

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ISABELLA
SEWART GARDNER
MUSEUM**

“Artful Holidays at the Gardner”

*Museum ‘decks the halls’—and courtyard—for special evening event;
opens a favorite Boston holiday tradition to the general public for the first time this year!*

Saturday • December 13, 2008 • 7:00-9:30 PM • Ticketed Event



“The combination of the arts for a beautiful and impressive effect...was unexampled I believe in the experience of everyone who had the honor of being present at it.

(Harvard College Professor Charles Eliot Norton in a letter to Isabella Gardner following opening night, New Years, 1903)

BOSTON, MA -- NOVEMBER 26, 2008 • The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, opens a Boston holiday tradition made famous by Isabella Gardner to *all* this holiday season! The museum hosts its annual Saturday evening holiday celebration, newly entitled *Artful Holidays at the Gardner Museum*, on **Saturday, December 13, from 7:00-9:30 pm** – and all are invited.

Featuring holiday music and festive fare in the unparalleled atmosphere of the Gardner Museum, this special evening event has become a holiday tradition long enjoyed by members of the museum. **This year, for the first time, the celebration is open to the general public in addition to museum members – inviting *all* to experience the enchanting museum at its most memorable and to start a new holiday tradition!**

With the central courtyard abloom with red and white poinsettias and flowering jade trees, and strains of holiday music drifting through the gently glowing galleries, the Gardner’s *Artful Holidays* celebrations evoke the elegance and grandeur of holiday festivities in Boston’s Gilded Age.

“The Gardner Museum has hosted unique, festive holiday gatherings since Isabella Gardner’s day,” says **Anne Hawley**, *Norma Jean Calderwood Director* of the museum. A much-regaled hostess, Isabella Stewart Gardner was known for the elegance and flair of her parties. At the museum’s opening fete on January 1, 1903, two hundred guests enjoyed a performance by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and were served champagne and donuts, among other celebratory fare.

A Feast for All the Senses: Art, Music, Cocktails, & Culinary Delights for the Holidays

Artful Holidays at the Gardner Museum continues the tradition of festivity at the Gardner with a celebration that is a feast for all the senses! The *Artful Holidays* evening begins with a holiday buffet in the museum’s cloisters, overlooking the poinsettia-laden courtyard. Revelers will enjoy an inspired array of seasonal fare, festive libations—including a new **signature champagne cocktail, *The Balthazar*** – and indulgent desserts created exclusively for this event by The Gardner Café.

“The dessert buffet is a tradition at the Gardner’s holiday celebrations,” Peter Crowley, chef/owner of The Gardner Café, explains. Isabella Gardner’s holiday entertainments often featured sumptuous sweets with a holiday spin, such as *Gateau Saint-Honoré with Sugar Plums*, the grand finale of one of her dinner parties in December 1904. “We’ve given it a new twist this year with a mix of updated classics and modern favorites.” At this year’s celebration, the dessert smorgasbord will feature such seasonal delights as **Chocolate Mousse Torte with Bourbon Crème Anglaise**, a traditional **Bûche de Noël**, and The Gardner Café’s **signature bread pudding, boasting a pumpkin flavor** for the occasion.

After sampling the culinary arts courtyard, guests will be treated to a spirited performance by the **Gardner Chamber Orchestra** in the museum’s intimate Tapestry Room at 7:45pm. Led by flutist Paula Robison, the acclaimed ensemble will perform Bach’s Brandenburg Concertos No. 2 and 4, undisputed masterpieces beloved by concertgoers the world over.

Throughout the evening, all are invited to explore the Gardner’s uniquely inspiring galleries, feasting their eyes on a **world-class collection** of art while the festive sounds of a variety of musical ensembles fill the air. The **Sonic Brass Quintet** will offer a jubilant musical welcome to arriving guests, followed by a nod to Isabella Gardner’s Scottish heritage: **holiday piping** from the Dutch Room balcony. Later, the **Lexington High School Madrigal Singers** perform holiday favorites from the medieval to the modern, and invite guests to join in another holiday tradition – caroling around the courtyard.

“Isabella Gardner’s entertaining was renowned in Boston and beyond as an apotheosis of the visual, musical and culinary arts,” adds Hawley. “William James wrote to her following opening night in 1903 in praise of the evening’s ‘*aesthetic perfection of all things*’ and Henry Adams described the event as an experience of ‘*Absolute – vertigo – loss of relation – absence in space, time and thought... like repose or dream...*’ Isabella Gardner’s parties delighted! It is our goal, this year, to bring this same experience of beauty and arts to the holidays to a new generation of Bostonians by opening this wonderful holiday tradition to all.”

Tickets • *Artful Holidays at the Gardner* tickets for the general public range from **\$200 per person to \$375 for two** – and include **one full year of museum membership**. Discounted tickets are available for museum members for \$150 per person. Sponsorships of \$750 (including 4 tickets) and \$1500 (including 8 tickets) are also available. Tickets can be reserved through the Office of Special Events at 617-391-3949 or events@isgm.org. *Reservations are required; tickets will not be sold at the door; space is limited, so guests are encouraged to reserve tickets early!*

Saturday evening’s Artful Holidays is the first of two holiday events at the Gardner this holiday season. On Sunday, December 14th, 4:30–7:00 pm, the museum hosts an annual holiday celebration for families with children ages 10 and younger. This members-only event includes activities and performances by the Tanglewood Marionettes and PALS Children’s Chorus.

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum • 280 The Fenway Boston MA 02115 617.566.1401 www.gardnermuseum.org • Modeled after a 15th-century Venetian palazzo surrounding an interior courtyard garden, the century-old Gardner Museum houses one of the most remarkable art collections in the world, featuring works by Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Raphael, Degas and Sargent. Changing exhibitions, the oldest museum music program in the country, evening events, and seasonal courtyard garden displays enrich the collection.

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EDITORS’ NOTE | Members of the media and social photographers/film crews are welcome to attend to cover and/or photograph this event with advance notice through the press office. The museum can also provide post-event images for publication. Please contact the press office for tickets or information.

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