

# Grand Theater tickets go online

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Individual tickets for Grand Theater performances go on sale Tuesday, and instead of standing in line for tickets, patrons can purchase them on the Internet.

The Performing Arts Foundation will add the online buying component to its Web site at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday. The PAF worked on the option the past 10 months to increase convenience for existing patrons and hopefully attract new ones, said Jim O'Connell, PAF executive director.

The PAF began to sell season tickets for its 2005-06 lineup earlier this summer. The first day of individual ticket sales typically attracts about 500 people - half order by telephone and half stand in line at the ArtsBlock ticket office in downtown Wausau, O'Connell said.

Since the theater was reopened in 1987, it has been a tradition to be among the first in line or the first to call for individual tickets. The PAF staff of 16 is eager to see how the online option to purchase will affect that tradition, O'Connell said.

"This is going to be a very interesting Tuesday for us, and quite frankly we're looking forward to it," he said.

Kathy Garvey and her husband, Charles, plan to purchase individual tickets next to a group of friends so they can sit together at shows.

For efficiency's sake, one of the friends will stand in line to purchase tickets for the group, she said.

"For a while, we stood in lines with friends," said Garvey, 58, of Wausau. "Then we figured out, wait a minute, we could do this all on the same form." The online component could save the group even more time and effort, and Garvey would welcome the convenience.

"In fact, when you called (for this interview) I was online," she said. "I had just gotten airline tickets online. We do that all the time."

Judy Martens, president of Martech Systems, the Wausau company that helped develop the PAF's online ticket component, said buying tickets online will be "just like shopping at any other store on the Web.

"It's very straightforward - anybody can do it. It's a secure server, so they don't have to worry."

All ticket sales, whether by telephone, over-the-counter or on the Web, will immediately be reflected on the PAF's computer software. That "real-time" capability was key to developing the online component, O'Connell said.

And although he hopes the Web option will increase ticket sales overall, first-day individual ticket sales might dip because the PAF made it easier this year to become a season ticket holder.

The PAF dropped the threshold to become a season ticket holder from seven shows to four shows in order to encourage people to commit earlier.

"It saves us on advertising expenses," O'Connell said. "Also, if they commit

## To buy tickets

Individual tickets (three shows or less) go on sale at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday.

There are five ways to purchase individual tickets to Grand Theater performances:

- Internet - Log on to [www.onartsblock.org](http://www.onartsblock.org)
  - In person - Bring a show order form to the ArtsBlock Ticket Office at 401 N. Fourth St. in downtown Wausau. Order forms can be printed from the Web site or picked up at the ticket office.
  - Telephone - Have your show order form ready and call the ArtsBlock Ticket Office at 842-0988 or toll free at 888-239-0421
  - Mail - Send your show order form with payment to the Performing Arts Foundation, 401 N. Fourth St., Wausau, WI 54403
  - Fax - Transmit your show order form with payment to the ArtsBlock Ticket Office at 842-8715
- Ticket orders submitted via phone, Internet or in person will be entered first. Fax and mail orders will be entered in the order they were received beginning on Wednesday.

early, then they won't be distracted by something else, including staying home and watching TV."

The strategy seems to have paid off. The PAF sold a record 520 season subscriptions, which surpassed the previous record of 449 established two years ago and by far surpassing last year's total of 374.

For more information, call the PAF at 842-0988 or log on to [www.onartsblock.org](http://www.onartsblock.org).

Overall, the PAF sold 11,000 season tickets so far this year, which surpassed its goal of 10,000.

But more season ticket holders might equate to fewer individual ticket sales, O'Connell said.

"Some of our (individual ticket buyers), perhaps as many as 200 of them, have turned into series subscribers, so we're not quite sure what's going to happen there."