort to boost sales after a holiday season already rife with discounts. Many, including lingerie chain Journelle and kidswear store The Children's Place, took advantage of Friday's blizzard to offer online marketing offers of free shipping and sales to those consumers stuck at home.



Associated Press

On and off Broadway shows are offering discounted tickets during the snow storm.

"Snow Day! Today only—winter clearance blowout" read an email from Children's Place.

On Thursday evening, Brooklyn Industries, a trendy chain with 15 New York stores, blasted an email to shoppers touting the best attire to wear in a blizzard—its discounted puffer coats. Home furnishings chain West Elm offered free shipping on Friday only.

"The rationale is pretty basic—we know a lot of people are going to have trouble getting out and about today so we wanted to make it as easy as possible for them to shop from home by offering free shipping," said a spokeswoman for West Elm, noting that the Dumbo, Brooklyn-based retailer is also digging itself out from the snow.

Denise Lee Yohn, a brand expert and author of upcoming *What Great Brands Do: The Seven Brand-Building Principles That Separate the Best from the Rest*, said the strategy is a great way to connect with would-be shoppers sitting around at home surfing the Internet.

"It's still too early to see the numbers from the holiday season, but there was some concern about whether retail sales were as strong as they could have been," she said. "Some retailers are probably scrambling to make up the difference and this is a way to start the year off on a better foot than they ended in 2013." Ms. Yohn did note that the challenge with such offers is to be creative and show some brand personality in order to stand out from the competition.



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