

## Chapter 15

# Living It Up After Dark: Vancouver's Nightlife

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Getting down with the music scene
  - ▶ Visiting the best clubs and bars
  - ▶ Discovering the city's performing arts
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**L**et's get one thing straight from the start: Nightlife isn't hard to find in Vancouver, but it takes limited forms. Basically, I'm talking about a few true dance clubs — quite hip, mind you — plus a good supply of live music venues (where the city shines), and bars and pubs with character. You also find a decent slate of theater offerings. In fact, in an effort to support the performing arts, the tourism folks have developed an entire entertainment season (a.k.a. fall and winter), and Yaletown's been dubbed the city's "entertainment district" because of its proximity to many event venues.

Where should you go to find nightlife? Dance clubs increasingly litter the Yaletown, Robson Street, and downtown districts, while Kitsilano is more a place for an organic brew or a glass of wine. More upscale areas, such as South Granville and the West End, offer the sorts of bars where you may want to wear a jacket or at least shuck your sneakers — places where a drink can cost more than a meal sets you back in other parts of town. Finally, strip joints have long been fixtures on the fringes of downtown, Yaletown, and East Hastings — not that you were thinking of going to one of *those*.



Closing time for a Vancouver bar or club is usually 2 a.m. — earlier on Sundays — although exceptions exist.

### *Checking Out the Music Scene*

The city's most popular music can be described by one of two R's: rootsy (blues, rock, Irish-tinged folk, acoustic folk, punk) or refined (in other words, classical). But the genres don't end there. The city's multicultural character (and its proximity to the U.S.) has spawned

everything from Euro-dance clubs to jazz clubs to a hardcore punk scene. In other words, whatever you're looking for is probably already established in some pocket of town or another.

Most clubs in Vancouver charge a variable cover fee to see live music performances (better-known acts command higher cover charges), and the hipper dance clubs also require a C\$5 to C\$10 (US\$4.15–US\$8.30) cover charge to gain entrance — although women are often exempt from this.

To find out who or what's playing where, from nightclubs to theater productions, check the free weekly newspapers: *The Georgia Straight* ([www.straight.com](http://www.straight.com)) is found in stores, bars, restaurants, and tourist offices; and *The West Ender* ([www.westender.com](http://www.westender.com)). *Xtra West*, the city's gay and lesbian newspaper, publishes every two weeks and lists gay-oriented club events. *Vancouver Magazine* ([www.vanmag.com](http://www.vanmag.com)) is put out once a month and provides in-depth coverage of the music scene, including clubs and bands. *Where Vancouver* ([www.wher Vancouver.ca](http://www.wher Vancouver.ca)) is another monthly, and although the tourist guide is a titch advertising-heavy, its event and restaurant reviews are independent and reliable. You can also call the **Talking Telus Pages** (☎ 604-299-9000, ext. 2489); for pre-recorded (although not comprehensive) club listings, press menu option 6.

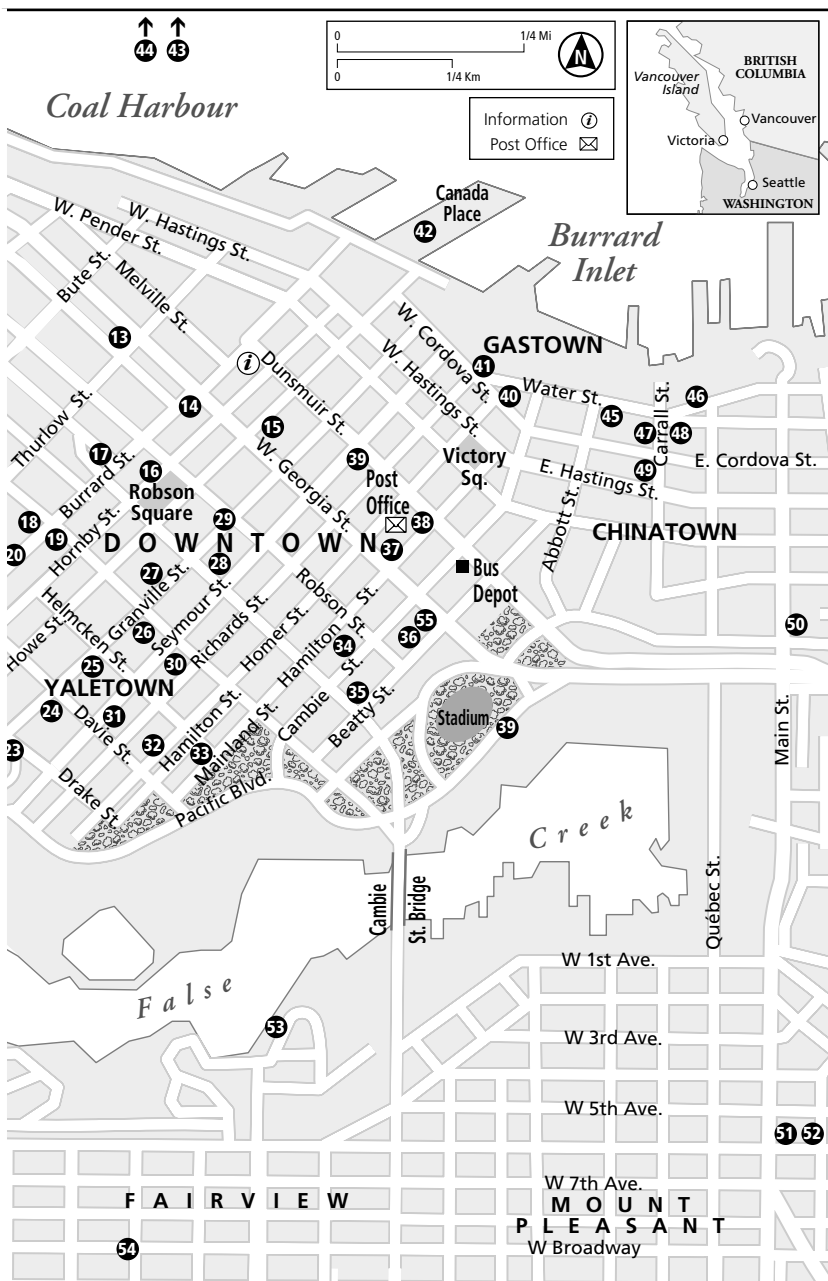
### *Shaking your groove thing: The best dance clubs*

Dance clubs are hotter than ever in Vancouver, and long lines will undoubtedly greet you on any weekend you try to get into one. My advice is to go either during the week or earlier than everyone else; sure, the dance floor may be a void, but at least you can wait inside, drinking and socializing, as opposed to freezing your tail off in the rain while arguing with some musclehead in a T-shirt and flak jacket. Here are my picks of the hottest spots:

- ✔ **Sonar**, 66 Water St., Gastown (☎ 604-683-6695), probably the top dance club in British Columbia, established a name for itself far and wide by attracting top DJs to spin eclectic hip hop tunes and island rhythms — for once, much more than just droning, bass-fueled dance music — within a gorgeously designed space. Closed Sundays.
- ✔ **Stone Temple Cabaret**, 1082 Granville St., Downtown (☎ 604-488-1333), a good old-fashioned disco, does everything — music, lighting — on a grand scale. Only the hairstyles have changed. Closed Sundays and Tuesdays.
- ✔ **The Urban Well**, 1516 Yew St., Kitsilano (☎ 604-737-7770), delivers with a surprisingly good range of music and a top-notch drink selection. As with so many other popular Vancouver spots, though, the crowd may annoy with its perfection. The high-tone crowd jacks up drink prices, too. Mondays and Tuesdays usually involve improv nights and/or a stand-up comedy showcase.

Vancouver Nightlife

<p>Alibi Room <b>46</b>                  Arts Club Theatre <b>7</b>                  Atlantic Trap and Grill <b>24</b>                  Bacchus Lounge <b>16</b>                  Backstage Lounge <b>7</b>                  Bard on the Beach <b>9</b>                  Blarney Stone <b>48</b>                  Brickhouse Bar <b>50</b>                  The Brickyard <b>49</b>                  Café Pacifica <b>42</b>                  Cellar Jazz Café <b>1</b>                  Chan Centre <b>2</b>                  Cloud 9 Lounge <b>11</b>                  Commodore Lanes &amp; Billiards <b>28</b>                  Death by Chocolate <b>5</b>                  Dix Barbecue &amp; Brewery <b>35</b>                  Doolin's <b>19</b>                  DV8 <b>31</b>                  The Fairview <b>54</b>                  Fleuri <b>17</b>                  Frederick Wood Theatre <b>3</b>                  Fred's Tavern <b>26</b>                  Garden Terrace <b>15</b>                  Gerard Lounge <b>17</b>                  Hot Jazz Society <b>51</b>                  The Irish Heather <b>47</b>                  Joe Fortes <b>13</b>                  New Revue Stage <b>8</b></p>	<p>900 West Lounge &amp; Wine Bar <b>14</b>                  Numbers Cabaret <b>21</b>                  O'Douls <b>12</b>                  The Odyssey <b>22</b>                  Orpheum Theatre <b>29</b>                  Queen Elizabeth Theatre <b>37</b>                  Railway Club <b>39</b>                  Richard's on Richards <b>30</b>                  Rosie's <b>34</b>                  The Roxy <b>27</b>                  The Rusty Gull <b>44</b>                  Sailor Hagar's <b>43</b>                  The Shark Club <b>55</b>                  Shine <b>40</b>                  Soho Café &amp; Billiards <b>32</b>                  Sonar <b>45</b>                  Stamp's Landing <b>53</b>                  St. Andrews-Wesley Church <b>20</b>                  Stanley Theatre <b>6</b>                  Steamworks Brewing Co. <b>41</b>                  Stone Temple Cabaret <b>25</b>                  Sylvia Lounge <b>10</b>                  The Urban Well <b>4</b>                  Vancouver Playhouse <b>38</b>                  Whip Gallery <b>52</b>                  William Tell <b>36</b>                  The Yale <b>23</b>                  Yaletown Brewing Company <b>33</b>                  Yuk Yuk's <b>18</b></p>	
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### *Focusing on the music: The best folk, jazz, and blues clubs*

Jazz seems to be the cool thing around town these days — no doubt fuelled by aging baby-boomers mellowing their tastes. For up-to-date performance info, consult the **Jazz Hotline** (☎ 604-872-5200). If you're a real diehard fan, try to visit town during June as the annual **Vancouver Jazz Festival** is blowing full force. Blues and folk are harder to find, but it can be done. Here are my recommendations for enjoying all three styles:

- ✔ **Cellar Jazz Café**, 3611 West Broadway, Kitsilano (☎ 604-738-1959), presents musicians playing much more than top-quality jazz, although Sunday is reserved for its jazz brunch. You also hear blues, soul, funk, and related forms, all amid some wild decor (think red, seriously red) and the usual Kitsilano cooler-than-thou scene. Closed Mondays.
- ✔ **The Fairview**, 898 West Broadway, Fairview (☎ 604-872-1262), among the best blues bars in town, hides within a chain hotel. Sundays, various musicians play free-form with each other.
- ✔ **Hot Jazz Society**, 2120 Main St., Mount Pleasant (☎ 604-873-4131), a long-standing jazz joint, is authentic, which may explain its devoted following and staying power. Dixieland is big here, and so is dancing.
- ✔ **O'Doul's**, 1300 Robson St., Downtown (☎ 604-661-1400), is one of the few places in town offering live jazz seven nights a week. Because of its Robson Street location, the crowd is mixed — lots of out-of-town visitors, and locals enjoying a post-theater nightcap.
- ✔ **The Yale**, 1300 Granville St., Yaletown (☎ 604-681-9253) is a very good blues club stuck amid an otherwise down-at-the-heels stretch of Granville. Acoustics and sight lines aren't exactly top quality, but what do you expect? This is a blues dive, after all.

### *Turning up the volume: The best rock-and-roll bars*

Rock-and-roll is alive and well, although it may not always seem so. You have to scout a bit to find its beating pulse in Vancouver, sometimes descending into grittier neighborhoods to hear up-and-coming stars. Frankly speaking, the town's just too politically correct and overly polite to appreciate hard rockers. (The biggest musical star ever to come out of here was Bryan Adams, after all, so maybe it's just not a hard rock town.) Here are a couple of places where you can really "r-a-w-k" — don't forget the earplugs:

- ✔ **The Brickyard**, 315 Carrall St., Gastown (☎ 604-685-3922), yet another gritty, down-to-earth joint in Gastown, rocks out part of the week and throbs to house and dance music the other. Definitely not for the beautiful people.

- ✓ **The Roxy**, 932 Granville St., Downtown (☎ **604-331-7999**), attracts a young, happy crowd with cover music and silly bartenders juggling hard liquor. The operative word is fun, and they do actually pull it off — hey, you just may win a trip to Cuba or something — but don't expect anything musically or culturally original.
- ✓ **Shine**, 364 Water St., Gastown (☎ **604-408-4321**), is one of the newest spaces in town, attracting the twenty- and thirtysomethings into its ultra-modern-yet-retro environment — it kind of conjures up “the Jetsons meet the new millennium.” The dancing crowd gets to chill in the red room out back. Music is everything from '80s classics to rap to rock. Open nightly.

## *Hanging Out: Vancouver's Best Bars*

If you don't care much for music but enjoy kicking back with a drink, you're in luck — this is definitely not a dry town. The central business core is home to a preponderance of hotel bars, most of them pretty good for atmosphere, local character, and a draft of something cold. Gastown, in particular, offers some grungy examples while Yaletown has more gentrified brewpubs; you feel well-nigh stupid ordering a brew that *wasn't* made in Vancouver. Sports bars do exist in the city, but they're mostly confined to the suburbs. And despite the city's English roots, the central city has surprisingly few authentic pubs — go to Victoria if you're craving true “bangers and mash” and a pint of some terrific but obscure English ale.



Pubs and bars normally don't charge a cover, unless some sort of event is going on, and then you may pay a small charge.

### *See-and-be-seen spots*

Despite its laid-back charms, Vancouver certainly has its fair share — okay, maybe more than its share — of nightspots where patrons are simply there to make deals and connections, get noticed, and basically ignore anyone else who can't further their ends in life. That said, living like the other half for a night *can* be fun. And you may espy someone famous shooting a film or TV series in town; film stars are much more likely to hang out publicly here than in Los Angeles, because polite Canadians tend not to rush at them with popping flashbulbs, plastic grins, and boorish autograph requests. Here are the top places to get an eyeful:



- ✓ **The Alibi Room**, 157 Alexander St., Gastown (☎ **604-623-3383**), is ground zero for U.S. film industry types. Every wannabe Hollywood screenwriter and actor in town — a larger group than you'd guess — knows this place. Industry types drink upstairs in the restaurant section or, less frequently, downstairs in the lounge area.

- ✓ **Gerard Lounge**, 845 Burrard St., Downtown (☎ 604-682-5511), housed inside the Sutton Place Hotel (see Chapter 9), attracts a star-studded and blasé crowd to its posh surroundings. Try not to drop your drink when some mega-movie star saunters by on his/her way to the john. Tuesdays, a locally famous Chocoholic's Buffet lays out treats of a different kind.
- ✓ **Richard's on Richards**, 1036 Richards St., West End (☎ 604-687-6794) features various incarnations of dance and rock, sometimes played by local bands and sometimes by world-renowned acts. But you don't just come to listen: You come to look. This is *the* place to be seen in the city, so wildly popular among its surgically enhanced and overdressed clientele that it needs to open only two nights a week — Friday and Saturday, of course — plus additional days for concert performances.

### *English and Irish pubs*

Finding an authentic pint being drawn in downtown Vancouver is amazingly hard. All the expatriate Brits and Irish appear to have headed for the 'burbs, and indeed several excellent pubs are in outlying areas. I don't assume that you're such a hardcore Anglophile that you'd head to the Canadian equivalent of Hoboken just for a beer. Bearing that in mind, here are the best of the central places, all somewhat geared to tourists, but nevertheless kind of fun:

- ✓ **Atlantic Trap and Gill**, 612 Davie St., West End (☎ 604-806-6393), is an Irish bar where the glass of stout reigns supreme and live Celtic music is almost a sure thing.
- ✓ **Blarney Stone**, 216 Carrall St., Gastown (☎ 604-687-4322), another Irish pub, sometimes features live fiddle players. Even without music, the pub stocks enough Harp and Guinness to make one teary for the Emerald Isle. It's closed Sunday through Tuesday, but open until 2 a.m. the rest of the week.
- ✓ **Doolin's**, 654 Nelson St., Downtown (☎ 604-605-4343), yet another pub of Irish persuasion blending rock and "kitchen ceilidh" with a sports flavor, especially on hockey nights. Open daily — until 4 a.m. Thursday through Saturday. **The Cellar** (☎ 604-605-4345) lies beneath the pub and is a popular underground dance club, so you can expect this corner of town to get mighty noisy on weekends.
- ✓ **The Irish Heather**, 217 Carrall St., Gastown (☎ 604-688-9779), one of several Irish pubs in this touristy part of town, nevertheless delivers famously — not too bright and clean. In other words, it's like a real Irish pub.

### *Neighborhood bars*

Sometimes you really do want to go where everybody knows your name. Loads of neighborhood bars await in the residential neighborhoods of Vancouver, including these four for starters:



- ✓ **The Shark Club**, 180 West Georgia St., Downtown (☎ 604-687-4297), is the city's premier sports bar, and I don't just mean at the pool tables and musing over a beer at all the TV action. There's always a lot of serious shark action between mingling singles which gets especially rowdy if there's a sporting event in either General Motors Place or BC Place Stadium.
- ✓ **Brickhouse Bar**, 730 Main St., Main Street Station (☎ 604-689-8645), is a good neighborhood bar in what has long been a pretty rugged area. The area is gradually improving hereabouts, and kudos to the bar owners for leading the charge. This place has everything you want and more — good drinks, comfy seating, superlative snacks — and everyone remarks on the long fish tanks.
- ✓ **Stamp's Landing**, 610 Stamp's Landing, Kitsilano (☎ 604-879-0821), is an almost-authentic British pub — except with much better food — offering an array of draft beers that you normally find only in your dreams. Your fellow drinkers are wannabe boaters, however, so unless you enjoy boat talk and stock tips, you may want to cut out after a couple of pints. The location across False Creek from Yaletown is a bit hard to reach.
- ✓ **Sylvia Lounge**, 1154 Gilford St., West End (☎ 604-681-9321), a hotel bar, is loved by West Enders, and although the decor borders on tacky, the feeling is actually neighborhoody, and — thank goodness — no bad music is piped in to overwhelm attempts at conversation or matchmaking.

### *Hip alternative bars*

I don't know what else to call this hodgepodge of a category, which simply denotes a place where the vibe is young, alternative, artsy . . . the kind of places where granny glasses, Gram Parsons, Elvis Costello, and Elvis Presley are still in.

- ✓ **Backstage Lounge**, 1585 Johnston St., Granville Island (☎ 604-687-1354), is frequented by young locals — and, yes, budding artists — for its water views, theater-company ties, and exceptionally happy atmosphere. The live music on weekends gets pretty good, too.
- ✓ **DV8**, 515 Davie St., West End (☎ 604-682-4388), a very late-night spot, attracts young, rich rebels busy rebelling on their parents' money. Dress like you're at a rave (or a prison break) and you're more likely to fit in than if you're sporting fancy threads. Seriously, though, the live music can be a cut above many other places.
- ✓ **Joe Fortes**, 777 Thurlow St., West End (☎ 604-669-1940), a hopping, healthy place named for a heroic Jamaican lifeguard, attracts a youthful, *St. Elmo's Fire*-type crowd flaunting some serious wealth.
- ✓ The **Railway Club**, 579 Dunsmuir St., Downtown (☎ 604-681-1625) is a nice spot thanks to a train theme, eclectic tunes, and famous musicians popping in. You pay a little extra to get inside if you're not already a member of the "club."



- ✓ **Whip Gallery**, 209 East 6th Ave., Mount Pleasant (☎ 604-874-4687), is hip, sure — hip enough to be a coffee shop or a design school graduate's crash pad. Instead, it's a bar with a decent (if limited) drink selection, light eats, occasional jazz, and funky art. The feeling is more laid-back and mature than you may expect from the living room–furniture motif. The freshly-baked pies are to die for!

### *Chic bars and lounges*

If you like to feel right at home in a stylishly decorated lounge, sipping martinis and other shaken or stirred drinks, you'll find places aplenty around town. Here are some of the best:

- ✓ **Bacchus**, 845 Hornby St., Downtown (☎ 604-689-7777), a lounge in the plush Wedgewood Hotel (see Chapter 10), almost demands a dress code, it's so well appointed. Think of it as a potential pre- or post-dinner spot to snuggle over a drink. Quite expensive and trendy.
- ✓ **Cloud 9 Lounge**, 1400 Robson St., West End (☎ 604-687-0511), revolves high, high above the city's main shopping drag — and, no, the lounge doesn't whip around so fast that you'll get seasick. It's not as swish as you might expect from such a lofty location — it seems to rely on the incredible views of the mountains, the water, and even Washington State to lure people up. To find the club from street level, enter at the Empire Landmark Hotel and take the elevator.
- ✓ **Garden Terrace**, 791 West Georgia St., Downtown (☎ 604-602-0994), is the only place in town where you can sit beneath foliage imported from the African subcontinent. Housed within the ultra pricey Four Seasons hotel (see Chapter 9), it's an extremely refined place in which to sip a drink — save it for a special occasion. Closed Sundays.
- ✓ **900 West Lounge & Wine Bar**, 900 West Georgia St., Downtown (☎ 604-669-9378), the smartest wine bar in town, serves glasses, carafes, and bottles of some terrific vintages — plus great martinis if you don't feel like wine. Huge chandeliers and wingback chairs fill out the mood. Located in the Hotel Vancouver (see Chapter 9), it's a nice place for a snack with your drink, too, but wear your snazziest clothes and bring your wallet.

### *Thirst-quenching brewpubs*

You may find no hotter trend, this moment, than the brewpub in Vancouver — and most of the action is tightly concentrated in Yaletown, although it's beginning to spread to other hip quarters of the city. I love sampling the freshly brewed products of a micro while chatting with the owners, and the atmosphere in such a place is almost always reliably affable, too. Here are my top picks:

- ✔ **Dix Barbecue & Brewery**, 871 Beatty St., Yaletown (☎ 604-682-2739), a microbrewery near BC Place Stadium, is as attractive as all the others in Yaletown, with good period photographs lining the walls. The crowd is pretty (although it morphs into Testosterone Central on hockey or hoops nights), and the beer isn't bad at all.
- ✔ **Steamworks Brewing Co.**, 375 Water St., Gastown (☎ 604-689-2739), brews such good drafts that you may not notice the sometimes-smarmy clientele. Explore several comfortable seating areas before settling down. This is one of Vancouver's original brewpubs.
- ✔ **Yaletown Brewing Company**, 1111 Mainland St., Yaletown (☎ 604-688-0064 or 604-681-2739), yet another Yaletown microbrewery, may be a bit of a scene, but the beer's the thing. You can drink outside when it's warm and dry, too, and the hip location for once doesn't preclude casual dress.

### *Beer joints*

I love great beer, and I really like bar owners who know the huge difference between drinking a can of imported beer and savoring a hand-drawn pint of the same stuff. At the following places, you can count on a superb choice of beers and a staff that knows how to serve each and every one of 'em:

- ✔ **The Rusty Gull**, 175 East 1st St., North Vancouver (☎ 604-988-5585), is one of those bars that seems to exist simply for the pleasure of quaffing. Ownership has put together a knowledgeable beer list, and you'll want to sample as much of it as possible. Live music complements the atmosphere.
- ✔ **Sailor Hagar's**, 221 West 1st St., North Vancouver (☎ 604-984-3087 or 604-984-2567), seems to have everything under the sun. If you're a connoisseur of hard-to-find Bavarian dark beers, northern English ales, Irish cream stouts, or Belgian lambics, this is your place. They use authentic pub equipment to keep the beer fresh. Views of the city back across the water are astounding, and a restaurant is on the premises, too. Don't feel like driving to North Van? No problem — the bar's just a short walk from the SeaBus landing.

### *Cue-crackin' poolrooms*

Sometimes you have to shoot some pool, and Vancouver's not short on places to do it. Here are two of the most fun:

- ✔ **Commodore Lanes & Billiards**, 838 Granville St. (☎ 604-681-1531), is tucked beneath the Commodore Ballroom, down a narrow stairwell that opens up to a humongous underground cavern of 8 lanes of bowling and 18 pool tables.
- ✔ **Soho Café & Billiards**, 1144 Homer St., Yaletown (☎ 604-688-1180), is a classy place to shoot some stick among the beautiful people. If you're looking for a dive in which to hustle some barflies, look elsewhere.

## *Laughing the night away: Comedy clubs*

Vancouverites may take their West Coast–lifestyle pretty seriously, but when you consider this is improv comedy–champ Colin Mochrie’s home base, you gotta believe this burgh has humor. Here are three ways to tickle your funny bone:



- ✓ **TheatreSports League**, New Revue Stage, 1601 Johnston St., Granville Island (☎ 604-738-8013), has ongoing shows Wednesday through Saturday, although it’s the late-night weekend gigs — appropriately called Improv Extreme — that can get really wildly funny.
- ✓ **Tony n’ Tina’s Wedding**, St. Andrew’s-Wesley Church, Nelson St. at Burrard (☎ 604-258-4079 or TicketMaster ☎ 604-280-4444), is about as fun and interactive as comedy can get. As soon as you enter the church, you’re a guest at a bizarre Italian wedding where the best man is dressed as Guido and the maid of honor? Well, I can’t give too much away. The celebration continues at a downtown restaurant where members of the wedding party gradually start to unravel the family secrets. And you get to witness and live the drama.
- ✓ **Yuk Yuks Comedy Club**, Century Plaza Hotel, 1015 Burrard St. (☎ 604-696-YUKS), is your traditional sit-back-and-be-entertained club, although the comics themselves may have plans to the contrary. Most of them are pretty good; many are on the Yuk Yuks circuit; one or two even end up on *The Tonight Show*.

## *Stepping out: The gay and lesbian scene*

Vancouver is a very gay-friendly town, and a network of bars and clubs has emerged to bind together the area’s growing gay and lesbian population. Here are two of the hottest places for gays and lesbians to meet:

- ✓ **Numbers Cabaret**, 1042 Davie St., West End (☎ 604-685-4077), a multilevel complex of loud and quiet niches, is a prime spot for gay trawlers to sip beer, taste cocktails, cruise the scene, or just go nuts on one of several dance floors.
- ✓ **The Odyssey**, 1251 Howe St., Downtown (☎ 604-689-5256), rages all night, every night, with everything from cultural events to disco DJs to some truly outrageous stuff, as well — I’ll just say that show-ers and drag queens are involved. Not really a place for most straight folks.

## *Getting Artsy: The Performing Arts*

Vancouver’s sophisticates enjoy a major symphony orchestra, a world-class opera company, several large theater troupes, and an arena large enough to host such supergroups as U2 or the Rolling Stones.

To find out what's happening in venues big and small, just check the *Georgia Straight*, a free weekly newspaper. Its entertainment listings are beyond reproach. Or buy a copy of *Vancouver Magazine*, which does a good job of laying out each month's offerings.

Tickets for the performing arts and special productions or festivals are best bought in advance, either directly from the box office or via **TicketMaster** (☎ 604-280-4444; [www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca)). The latter is by far the easiest way to snag tickets for major events, although they'll come with the obligatory service charges — about C\$5 (US\$4.15) extra per ticket.

You can also call the **Vancouver Cultural Alliance's Arts Hotline** (☎ 604-684-2787; [www.allianceforarts.com](http://www.allianceforarts.com)), which offers tickets sold by TicketMaster as well as for shows by independent producers throughout the region. Advance tickets can be purchased online or at the ticket booth at the Visitor Information Centre, 200 Burrard St.



If you're prepared for a catcher's catch-can choice, the Cultural Alliance also operates **Tickets Tonight** (☎ 604-684-2787; [www.ticketstonight.ca](http://www.ticketstonight.ca)), which sells same-day tickets at half price. Tickets Tonight is also at the Visitor Information Centre.

### *Raising the curtain on Vancouver's theaters*

Vancouver's theater scene bumps along: It's usually pretty decent but occasionally a little rough for stretches of time. Current offerings include a mixture of retreads — which don't seem to do too well in this town — and original works, some of them locally penned. The city doesn't have a compact theater district, so plan well before heading out for the evening. The four major theater spaces to check out are

- ✓ The **Arts Club Theatre**, 1585 Johnston St., Granville Island (☎ 604-687-1644), the home of a big regional company, produces an interesting array of plays. The Backstage Lounge is here, too (see "Hip alternative bars" earlier in this chapter). Tickets start at C\$15 (US\$12) per performance.
- ✓ The **Frederick Wood Theatre**, 6354 Crescent Rd. at Gate 4 (☎ 604-822-2678), part of the University of British Columbia, offers student work at serious bargains (usually C\$18 (US\$15) per person).
- ✓ **Stanley Theatre**, 2750 Granville St., South Granville (☎ 604-687-1644), the best looking of these four theaters, is a renovated art deco-style movie house. The same company that performs at the Arts Club Theatre also performs here, but the shows are glitzier. Tickets generally run C\$20 to C\$45 (US\$17–US\$37) per show.
- ✓ The **Vancouver Playhouse**, 600 Hamilton St., Downtown (☎ 604-872-6622), is another place to see local and experimental work; sight lines are especially good. Tickets are C\$21 to C\$50 (US\$17–US\$42) depending on the night. The playhouse is adjacent to the Queen Elizabeth Theatre (see the opera section below).





If you happen to be in town during summer and like Shakespeare, the **Bard on the Beach** (☎ 604-737-0625) series is an absolute must-see. From mid-June to mid-September, actors perform Shakespeare's plays in Vanier Park inside three giant tents. Productions are fun and highly professional.

A similar series (without the Shakespearean focus) is the **Theatre Under the Stars** musical productions (☎ 604-257-0366; [www.tuts.bc.ca](http://www.tuts.bc.ca)) in Stanley Park during July and August. This popular open-air theater can be very romantic — although a brisk wind is usually blowing in from the ocean. Picnicking is encouraged.

If you're coming in September, be aware of the avant-garde **Fringe Festival** (☎ 604-237-0350; [www.vancouverfringe.com](http://www.vancouverfringe.com)), a spin-off from the popular Edinburgh festival, is held on and around Commercial Drive, east of downtown.

## *Tuning up for Vancouver's symphony*



The **Vancouver Symphony Orchestra** (☎ 604-876-3434 for information, 604-280-4444 for tickets; [www.vancouverSymphony.com](http://www.vancouverSymphony.com)) gets classical — yet stays accessible with pops concerts, big-name guest soloists, and children's shows — at the venerable **Orpheum Theatre**, 800 Granville, Downtown (☎ 604-665-3030). Tickets run anywhere from C\$20 to C\$80 (US\$17–US\$67) per person.

## *Singing the praises of Vancouver's opera company*

The talented **Vancouver Opera** (☎ 604-683-0222; [www.vanopera.bc.ca](http://www.vanopera.bc.ca)) performs four or more times annually before gorgeous set pieces at the busy **Queen Elizabeth Theatre**, 600 Hamilton St., Downtown (☎ 604-665-3050), adjacent to the Vancouver Playhouse (see the theater section above). This venue is worth consulting for its other performances, too. Tickets generally cost from as little as C\$25 (US\$21) to as much as C\$115 (US\$96) per person — but, hey, you just may get to see one of those famous tenors you've only ever espied on PBS.

## *Et tutu, Vancouver? Dance in the city*

For dance fans, **Ballet British Columbia** (☎ 604-732-5003; [www.balletbc.com](http://www.balletbc.com)) stages a number of challenging performances around town, often at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre (see preceding listing). And some very good visiting companies often show up to join in the fun. Tickets for a performance usually cost between C\$20 and C\$70 (US\$17–US\$58) per person.



If you're tired of paying big bucks for nosebleed seats, head over to the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Point Grey. The university's **Chan Centre for the Performing Arts** (☎ 604-822-2697; [www.chancentre.com](http://www.chancentre.com)) hosts a good bill of student and guest performances, sometimes free, sometimes at cost — but still at a better deal than in the big venues, and you definitely can hear better. (The venue is said to be world-renowned for its acoustics.) Performances happen year-round on weekends; more often in summer.