



# VENUES**today**

"The news behind the headlines"

**Dear Natasha,**

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What's the latest this week in the fast moving venue management business? Here's your copy of **Venues Today**, the industry's leading source of news and information, full of all original reporting on general news, marketing, bookings, concessions and more. This weekly e-mail newsletter, combined with our monthly, full-color magazine is the unmatched source of valuable information designed specifically for the venue management industry.

## **QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

"Now what we have is what I call a living emergency preparedness plan." — Vince Quattrociocchi, VP of operations, Metro Toronto Convention Center

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## **VENUE NEWS**

***Rendering of Rochester Rhinos Stadium***

**ROCHESTER RHINOS CHARGE INTO SNAG**



Before construction on the future stadium of the Rochester (N.Y.) Rhinos soccer team can get underway, the Rochester Museum & Science Center must present a thorough plan to the city stating the Rhinos would not be building on any piece of land that has historical significance.

According to a spokesman for the Rochester Museum & Science Center, the process calls for the Rochester Museum to do the archeological

work and determine if there is anything on the site that would be of cultural importance to preserve. The Rochester Museum & Science Center began a small archeological dig at the site last week after discovering some foundations for buildings that used to border a portion of the Erie Canal. Archaeologists plan to spend a few weeks investigating whether the find is significant, and then they will produce a report. The state historical preservation office must sign off under The State Environmental Quality Review Act on this site.

"The site has a long history of different land uses and the current site is called the Erie Canal Industrial Park, but the Erie Canal was removed because they built an underground railroad on the site," said the museum spokesman. If the museum does find anything of historical value, it will be moved to the museum.

Soccer and city officials say that while the dig has created another minor delay in starting construction on the \$22 million project, it won't scuttle the stadium. "The fact is we are weeks away from the groundbreaking," Rhinos majority owner Frank DuRoss said in a press statement.

While the state environmental committee awaits the project information from the archaeological dig, stadium planning and design remains at a standstill. "We're waiting further directions from the Rhinos," said Carrie Plummer of HOK Sport + Venue + Event, the architectural firm hired to design the Rhinos' new stadium.

The Rochester Rhinos are planning to build the 12,500-seat stadium on the mostly vacant city-owned land in the Brown Square neighborhood. The city already has agreed to lease to the Rhinos about 15 acres of land just south of Lyell Avenue for \$1 a year for the next 45 years. The team, which is receiving a \$15 million state grant for the project, had hoped construction on PaeTec Park would have started by now.

Because of the delays, the Rhinos will play the majority of its games next year at Frontier Field, its current home.

One other concern — although not one that would delay construction — involves the future of Empire Precision Plastics Inc., which is located at the intersection of Oak and Smith streets. Company President Neal Elli, who supports the soccer project, has agreed to move to avoid conflicts with the stadium. The Rhinos plan to use the building for their administrative office, locker rooms and team store. But no deal has been worked out yet to relocate the company. — Melanie Nayer

*Interviewed for this story: Rick VanVertlo, Rochester Museum & Science Center, (585) 271-4320; Carrie Plummer, (816) 329-4220*

## **Metro Toronto Convention Centre's Vince Quattrociochi, left, and his security team**



### **TORONTO VENUES PUT SECURITY AT EMPLOYEE FINGERTIPS**

TORONTO — Turning a paper-based document into a living, breathing tool is what the Metro Toronto Convention Centre (MTCC) had in mind when it implemented a new software system designed to facilitate the timely initiation of its emergency-preparedness plan.

"For anyone who's been in the public assembly facilities business, emergency preparedness plans have usually been on paper and in binders

somewhere," said Vince Quattrociochi, vice president of operations, MTCC. "It tends to get out of date in terms of the names and numbers and contacts and procedures. We found ourselves in a similar situation a few years ago. When I reviewed the emergency plan here, which was on paper, I realized very quickly that it was out of date."

Soon after this discovery, Quattrociochi, a 25-year veteran in the life-safety business, said he met with Brian Smith, president of Toronto-based Crisis Management Online (CMO), whose software provides quick access to vital information.

"Now what we have is what I call a living emergency preparedness plan," said Quattrociochi, adding that MTCC ultimately chose to implement CMO. "It's on the desktop of all the people on the emergency team. And they just click on it, and its information they look at, refer to. It's no longer in the background of our organization."

As Canada's largest convention center — with 2.2 million square feet of space and about 700 events with roughly 1.5 million people annually — MTCC required a robust emergency-preparedness system. And while it has always had plans in place for fire safety, emergency and security, MTCC implemented CMO to improve response time.

"Customers typically have a wide variety of binders of written information," said Smith. "We gather the information from the multiple disciplines and structure it."

The Air Canada Centre (ACC), which formerly used a paper-based system to coordinate emergency preparedness, now uses CMO also, according to Ed Burgie, manager of safety and security at ACC.

"We use it as a training vehicle for employees for critical-emergency protocols," said Burgie, referring to layouts of the building, location of emergency systems and location of first-aid systems.

Quattrociochi said a facility can ask a member of its existing staff to make updates to CMO whenever there are changes related to staffing or contact details. And he says there have thus far been no regrets. "If we had to get into a situation which [necessitated] an emergency response, we're better equipped to do a better job in ensuring people are properly evacuated and the building is restored to its normal condition as quickly as we can with this software," said Quattrociochi. — Ian Palmer  
*Interviewed for this story: Vince Quattrociochi, (416) 585-8238; Brian Smith, (866) 250-8599; Ed Burgie, (416) 815-5745*

## **Tom Lewand, Ford Field vice president and COO**



### **NCAA GAME BESTS GLOBETROTTER RECORD**

Detroit's year-and-a-half-old Ford Field has succeeded in throwing the best-attended basketball game ever, welcoming 78,129 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Michigan State Spartans and Kentucky Wildcats fans to the stadium Dec. 13.

It took over five decades to best the 75,000 watermark set by the Harlem Globetrotters at the Berlin Olympic Stadium Aug. 21, 1951. The best-attended NCAA game had stood at 68,112 for a Jan. 20, 1990 Louisiana State University vs.

Notre Dame match-up at the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans. The best crowd Michigan State had drawn in the past was 45,406 at the 2001 Final Four at the HHH Metrodome in Minneapolis that March 31.

Tickets for "The BasketBowl — Hoops on the 50" sold out last summer at price points of \$125, \$38, \$36, \$14 and \$8. The most common ticket price was \$36, while 57 percent were \$14 or less, making for an approximate admission gross on the game of \$2.6 million. The cost to put on the event was estimated at \$1.5 million. It took a week to lay down the wooden planks for the court centered on the 50-yard-line. Thousands of patrons in the 65,000-seat stadium bought SRO spots on the artificial turf.

Food, handled by concessionaire Levy Restaurants, did not set a record, however, said Ford Field Director of Communications Risa Balayem.

Balayem said particulars of the deal were confidential, but it was a typical straight rental agreement, as are most events, although "it was a little more involved than that," she said. "It was a collaboration between folks at the stadium and Michigan State University."

Detroit Lions and Ford Field Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Tom Lewand said he hoped the success of "The BasketBowl" would help bring the NCAA Final Four to Detroit when the original announcement was made, and the NCAA made the decision to do just that in 2009 shortly thereafter.

The main goal for the stadium was good PR, Balayem said. "It was televised nationally on CBS Sports. It does bring 78,000 fans to the Detroit area, which is one of the main goals of the facility — to drive business and be the economic backbone of downtown Detroit." The new record was news everywhere, she said. "It was all over 'USA Today.' It's out there."

The record was intentional. "It was the brainchild of a couple of people here. Michigan State a couple of years ago had the world record attended hockey game at Spartan Stadium," Balayem said. — Natasha Emmons

*Interviewed for this story: Risa Balayem, (313) 262-2000*

## FACES & PLACES

### ARENA MANAGER BEAUCHAMP TAKES A CVB BOARD CHAIR

With an eye toward more business and better working relationships, Nancy Beauchamp, general manager of an arena for SMG, has stepped headlong into the convention side of the equation, accepting appointment to the board of the Greater Springfield (Mass.) Convention & Visitors Bureau. She will be attending her first board meeting Jan. 29. She was elected to the board on Oct. 29 for a two-year term.

Beauchamp manages the Mullins Center, a 10,500-seat capacity arena on the campus of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Her traditional role would not involve heavy interaction with the CVB, but Beauchamp stepped out of the box. "I think it is due to the fact I've gotten two major conferences for this area," Beauchamp said of her election to the CVB. "It might not seem like a lot to a major market, but for Springfield and Western Massachusetts, the fact we got the Massachusetts Democratic Convention to come here this upcoming spring and the fact we now have the 2005 Northeast first and second round ice hockey regionals through the NCAA is a very big deal." Both will be at the Mullins Center.

That got the attention of the Springfield CVB and particularly of the CVB director of sales who nominated Beauchamp for board. Beauchamp worked with the bureau's Michelle Beaudreau in getting hotel rooms blocked for the Democrats. "I've gone after this business independently. They recognize the fact we should all act as one group in the Pioneer Valley and they felt I should be on the board. I was pretty flattered to be asked," Beauchamp said.

She expects it to translate into more business for Mullin Center as well. "I will be on the front line of communication in knowing what's potentially out there and what the local region is trying to attract," she said. The Mullins Center and the University of Massachusetts are somewhat "on the fringes of outreach of the Greater Springfield CVB," she said. But with the Springfield Civic Center currently in a renovation phase, Mullins Center might get some of the business they typically attract temporarily, she said.

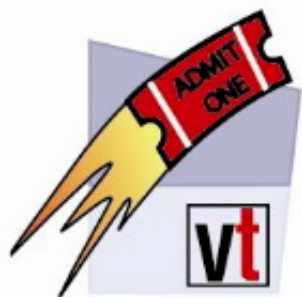
During the summer months, Beauchamp already blocks seven to eight weekend dates for Jehovah's Witnesses conventions. "That has helped fill in a lot of dark days for us, and the CVB recognizes that as well because there is a very large economic spin off to events like that," Beauchamp said. SMG also recognizes that effort. Thom Connors, SMG senior vice president of operations cited her "outstanding job of diversifying the programming at the Mullins Center and reaching out to the entire campus and local community." — Linda Deckard

*Interviewed for this story: Nancy Beauchamp, (413) 545-3001*

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## BOOKINGS

**HOT**tickets



## TROUBLED WATERS=SMOOTH TICKET SALES

**Hot Tickets** is a weekly summary of the top acts and ticket sales as reported to and not yet published in **Venues Today**. Following are the top 10 such concerts and events which took place since Nov. 26, 2003. To submit reports, e-mail Allison@venuestoday.com or fax to (714) 378-0040.

The **Hot Tickets** this week as reported to **Venues Today** are:

1) Gross Sales: \$6,023,220  
 Event: Simon and Garfunkel  
 Venue: **Madison Square Garden Arena, New York**  
 Attendance: 54,482  
 Ticket Range: \$250-\$50  
 Promoter: Clear Channel Entertainment (CCE)  
 Date: December 2, 3 & 4  
 Number of Shows: 3

2) Gross Sales: \$2,045,222  
 Event: Simon and Garfunkel  
 Venue: **Wachovia Center Complex, Philadelphia**  
 Attendance: 18,300  
 Ticket Range: \$227-\$52  
 Promoter: CCE  
 Date: Dec. 9  
 No. of Shows: 1

3) Gross Sales: \$1,231,375  
 Event: Aerosmith  
 Venue: **FleetCenter, Boston**  
 Attendance: 12,169  
 Ticket Range: \$125-\$45  
 Promoter: CCE  
 Date: Nov. 26  
 No. of Shows: 1

4) Gross Sales: \$1,091,880  
 Event: Aerosmith with Kiss and Porch Ghouls  
 Venue: **Jacksonville (Fla.) Arena**  
 Attendance: 11,145  
 Ticket Range: \$125-\$50  
 Promoter: CCE  
 Date: Dec. 5  
 No. of Shows: 1

5) Gross Sales: \$1,038,850  
 Event: Radio Show featuring: Beyonce, Sean Paul, Britney Spears, and more  
 Venue: **Staples Center, Los Angeles**  
 Attendance: 14,272  
 Ticket Range: \$175-\$35  
 Promoter: CCE



Date: Dec. 5  
No. of Shows: 1

6) Gross Sales: \$1,001,857  
Event: Dave Matthews and Friends  
Venue: **Wachovia Center Complex, Philadelphia**  
Attendance: 19,236  
Ticket Range: \$52.50  
Promoter: CCE  
Date: Dec. 15  
No. of Shows: 1

7) Gross Sales: \$920,775  
Event: Aerosmith with Kiss and Porch Ghouls  
Venue: **St. Pete Times Forum, Tampa Bay, Fla.**  
Attendance: 10,633  
Ticket Range: \$125-\$45  
Promoter: CCE/In-house  
Date: Dec. 3  
No. of Shows: 1

8) Gross Sales: \$695,560  
Event: Aerosmith with Kiss  
Venue: **Thompson Boling Arena, Knoxville, Tenn.**  
Attendance: 9,481  
Ticket Range: \$125-\$42.50  
Promoter: Jack Utsick Northeast Presents  
Date: Dec. 10  
No. of Shows: 1

9) Gross Sales: \$676,360  
Event: Phish  
Venue: **FleetCenter, Boston**  
Attendance: 17,569  
Ticket Range: \$40  
Promoter: CCE  
Date: Dec. 2  
No. of Shows: 1

10) Gross Sales: \$576,189  
Event: Phish  
Venue: **Pepsi Arena, Albany, N.Y.**  
Attendance: 16,135  
Ticket Range: \$36.50  
Promoter: CCE  
Date: Dec. 1  
No. of Shows: 1

*Compiled by Allison Peters, Allison@venuestoday.com*

***Limp Bizkit's Fred Durst, right, signs autographs in Korea***

**LIMP BIZKIT BUCKLES ON SE ASIA RUN**



JAKARTA — It's not the first time that a foreign band has canceled a concert in Indonesia. After Mariah Carey cancelled her concert in Jakarta that was scheduled for November 2003, another U.S. rock band, Limp Bizkit, also cancelled just three days before a scheduled concert in Bali, citing security concerns.

Original Production, which was promoting the Limp Bizkit concert in Indonesia, had to issue a press release on Dec. 2 canceling the highly anticipated Dec. 5 at Lotus Pond of Garuda Wisnu Kencana in Jimbaran, Bali.

The Indonesian promoter is bitter. "The official management and agent of Limp Bizkit in the U.S. said the cancellation is because the controversial vocalist [of] Limp Bizkit, Fred Durst, had one-sidedly cancelled their Southeast Asian countries [dates]," the press release from Original Production stated.

Concerts on the "Summer Sanitarium World Tour" scheduled for Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines that week were also nixed following a Nov. 21 U.S.-government-issued travel advisory in the wake of the terrorist bombing in Turkey.

"The very reason why Limp Bizkit/Fred Durst cancelled their concerts in some Southeast Asian countries [is] because of the indistinct fear of Fred Durst on the grounds of security reason[s] referring to the appeal of [the] U.S. State Department," the press release of Original Production stated. "It does not reflect the professional attitude of a band like Limp Bizkit," although the promoter did his best to persuade the band to keep playing in Bali on Dec. 5, the press release added.

Local news outlets in Southeast Asia were not kind, either, often noting the disconnect between the band's defiant lyrics and decision to "head for a shelter," as one columnist put it.

The main sponsor of the concert, Gudang Garam International, a cigarette brand, had extensively promoted the concert in billboards, newspapers and flyers to the tune of about \$119,047 (U.S.) and seven local television stations were scheduled to broadcast the event.

Tommy Pratama, the promoter, said that, along with other concert promoters in Southeast Asia, "we [will] try to persuade the band to reschedule the concert in the near future."

"The band violated the contract because the management and agent cancelled the concert just one week before it was scheduled. [If] the rescheduled concert does not materialize, we may bring the case into the court," Pratama said. "It is understandable when they consider Indonesia unsafe, but how about Singapore?" asked Pratama. The Singapore Indoor Stadium had expected the band on Dec. 3. Midas Promotions stated that they also only received notification of the cancellation on Dec. 2. BEC Tero Entertainment, the promoter in Bangkok, also made the cancellation announcement on Dec. 3.

"Actually it [was] Fred Durst who opted for Bali as the venue for its concert in Indonesia," Pratama argued.



VIP tickets for the concert were \$29.70 and regular admission was set at \$17.80. Package tours for the trip to Bali, including transportation, hotel and shuttle to the show were also offered, and will be refunded, Pratama said.

Dates in South Korea and Japan this week are going ahead as planned. The band is next due to play Castle Hall in Osaka, Japan, Dec. 18.

The band is popular, although Limp Bizkit's four-letter lyrics on some radio stations in Jakarta are normally censored. — Wahyuni Kamah

*Interviewed for this story: Tommy Pratama, +62 816 843 692; Revie Dhut, Original Production, +62 21 727 94 423*

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## ADVERTISEMENT



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## MARKETING



***CTV production studio, left, and finished newscast***

### CONVENTION TV CROSSES THE PACIFIC

CTV has spent the past four years ramping up its capabilities in the company's home base of Honolulu and is now starting to travel its "Convention Television" concept on the mainland.

For example, the American Academy of Orthodontists, which used CTV in Honolulu, has requested the company travel with them to their convention in Orlando in April 2004. CTV will conduct 20 interviews before that conference, then hire a news anchor and local production studio in Orlando.

"It's kind of like watching local network news, with an anchor desk and field reporters and pre-produced spots, with a little touch of CNN or CSNBC with the news crawl along the bottom, in our case scheduled events," said CTV President Mark Jensen.

"Most of the convention-related efforts in the past have been more looping commercials. The way this is set apart is it's a new show each day, like watching the news," Jensen said. About 85-90 percent of it is pre-produced, such as interviews with speakers, previews of social events and meetings. "Our writers interface with meeting planners months ahead of time, with the exception of some interviews on the exhibition floor or VIPs."

This has been a good training ground for CTV, which has a deal with the local cable provider giving the company access to televisions in 28,000 hotel rooms in Honolulu. CTV is a joint venture partner with Warner in Hawaii. They started out providing proprietary programming for the visitor market in Waikiki, then segued into the convention market, Jensen said.

"I think we've finally reached the point where the show is now mature. Early on, we didn't do same-day interviews. Now we're confident in technology and our ability," Jensen said.

As of Jan. 1, 2003, the Hawaii Convention Center became responsible for its own marketing, and brought CTV on as a marketing partner. CTV recently built a 1,400-

square-foot studio in the convention center capable of producing video on site. The digital studio has a blue screen that allows video to be added behind the speaker, and an Avid editing system. "It's an exciting new use of technology," said Joe Davis, general manager of the convention center.

And the technology has also been a key marketing tool for the convention center, allowing management to gather video footage of client testimonials on site, Davis said. "Eventually, we're going to put on our Web site streaming video and offer clients a piece of our Web site."

"We're able to post the program, also rebroadcast general sessions or keynote speeches or special events directly into the hotel rooms," Davis said. "Some groups have used it to provide a welcoming message from the chairman or the governor or ourselves. That personalizes the welcoming experience."

"This is something we initially co-created with the Hawaii Convention Center," Jensen said. "We started off real slow, looping content for the American Dental Association. They had what they called a series of Dental Minutes, a lot of content that they want the constituency to see. They also had a feature on 100 years of dentistry they had produced and wanted to debut during their meeting in Honolulu, which they did, but also showed later that evening in the hotel rooms."

The channel can also offer a tour of the building as part of the video program, talk about the mission of the building, architecture, and recycling program. "People will end up on that channel because of being bored with the programming elsewhere. It seems to be catching on," Davis said.

"It's part of the overall mix of services that we're offering," Davis said. "It's certainly gets the client and potential customers' attention when they see the capability. It's certainly attractive to exhibitors. They can market their service or product directly into the hotel rooms where attendees going to the trade show are staying. That's a real value-added service that event organizers figure they can use to make their exhibitors happy, and it makes attendees happy by being user friendly."

Right now the studio is not broadcasting directly to the hotel rooms. Footage is taped and taken to the cable distributor which rebroadcasts it. The ability to broadcast directly from here the center "is going to happen in the very near future," Davis said.

All the convention center is contributing is space and the ability for CTV to market their services. Davis sees potential for revenue opportunities or revenue sharing with CTV, especially in terms of selling advertising time. He also envisions pay-per-view broadcasts of concerts held at the convention center. "Say we get the Eagles, Sheryl Crow, and somebody wants to think about revenue opportunity worldwide. Why not? I think there's potential," Davis said.

CTV could be spreading across the SMG family. "Since groundbreaking, we've always been looking for an innovative companywide [offerings] that distinguish and separate us from other operating companies," Davis said.

"It provides the exhibitors who are the lifeblood of these meetings an opportunity to extend beyond the brick and mortar," Jensen said. Many advertisers will put their booth numbers and mobile phone numbers on their ads. CTV's research shows that they are getting 85 percent viewership from attendees at conventions that use the service. It's aired around the clock during the convention.

The ad sales model is not set in stone. Jensen's goal is to make it costless for the meeting planner, but it can also be a revenue generator depending on how the ad sales are worked. "What we try to do is create the core product, but allow ad sales and marketing to blend into what's comfortable with the meeting planner. We've had cases where they would like to do it all. We have a national call center and sales office we're utilizing now where we pre-market three to four conventions at a time.

"We're out of dress rehearsal. We're, literally, now ready for prime time," Jensen said. "It's one of these things that has found its niche built totally based on needs. Rather than us going in and saying, 'Here's the program,' we've taken four-and-a-half years and said, 'What's important to you?'" — Natasha Emmons

*Interviewed for this story: Mark Jensen, (808) 371-3535; Joe Davis, (808) 943-3536*

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## CONCESSIONS

### OVATIONS STANDS FOR PROMOTING FROM WITHIN

Ovations Food Services has reorganized, hiring George Lancia, a food service veteran most recently with Centerplate, and promoting within, to keep up with new business. The latest contract negotiated is with the Alameda County Fair, Pleasanton, Calif., where Ovations has a new 10-year deal and has installed Robert Garcia as general manager, said Todd Wickner, Ovations vice president of operations. The company also added the Fresno (Calif.) Grizzlies minor league baseball park in October, taking over what had been a self-op. That deal is for 13 years, Wickner said.

Ovations now has 28 food service contracts at public assembly facilities, seven of which were added in 2003. Three years ago, Ovations serviced just four accounts. The seven include the Clark County Amphitheater, Vancouver, Wash.; Larimer County Fairgrounds, Loveland, Colo.; Albuquerque (N.M.) Isotopes; Alameda; Savemart Arena, Fresno, Calif.; Norfolk (Va.) Tides; and the Fresno Grizzlies. Another new account, minor league baseball's The Swing, will open under Ovations' banner in 2004 at the renovated John O'Donnell Stadium, Davenport, Iowa. That, too, had been a self-op, Wickner said.

To accommodate the increase in business, Steven Cahoon, who joined Ovations in March as a special projects manager, was promoted to area regional manager, overseeing accounts in the Northeast. Lancia joined Ovations this month as an area regional manager overseeing the Southeast and Central U.S. His experience includes general manager positions at the Atlantic City (N.J.) Convention Center, Phoenix Civic Plaza, and the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, New Orleans. Most recently, Lancia oversaw the Eastern Division of Convention Centers for Centerplate.

Lancia and Cahoon join Nick Nicora and Charlie Neary as area regional managers, reporting to Wickner.

In addition Mike Brulatour will be relocating to Memphis to manage Ovation's largest Triple A baseball park; Chris Inouye becomes general manager at the Frederick Keys (Md.) Baseball Park, and Catherine Crowley has been promoted from operations manager for the Bowie (Md.) Baysox to general manager of the Patriot Center. — Linda Deckard  
*Interviewed for this story: Todd Wickner, (813) 265-0699, ext. 5.*

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## SHORT TAKES

### 'TREASURE' STATUS PROVES 'PROVIDENTIAL'

The Providence (R.I.) Performing Arts Center received a federal appropriation of \$275,000 from the Save America's Treasures Program to replace its deteriorated roof. U.S. Senators Lincoln Chafee and Jack Reed were instrumental in securing the assistance. Save America's Treasures, established in 1998 as part of the National Park Service, is dedicated to preserving and restoring the nation's historic and cultural heritage. The Providence Performing Arts Center, the second largest theater of its kind in New England, is a 3,100-seat, world-class venue. It was nicknamed the "Jewel of Weybosset Street" after its doors opened as Loew's Movie Palace in 1928. It was designated as an official project of the Save America's Treasures Program in March of 2000. The Providence PAC will celebrate its 75th anniversary April 7 with a concert by Josh Groban, at which time management will unveil the center's new chandelier.

*Contact: Lynn Singleton and P.J. Prokop, (401) 421-2997*

### LA FENICE OPERA HOUSE IS 'FINIS'

Dec. 14 was the grand reopening of the La Fenice (The Phoenix) Theatre opera house in Venice, Italy, seven years after the original 18th century structure burned, according to wire service reports. The building's marble façade, inlaid wooden floors and frescoed ceilings were restored. The total cost of the renovation is estimated at \$90 million. New seating gives the renovated concert hall a total of 1,076 seats and new rehearsal and conference rooms have been created below the orchestra floor. Opening night was the beginning of a weeklong series of concerts including performances by visiting orchestras and conductors, and a solo performance by pop singer Elton John. Then La Fenice will shut down again until November.

### HIGH-TECH, LOW-COST CONFERENCE CENTER

A new small conference facility, The Barnett Center, has opened for business at the Los Angeles and Orange County borders, in La Habra, Calif., and hopes to compete with larger centers and hotels. The venue is part of the headquarters for the Institute for Healthcare Advancement, and offers a 184-seat auditorium with theater-style seating and fold-down desktops at each seat. An adjacent, divisible classroom can be used for smaller meetings and instructional sessions. Michael Villaire is director of programs and operations. The center advertises itself as: "now open for community education events, fundraisers, corporate meetings and a variety of other conference needs."

*Contact: Michael Villaire, (562) 690-4001*

### DANCE FOUNDATION KICKS OFF

MetLife Foundation announced it will contribute more than \$2 million over three years to sponsor the MetLife Dance for Life initiative. The initiative will fund the national tours of six leading dance companies and is slated to bring over 400 performances to at least 200 cities each year. In addition, arts education programs will be provided in up to 15 cities during the three-year period. Grant recipients are: Ailey II of Alvin Ailey Dance Company, Ballet Hispanico, Dancing Wheels, H.T. Chen and Dancers, Mark Morris Dance Group, Paul Taylor Dance Company, ArtsConnection, and Young Audiences.

*Contact: Wangsheng Li, (212) 578-3194*

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