



Experience the Heart of the Garden...



Visit us on **Facebook** to learn more!



Ranked within the Top 10 Portland Hotels

207-828-1117

Fax: 207-828-1118

PortlandHilton.com

145 Jetport Boulevard

Portland, Maine 04102



FOR RESERVATIONS



The Curtain Call



Portland Jazz Orchestra plays **One Longfellow Square** on April 20. Pairs well with dumplings from nearby Bao Bao (left) for a night of delight.



Starved for a night of entertainment? Candy from the concession stand just won't cut it. Instead, try elegant dining **before** or **after curtain** at these go-to watering holes.

BY KAREN HOFREITER

WITH ELECTRIC PERFORMANCES ahead, from **Golden Dragon Acrobats** (April 6) to **Annie** (April 27); **Tony Bennett** (May 11) to Tchaikovsky's **Pathétique** (May 16); to a storm of sound from **Riverdance** (May 31) at **Merrill Auditorium**; **Bridget Kearney** (of Lake Street Dive) at the **State Theatre** (April 17); **Portland Jazz Orchestra** at **One Longfellow Square** (April 20); and **String Around My Finger** at **Portland Stage** (through April 23), there's never been a better time to add a first or final act to your evening's headline sensations. Whether your preference is a pre-show opening snack, post-curtain call nightcap, or late afternoon matinee bite, Portland's vivacious dining scene offers plenty of star options.

INDUSTRY FAVORITE

If you're looking to add a little extra drama to your night in the audience, there's nothing like sitting and sipping under a glowing golden dragon. Situated close to **State Theatre** and **One Longfellow Square**, sleek

Bao Bao Dumpling House has everything you need to set the scene. Sample steaming plates of hearty Asian fare (shrimp and bacon dumplings, anyone?); cocktails by the bowl (you'll see Scorpions aren't just for college kids); and, as Bao Bao's Chris Peterson puts it, a selection of "wonderful but often overlooked" desserts. If you're in a pre-show rush, "there are quite a few menu options [Somen noodles arrive in a hurry] that can get you in and out in enough time to catch the curtain." Post-show, Bao Bao (open till 11 p.m.) is a "super fun way" to stretch your evening. But if you're still not convinced, just ask the hard-working and heavy-lifting stage crews who stop by Bao Bao to fuel up for the long night and wind down afterward.



A cocktail at Inkwell Bar in The Press Hotel will add a touch of glamour to your evening of entertainment.

FROM TOP: JOANNE LEE; LEAH BROWN; KARI HERER

CULTURE & COCKTAILS

Heading uptown, just a skip across Congress Street from **Merrill Auditorium**, you'll find the tweedy **Inkwell Bar** within **The Press Hotel**. According to Derek Hunt, the "lively but relaxed lounge-style atmosphere and cozy seating by the fireplace" make the old-school media-themed bar the perfect *mise-en-scène*. Beyond the artistic small plates, patrons will find cocktails to match the evening's theme. For example, "a dramatic and fancy evening calls for a twist on the classic Manhattan, which describes our **Just North Of** drink (rye whiskey, B&B, Luxardo, dry vermouth/bitters)—a reference to our location 312 miles north of Broadway and 42nd." Ahead of a show, don't miss Inkwell's "Off the Record" happy hour (Su.-Th. 4-6 p.m. and 10 p.m.-1 a.m.), with \$5 select local craft beers on draft and wines.

Only a three-minute stroll from Merrill, a leisurely stop at **Dobra Tea** is the perfect way to extend an afternoon matinee or start an evening on a zen note. Swathed in rich hues of burgundy and turquoise with Persian-style rugs and floor-pillow seating, it's "a great space to relax and unwind and the perfect space for conversation with friends or relaxing with the whole fam-



Jimmy Eat World May 9 at Aura.

THE COMEBACK KID

Asylum, Portland's long-standing alternative music venue, has been reincarnated and renamed as **Aura**. On April 27, the newly-minted nightclub will open its doors to the public. "One of our biggest priorities was fixing sight lines," says owner Krista Newman. The result? Tiered seating, a balcony, and expanses of room for over 1,000 attendees in the main stage.

True to its roots, the venue's spring and summer lineup features an eclectic mix of acts, from **Jimmy Eat World** (May 11) to **Frankie Ballard** (June 3) to **Lupe Fiasco** (May 14), and "new genres we haven't touched on yet," according to Newman. A smaller performance space located in the basement will provide a venue for local bands and events.



Golden Dragon Acrobats will perform at Merrill Auditorium on April 6. Why not start the night with a cocktail at the Inkwell Bar in the Press Hotel?

ily," says co-owner Ray Marcotte. (Actors from **Portland Stage** frequently stop by pre-performance to get "into the zone.") Over 100 tea varieties mean everyone will find something to soothe or energize, from chocolate-laced comfort teas (try the "Memories of Prague" made with Black Assam tea mixed with semi-sweet chocolate) to heady and invigorating blends (the "Taste of Kashmir," a mix of green, black, and oolong teas with orange peel, cloves, ginger, and cinnamon). And since no one wants to provoke disapproving sidelong glances with a rumbling tummy, don't leave without a bite of something decadent like a matcha cheesecake, currant scone, or chocolate-drizzled macarons.

SET THE STAGE

If the tickets in your hand are for a performance at **Portland Stage**, the **Little Tap House** is less than a four-minute stroll (six minutes with heels) through the colorful Arts District. With white stucco and exposed brick walls, the rustic-modern locale combines a neighborhood-pub feel with an upscale aesthetic—perfectly suited for an evening of artistic and intellectual stimulation. (It even lured in Bernie Sanders for a post-rally indulgence of fish and chips.)

"The Little Tap House is a cozy nook to hang your hat before or after an event. Feel the warmth of the wood interior and comfort of friends around you while listening to some jamming tunes,"

says Robin Landry. "The beer connoisseur is bound to find a favorite local brew or special one-off style to sip on. If the concert falls on 'date night,' sharing a local beer flight is a romantic way to have an enjoyable tasting experience together." More than just a beer haven, Little Tap House's cocktail creations like the Maple Manhattan (Knob Creek whiskey, Aztec chocolate bitters, Maine maple, sea salt rim) are encore-worthy.

DON'T MISS

Over on the East End, the **St. Lawrence Arts Theater** isn't the only place with a flair for the dramatic. Petite, crimson **Lolita** is a beloved spot for local theatergoers. The small plates menu lends itself to a quick bite pre-performance, and the kitchen is open until 10:30 p.m. for a post-show feast. Stella Hernandez, co-owner and wine director, describes the self-styled "Vinoteca and Asador" as "warm and urban, but decidedly low-key." Cocktails sipped at the zinc bar are a must. Hernandez recommends the **Bijou cocktail** (gin, green Chartreuse, sweet vermouth, orange bitters)—"complex and herbaceous with a lovely, opulent color that is very much about drama."

Not to be outdone, South Portland's **Portland Players** is surrounded by great pre-show spots, including the laid-back **Elsmere BBQ**, with its fascinating auto-garage-chic interior; **David's 388**, with its warm hues and urban-cottage feel; and the bright and airy Italian spot, **Enio's Eatery**. ■

Handmade Quality Craftsmanship...Craftsmen Rebuilding Their Lives

- Jewelry Boxes
- Coffee & End Tables
- Deacon's Benches
- Rocking Horses •Hope Chests
- Children's Toys •Bar Stools
- Cutting Boards •Ship Models
- Birdhouses •Bureaus
- Bookcases •Nightstands
- Jelly Cupboards



MAINE STATE PRISON SHOWROOM



358 Main St., Rte. 1, Thomaston | 207-354-9237

THE GREAT LOST BEAR

MONDAYS AND TUESDAYS ARE
"SHORT" BEER NIGHTS...



...SERVING 24 OZ DRAUGHTS FOR THE PRICE OF A PINT
540 FOREST AVENUE PORTLAND, ME www.greatlostbear.com