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[The Night Is Young](#)

Styling with original songs, steel drums, Sandman salute

By AIMSEL L. PONTI

This week I give you folk-rock draped in high fashion, 25 steel drums, a living memorial to Mark Sandman and a Red Curtain rising over four stellar singer-songwriters.

I'm also seriously contemplating tossing my winter boots into the dark abyss that is the back of my closet. Hoorah for spring. Sing it out, Nina Simone: "And then one morning, another spring is there outside my door. Things are blooming, birds are singing, and suddenly, yes, well I ain't sad, ain't sad no more, ain't sad no more."

The Red Curtain Music Series (www.reverbnation.com/venue/redcurtainmusicseries) continues Saturday at the North Star with performers from Minneapolis, Seattle and the epicenter of acoustic hipness: Portland, Maine.

Brianna Lane (www.myspace.com/briannalane) represents Minneapolis with her blend of Americana-infused folk. Listen to "Lovely" and succumb equally to the music and words. "She was my secret worth holding, she was my never regret," sings Lane with a soothing, sweet voice that will sucker-punch you without notice.

Seattle-ite Cahalen Morrison has four songs to enjoy at www.myspace.com/cahalen. "Ode to Autumn" is but one example of his new-old folk/bluegrass style. He plays his acoustic guitar with gentle yet penetrating finesse. He also does wondrous things with a mandolin, clawhammer banjo and lap slide guitar. Such a wise old soul for a young man.

You can expect to hear new melodies from Portland acoustic folkie Scott Peterson (www.myspace.com/scottcpeterson) as well as duets with Colin "Banjo Man" McGovern. Check out "The End Is the End" for a glimmer.

The other Portlander on the bill is Meghan Yates. Get acquainted at www.myspace.com/meghanyates or find her fan page on Facebook. First off, I love how her music is described (at least on Facebook) as "lyrical folk fusion." Love that. Yates has recorded two CDs, the latter of which was just released. I am truly stumped as to how to properly describe her singing voice, and my online thesaurus isn't helping one bit. So I'll take the easy way out and do a comparison. Think October Project. Listen to "I'll Be Back" if you don't believe me.

Red Curtain Music Series with Brianna Lane, Scott Peterson, Cahalen Morrison and Meghan

Yates. 7 p.m. Saturday. North Star Music Cafe, 225 Congress St., Portland. \$8 (\$5 students at the door).

Although musician Mark Sandman has been gone for more than 10 years, the legacy of his low-rock band Morphine couldn't be more alive. Sandman didn't live long enough to see the 2000 release of the Morphine album, "The Night," but his bandmates Billy Conway and Dana Colley pulled together the nine-piece Orchestra Morphine as a means of playing these songs live and remembering their friend.

The story's much longer than that, and side projects are part of it but the crux of it is that Mark Sandman's place in Boston, and well beyond that, in music history, is revered, respected and continually remembered. A truly special night in Brownfield.

Orchestra Morphine featuring Billy Conway, Dana Colley and Friends. Doors 6 p.m., show at 8 p.m. Friday. Stone Mountain Arts Center, 695 Dugway Road, Brownfield. \$23 for show only. Call to make dinner reservations. 935-7292; www.stonemountainartscenter.com

As I cling to my fading St. Maarten tan, I will whole-heartedly suggest Caribbean Night at the Opera House at Boothbay Harbor. What better way to ring in spring than with Pan Fried Steel, the 25-member steel drum band made up of area musicians with a love for warm breezes and cool rhythms? Flip-flops are encouraged.

Caribbean Night with Pan Fried Steel. 7:30 p.m. Saturday. The Opera House at Boothbay Harbor, 86 Townsend Ave. \$10 advance; \$25 day of show. 633-5159; boothbayoperahouse.com

Congrats to Marion Grace, Portland folk rockers who celebrate the release of their debut record, "Lying Down, Looking Up."

Marion Grace is Ralph Graceffa on guitar and vocals, Clarabelle Junken on guitar and vocals, Aaron Cloutier on drums, percussion and vocals, Josh Prescott on bass, and Adam Frederick, multi-instrumentalist and producer. If the songs "Walking with You," "The Flame" and "Can You Feel It" (www.myspace.com/mariongrace) are any indication, this CD is a no-brainer purchase.

There's a purposeful moodiness to their songs. "Stuck in the middle, right here with you. Staring at the ocean, cold, dark and blue, I'll just keep walking with you," sings Graceffa with Junken's shadowy backup vocals.

As for the name, here's what

I learned at mariongracemusic.com: Marion Grace was conceived years ago by namesake lead singer and songwriter Ralph Graceffa. The current members have been together since 2009.

The name Marion Grace is anchored to a childhood memory of a woman met through pictures and stories only. "Marion is a person that we will all carry in remembrance through the spirit and grace of the music," explains Graceffa.

And as for the Saturday-night show, they're pulling out all the stops. The band has teamed up with local eco-fashion designer Meredith Alex, aka "Madgirl," under the umbrella heading of "Marion Grace Unleashes the MADness!" Port City will become NYC's Bryant Park during fashion week,

complete with a Madgirl runway show to promote Alex's latest streetwear men's line.

Add to the mix some funk/soul from Sly-Chi and acoustic rock from the Adam Ezra Group, and I dare say this will be a blue-ribbon affair to remember.


Marion Grace with Sly-Chi and Adam Ezra Group. 8 p.m. Saturday. Port City Music Hall, 504 Congress St. Ages 21 and older. \$10 advance; \$13 at door. www.portcitymusichall.com or Bull Moose locations.

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