



7 Nights in the City

BY OLIVIA GUNN

Early in the journey of my life
I found myself within a forest dark.
And then the lights of Wharf Street
drew me in.

MONDAY

It's 11:30 p.m. on Monday and my boyfriend has the overwhelming urge to play pool. There must be days when every man needs to feign Paul Newman. "All right, hustler, let's go." **Old Port Tavern Billiards** sits on the corner of Fore Street and Market just across from Bull Feeney's. We pass through the crowd of USM students, whom I assume don't have class the next morning or simply don't care. The live band blasting from the upstairs lounge at Feeney's, backed by Old Port Tavern's '70s-mix, makes for an interesting rendition of "I Got You Babe." There's just one of six tables left, and it's conveniently centered in the room. The ratio of men to women is three to one. These lucky ladies were either dragged into boy's night or finishing off a first date. They can be identified by a giddy smile or bored iPhone stare. I notice one group of guys

MEAGHAN MAURICE (3)



Bull Feeney's



First Friday Art Walk

seems to have followed a friend on said first date and show no shame in their “ball” and “pocket” jokes. He blushes at their catcalls and playful insults as his date smiles and secretly wishes they’d gone to her place after dinner. Two games later it’s closing time, and since it’s Monday night, since I left my yoga pants behind for jeans, TOMS, and a sweater, we’re off to find the nearest slice of pizza.

“Hey, kid, we got *three* slices.” The 23-year-old tool nudges his way through the rest of us waiting in line. We’re all relieved he got his much needed, well-deserved slice be-

fore those of us who’ve been in line for 10 minutes. It’s one in the morning, everybody has been drinking, everybody has to drive home, everybody needs a slice, and the teen behind the counter hustles, trying to keep up with orders. **Bill’s** is a solid retreat to grab food at the end of a long night. Open until 2 a.m., the place appeals to anyone and everyone. Sitting in a booth amid it all, that’s very obvious: “Yo’, Will, yo’, Jeff, yo’, Greg” rings out as more and more bro’s file in. My friend is rudely pushed out of their way, so we decide to give up and split the slice we have. It’s delicious, but at this time of night anything is.

TUESDAY

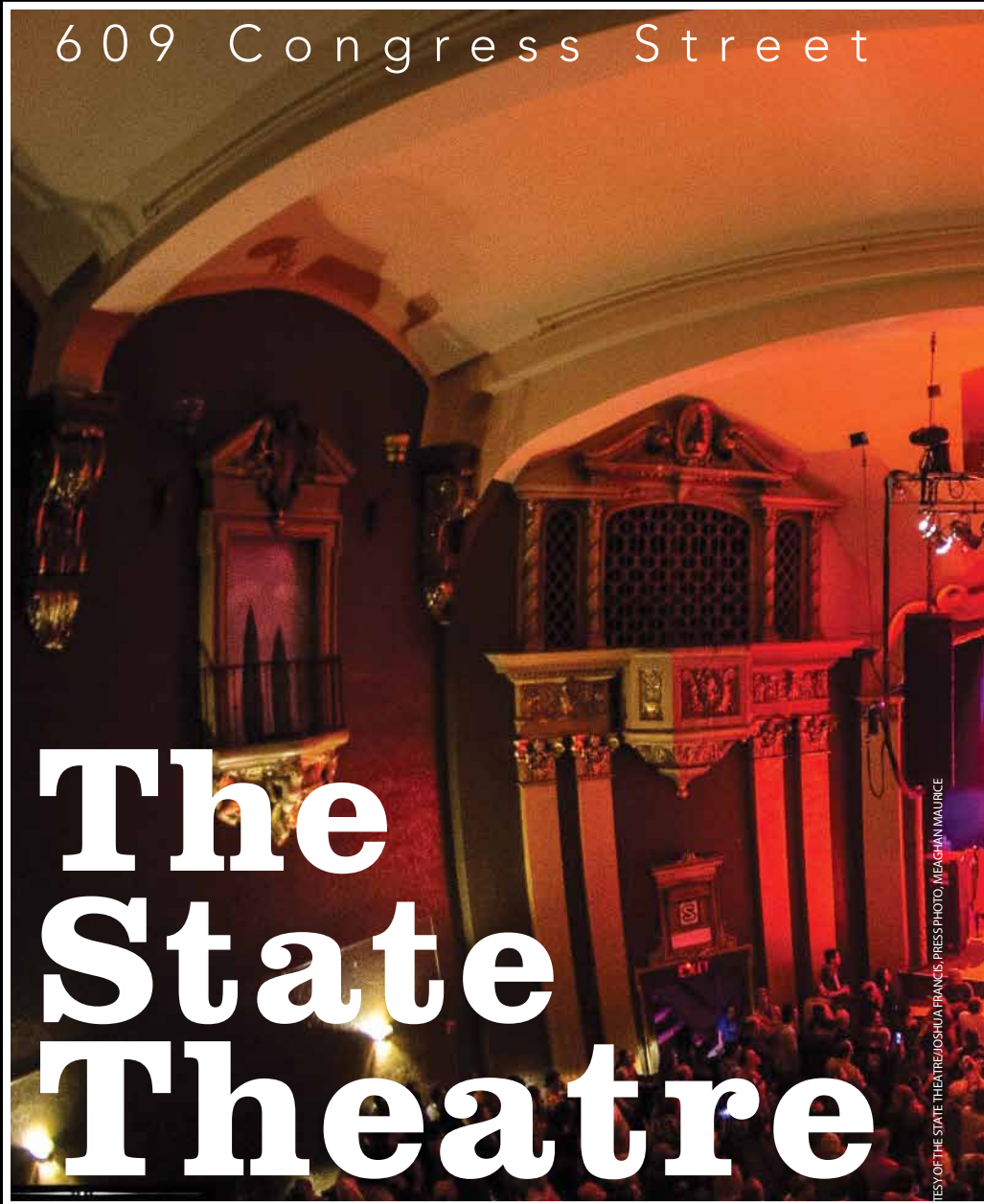
“What’s she drinking?” “Something that’s not on the menu.” Specialty cocktails are the latest trend in Old Port, or so I’m learning here at **Portland Hunt and Alpine Club**. The place is brightly lit, chic, and fun. A bar wraps around the front window, tables line up in the middle, and an intimate nook for couples is enclosed with a curtain. A thin, stylish woman with cropped hair sips her no-name wonder from a champagne glass while nibbling popcorn. I order the Witch’s Kiss, a tequila drink—I’m sorry, Agave, an Agave drink—and enjoy the low murmurs of the couples nearby. —>

It's the perfect spot if you're not looking to run into friends or coworkers. Everyone keeps to her/himself, thoroughly enjoying every last drop of her/his delicious choice. The bartenders work magic, measuring each concoction to perfection. Cocktails are an art here at Portland Hunt and Alpine Club, and I dissuade myself from enjoying another masterpiece.

WEDNESDAY

We arrive at **Mayo Street Arts** with no real expectations, to play it safe. I'd heard of Crow-bait Club through a friend and thought I'd give the monthly play competition a go. Walking into the already packed space, we are certainly strangers in a room full of hysterical "club members." One group stands in the corner shouting across to another group, who shouts to another group, who shouts to the group behind us, and so on. The setup is rather confusing as we pass by a table with cans labeled "WOMEN" and "MEN." Oh, no. My friend glares at me. I swear to her it's nothing kinky, but we take two seats with an easy exit. Beer and wine are passed through a small kitchen window, and those who aren't adding their name to the cans or "playwright" list file in and sit. Soon a man takes center stage and quiets the crowd, yet is continuously interrupted by shouts and "That's what she said" from the back. This is a group of close-knit theater fans, none of whom are working on the next *Les Mis* but look forward to this night with friends, beer, and dialogue. Tonight is Bad Play Night and the writers have gone above and beyond to write their worst. Raunchy is an understatement as the F-word bounces off the walls and the crowd "ughs" and "ewws." Af- →

609 Congress Street



The State Theatre



Restored and reopened to acclaim (with its gilt balconies and Moorish theme, State Theatre is like stepping into a vaulted palace in *New Arabian Nights*). Built in 1929, it operated as a first-run movie house until the 1960s, when it became a porn theater, closing in 1989. Its decline from grand dame cinema status to that of a smut-film street mistress in decades past has been utterly transformed.

Coming Attractions:
May 6, **M.I.A.** 8 p.m.

May 9, **THE MAVERICKS**, 8 p.m.

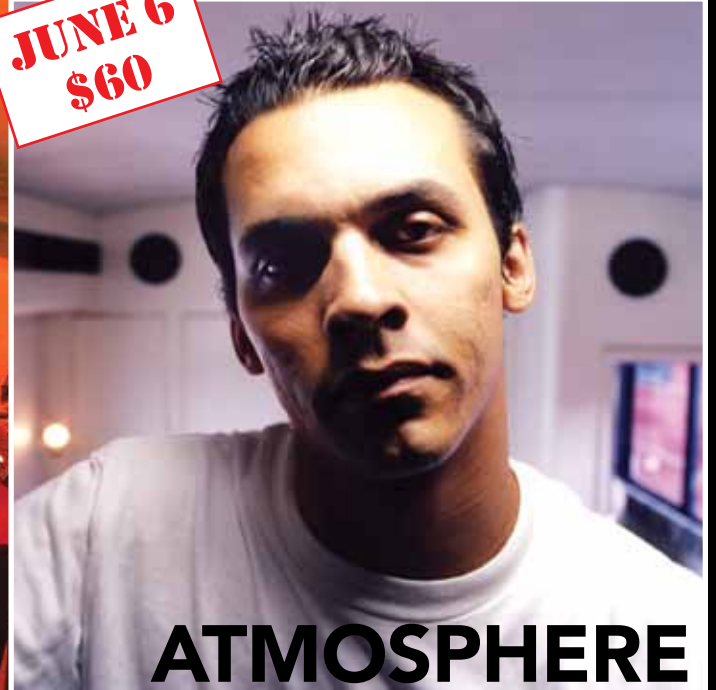
May 10, **PURE PRAIRIE LEAGUE, JONATHAN EDWARDS, LIVINGSTON TAYLOR**, 7 p.m.

June 5, **THE MOTH MAINSTAGE**, 7:30 p.m.

June 15, **PATTY GRIFFIN**, 8 p.m.



JUNE 6
\$60



ATMOSPHERE

David Letterman announced their album as "When Life Gives You Lemons."
Real title: *When Life Gives You Lemons , You Paint That Shit Gold.*

"WE STAY UP LATE EVERY NIGHT, REGRET IT EVERY MORNING, THEN DO IT AGAIN."

– Slug (Sean Daily), 41

After the first act we cast our votes, I for a particularly strange play set in a hotel with surfing sharks. My guest is obviously ready to move on as she breaks away for a smoke. I follow her out, nodding my unacknowledged thank you. Outside, another smoker suggests we stay and act, confessing she's never acted before either but thinks it's fun. Maybe for some, but I'll pass, promising to return next month when the plays aren't so bad.

THURSDAY

After being unreasonably honked at while crossing the "cross-walk" at Commercial and Union (expected on a Thursday past 8 p.m.), I make my way into In'Finiti, eyes peeled for my friend. The place is wide with



In'Finiti



Oasis

42 Wharf Street

MAY 24



GATSBY PARTY

**"AND I LIKE LARGE PARTIES.
THEY'RE SO INTIMATE. AT
SMALL PARTIES THERE ISN'T
ANY PRIVACY."**

-F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

The absinthe cobble streets, the lurid Parisian lighting...not a bad place for a bar & music venue.

Coming Attractions:

May 9, **LUAU PARTY**, DJ TINYDANCER on the Patio and DY Royale Upstairs

May 10, **SPARKS TO THE RESCUE** on the Patio DJ TINYDANCER Upstairs

May 17, **BLACK ROSE** on the Patio, DJ Royale Upstairs

May 23, **KILLCOLLINS** on the Patio, DJ Royale Upstairs

May 24, **GATSBY PARTY**, Jazz Quartet on the Patio, DJ TINYDANCER upstairs

One Perfect Night



Cosmos at the Top of the East

CRAFT COCKTAILS

- Cucumber Collins
Dick's Gin, freshly muddled Cucumber, Club Soda, Lime
11
- Gold Paloma
Silver 1800 Tequila, Red Grapefruit Juice,
Fresh Lime Juice, Agave, Club Soda
13
- Calpirinha
Cachaca, Lime, Agave
12
- Green Tea & Honey Mojito
Cane Rum, Green Tea, Honey, Mint, Lime
13
- Hotel Nacional
Superior Rum, Apricot Brandy, Pineapple Juice, Lime
14
- Espresso Martini
Vanilla, Kahlua, Amaretto, Espresso, Cream
13
- Pear & Brown Sugar Martini
La Poire, Pear & Brown Sugar infusion, Lemon
14
- Chocolate & Raspberry Bellini
Dark Chocolate Liqueur, Stoli Razberi,
Prosecco, Raspberry Puree
14

an industrial feel. Giant, copper distilleries shine behind the counter, justification for the minimalist bar of 20 or so local/micro brews. Spotting her, I take a seat and am greeted by Chloe, the new bartender from Seattle. "What's your go-to beer?" She points out the Cannonball XPA, an American Pale Ale for five bucks. "I'll take it." My friend orders the cheese platter and is happy to see a new brie. She's obviously a regular. It's a quiet place, no music, no TVs. The bar is by no means packed, but singles and couples are placed strategically away from one another, yet close enough to overhear a good topic. "Sangillo's?" The woman two seats down whips around, hearing my friend, Rachel, describe local dive-bars. "Oh, my God. You've got to go to Sangillo's." It's a common occurrence with whomever you meet in a Portland bar that they just can't help but tell you where you should be drink-

ing. The stranger—Alicia—the bartender Chloe, and Rachel all rave over Sangillo's one-dollar Jell-O shots, and our present drinks, a perfect Pale Ale and Rachel's Sorta Toddy—tequila-

lo, Dixie cup," the three cackle in camaraderie as I pay my tab and realize exactly where I'll be headed come midnight Friday.



based specialty cocktail with a lavender Dolin Blanc (vermouth), cinnamon, and lemon—are eclipsed by cherry-flavored gelatin and well vodka. "You get a shot there and it's like 'Hel-

I head up State Street, taking in the particularly flirty swagger of the city this evening. The night is warm, a jumpstart for summer, and the streets are buzzing with those of us who can't sit still long enough to watch another episode of *Orange is the New Black*. The reggae band, Royal Hammer, is playing at **Local 188**, and it simply just fits the evening. When entering Local, I'm always a bit reserved, fixing my poise and checking any eagerness at the door. There's a coolness about Local, and each time, I can't help noticing the cliques. Tonight it's no different. Groups of attractive twenty/thirty-somethings lounge on the puffy sofas, reminiscent of *Friends*, and are quick to turn their heads and watch who dare enter the doors of Hipstertopia. Luckily, with my slouchy hat and a wave to nobody in particular at the bar, I



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Cafés of Portland

PORTLAND, Maine's City Magazine

Ever feel blue? Ever hear Blue? Blue, the intimate music venue at 650 Congress, will pull you in from the street. Late night shows a plus; features jazz on Saturdays.

Blue

650 Congress St.



Late Nite Bites

BY CLAIRE Z. CRAMER

It's getting late. You've just emerged from a paranoid dystopian thriller at the Nickelodeon, or Anna Lombard's set at One Longfellow Square. You're hungry.

YOU'RE IN LUCK

"We call it 'reverse' Happy Hour," says Andre Genetti at **Boone's** on Commercial Street. "From 9 till 11 p.m. Tuesday through



FROM LEFT: MEGHAN MAURICEZ, CHRISTOPHER RICCARDO

Coming Attractions:

Saturdays in May:
JAZZ AT THE BLUE,
From 6 p.m.

June 13, **THE ACADIAN ACES**,
10 p.m.

May 16, **SHANNA IN THE ROUND**, 6 p.m. **FOR THE BIRDS**,
8 p.m. **GUNTHER BROWN**, 10
p.m.

June 14, **HARDY BROTHERS QUARTET** 10 p.m.

June 21, **SEAN MENCHER & HIS RHYTHM KINGS** 8 p.m.

Wednesdays in May:
IRISH SESIUN, 9 p.m.

pass inspection. Making my way through the maze of tables, I spot a seat where I proceed to wait...and wait...and, "Scuse me? Can I get a menu?" By this point my stomach is growling and the scene is closing in on me: beards, flannels, and mom jeans. After indulging in the Spicy Margarita and Garlic Shrimp, I see my friend arrive and we make our way over to the main bar, ordering another drink. By 11 p.m. the band has been playing for an hour, the crowd is tipsy, thus friendlier, and we've made several new acquaintances. The space in front of the band is packed, and it's good to see couples, friends, and strangers grooving together unconsciously, unceremoniously welcoming spring. Local 188, while not always presenting the warmest welcome, wishes me sweet, sweet dreams tonight.



Sonny's is near empty, and of those who are here, 10 of them are men, 40 plus. One in particular can't help but lean in closer and closer —>

Portland Hunt & Alpine Club
 Feeling flush, so we're heading to Hunt & Alpine for craft cocktails and spicy popcorn



ROAM THE COBBLE-STONES

Maybe you've been dancing the night away at Bubba's or Styxx and now you're starved. How about a locally sourced and pedigreed, utterly divine hotdog? **Blue Rooster**, the diminutive but decadent sandwich shop on Dana Street, has the gourmet bargain. A Junkyard Dog—bacon-wrapped, chili-slathered, and topped with house-made tater tots—is just \$5.

"We're open until 2 every night but Sunday," says Randy Cruse. "People get hungry

late. It can get crowded after the bars close at one. We kind of clear the counters so stuff doesn't get knocked off; it's a good time. There have been situations, but the patrons are helpful if someone needs to be escorted out. We've only called the cops once." Not bad for more than a year of late nights after the bars turn out the lights. 5 Dana St. bluroosterfoodcompany.com

Don't forget **Gritty's**—the burnished, beloved pub has been here for Portland for 25 years. "We're open till 1 a.m., and the kitchen serves till 11 on Fridays and Saturdays," says bartender Abby Neill. Between the hours of 9 and 11 p.m., "some people need to get a base" if they're planning an evening with pints of Black Fly Stout. A Gritty's Meatloaf Sandwich on a toasted pretzel bun (\$10.99) can be just the thing. 396 Fore St. grittys.com

Buck's Naked BBQ serves up big game until 11 p.m. Thursday through Saturday nights. A Big Buck Combo plate pile-up of brisket, pulled pork, sausage, and pit chicken

Thursday nights, and 10 to midnight Friday and Saturday, we serve our bar menu for half price and \$3 off wine and beer, with special cocktail prices." In no time, you find yourself on a barstool in Boone's upstairs Oyster Room, gazing out over a row of premium single-malt and vodka bottles into the inky harbor, sipping a \$5 glass of Fess Parker pinot noir with plates of Kung Pao chicken skewers (\$5.50) and pork-and-oyster meatballs (\$3.50) set before you. 86 Commercial St. boonesfishhouse.com



Kushiya Benkay

er, hoping desperately for us to acknowledge him. Finally he asks, "How do you two know each other," making sure we are, in fact, two separate entities. I have the urge to tell him we're dating, but you can never trust that a guy like him will back off with that line. Luckily, it's Thursday and there's a live band, so we really invest ourselves in the singer, Jake Roche, and ignore Don Draper. Sonny's is everyone's favorite bar. I watch as each newcomer is welcomed by name and knows at least one other person seated. It's past 10 p.m. and the bar seems to be getting a steady flow. Soon our first friend is replaced by a younger gentleman who listens as we discuss where to go. He moves in close, unsuccessfully shielding his wedding

ring, and suggests we all go to Sangillo's with him for, you guessed it, Jell-O shots. We smile along and entertain this thought for



Taco Escobarr

less than a minute before Roche distracts us all with his rendition of "Friend of the Devil." Sitting here with my Spicy Pineapple Margarita and The Grateful Dead playing behind me, I'm content and feeling very much a part of the Old Port.

FRIDAY

This is our first stop for the night, and it sets the mood perfectly. **Taco Escobarr** is my spot when I'm not sure whether I'm hungry or just thirsty. They've got a stacked menu and liquor shelf, so I'm never disappointed. The space is lit by tiny chili pepper lights, green, yellow, red, that cover the entire ceiling and give everyone a warm, sultry look. We take two stools at the end of the bar, and I order my margarita with salt, guac and chips, and a

181 State Street

One Longfellow Square

MAY 25

You never know how they're going to surprise you at this venue on the corner of State and Congress streets.

Coming Attractions:

May 6, **DAVE GUTTER & MIKE TAYLOR**, 8 p.m.

May 16, **DECOMPRESSION**

CHAMBER MUSIC SEASON 6, CONCERT #5: MOZART, 6 p.m.

May 17, **JOE WALSH, BRITTANY HAAS & OWEN MARSHALL WITH LAUREN RIOUX & STEN ISAK**, 8 p.m.

May 18, **OLS SUNDAY JAZZ BRUNCH**, 10 a.m.

May 25, **ANNA LOMBARD**

& THE BOSTON BOYS, 8 p.m.

May 31, **DUDEFEST 2014: THE BIG LEBOWSKI**, 8 p.m.

June 17, **DUSTBOWL REVIVAL**, 8 p.m.

June 19, **THE PORTLAND JAZZ ORCHESTRA**, 8 p.m.



ANNA LOMBARD + THE BOSTON BOYS



Blue

bloody Mary for my guy. It's not long before we make friends with the couple close by. The girl is drinking a Mayan Ruins, the spiciest cocktail I've ever sipped, and she laughs as we order one ourselves. Devin is a student at one of the local colleges and tells me she's been coming here for the past two years, explaining

it's gone from "sucking" to "great." I ask why she stayed loyal during the bad times. "It was convenient, and they make good infused drinks," she laughs, and I get a sense there's more to that story. After draining our Mayan Ruin (one is enough), we pay our perfectly fair tab and head down Congress.

The place is packed, as usual. **Blue**, being the designated jazz bar of Portland, tends to attract music buffs, wannabe music buffs, and, at times, your run-of-the-mill music snob, all of whom you can differentiate with a glance around the room (the buffs delight in talking to you about a band you've heard of, the snobs in talking to you about a band you haven't heard of). But tonight is to be a good night for

Blue, a good night for couples who can groove to any Sam Cooke while knowing a bit of Sinatra on the side. We squeeze ourselves into a space between a couple from CA campaigning cross-country and the bar. My friend Colleen serves our drinks, suggesting the Bantam cider. She tells us we're going to love the band, The Evan King Group, and by the looks of front-woman Ms. King, I already do. She's ultra-'40s femme with vixen red hair and a fitting black dress. She and her band seduce us with Al Green and Jill Scott. King plays with the audience, encouraging us to sing along, and we do, to Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On," as Tim, the bar's regular volunteer musician, keeps the tempo on tambourine. With my man's arms around me as we watch a soulful —>

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MEAGHAN MAURICE(2), COURTESY ONE LONGFELLOW SQUARE, OLIVIA GUNN(2), MEAGHAN MAURICE

PORTLAND AFTER DARK

is \$17.99. If this sounds overwhelming, catfish fingers with ancho mayo (\$8.99) might be a little daintier with your mojito. 50 Wharf St. bucksnaked-bbq.com

SETTLE IN

Have an all-American pub dinner and a cold pint of Lake Trout stout brewed with the clear waters of Sebago Lake at **Sebago Brewing Co.**'s spacious storefront on the ground floor

of the Hampton Inn until 1 a.m. Sebago excels with classics like beer-battered fish and chips. "We do a late-night happy hour with \$6 apps and \$6.99 burgers from 10 to 1 a.m. and a dollar off draft beers—it's pretty popular," says manager Ben Ellis. Sounds like good food for watching sports. "Oh yeah. Last night we had all seven TVs on the Red Sox. They won." When the mood strikes, the most expensive thing on the menu is the New York strip steak at \$23.99. Twelve ounces of Angus with blue cheese butter just might answer the call of the wild when the Yankees come to Fenway. 211 Fore St. sebagobrewing.com

If you'd rather skip the game, the **North Point** at 35 Silver Street has a good selection of wine by the glass to enjoy with a cheese plate or sandwiches like the Havana Cubano (\$13) until midnight on



Rasta Maine Vibrations...Positive



Nyah Henderson

MEET TWO PERFORMERS

"You want to see me play live for sure," says **Nyah Henderson** of Stream Reggae. "We've got something at the Eastern Promenade, on Munjoy Hill. I've played every corner and crevice in the Old Port: Brian Boru, Merrill Auditorium, Asylum, The Big Easy, the Porthole, State Theatre, Old Port Tavern, Port City Music Hall. We've performed from Martha's Vineyard to UMaine Orono & Bar Harbor. We've opened for Burning Spear, Third World, Luciano."

David Gagne, 57, has been doing the Boothbay reggae cruise every Sunday for 25 years. Early gigs: "Sugarloaf, the Bag, Raoul's Roadside Attraction. I've opened for The Wailers. "I plays about 230 days of the year, sometimes with my band the Dani Tribesmen.

"One night, at Raoul's, I got a note after the show from Winston Grennan, who'd been in the audience. It said "Can I play with you?" He was one of the original

Maytals. I recorded with him.

"My wife and I also sing as a duo—catch us at Sunday Brunch at McSeagulls in Boothbay Harbor." ■

GIANT PANDA GORILLA DUB SQUAD, May 9 Empire 9:30 p.m.

STREAM REGGAE *Peace Jam*, May 17 Harmony, 8:30 p.m.

THE ROYAL HAMMER May 25, Peaks Island 12 p.m.

THE ROYAL HAMMER May 31, Kelley's Row, Dover, NH 9 p.m.

STREAM REGGAE Jun. 1 The Brunswick in OOB 1 p.m.

STREAM REGGAE, Jun. 8 & 23 Litchfield Bar & Grill 1pm.

STREAM REGGAE Jun. 14 Festival of Love, Harmony

CATCHA VIBE Reggae Sundays mid-May to Sept. at Carmen Verandah, Bar Harbor 6 p.m.

Catch the **DANI TRIBESMEN** every Sunday, May 25 through September 2 at 6 p.m. for the Reggae Music Cruise leaving from McSeagull's in Boothbay Harbor.

weekends (and 10 p.m. during the week). northpoint-portland.com

CONGRESS STREET AFTER THE SHOW

The curtain just dropped on Portland Symphony's presentation of *Don Quixote* and you want a spot for drinks and spicy, salty snacks in which to talk it over. It's a possible dream—just turn west on Congress Street and discover a great white way of late-night snacks. Nosh is known for its hopping bar, towering burgers, and spiced-up, much-in-demand fries made from Lewiston-grown potatoes—dip the sea salt and vinegar version (\$6) into exotic condiments from chipotle mayo to Thai peanut sauce. Eat and drink seven

nights a week until 12:45 a.m. 551 Congress St. noshkitchenbar.com

Across the street at 548 Congress Street, **Taco Escobarr** is serving \$5 wings or nachos from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. every night. On Monday nights, you can have your tarot cards read while you sip your margarita. A stone's throw farther toward Congress Square, there's **Otto's** flagship pizza parlor at 576. The people who somehow taught us to love butternut squash and ricotta on our pizza keep the sit-down cafe open till 1 a.m. on weekends, and the slice shop until 2 a.m.

Head farther west across High Street and discover **Kushiya Benkay** at 653 Congress. The Old Port's old-favorite sushi pioneers, Benkay, opened this Japanese pub-style restaurant in the space that has held restaurants celebrating many ethnicities over the years. It's headquarters for grilled meats and seafood on skewers—including chicken livers, smelts, and baby octopus. Kushiya keeps grilling until 2 a.m. Thursday through Saturday, which is handy after a show at the State, One Longfellow, or Blue—or after extra innings at Hadlock Field—when you're craving all things spicy, grilled, and exotic with sake. You can't miss the *Rock and Roll Benkay/\$2 Skewers till 2 a.m.* sign outside. ■

RiRa



Tessa, Kara, and our new friend Kevin

couple swing around, Blue hits the perfect note tonight. We stay until the very last song, Ella Fitzgerald's "Make Love to You," and head home humming the lyrics: "I can tell by the way you walk that walk..." The Evan King Group plays every first Friday at Blue, so you can find me there on June 6.

Seafood dinners with the parents by day, loudest bar with the longest line by night. This, my friends, is **Bull Feeney's**. The scent of seafood and too many college dudes in one space can be overwhelming on a weekend, but never judge a bar by its stink. It just shows character. The band tonight is the Dapper Gents, a popular group in Portland that draws a good crowd. I show up early to avoid any potential line, order a Coke, and wait for the band. They are scheduled to start at 9:30, but by the sounds of it (*check, check*), I won't be hearing anything until 10. I chat up the bartenders, check bits of the Sox game, and people watch until I hear, "HEY...HO." I carry my stuff to the neighboring room and take a corner to observe. The song is by the popular band The Lumineers, and the Dapper Gents are doing just fine with

their own version. I watch as more and more girls flutter up to the stage, twirling in their carefully chosen, tiny Urban Outfitters' dresses. It's maybe 50 degrees, but these dolls are ready for summer and even more ready to get the front-man's number. Eventually a couple shimmies up, pulling their burly, Sperry-shoed friend along. They move to Sublime's "What I Got," and I can't help but miss my freshman year of college. A young couple must notice my nostalgia; the girl invites me to sit with them. I decline but ask if they're dating. The guy, Eric, grins, "Not yet." His date, Erin, blushes. They're from Auburn and never miss the chance to visit Bull Feeney's. "It's my absolute favorite spot," Erin confesses. "I mean, sometimes I go to Amigo's to pregame, but I can't come to the Old Port and not come here." I see Eric is ready for one-on-one time with Erin, so I leave them and head out before the crowd gets too big. Had I been with a group of friends, I absolutely would have stayed to dance the night away, playing 19 with the rest of the 25-year-olds.

SATURDAY After flashing our new Maine →

Merrill Auditorium

20 Myrtle Street

1 NIGHT ONLY
MAY 8, \$40

With fabulous acoustics, the Merrill Auditorium at Portland City Hall will wake up summer with an ambitious schedule, from comedy to symphony to Italian opera.

Coming Attractions:

May 10, **AN EVENING WITH ROBERT KLEIN & ROBERT WUHL** 8 p.m.

May 11, **HARRY POTTER & THE MAGIC OF MUSIC** 2:30 p.m.

June 17, **AN AMERICAN IN PARIS** Portland Symphony Orchestra 7:30 p.m.

July 23 & 25, Giuseppe Verdi's **RIGOLETTO** presented by PortOpera 7:30 p.m.

August 17, **JACKSON BROWNE** 8 p.m.

Summer King for a Day

BY CLAIRE Z. CRAMER

Even by opera-star standards, bass Kenneth Kellogg gets around. In his travels, he's sung Colline in *La Bohème* and Judge Turpin in *Sweeney Todd* at San Francisco Opera; he was Il Re in *Aida* in Atlanta, and at Washington National Opera he was Angelotti in *Tosca*.

On May 8, he'll appear at Merrill Auditorium in the world premiere of *The Summer King*, an original opera by University of Southern Maine music professor Daniel Sonenberg, 43. *The Summer King* tells the tragic story of Negro League baseball star Josh Gibson. Gibson's untimely death in 1947 just 3 months before Jackie Robinson broke the Major League Baseball color barrier kept him from the fame and recognition he almost would surely have received.

What is your favorite line in *The Summer King*?

It's in Sam's aria which comes as he's holding Joshua after he's taken his last breath. He describes Joshua as "a Joshua without God's invitation, never allowed to cross the Jordan River." This speaks volumes to Gibson's importance to the Negro League players... Unlike the Biblical Joshua, whom God parted the Jordan River for, Joshua Gibson wasn't allowed to [cross into] the big leagues.

Tell us about getting into character. Did Gibson really have a friend named Sam?

From my research Gibson was *the best play-*

er to play the game of baseball. The Babe Ruth of the Negro Leagues or Babe Ruth was the Joshua Gibson of the big league, depending on your frame of reference. My surprise was that I never heard of him. Yes, he had a friend named Sam. Sam Howard Bankhead played in the Negro Leagues and with the Dragones de Ciudad Trujillo along with Satchel Paige and Joshua Gibson.

Have you ever been here before?

I've been to Maine but not officially. I was doing a show in sunny Florida, and Daniel wanted me come to Maine to sing Sam's aria and to participate on a panel discussion at the university. So I flew up to be part of the panel and I spent less than 24 hours here. I didn't even bring a coat. I had to run from car to building because it was so cold here. From what I was able to see in the blur, I want to visit the coast, some of the islands, and eat as much lobster and clams as my stomach can stomach. ■



Kenneth Kellogg



Lori-Kaye Miller

Mezzo-soprano **Lori-Kaye Miller** plays Josh Gibson's wife, Grace.

"My favorite line I sing is toward the end of the opera when Grace argues with Josh before her aria and asks him, "What kind of King has to leave home to reign?" For some reason, that line means so many different things to me and maybe even to Grace at that time.

"In my childhood, my Dad talked about Jackie Robinson and Hank Aaron, but never anything about Josh Gibson."

575 Congress St.

JUNE 5
\$13



SIMONE FELICE



"THIS ALBUM IS SO AUTHENTIC, IT'S STRANGELY UPLIFTING, IT'S ALMOST LIKE YOU'RE GREETING THE SUNRISE."

—NPR

Empire's famed for Wednesday night "Clash of the Titans" competitions where local bands face off with dueling covers. You'll come for the dumplings downstairs at Empire Chinese and stay for the music upstairs.

Coming Attractions:

May 9, **GIANT PANDA GUERRILLA DUB SQUAD** 9:30 p.m.

May 10, **WAYLON SPEED & WHALE OIL** 9:30 p.m.

May 15, **GRIZFOLK** 9:30 p.m.

June 5, **SIMONE FELICE**, 10 p.m.

— ■ licenses to the unenthused security, my boyfriend and I push past what I like to refer as the "Gritty's loiterers," the patrons who stand in the middle of the doorways and cast irritated glares as you are forced to nudge your way through. I suggest keeping your eyes forward and ignoring the catty insults from the 35-year-old decked in Forever 21. There's always a live band, and when we arrive around 9:30 they're just setting up. Agreeing it's too nice to be upstairs sweating, we head down to the basement, where another more intimate bar awaits. The bartender pours my Hornitos, and when asked to explain the difference between the Plata and Reposado he offers a short

history on barrel-aged tequilas vs. steel-fermented tequilas, and a sample of both. Impressed, I leave a decent tip. We notice our friends outside and join them, crowding around a small table of mixed drinks and packs of smokes. This is the perfect spot for our starter drink, and we take note of which direction the crowds are headed tonight.

Ri Ra is like that guy you desperately fell for junior year but couldn't get past his flirting and over-partying. I love the idea of Ri Ra. They always have a live band playing great covers, a giant bar, and plenty of floor space. The problem? Everyone else loves the idea of

Ri Ra, too. I enter the bar and immediately feel overwhelmed. The place is full to capacity, and my ears aren't quick enough to adjust to the volume level bursting out of the speakers. How couples are dancing is beyond me. All I can tell is, the song involves drums and a guitar. What the other band members and singer are doing is unclear. I try to squeeze past a group of men who've volunteered as the body inspectors for the evening. Maybe it's the timing, maybe it's the crowd, but I can't seem to shake the bad feeling. I wait to order a drink I know I won't see for another 10 minutes, and before I know it, my group decides to split. Ri Ra was too much of a good thing →

Port City Music Hall

504 Congress Street

Port City Music Hall takes you downtown and means it. Look for top-flight performers here in many categories.

Coming Attractions:

May 10, **FOGCUTTERS & KENYA HALL BAND**, 8 p.m.

May 16, **PARDON ME DOUG**, 8 p.m.

May 17, **THE AWESOME**, 8 p.m.

June 6, **ROBERT EARL KEEN**, 8 p.m.

June 13, **MODEL AIRPLANE**, 8 p.m.

June 18, **MELANIE MARTINEZ**, 7 p.m.

June 20, **SISTER SPARROW**, 8 p.m.

June 22, **REEL BIG FISH**, 8 p.m.

—■ tonight, and I'm ready for something a little simpler.

Sitting here, listening to roots musicians Adela and Jude, it's hard to imagine that half an hour ago I was fighting my way through a swarm of middle-aged singles for a beer at Ri Ra. It's a relaxing night at **Andy's**, and though we're too late to order food, our server, Rick Marsh, offers us samples of his smoked almonds and pistachios. Andy's is calming and warm, a good break from the louder bars in

Old Port. If you're looking for a spot to actually hear the musicians and your companions, Andy's is your best bet. Rick points to the free popcorn in the back, but we're all set. Andy's has given us the re-boot we needed before taking on the last two hours of our Saturday night.

In **Silver House Tavern**, the entire bar bursts into the chorus of "What's Up," the '90s one-hit-wonder by 4 Non Blondes and the biggest hit of tonight's karaoke. It might be the booze singing, but every single one of us thinks we're

in tune as we continue to belt, some of us even doubling over with emotion, the lines "Hey-yeah-yeah-yeah, Hey-yeah-yeah..." It's that single moment we've all been waiting for. That moment you've worked for all week when you forget the money you just blew on Absolut shots, share a phantom microphone with a stranger, and convince yourself you've just met your soul mate. This song has just inspired a battle of one-ups, and we all rush for the song binder to make our selections. "What about Gold Digger?" "I can't read that fast." As we



"...STICK-TO-YOUR-RIBS-STYLE ROCK..."

—Wall Street Journal

**JUNE 20
\$12**



SISTER SPARROW

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY PORT CITY MUSIC HALL; /JOSHUA FRANCIS; MEAGHAN MORRICE(S); COURTESY SISTER SPARROW AND THE DIRTY BIRDS

push and shove, spilling a drink on the pool table, a leather-skirted chick struts up to the mic and dares to take on “Black Velvet,” the only song you’ve seen your mother polish off an entire glass of red to. She takes charge of the room and we all quiet; she needs no backup or lyrics. The song ends, the room sobers for a moment, and my dreams of wowing them with “Mamas, Don’t Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys” are dashed. All right, the point of karaoke is to sing badly. Deep down we know we can’t sing; that’s why we came →



The Armory in the Portland Regency

Tuck Into a Hotel Bar

Hotel bars are one of the easiest ways to feel away from it all, an explorer in your own city. Beyond, they’re safe, out of the wind—a welcome combination of intimacy and distance.

Start at the heart of the Old Port, deep within the Portland Regency Hotel. The Armory is wood-paneled, dark, and clubby, just the sort of place to meet 007 for a...

blueberry mojito? “I make a ton of those in the summer,” says bartender Mike. “I muddle the berries with the mint—it’s delicious.” He also recommends the espresso martini. “We have an under-appreciated food menu. It comes from the same kitchen as the four-star restaurant upstairs.”

He’s right. The Armory’s burger easily makes the list of best-in-Portland. 20 Milk St., the regency.com

Another hideaway we love is the bar in the lobby beside Eve’s At The Garden in the Portland Harbor Hotel on Fore Street. It’s a great place to take it all in and sometimes catch a glimpse of celebrity guests (including Martin Scorsese). ■



The Shipyard Bar & Lounge in The Residence Inn



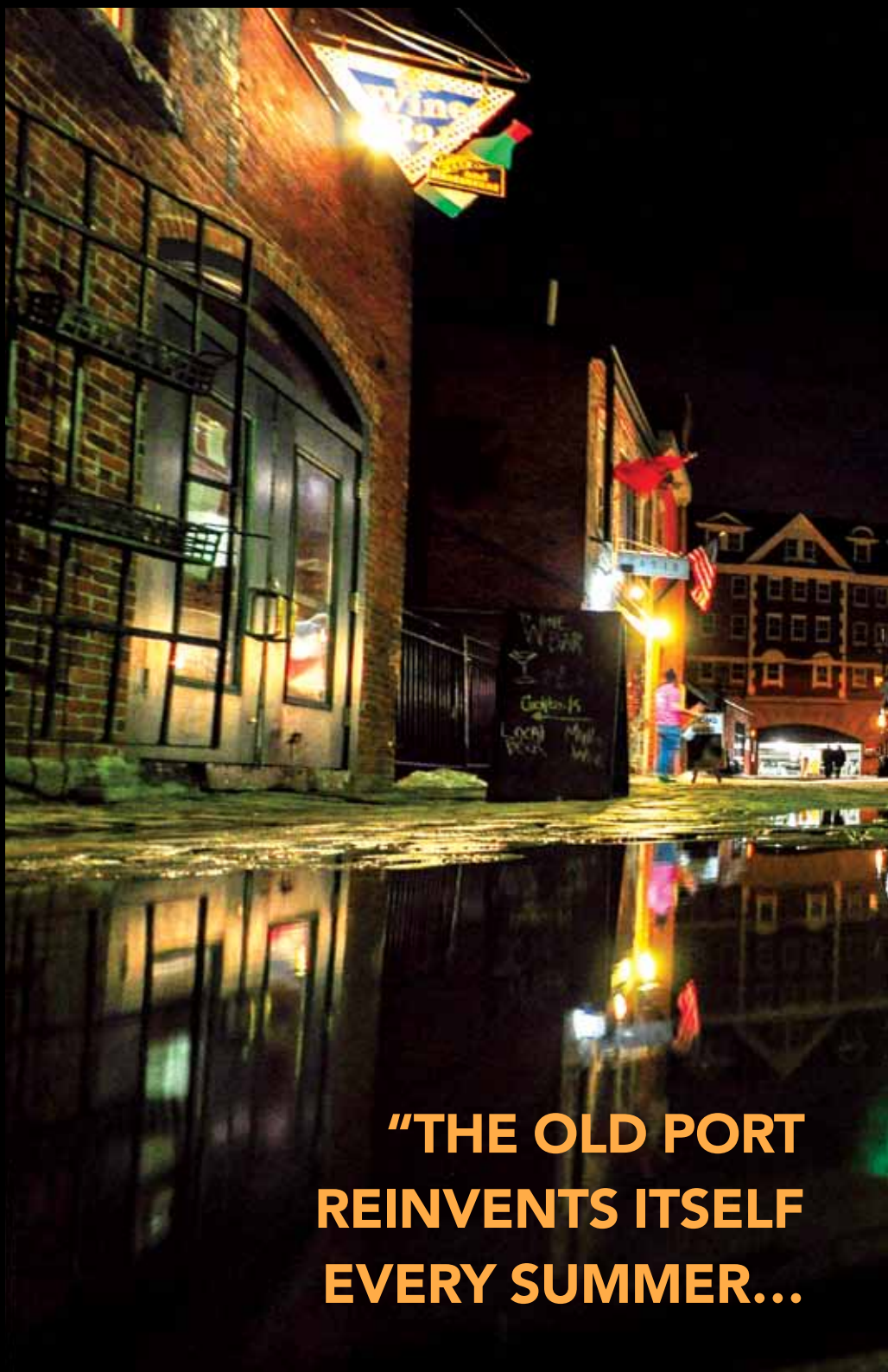
Eve’s at the Garden in Portland Harbor Hotel

to Silver House, where everybody sounds like Adele.

There's barely enough room to move, but when the song is right, we all sync up. There's an hour left to the night, and no one is shy. It's all or nothing at this point, so both girls and guys are taking the leap and asking for a dance. **Old Port Tavern** has turned from the first place we send a tourist to a pheromone-drenched nightclub where everyone is hoping to leave with someone. It's here where hipster and bro find even ground because, quite frankly, they don't notice one another. We're all much too busy getting busy, and as the DJ starts "Blurred Lines," the only person you're focused on is the one you're dancing with. Though the twenties have taken the dance floor, there's an older crew lingering around the bar and we're lucky enough to catch the attention of a woman who offers to order our beers. "Have fun," she shouts and passes us two bottles. The dance floor is a different world, with green laser lights cutting through the thick air. "Happy Birthday, Alexis, this one's for you," the DJ shouts over the speakers. Alexis and her friends cheer, and it's on to the next song. Thirty minutes later we're exhausted, unable to keep up with the rest. It's time for us to go, but it's certain Old Port Tavern will be going strong until the very last minute.

SUNDAY

My head is spinning while trying to read the list of beers above the bar. With 25 taps and over 500 bottled beers, **Novare Res** is no place for the Coors fan. I try to play it cool and order the first beer I can pronounce, "High and Mighty Two Headed Beast." Oh, God, what have I done? The waitress smiles, knowing I'm lost. Here folks know their beers or have at least experimented enough to make educated guesses. A person like me is simply confused. Having never been able to turn down any beer that's handed to me, I'm no snob. With long picnic tables inviting groups to mingle with others, it's a great opportunity to ask someone what they're drinking and why without feeling like a creep. I mean that's why we're here, right? We all love beer. The place is a bit dungeon-like for my taste, but there's a small room in the back with a fireplace and big, comfy chairs. I'm sold. Now and only now do I wish it were still January. Next time, though, I hope to be drinking

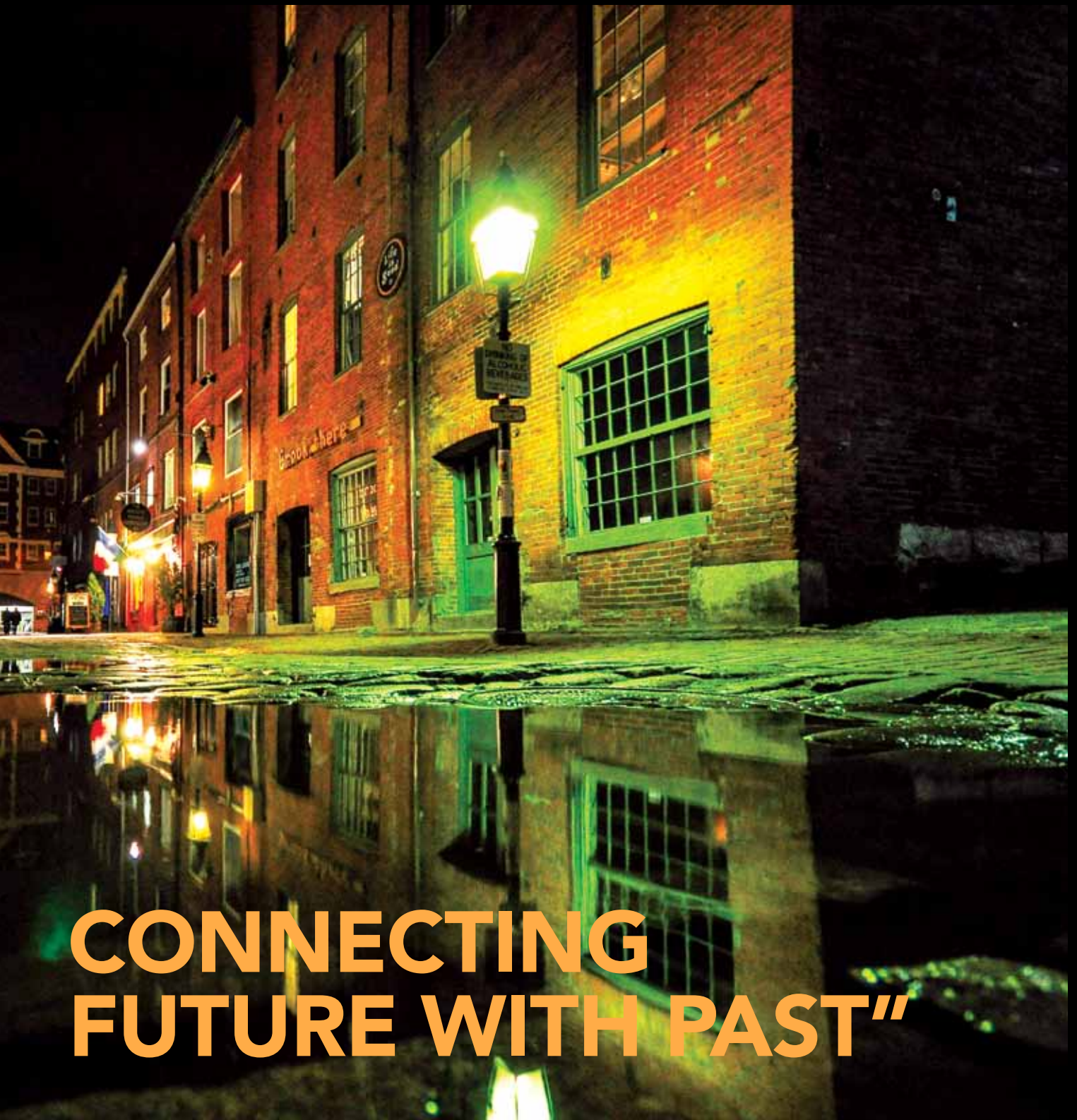


"THE OLD PORT REINVENTS ITSELF EVERY SUMMER..."

my fancy-schmancy draught on the deck with sunshine and friends.

Having no guest, I hand my extra ticket over to the box office at **Merrill Auditorium** before waiting in line at concessions. "Tonight is a special night," I'm told, and I'm

allowed to take my Allagash White into the concert hall. A very friendly woman leads me to my seat, and I'm shocked to see how full the space is. I wasn't expecting this large audience but am happy I'm not alone. Bobby McFerrin is playing tonight, a promise that summer is really nearly here.



CONNECTING FUTURE WITH PAST"

Though he's a 10-time Grammy winner, I unknowingly assume I'll be hearing "Don't Worry Be Happy," which I'm more excited for than you'd think. As I look over the line-up, I realize I'm in for something quite different. McFerrin and his band will be playing well-known Americana. The crowd

is familiar with most of the songs, and when three audience members are invited on stage, five show up. We're all proud when these Portlanders impress Mr. McFerrin with their voices. I think he's even a bit surprised. One singer in particular, a young man named Chaz, makes his way to

the stage a second time and the two scat back and forth. The show brings Portland to its feet, and at the end of a long week, Merrill Auditorium provides me with an enlightening cultural event. This summer we can look forward to classic acts like Jackson Browne and Gordon Lightfoot. ■

COREY TEMPLETON