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# Adventurous VOWS

Spirited couples, kick off your wedding with a jolt of **adrenaline**.

BY OLIVIA GUNN KOTSISHEVSKAYA

WHEN MOST BRIDES are undergoing primp and care with three or four bridesmaids and an anxious mother pulling, plucking, and combing, Tera Holtz slips into her wedding dress inside a Baxter State Park outhouse. Luckily, “it’s pretty clean and doesn’t smell too bad.” Clearly, this is no blushing bride. She and her groom, Andy, have just hiked the three miles to Chimney Pond with a minister they’ve



## A Union of Souls

Experience the ancient customs and moving traditions of the Wabanaki wedding ceremony.

BY MAULIAN DANA

Wabanaki people of Maine—the Penobscot Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe, Maliseet and Micmac Bands—have distinct and long-held wedding customs. Over time, many Indigenous people converted to Christian religions. These weddings are often held in churches but combine elements of authentic customs. Some of us have completely traditional ceremonies held outside or at sacred places, led by spiritual leaders.

An ancient ceremony involves laying a blanket across the shoulders of the couple, who then performs a dance with other members of the tribe to a specific song written for the occasion. The dance is less commonly seen these days, but we still often celebrate the blanket ceremony, along with Indigenous songs, language, prayer, and smudging to bless the union. Weddings are another instance in which Indigenous people walk a line between two worlds. It's a special day for celebrating with loved ones and nurturing our heritage.



just met and two photographers to offer proof to friends and family.

Tera and Andy personify the newlyweds who are out to collect experiences, not just wedding gifts. The Wisconsin couple started their adventure with a cross-country trip with Maine and marriage as the destination. They'd visited here a year before with friends and "always dreamed of making it back," Tera says. "Neither of us wanted to do the standard wedding. Who needs the frustrations?" Instead, it was time for some fresh air. "We decided that an elopement was best for us." For a couple who defines themselves with

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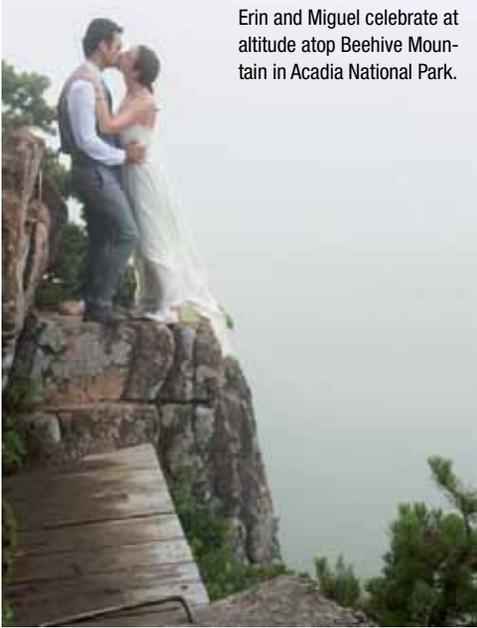


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Erin and Miguel celebrate at altitude atop Beehive Mountain in Acadia National Park.

the outdoors, this ceremony was only natural. Andy did the research, eventually choosing Chimney Pond with the hopes of getting some fishing in during the trip. But there were other logistics to consider. Because the two are from out of state, their officiant had to be either a minister or a judge. "We

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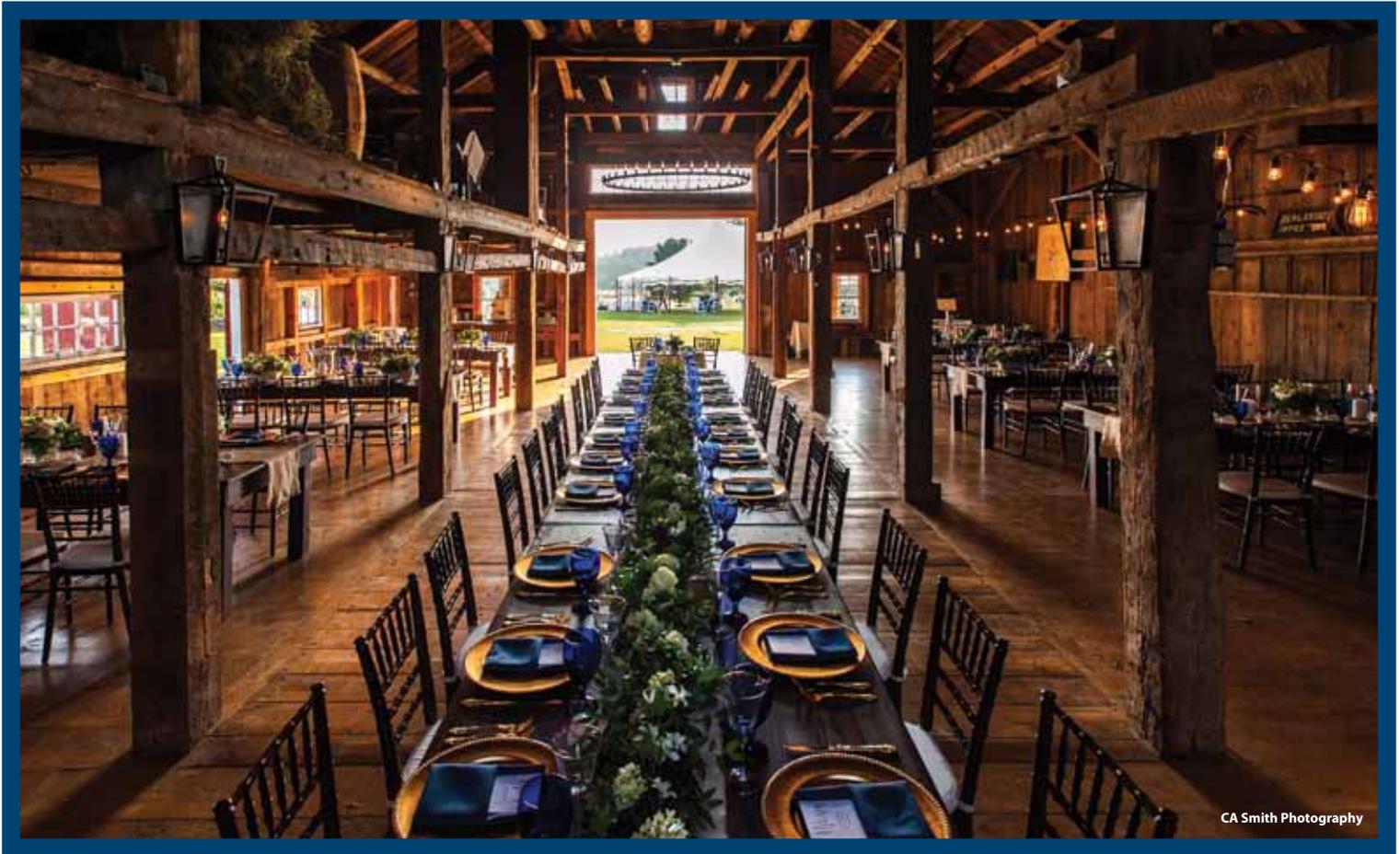
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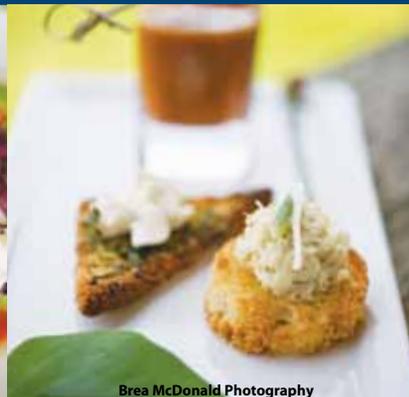
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knew it would have to be someone who'd be willing and able to hike with us, and, well, some priests are a little out of shape!" Tera says. Luckily, one of the wedding planners bumped into a minister at the gym and connected the three. Ben Greene, the fearless pastor at United Baptist in Island Falls, has accompanied the couple on the biggest hike of their lives.

Cradled by Mt. Katahdin, Maine's highest mountain, Tera and Andy read their vows in the warm, high winds. Reflections of the mountain range and greenery provide the backdrop a wedding photographer dreams of. The moment is captured by Keith Tharp and Kate Harris, an adventure photography team from Kittery. "These adventurous couples are often very aware of why they're getting married and having a wedding" in a geographically astonishing setting, says Keith. "It's about coming together with friends and family to celebrate their love very specifically, rather than the idea of a giant party to broadcast their status. They're in line with the very principle reasons for getting married." Imagine your reception conducted at the edge of the Universe.

**SUCH GREAT HEIGHTS**

Maybe granola on your wedding day isn't your idea of an adventure and you've got your sights set higher. Damn Yankee Balloons in Lewiston hosts hot-air balloon rides for ceremonies, wedding receptions, and engagements. In the 40 years Derald and Joy Young have been in business, they've dealt with a fair share of "very nervous young men." Though couples have chosen to conduct ceremonies at 3,000 feet, Joy says engagements are more popular. "There's so much pressure to come up with a unique proposal," she says. "We offer private romantic flights, but shared flights are usually better. You're with other people-witnesses-and they celebrate with you." Because hot-air balloon rides schedule around the gusts and caprices of the weather, another option is to have tethered flights. Often couples will take a private flight after the ceremony, then make the balloon available to guests. Now that's a party favor.

**RIVERS OF LOVE**

Marvin Gaye said it best: "Ain't no mountain high enough, ain't no valley low enough, ain't no river wide enough..." And Maine's natural terrain certainly offers endless options for couples willing to hike, fly, or row

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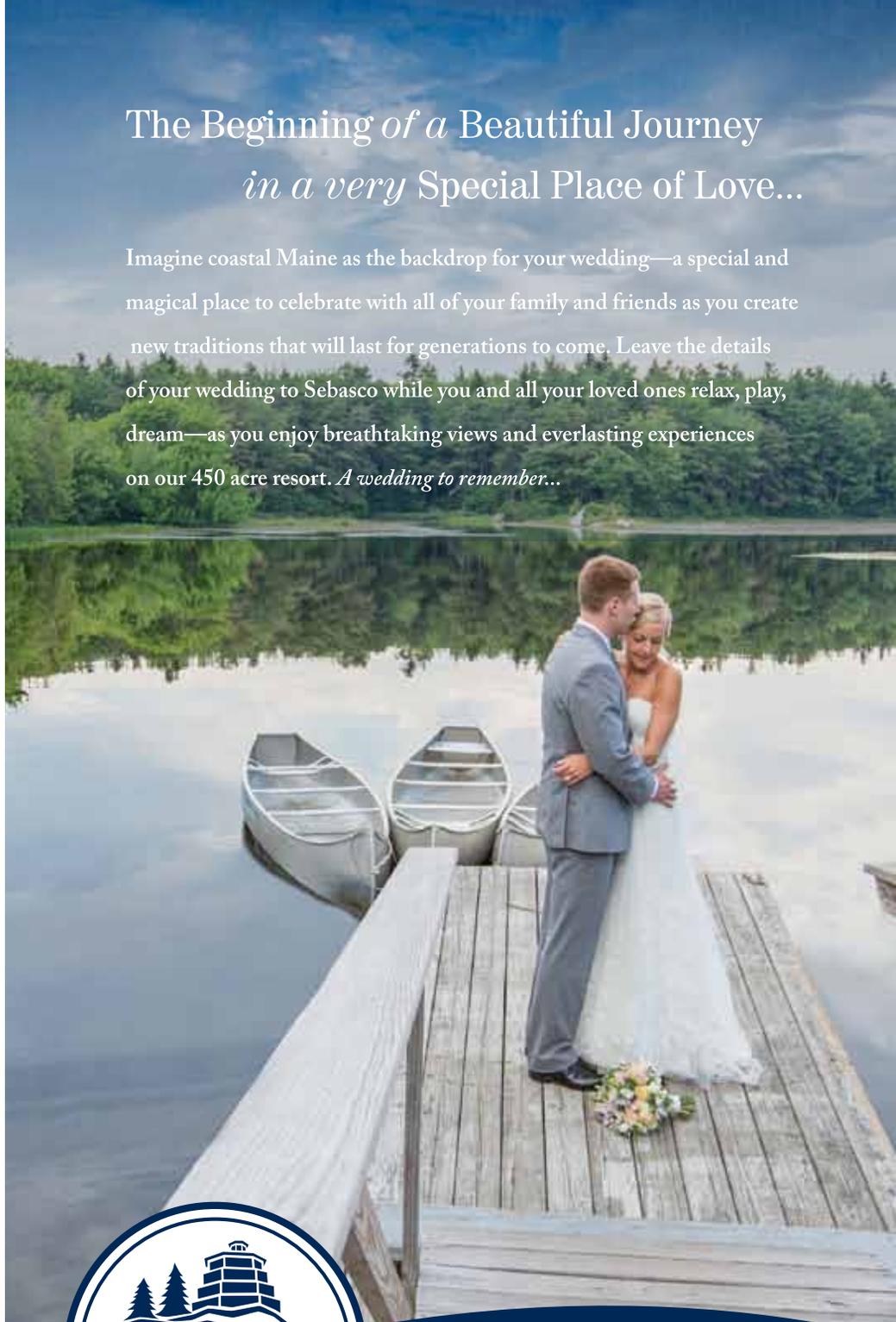
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the extra mile. At Three Rivers Whitewater Rafting, April Glidden says couples love to feel the rush of whitewater. "A lot of groups will plan for an entire weekend, arriving Friday for an evening at the restaurant and some karaoke, then waking up on Saturday morning for rafting." After a full day on the river, Saturday hits a peak with live music around a bonfire.



**PLAN B**

Miguel and Erin Reyes-Zaragoza will never forget the beauty and risk of their nuptials. As an experiential prelude to their ceremony on Schoodic Point, they climbed Otter Cliffs at Acadia National Park, the same place they met years before on a spring-break trip. "Climbing was how we got close as a couple," says Miguel. "I even proposed on top of a mountain in Colorado." Erin had her dress "specifically tailored for a climbing harness." But, when a mountain biking accident left Miguel with a dislocated elbow, plans changed. Even though the groom was willing to go through with the climb, as a med student he thought it best to practice what he preached. The two settled on a 45-minute hike along Beehive Trail, which offers gorgeous views of the Atlantic. For the ceremony, they stood still amid the majesty of a natural amphitheater at Schoodic Point, surrounded by their friends and family.

Though Miguel and Erin's original itinerary didn't pan out exactly as they'd wanted, the two were able to maintain a version of the dream. It's a risk any couple wanting to go off the beaten path for their wedding has to be willing to take. "What is any adventure with certainty?" Miguel says. So long as you're willing to go hand in hand, from storm to storm and world to world, you'll find that one of the greatest adventures of all starts with "I do." ■

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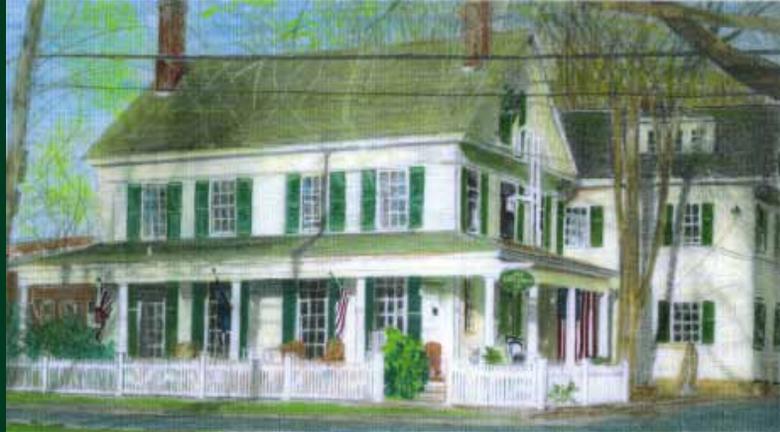
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- Cabane à Sucre MÉGANTIC (Sugar Camp) Day Trip-Quebec  
Saturday, April 14 at 6:45 a.m.
- Robert Plano - Piano Concert Series  
Saturday, April 21 at 7 p.m.
- L/A's Emerge Film Festival  
Friday & Saturday, April 27 & 28
- Buccaneers Banquet- Pirate Dinner Theater  
Friday & Saturday, May 4 & 5 at 7 p.m.
- Midcoast Symphony Orchestra  
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- Maine Music Society  
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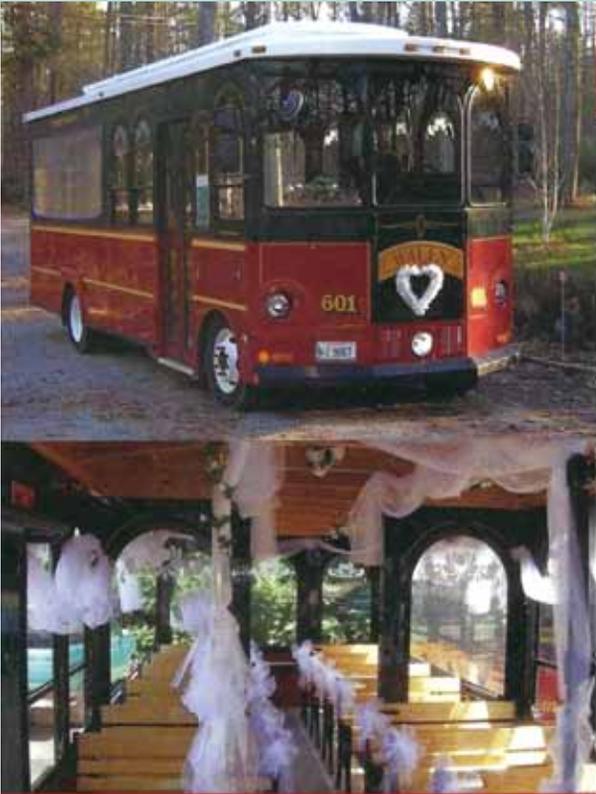


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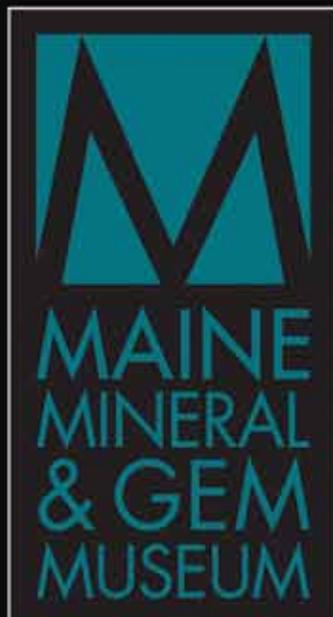
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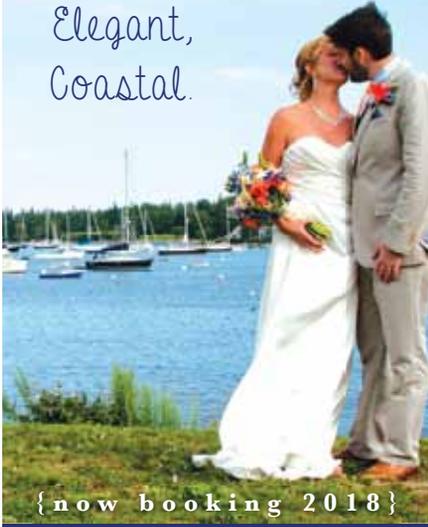
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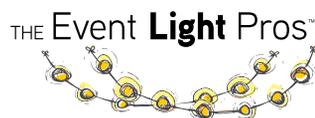


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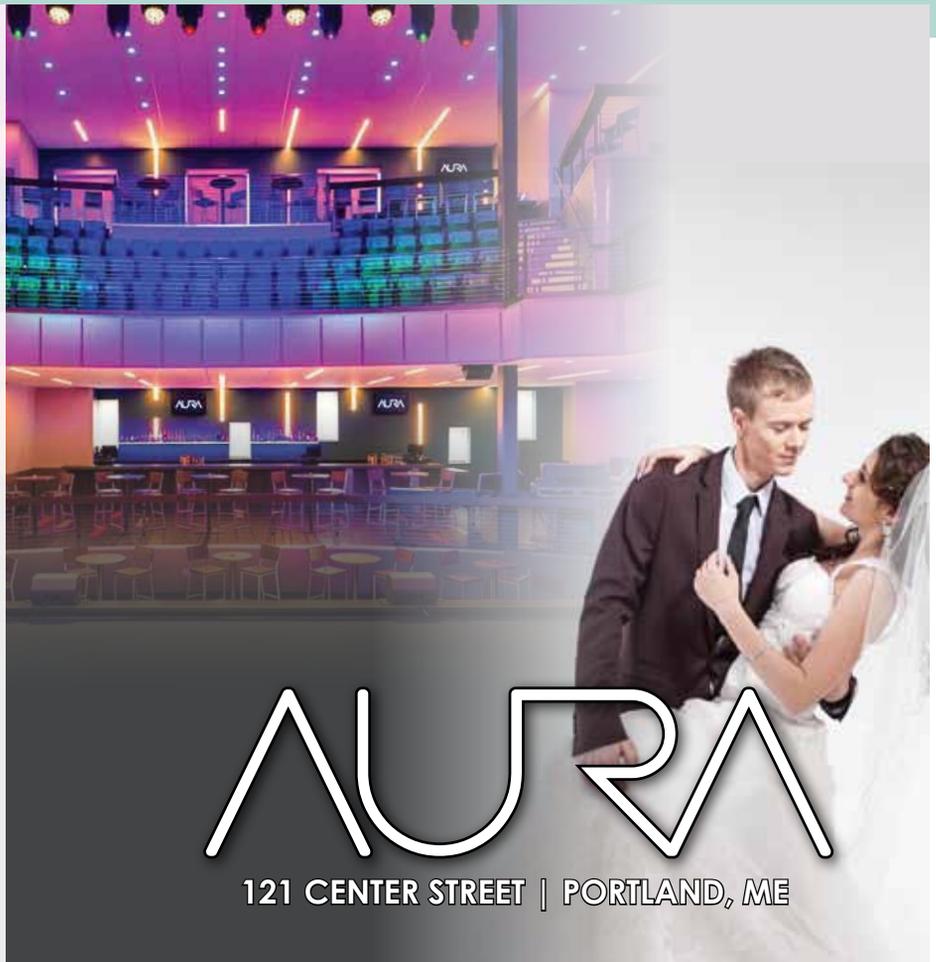
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