long adjustment for him to accept what my path would be. For a long time, he still had designs on my having a career more like his."

"We both felt that there were unexplored similarities between jazz and science," Jacob said. "They both involve investigating patterns and structures and how things work. Science and jazz are also both fringe communities in this country, and so we figured we could tell a parallel story."

At first, they talked about working up a program on evolution—of species and of jazz—but that felt too didactic. "We decided we had to start with the simplest thing, the cell, and use music to try to express it. I was trying to use cell structure, like the double helix, to mirror that in the music."

Exactly how a composer could express the idea of cells dividing became the subject of some dispute between Varmus and his wife. "We had our ups and downs," Harold said. "Whenever I was in town on a weekend, I would ride my bike to Queens to have lunch with Jacob, and he would sit at the piano and I would talk. Jacob has a good layman's appreciation of science, but sometimes his understanding of the science didn't agree with mine, and that's where the father-son relationship began to break down. We had different interpretations of things."

Then Harold came across some computer simulations of basic cell processes which had been produced by an Australian biomedical animator named Drew Barry. The animations, which are speeded-up renderings of cells dividing, are astonishingly beautiful. Harold decided to use them to illustrate his talk, and Jacob started thinking of his music as a kind of score. At the Guggenheim, the stage was arranged with a large screen in the middle, making it, in effect, a bridge between the two Varmuses. Science and music, father and son, were separated by the width of the auditorium.

Jacob Varmus's music is lyrical and self-assured, more Miles Davis than Dr. John. During the presentation, it was sometimes hard to tell that it was intended to evoke cell biology, but then, the notion that a jazz composition might enhance your understanding of the way cancer cells divide is not really any more far-fetched than the idea that "Take the A Train" puts you in the right frame of mind for the subway.

Harold Varmus seeded his lecture with musical metaphors. "Cells are like tiny orchestras, and they contain several instruments," he said. "Cells use their instruments to create the harmonies of life."

"I now understand the difference between giving a talk and doing a performance," Harold said the next day. "It's a whole new thing for me, these cues and lights and timing." He paused. "You know, later today I have to go to Washington to give a talk at a neuroscience meeting, and I actually wish I had some music."

—Paul Goldberger

HERE TO THERE DEPT.

WHEELING

It's possible for a New Yorker to go weeks without glimpsing a river or a harbor, and to lose track of the fact that Manhattan is both an island and a seaport. This misapprehension is inconceivable, however, for a user of the Waterfront Greenway, a well-marked thirty-two-mile route for walkers, runners, skaters, cyclists, and other non-motorized travellers. It follows the Hudson, Harlem, and East Rivers around Manhattan's perimeter, with occasional inland detours (across Dyckman Street, way up beyond the Cloisters; along the spine of central Harlem; around a couple of dozen blocks near the United Nations). The Greenway is especially well suited to bicyclists, who, if they are moderately fit and don't blow a tire on a broken apricot-brandy bottle, can cover the entire distance in a single leisurely morning or afternoon. Biking the Manhattan shoreline turns the city inside out, and gives the cyclist firsthand answers to questions that often stump even lifelong residents, such as: are there any decent places in Manhattan to go rock climbing, and what the heck do they keep under the Henry Hudson Parkway? Perhaps you yourself rode the Greenway on a recent, spectacular Friday afternoon, beginning and ending at the Battery, where, when you started, a man wearing a broad-brimmed hat was baiting a fishhook with a half-dollar-size crab, which he had selected from a joint-compound bucket at his feet. If so, here are a few of the other things you may have noticed along the way:

Helicopters and small airplanes flying above the Upper Bay like dragonsfly above a swimming pool.

A man wearing a black wetsuit and an orange life jacket, bobbing in the Hudson about fifty feet from shore, using various hand tools to affix four large pink plastic petals to a rotting wooden piling. According to another man, who was standing onshore and holding a walkie-talkie, the man in the water was "installing prototypes for an art project, to see how they make it through the winter."

The Parthenon-like and perhaps spectacularly luxurious colonnaded rooftop outdoor lounging facility of Larry Flynn's Hustler Club, at Fifty-first and Twelfth.

A guy who had been shooting hoops alone on a court underneath the West Side Highway asking another guy, who had been shooting hoops alone on a different court, two courts away, for a little help in retrieving his ball, which had become stuck between the rim and the backboard, and then also asking, "Wanna play?" and then the two of them continuing to shoot hoops alone but now on courts adjacent to each other.

A man in bluejeans travelling south on a bright-yellow pedicab piled high with driftwood, which presumably he had collected along the river's edge, steering with his right hand and using his left hand to give his left leg a downstream power assist; and a middle-aged nun in a white habit, veil flapping, riding a regular bike in the opposite direction.

A lost or discarded parking ticket undulating like a miniature magic carpet in the tiny waves a few feet from shore.

A guy fishing with an enormous surf-casting rod a little downstream from the George Washington Bridge and around a bend from the Jeffrey's Hook Lighthouse, which was saved from demolition in 1951 by outraged readers of the children's book "The Little Red Lighthouse and the Great Gray Bridge," by Hildegarde H. Swift and Lynd Ward.

Several hundred pigeons loitering near the center of an otherwise unoccupied playing field, and, on the other side of the bike path, a man in running clothes sticking out his lower lip while doing rapid, shallow pushups on a bench.

A trailer, carrying rowing shells, parked near the magnificent gate of the Peter Jay
the few surviving Vaux and Mould drawings, Kershaw speculated that something interesting might be hidden behind the bulge—namely, an oculus.

An oculus (the Latin word for “eye”) is a round opening, often at the top of a dome but sometimes set into a wall or a landing. Vaux’s building, a barnlike red brick structure in the High Victorian Gothic style, which today forms the centermost section of the museum, had included an oculus on the middle landing of each of four stairwells. There was no doubt that one pair of oculi had been destroyed, but Kershaw had hopes for the other two: “I would tell people, ‘One day, I’m going to get in there.’” Earlier this year, when the museum renovated the Tapestry Hall, he did. In March, Kershaw and a team of workmen chopped through thick layers of plaster with small chipping drills, revealing the outlines of the oculi. The openings had been filled in with brick, and a few electrical wires ran through them. The team carefully removed each brick by hand.

Last week, a new gallery devoted to the art of the High Middle Ages opened in the renovated space behind the Grand Staircase. High up on one wall, seventy feet apart, were two round openings, each six feet in diameter. Standing in the space a few weeks earlier, Kershaw had pulled out some of Vaux’s old plans for the building from the eighteen-seventies. It was almost unrecognizable: a center hall was separated from the side vestibules only by columns, and the interior was encrusted with Victorian ornament. One drawing, showing an elaborate moldings around each oculus, made Kershaw laugh. “It’s so fussy!” he said. “But this didn’t make it into the final design. Maybe someone talked Vaux out of it, or maybe he came to his senses.”

The architectural history of the Met spans more than one century, twelve firms, five master plans, and seventeen wings, but if there is a dominant theme it is this: bringing Calvert Vaux to his senses. Vaux had won the commission based on his standing as one of the masterminds of Central Park, but his initial museum building was declared, by its irascible president, “a mistake.”

“Vaux was off the job almost as soon as it opened,” Morrison Heckscher, the museum’s resident expert on its architectural past, said. Vaux’s master plan was too ambitious and costly, and Victorian design was slipping out of fashion. By the end of the century, new architects had begun executing a plan to completely surround Vaux’s exterior with other structures; by the nineteen-fifties, the interior decorations had been stripped. “Basically, they came up with brilliant ways to make a building disappear,” Heckscher said.

Initially, at least, Vaux’s oculi were appreciated. In 1880, the Times reported, “The circular windows, which are at the intermediate landings, are so alluring, giving such pleasant glimpses of the rooms, that one must vainly linger for a moment to look within, and an unconscious rest is gained.”

Heckscher said, “Vaux wanted transparency, a concept that is very appealing to us in the art world today.” He went on, “When you looked through the oculus, you looked out over a sea of glass cases. It was like going into Wannamaker’s or Macy’s. It was a way of showing off the goods.”

The bird’s-eye view of the new gallery will be similarly dramatic: the tapestries have been moved to another room, and a peek through one of the oculi from the stairwell now reveals a splendid crucifix and a burst of colorful stained glass. The oculi have been altered in one important detail: what were once open airways now hold panes of glass. These, Kershaw explained, were a necessary precaution. “We suspect that moderns might not be as well behaved as their historical counterparts.”

—Macy Halford