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# Wheels of a Dream

**Ogunquit Playhouse** showcases the edgy Broadway hit *Ragtime* as a sign of these times.

BY OLIVIA GUNN

**O**NCE UPON A TIME, summer theater was dismissed for rarely taking risks. This year, race, immigration, and class issues all take center stage at **Ogunquit Playhouse** in *Ragtime: The Musical*, a story spanning 10 years of the early 20th century as the United States prepares to enter World War I. Three families, three different worlds, all-American.

To better understand our national uneasiness in 2017, “we must examine how our country came together,” says artistic director **Brad Kenney**. “*Ragtime* shows the struggle laid out bare on the stage.”

Based on the 1975 novel by E.L. Doctorow, the musical first premiered at

the Ford Centre for the Performing Arts in Toronto in 1996 before making its way to L.A. and finally to Broadway in 1998. The show is epic in its scope. Written by four-time Tony Award-winner and Pulitzer Prize-nominee Terrence McNally, *Ragtime* follows the lives of three central characters from three very different backgrounds: Mother, an upper-class WASP from New Rochelle; Coalhouse Walker Jr., a black Harlem musician; and Tetah, a Jewish immigrant from Eastern Europe.

Their lives merge in a force, generating one sweeping, tragic, triumphant version of the American tale. The story was produced in cinematic form in 1981, garnering a slew of Academy Award nominations.

**Tom Mikotowicz**, au-

thor and Professor of Theatre at the University of Maine, says it’s multiculturalism that makes shows like *Ragtime: The Musical* and the recent hit *Hamilton* so strikingly relevant today. “That is a real post-modern concept. Thirty years ago on Broadway, you weren’t seeing shows like this. In *Hamilton*, for example, the cast would have been made up of white males. That clash, using that post-modern casting concept, points out the discrepancies in our culture.”

Doctorow, an Army veteran who once stated his politics were “Biblical: you shouldn’t murder, you shouldn’t steal,” couldn’t avoid reflections on the Vietnam War while writing *Ragtime* in the 1970s. So while it seems there’s no coincidence that Ogunquit Playhouse has chosen to take on the show now,

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## THEATER GUIDE

to feel more recent tensions and reverberations, Kenney is a deeper pattern-spotter. He's been mulling over the idea of presenting *Ragtime* in Maine "for over five years."

Still, particularly this summer, "theater has a responsibility to give back to the community and culture," says Kenney. "Members of my own immediate family feel very differently about current affairs."

From the exploits of Harry Houdini to a functioning Ford Model T on stage, *Ragtime* isn't a walk in the park production-wise. "It's a lot to take on when you

know you have foot the bill,"

Kenney says. "But we knew that regardless of how people feel about it politically, we must examine how this country came together and what we are.

The president is the lead story every single day of our lives in this country. Most of our conversations harken back to



*Always...  
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these themes. I don't think there is a better piece that shows it...and it's done in a fantastic Broadway fashion."

Last summer, the theater performed *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, another epic undertaking. But it wasn't just the striking visuals and performances that hit audiences at their core.

"*Hunchback*, though it was based on the Disney version, takes more from the Victor Hugo novel," a much darker vision, explains Kenney. Charles Laughton's stand-out performance as Quasimodo in the 1939 film comes to mind. "In *Hunchback*, one of the strongest themes is racial hatred." When it was staged last summer, "we were headed toward the [presidential] election. Audiences were sitting there with tears in their eyes." For all its distance and antiquity, *Hunchback* "shocked people. It was more than they expected." Cue *Ragtime*. "The stakes don't get higher for people trying to survive, live in a new country, or keep their family together."



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## THEATER GUIDE

For the past 85 seasons, Ogunquit Playhouse has brought works to its stage that expose audiences to a life beyond their own. In 2014, it was recognized for exceptional work with a listing on the National Register of Historic Places that touches on its cultural impact and role as one of the bastions of the small theater resurgence.

Is art catching up with real life, or is it the other way around? "People are gravitating out of the cities, L.A., Hollywood, and New York. Professional productions are moving into different regions." This August, they'll give us the stories of a Harlem musician, a Jewish immigrant, and a sheltered, upper-class housewife. Three varied American stories merge into one message of hope. ■

## SUMMER THEATER PREVIEW

**Celebration Barn Theater**, 190 Stock Farm Rd., South Paris. Mike Miclon's *The Early Evening Show*, first Saturday in Jun., Jul., Aug., Sept. & Oct. 743-8452

**Children's Museum & Theater of Maine**, 142 Free St., Portland. Stage stories, daily. May: *Pet Month*; floral arrangements with artist Jen Richardson-Greene, May 18-28. 828-1234

**Cold Comfort Theater**, see website for Belfast locations. *Crimes of the Heart* or *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Jul. 6-9; *The Mikado*, Aug. 3-6. 930-7244

**City Theater in Biddeford**, 205 Main St. *Steel Magnolias*, May 12-21; *Wizard of Oz*, Jul. 21-Aug. 6. 282-0849

**Deertrees Theater**, 156 Deertrees Rd., Harrison. *Last Train to Nibroc*, Jul. 7-Aug. 18; *Indoor/Outdoor*, Jul. 15-Aug. 3. 583-6747


**Fenix Theatre Company**, at Deering Oaks Park, Portland. *Three Sisters*, Jul. 13-Aug. 5. 400-6223

**Freeport Community Players**, 30 Freeport Performing Arts Center, Holbrook St., Freeport. *Seussical*, Jul. 20-30; *The Servant of Two Masters*, Sept. 14-Oct. 1. 865-2220

**Good Theater & St. Lawrence Arts**, 76 Congress St., Portland. Vivid Motion's *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, May 12-14; *The Meatball Chronicles*, May 17-21. 885-5883

**Hackmatack Playhouse**, 538 Route 9, Berwick. *She Loves Me*, Jun. 16-Jul. 1; *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story*, Jul. 5-22; *Steel Magnolias*, Jul. 26-Aug. 12; *The Fantasticks*, Aug. 16-Sept. 2. 698-1807





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**Heartwood Regional Theater Company**, Lincoln Academy, Newcastle. *Into the Woods*, Jul. 13-22; Summer Camp, Jun. 26-Jul. 6. 563-1373

**Gaslight Theater**, Winthrop St., Hallowell. *Noises Off*, Jun. 16-25; *Baskerville*, Aug. 18-27. 626-3698

**Lakewood Theater**, 75 Theater Rd., Madison. *Arsenic and Old Lace*, May 25-Jun. 3; *Some Sweet Day*, Jun. 8-17; *Shout! The Mod Musical*, Jun. 22-Jul. 1; *Those Crazy Ladies in the House on the Corner*, Jul. 6-15; *Avenue Q*, Jul. 20-Jul. 29; *The Savannah Sipping Society*, Aug. 3-12; *Bullets Over Broadway*, Aug. 17-26; *Baskerville*, Sept. 1-9; *A Comedy of Tenors*, Sept. 14-23. 474-7176

**Maine State Ballet Theater**, 348 U.S. Rte. 1, Falmouth. Spring Recital, May 19-20; *Don Quixote*, Aug. 10-19. 781-7672

**Maine State Music Theatre**, Pickard Theater, 1 Bath Rd., Brunswick. *Always Patsy Cline*, June 7-24; *Sleeping Beauty*, June 14-17; *Guys and Dolls*, Jun. 28-Jul. 15; *Grease*, Jul. 19-Aug. 5; *Newsies*, Aug. 9-26; *Alice in Wonderland*, Aug. 21. 725-8769

**Merrill Auditorium**, 20 Myrtle St., Portland. *Pippin*, May 13; *Riverdance*, May 31-Jun. 1. 842-0800

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**Ogunquit Playhouse**, 10 Main St., Ogunquit.  
*Mamma Mia!*, May 17-Jul. 1; *Bullets Over Broadway*, Jul. 5-29; *Ragtime*, Aug. 2-26;  
*Heartbreak Hotel*, Aug. 30-Sept. 30; *From Here to Eternity*, Oct. 4-29. 646-5511

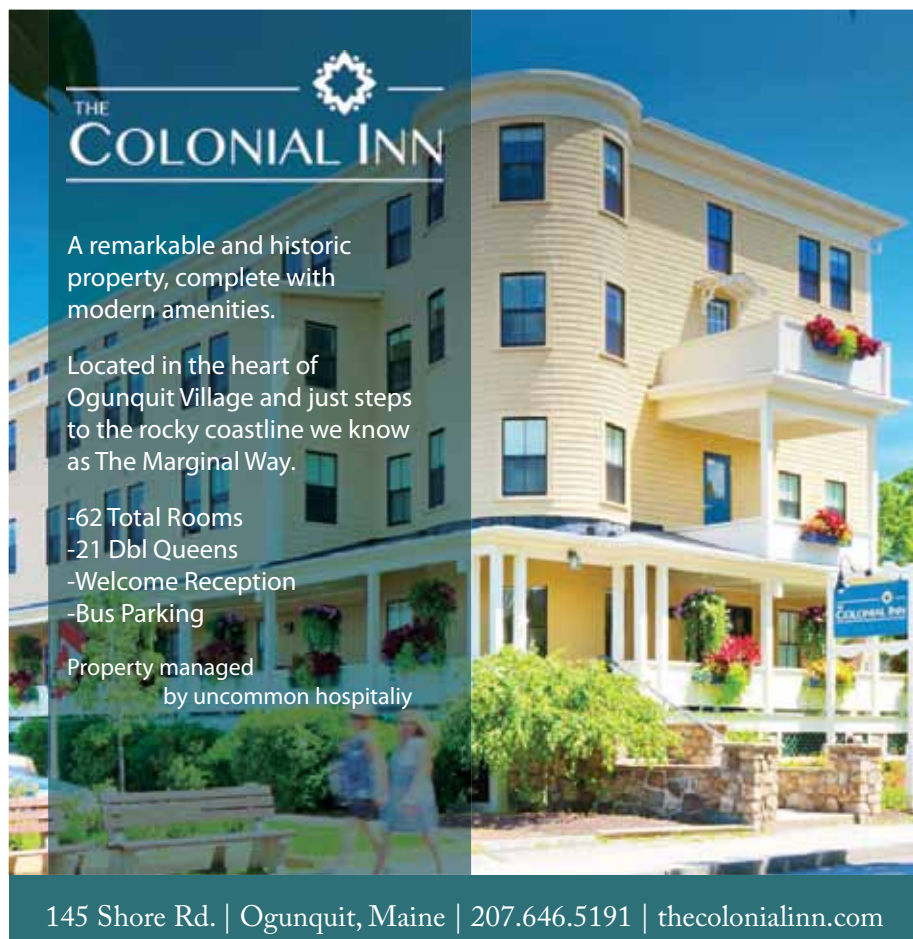
**Penobscot Theatre Company**, Bangor Opera House, 131 Main St. *I Loved, I Lost, I Made Spaghetti*, through May 14; *The Full Monty*, Jun. 15-Jul. 9. 942-3333

**Portland Stage**, 25 Forest Ave. *Disgraced*, May 2-21. 774-0465

**Public Theatre**, 31 Maple St., Lewiston. *Ripcord*, May 5-14; *Chickens and Crocodiles: Silly Stories for a Child's Imagination*, May 21. 782-3200

**Schoolhouse Arts Center**, 16 Richville Rd., Standish. *Disney's Mulan Jr.*, May 19-21; *Billy Goes to War*, Jun. 9-11; *Peter Pan*, Jul. 13-30; *Disney Before Dark KIDS*, Aug. 4-6; *Once Upon This Island*, Aug. 18-20; *Dracula*, Sept. 19-Oct. 15. 642-3743

**Theater at Monmouth**, 796 Main St., Monmouth. *My Father's Dragon*, Jun. 24-Aug. 17; *Three Days of Rain*, Jul. 1-Aug. 18; *The Learned Ladies*, Jul. 6-Aug. 20; *Macbeth*, Jul. 13-Aug. 18; *Othello*, Jul. 20-Aug. 19; *Red Velvet*, Jul. 27-Aug. 17; *Peter and the Starcatcher*, Sept. 14-24. 933-9999



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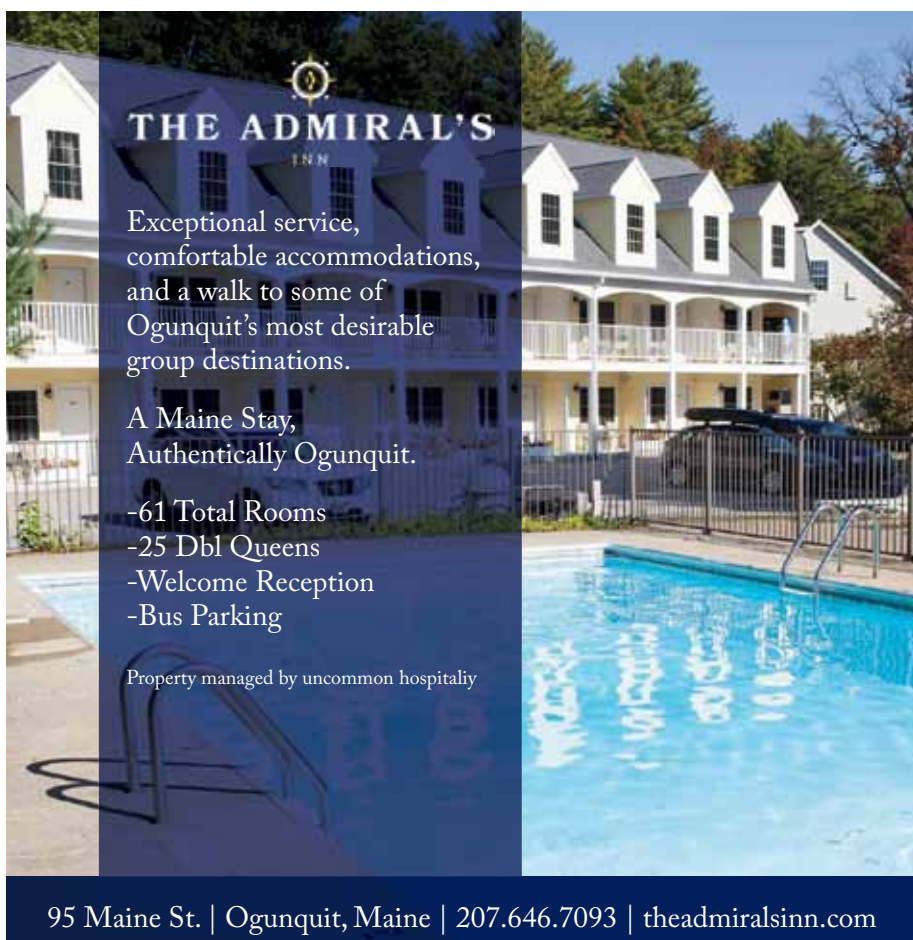
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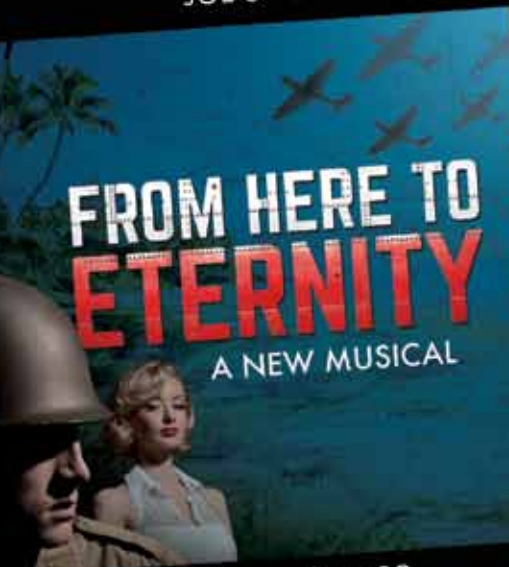
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## A night with Lupè

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## Wine & Dine

Meet Portland's hippest chefs at **Toast on the Coast**, a benefit event at the scenic Ocean Gateway on May 11. Learn about pairings, refine your palate, or simply enjoy the exquisite samples. Proceeds go to Veterans Count Maine. 828-0754



## Let's go fly a kite.

Hosted by South Portland Historical Society, the **Bug Light Park Kite Festival** will feature local vendors, on-hand kite experts, and tours of the Bug Light Tower. Families can cast their own kites high into the sky or simply sit back and enjoy the spectacle between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. on Saturday, May 20. 767-7299



## THEATER

**City Theater**, 205 Main St., Biddeford. *Steel Magnolias*, May 12-21; *Wizard of Oz*, Jul. 21-Aug. 6. 282-0849

**Lyric Music Theater**, 176 Sawyer St., South Portland. *Catch Me If You Can*, Jun 2-18. 799-1421

**Mad Horse Theater**, 24 Mosher St., South Portland. *Mr. Burns, a Post-Electric Play*, May 4-21. 747-4148

**Maine State Ballet Theater**, 348 U.S. Rte. 1, Falmouth. Spring Recital 2017, May 19-20. 781-7672

**Portland Ballet**, at Westbrook Performing Arts Center, 471 Stroudwater St., Westbrook. *Swan Lake Act II*, Apr. 28-29. 772-9671

**Portland Ovation**, 50 Monument Sq. *Pippin Broadway National Tour*, May 13. 842-0800

**Portland Players**, 420 Cottage Rd., South Portland. *Rock of Ages*, May 19-Jun. 4. 799-7337

**Portland Stage Company**, 25 Forest Ave. *Play Me A Story*, every Saturday; *Disgraced* by Ayad Akhtar, May 2-21. 774-0645

**Public Theater**, 31 Maple St., Lewiston. *Ripcord* by Norm Foster, May 5-24. 782-3200

**Schoolhouse Arts Center**, 16 Richville Rd., Standish. *Disney's Mulan Jr.*, May 19-21; *Peter Pan*, Jul. 13-30. 642-3743

**Waterville Opera House**, 93 Main St. 3rd Fl., Waterville. *Der Rosenkavalier*, May 13. 873-7000

## GALLERIES

**Bates College Museum of Art**, Olin Arts Center, 75 Russell St., Lewiston. Kate Gilmore: *In Your Way*, Jun. 9-Oct. 7. 786-6158

**Bowdoin College Museum of Art**, 1 Bath Rd., Brunswick. *Modern Medieval: Materiality and Spirituality in German Expressionism*, through Jun. 4. 725-3275

**Center for Maine Contemporary Arts**, 21 Winter Street, Rockland. David Driskell, *Renewal and Form*, through May 11; Mark Wethli, *Piper Club*, through May 14; Sam Cady, *Parts of the Whole*, through May 21. 701-5005

**Colby College Museum of Art**, 5600 Mayflower Hill Dr., Waterville. No Limits: Zao Wou-Ki, through Jun. 4; Marsden Hartley's Maine, through Nov. 12; Brand-New & Terrific: Alex Katz in the 1950s, through Aug. 6; Graphic Matters: George Bellows & World War I, through Sept. 3. 859-5600

**Farnsworth Art Museum**, 16 Museum St., Rockland. *American Treasures From the Farnsworth*, through Oct. 29; *Celebrating Maine*, Apr. 5-Oct. 29; *Andrew Wyeth at 100*, through Dec. 31. 596-6457

**First Friday Art Walk**, downtown Portland. Visit local galleries, studios, and museums. May 5.





## She Sings

Mary Fahl, star of mid-90s alternative pop group, October Project, will captivate audiences at One Longfellow Square on May 19. Tickets are \$28 in advance or \$33 on the day. 761-1757

## Tasty Delight

Fork Food Lab welcomes hungry foodies to meet its members and sample their wares at the May Market on May 13. Open 11 a.m.-3 p.m., there will be a cash bar and plenty of culinary inspiration for your summer meals. Free admission. 558-0881



**Greenhut Galleries,** 146 Middle St., Portland. William Irvine and Nancy Morgan Barnes exhibition, May 4-27. 772-2693

**Maine Historical Society,** 489 Congress St. World War I and the Maine Experience, May 10; Longfellow's Cocktail Party & Magical History Tour, May 12-13. 774-1822

**Maine Maritime Museum,** 234 Washington St., Bath. Through These Gates: Maine Shipyard Photography 1858-2016, through Sept. 24; See the Light: the Preservation of Midcoast Maine Lighthouses, May 27-Oct. 22. 443-1416

**Portland Museum of Art,** 7 Congress Sq., Portland. The Mistress and the Muse, through June 4; Artist's Choice: Photographs from the Judy Glickman Lauder collection, through May 29. 775-6148

## MUSIC

**Blue,** 650 Congress St. Irish Sessions, every Wednesday. Fat Knuckle Freddy, May 12; The Library Band, May 19; SoJoy, May 27. 774-4111.

**Empire,** 575 Congress St. Marbin, May 6; Jay Bragg, May 19. 747-5063

**Maine Academy of Modern Music,** 125 Pre-sumpscot St. The Kids are All Right ft. Namory Keita, May 6; 2017 MAMM Slam: Finals, May 13; All Roads Music Festival, May 20; 899-3433

**Merrill Auditorium,** 20 Myrtle St. Tony Bennett, May 11; Gordon Lightfoot, May 17; Riverdance, presented by Roberts Group Live. 842-0800

**One Longfellow Square,** 181 State St. John Craigie with Joel Thetford, May 7; Eric Bettencourt, May 12; Caroline Spence & Connor Jarvey, May 18; Kristin Andreassen, May 27. 761-1757



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**Port City Music Hall**, 504 Congress St. Jamestown Revival, May 3; The Dustbowl Revival, May 5; Real Estate, May 7; The Record Company, May 16; The Wind and The Wave, May 19; Buffalo Tom, May 25; The Orwells, May 30. 956-6000

**Portland House of Music and Entertainment**, 57 Temple St. Old Salt Union, May 3; Pink Talking Fish, May 12 & 13; The London Souls, May 18; Live Music Mon. through Sat. 805-0134

**Portland Symphony Orchestra**, 20 Myrtle St. Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique*, May 16. 842-0800

**Portland Ovations**, Merrill Auditorium 20 Myrtle St. Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in a Play!", May 7; "Pippin", May 13. 842-0800

**Space Gallery**, 538 Congress Street. Get Ready Weekly, May 1; Screaming

Females, May 6; Xasthur with Johanna Warren and Dwell in Moonblood, May 23. 828-5600

**State Theatre**, 609 Congress St. Kris Kristoferson, May 4; Twiddle, May 6; Ryan Adams, May 7; Mastodon with Eagles of Death Metal & Russian Circles, May 9; Suicide Girls: Blackheart Burlesque, May 19; Flogging Molly, May 27. 956-6000

**Stone Mountain Arts Center**, 695 Dug Way Rd. Del McCoury Band, May 5; The Wailin' Jennys, May 9; Susan Werner, May 12; Alejandro Escovedo, May 19; The Rough & Tumble, May 26; Tom Snow Quartet, May 27; Chris Thomas King, May 28. 935-7292

**Waterville Opera House**, 93 Main St. 3rd Fl., Waterville. Biscuit, May 12; Blue Öyster Cult, May 25; The Met: Der Rosenkavalier, May 27; 873-7000



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**Craft Beer Cellar**, 111 Commercial St. Craft beer tasting every Fri. 956-7322

**Leroux Kitchen**, Portland. Free wine tastings on the 2nd Saturday of each month, 1-3 p.m. 553-7665,

**Local Sprouts**, 649 Congress St., Portland. Music Brunch with Sean Mencher and friends, every Sun.

**Lolita Vinoteca + Asador**, 90 Congress St., Portland. Tapas Mondays, every Mon. 3:30-10:30; wines paired with small plates. 775-5652

**Otherside Delicatessen**, 164 Veranda St. Monthly wine tastings. 761-9650

**Rosemont Markets**, Portland and Yarmouth. Two to three free tastings each month on Fridays. 774-8129

**Sweetgrass Farm Old Port Tasting Room**, 324 Fore St. Tasting bar is open year-round for Maine-

## COMEDY

**Andy's Old Port Pub**, 94 Commercial St. Nick Crowley, Kevin Neales, & Krystal Kamenides, May 5. 874-ANDY

**Community Television Network**, 516 Congress St. Portland Playback Theater, the first Friday of every month. 775-2900

**Johnson Hall**, 280 Water St., Gardiner. Maine Event Comedy, May 13. 582-7144

**Lincolns**, 36 Market St. Laugh Shack comedy every Thursday.

**Somerset Abbey**, 98 Main St., Madison. Mark Turcotte

& Maine Event Comedy, May 12. 696-5800

**State Theatre**, 609 Congress St. John Mulaney: Kid Gorgeous, May 10. 956-6000

**Stone Mountain Arts Center**, 695 Dug Way Rd., Brownfield. Bob Marley, May 18th. 935-7292

## TASTY EVENTS

**Aurora Provisions**, 64 Pine St. Two to three free tastings each month on Tuesdays. 871-9060

**Browne Trading Market**, Portland. Regular wine tastings, through June. 775-7560

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**PortFringe**, throughout the Old Port. A week-long fringe festival, featuring shows and performances by local artists and theater companies, Jun. 17-24.

**Print: A Bookstore**, 273 Congress St. Best-selling authors Jacqueline Sheehan, Randy Susan Meyers, and Ellen Meeropol present their latest works, May 16. 536-4778

**Riverdance**, Merrill Auditorium 20 Myrtle St. An innovative and exciting blend of Irish dance, music, and song, May 31. 842-0800

**Sunday River**, Sunday River Rd., Newry. Pond-A-Palooza, Apr. 8; The Great Tailgate, Apr. 15; Ski Maynia, May 1. 800-542-2754

—Compiled by Willis Kuelthau

To submit your own event listing, visit: [portlandmonthly.com/portmag/submit-an-event/](http://portlandmonthly.com/portmag/submit-an-event/)

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