

Let Us ENTERTAIN YOU



The Harlem Gospel Choir at Lebanon Opera House.



Old playbills from Portsmouth Music Hall.

By Kim Windyka

Hollywood, Broadway, Vegas ... New Hampshire? Sure, the Granite State may look slightly out of place amongst these star-studded locales, but its unique and historic venues create the kind of entertainment experience that you'd be hard-pressed to find anywhere else.

And The Band Played On... Whether you've sold your soul to rock & roll, live and die by country western or flip out over folk music, New Hampshire has got you covered. The **Lebanon Opera House** has served as a movie theater and a stage for community productions in the past, but today, it mostly plays host to musical acts that span all genres, from the Harlem Gospel Choir to singer/songwriter Martin Sexton. While there aren't any slot machines to speak of at the **Hampton Beach Casino Ballroom** (www.casinoballroom.com), you can catch national rock, pop and country acts like Indigo Girls, The Beach Boys and George Clinton & Parliament Funkadelic, as well as

It couldn't hurt to add some drama to your life, right?



Clockwise from above left: Manchester's Palace Theatre; The Music Hall in Portsmouth; Portsmouth Music Hall dancers.

the occasional stand-up comedian at this popular beachside venue, originally established in 1899 as a multi-purpose recreation and entertainment facility. Kid, teen and family-friendly shows are a specialty of Plaistow's **The Sad Café** (www.thesadcafe.com), which provides a stage for up-and-coming area bands and offers arts enrichment programs for the region's youth.

Curtain Call It couldn't hurt to add some drama to your life, right? Fortunately, the state's full of spots to see stage shows. **The Music Hall** in Portsmouth (www.themusichall.org), the oldest theater in the state and 14th oldest in the country (and newly renovated), does host musical guests from time to time, but has more recently presented theater for both kids and adults, book readings and dance companies. Aside from staging adaptations of popular productions like "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change" and "High School Musical" with local talent, Manchester's **Palace Theatre** (www.palacetheatre.org) also runs two youth theater companies and hosts variety shows. In its 75th year, the **Peterborough Players** (www.peterboroughplayers.org) are fittingly located in the town upon which Thornton Wilder's famed "Our Town" was based, and its first local staging took place here. Today, the companies put on 10 shows annually in a 200-seat theater. **The Barnstormers** (www.barnstormerstheatre.org), a traditional summer stock theater in Tamworth,

produces one show a week during the season – last year's lineup included "Driving Miss Daisy" and "Babes In Arms." In store this year is the classic "Romeo and Juliet" and "The Fantasticks." If you're in the Concord area, **The Capitol Center for the Arts** (www.ccanh.com) presents Broadway musicals, comedians and even symphony orchestras.

Lights! Camera! Action! Trade in the massive multiplexes for some authentic theaters that bring back the magic of the motion picture. Built in 1886, the intimate **Wilton Town Hall Theatre** (www.wiltontownhalltheatre.com) shows independent art-house films rather than big blockbusters in one of two theaters. One was originally used for vaudeville performers and silent movies, and another, "The Screening Room," was a changing area for the performers. Over in Keene, **The Colonial Theatre** (www.thecolonial.org) has hosted famous figures like Amelia Earhart and Thornton Wilder since it opened in 1924, and now runs both cult-classic and current movies, as well as theatrical productions. ◇



AT THE DRIVE IN

A family favorite since the good old days, the drive-in movie theater is practically an endangered species. Luckily, New Hampshire is home to three that are still reeling us in.

MILFORD DRIVE-IN THEATER, www.milforddrivein.com

This drive-in, in operation since 1958, has two screens showing double features. And don't worry about those old-fashioned door-mounted speakers – Milford broadcasts its movies on a local FM radio station. If the kids get bored with the flicks, there's even an on-site playground to entertain them.

WEIRS DRIVE-IN THEATER, www.weirsbeach.net/drivein.html

Cool off after a day at the beach and head over to this four-screen theater which holds the title of largest drive-in in New Hampshire. Established in 1949, it's situated nearby the Weirs Beach Water Slide and Volcano mini-golf course.

NORTHFIELD DRIVE-IN www.northfielddrivein.com

Talk about being two (or three) places at once: This family-owned and -operated drive-in has the distinction of being located right on the New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Vermont state lines. Another claim to fame: It was featured in the 1999 film *The Cider House Rules*.

