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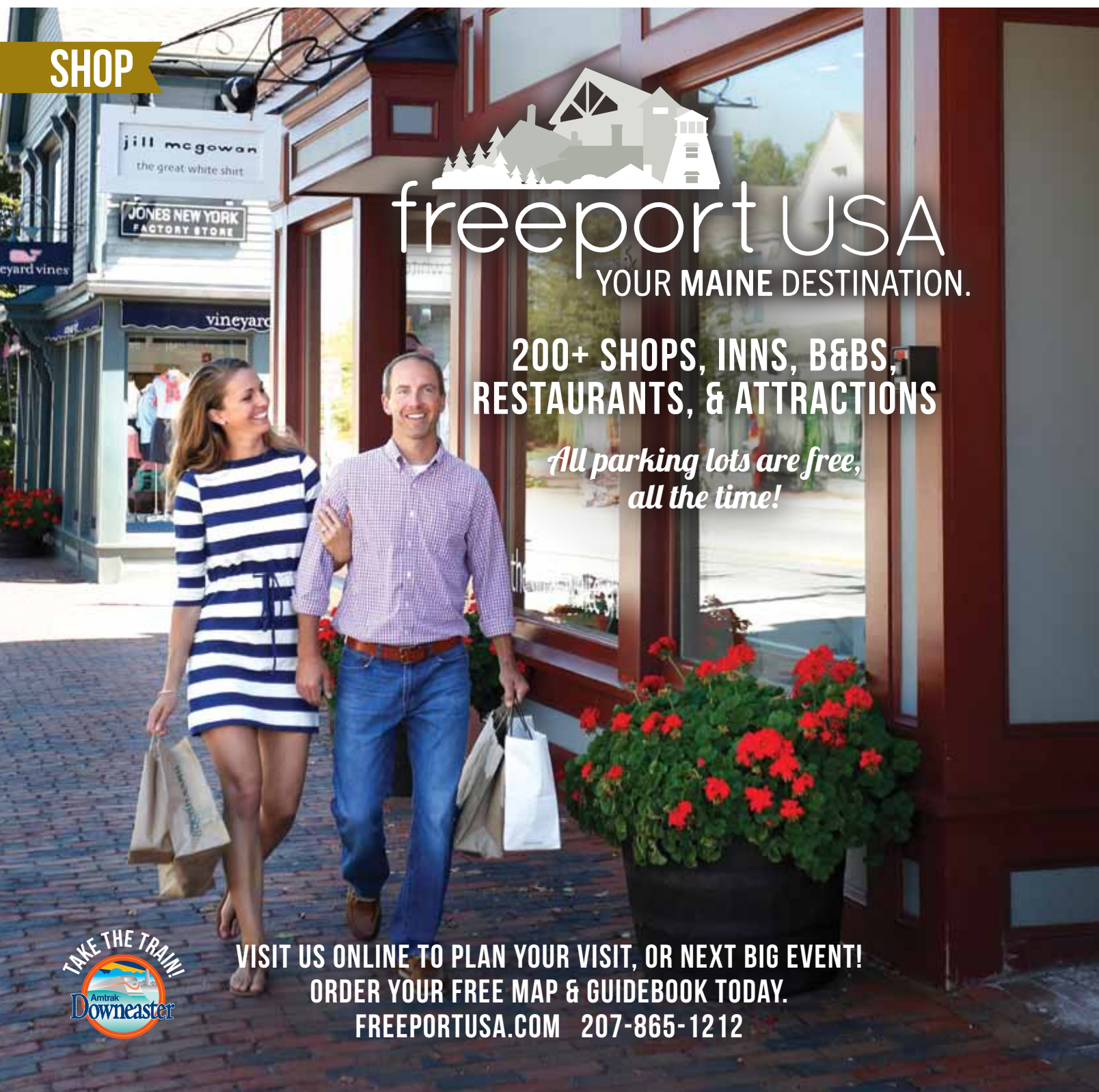
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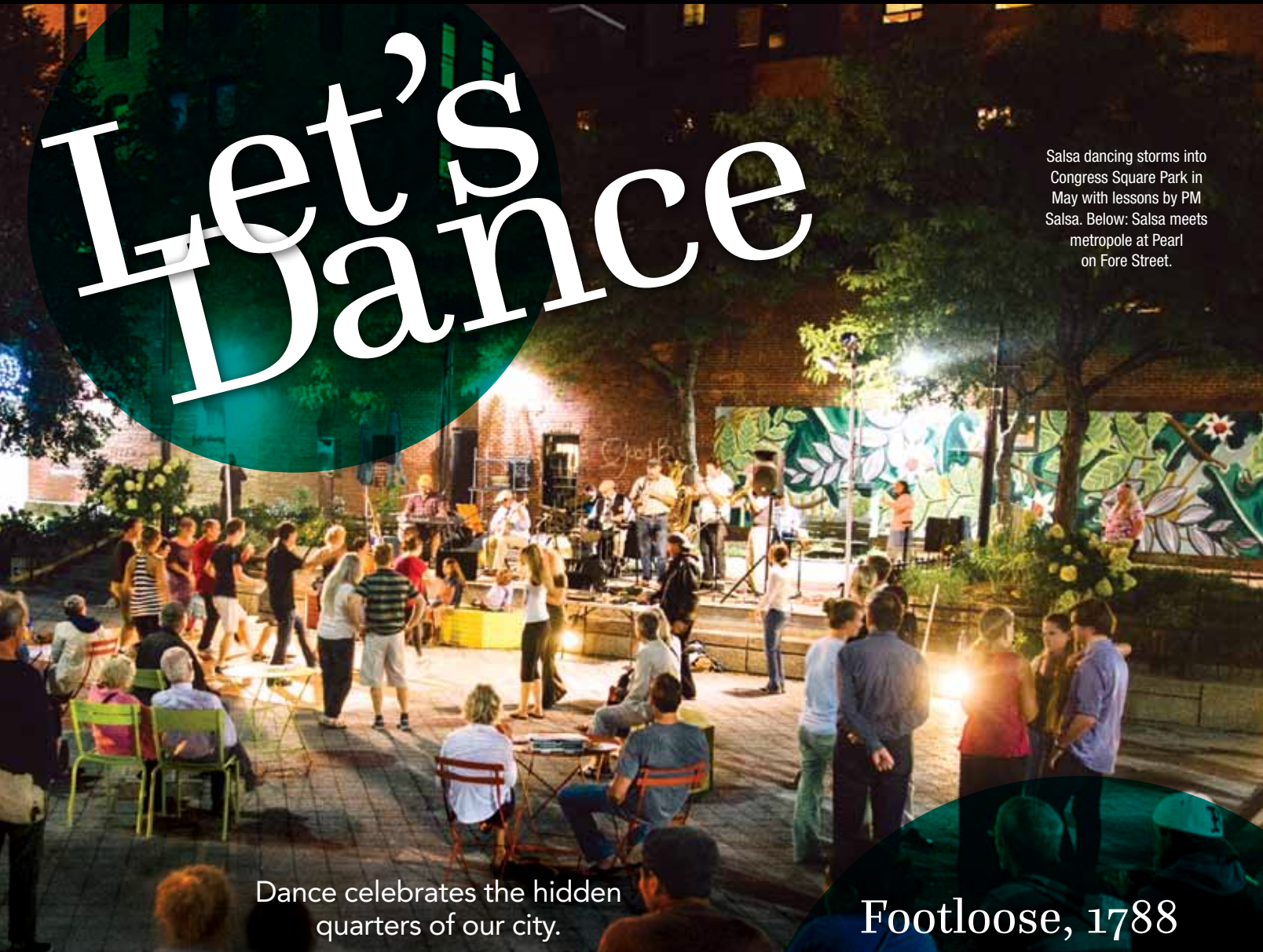
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Let's Dance

Salsa dancing storms into Congress Square Park in May with lessons by PM Salsa. Below: Salsa meets metropole at Pearl on Fore Street.



Dance celebrates the hidden quarters of our city.

BY KAREN HOFREITER

Summer, with its sun dresses and short-sleeve T-shirts, is just around the bend. For most of us, this means it's time to tone those winter-white limbs. But if sweating it out on the treadmill like a hamster on a wheel is as appealing as an iceberg-lettuce diet, dread not. It's possible to get a sizzling workout as tantalizing as a spicy chicken curry (sans calories). Best of all, it doesn't require spandex or sacrificing your lunch hour. This miraculous remedy? Dancing.

If you're conjuring thoughts of nerve-jostling techno beats, epileptic lighting, and sticky neon blue shots and thinking *No thanks*, then relax. This is not the dancing of your teenage youth (although it can be

just as sweaty and exhilarating). A multitude of studios, venues, and groups around Portland offers opportunities to swing, tango, and fox-trot an evening away, with contagious music and adult libations. Two left feet? No problem—



Footloose, 1788

In Portland, dancing has always been a guilty pleasure. We've even punished people for it. On May 1, 1788, after a mass spinning bee (attended by over 100 ladies in finest attire), "an agreeable variety of excellent pieces in psalmody" was performed at Parson Deane's house. Gentlemen were about, taking in the musical performance and more. There certainly should have been dancing. The floor vibrated. Looks were exchanged, and blushes. There was a rumor of tapping toes. But "Dancing was not allowed, as we may learn from the indictment, on record in 1766, against Nathaniel Deering and his wife, John Walte and his wife, and others of the first families, for dancing in a private apartment of Freeman's tavern. The King's attorney, David Wyer, argued the case. They were acquitted on the grounds that it was a very private hop, and not a public dance or ball," according to *A History of New England*, 1881.

old skool

Early Mainers knew how to strut their stuff. To eavesdrop on the exquisite Penobscot Pine Needle Dance, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOBqgKE9bL8>.

many evenings include a pre-social lesson. Single? Not to worry—partners are not required. Not sure it counts as a real workout? Think again—faster dances like swing and salsa can burn up to 500 calories an hour.

Beginners will feel particularly welcome at the Social Dance Parties hosted by **Ballroom Dance Portland** (Avant Dance and Event Center, 865 Spring Street, Westbrook, 756-5427. They meet on the second and last Fridays of the month, with lessons at 7:15 p.m. before dancing from 8-10:30 p.m.; visit ballroomdanceportland.com). Owner Polina Kirillova and Kristin Sutton of Avant Dance and Event Center make certain everyone feels comfortable and has fun.

“Participants can come with or without a

partner,” says Kirillova. “Our teachers are happy to dance with everyone and teach basic steps if someone is completely new to dancing. We do mixers and line dances throughout the evening, which creates a nice, friendly atmosphere, and we play a variety of music, from current hits to oldies and everything in between. This means people get to try out many different dance styles.”

The adjacent lounge is the perfect place to catch your breath and refresh with a cold cocktail. Don’t miss the spring-themed party April 29th. “We’ll wear flowery dresses and play some spring tunes. It makes for a perfect date night!”

For those looking for some kick-up-your-heels, high-energy fun (super-swingy skirts and tailored vests welcome), **Portland Swing Project’s** STOMP nights (Wednesday lessons at 7 p.m. are followed by dance 7:30-9 p.m. at Acoustic Artisans, 594 Congress Street, Portland; Friday lessons are at 7:30 p.m., with dance 8-10 p.m. at Maine Ballroom, 614 Congress Street,



Portland. See portlandswingproject.com for (schedule) guarantee to get the heart racing with toe-tapping live and DJ music from the Roaring Twenties to today.

For a sultry, steamy evening of hip-swinging and attitude, check out the Latin dances also held at **Avant Dance and Event Center** in Westbrook (avantmaine.com, third Saturday of the month, 8 p.m.-midnight) with a one-hour pre-dance lesson and cash bar.

Those wanting to satisfy a worked-up appetite should head to **Salvage BBQ** for an

COURTESY PHOTO

evening of anything from tango to zydeco rhythms and a side of outrageously good barbecue (919 Congress Street, Portland, April 8, 8:30-11:30 p.m.—see emmaholder.com for schedule). If you find yourself getting hooked on “Havana nights” (a very real possibility), there’s more to be found at **Port Tango’s** Milonga dances (see porttango.com for monthly calendar).

The next Port Tango dance is April 16 at Mayo Street Arts (10 Mayo Street, Portland; mayostreetarts.org). Take a lesson at 8:15 p.m., and then dance until midnight. ■

Other spots around Portland offering social dances include **Maplewood Dance Center** (383 Warren Avenue, Portland, 878-0584, Saturday evenings, www.maplewooddancecenter.com for details); **Aquarius Ballroom Dance Studios** (62B Forest Avenue, Portland, 671-7644, Saturday dance parties; www.aquariusballroomdance.com); **Bright Star World Dance** (108 High St., Portland, 370-5830; brightstarworlddance.com); **Hustle and Flow Studio** (155 Brackett St., Portland, 632-4789; hustleflow.com); and the Maine page of the online listing called **HaveToDance.com/danceme**.

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