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Husband-and-wife team to open theater in Northport

By [Alicia Anstead](#)
Tuesday, January 16, 2007 - Bangor Daily News

"All the world's a stage" is a saying Ruth and John Gelsinger take seriously, especially when it comes to their own home. Musicians by training — Ruth plays piano, John is a baritone — the couple is putting the finishing touches on a performance stage right in their backyard. When the doors open in June, the Northport Music Theater on Route 1 in Northport will be the newest addition to the midcoast area's performing arts venues.

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The building is not new — it's a renovated industrial repair shop — but the musicals will be contemporary. The Gelsingers, both of whom have performed and directed locally, intend to use their 3,000-square-foot, 136-seat space to attract musical theater fans and to employ actors, singers, musicians, designers and other theater workers.

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As members of the art scene in Maine, the Gelsingers, both of whom are in their 50s, know about the challenges of working as artists in a rural state. John managed a boatyard for many years while singing on the side. Ruth teaches piano during the school year. Together, they have remodeled and managed other properties in Belfast.

This newest venture is both a dream and a retirement plan.

"We want the theater to be entertainment for the community, but my true goal is provide work for artists," said Ruth. "I was underutilized by my community in terms of available pay, instruments and facilities. But this is how an artist works in Maine. I didn't want to leave the area. I loved where I lived. So we made it work."

They hope to make it work again by mounting pocket musicals that are popular at off-Broadway houses and at fringe festivals rather than the traditional, big-cast shows such as "Oklahoma!" or "South Pacific" that are the bedrock of community theaters and Broadway stages. By keeping the programming, cast and crew