

One-stop mobile app offers Broadway ticket ease

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This image released by The O+M Company shows the TodayTix app. TodayTix, a new ticket-purchasing mobile app created by a team of theater producers and ticketing veterans, hopes to bring Broadway into the 21st Century. Its creators hope to reduce the time from customers picking a show to getting confirmation of their tickets to just 30 seconds. (AP Photo/The O+M Company)

There are plenty of ways to get tickets to Broadway shows: You can wait in line at Times Square's TKTS booth or hunt online at Ticketmaster. You might try a ticket broker or a scalper. Then there's simply going to the theater's box office.

Now two guys who met more than a decade ago at summer camp think they've come up with a way to make the whole process easier and faster. They've created TodayTix, a one-stop mobile app for last-minute [ticket buyers](#).

The free app lets users see all the various shows being offered up to one week in advance, select a seat, pay for it with the best price currently available and then send you proof of your ticket—all in less than a minute.

"We've really created the app with the idea that it should take 30 seconds or less from choosing the show to confirmation of the ticket. It's just got to be that easy," says Merritt Baer, a former investment banker who became a ticket pricing expert in Europe.

He and Brian Fenty, a private equity investor, are theater lovers who went into the business world, hoping to return to their first love. They met 15 years ago at the French Woods Festival of the Performing Arts in upstate New York.

"We are just theater fans who want to sell more theater tickets," Fenty says. "At the end of the day, 20 percent of Broadway still goes unsold every single night on average."



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TodayTix searches for the best prices—whether it's a steep discount or full price for a hit show—and passes them along, plus a \$5 convenience fee, one of the lowest out there. It promises a future of no long lines, shady websites and uncertainty.

Ticket buyers can either pick up their tickets at the box offices that have partnered with TodayTix—including The Public and The Roundabout

Theatre—or be greeted outside the theater by a TodayTix representative who is wearing in a red T-shirt or sweatshirt and already has sent them a photo of him or herself holding the tickets. (The so-called concierge service costs another \$5).

Other features include the ability to send a photo of ticket buyers' credit cards if they can't be bothered to type in the numbers, reviews of the various shows, social media buttons, push notifications if better seats open up and a calendar feature that lets users pick available shows over multiple days.

"People just want to buy theater tickets in an easy, convenient way," Baer says. "The ticketing industry hasn't evolved particularly in the last 50 years."

The app comes at a time when half of Broadway tickets are purchased within a week of the performance, making it harder for theaters to plan ahead. A mobile ticketing application is the logical outgrowth of an increasing digital trend in which some 47 percent of people buy their tickets online.

This week, the app had a pair of tickets in the mezzanine for "First Date" for \$118, a savings of \$56, and a pair in the side orchestra for "Newsies" at \$73 each, or \$158 off the regular price. Tickets were also available for off-Broadway offerings like "Blue Man Group," "The Radio City Christmas Spectacular" and "Avenue Q."

Baer and Fenty built TodayTix from an oversubscribed initial round of financing that raised \$500,000. They released a test app in September and already have seen it used 50,000 times so far, with repeat customers representing a quarter of users. So far, TodayTix is available only on the iPhone, but there are plans to have it on other mobile platforms soon.

The pair turned for help to multiple Tony Award-winning theater producer and academic Elizabeth Williams, who serves as a TodayTix partner and theatrical adviser. Williams, who is currently producing "Waiting for Godot" and "No Man's Land," was excited by the app's promise.

"Any new ideas that come into the space that will provide shows a way to market their [tickets](#) is of interest to me," she says. "We'll be able to reach audiences potentially who we haven't been able to reach before. I'm very hopeful that this can make a big difference to us."

Williams, a longtime BlackBerry user, will get to use the new app on her own after Christmas. That's when Santa—in reality, her son—gets her an iPhone.

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