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A WEEKLY PUBLICATION FROM VENUES TODAY

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Quote of the Week

“As facility managers, it’s not who you book, it’s who you move around the schedule.”

— Doug Thornton of the Superdome in New Orleans on plans to add two more games to the NFL schedule.

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THE BEAT

Greetings,

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Meeting Planners**

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SHORT TAKES

>> CSC KEEPS WATCH AT US OPEN

—Contemporary Services Corporation (CSC) was chosen to provide security services for the US Open Tennis Championships in Flushing, N.Y. CSC is currently providing security to the event that began on Aug. 30 and is set to run until Sept. 12. *Contact: Meredith Gillotti, (949) 553-0820*

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VT NEWS

SPORTS

NFL CONSIDERS MOVE TO 18-WEEK SCHEDULE

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell



National Football League Commissioner Roger Goodell has announced that he will push for a longer schedule, expanding the regular season from 16 to 18 games while shortening the pre-season from four games to two. The expansion would tack two games onto the end of the season, pushing the regular season into mid-January, with a Super Bowl taking place in the second half of February.

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The plan faces objections from some players, facilities and other sports properties, but according to radio host Matthew Collier of Rochester, N.Y., the proposal could add \$500 million to the league's bottom line.

"The NFL makes approximately \$4.5 billion on TV contracts alone. If you add two more games that's essentially like adding 12 percent more to the season," he said. "ESPN alone pays about \$1 billion to have the NFL."

The proposed expanded schedule is expected to be a bargaining chip during the league's Collective Bargaining Agreement with the players association, whose contract expires before the start of the next season. While the NFL Players Association has not taken a position against an expanded schedule, many individual players have spoken out, arguing that adding two games each year could potentially shorten a player's career. Some fans have expressed opposition to an expanded schedule, Collier said, arguing that it could push up the price of tickets and add more end-of-season games that don't matter. Last season, the Indianapolis Colts benched their starters for the final three games of the season after locking up a playoff berth, disappointing many fans who hoped the team would be competitive all season long. Plus two more games in January might be a hard sell to fans who live in colder climates like Green Bay, Wis., or Buffalo, N.Y.

For NFL venues, the new schedule could present a challenge to the already full booking calendar for many stadiums.

"We do a lot of business that time of year," said Mark Miller, GM for Reliant Park in Houston. "We have a boat show, an auto show, a home show and many other trade shows."

Doug Thornton, GM for the Superdome and senior VP for SMG, said that adding additional games isn't particularly lucrative for stadiums.

"The net revenues generated from football events in our facilities go back to the team," Thornton said. "It won't be impactful to us either way as it relates to individual games. It will be impactful if we cannot host events that we would traditionally host during that period."

Thornton said an expanded schedule could interfere with long-standing Mardi Gras events. The New Orleans tradition is based on the Easter calendar and doesn't fall on the same dates each year. His tenant team, the New Orleans Saints, is expected to play far into the post season this year — the team won last year's Super Bowl and quarterback Drew Brees is the highest rated player in the NFL.

Plus there's the National Basketball Association's All-Star game, which takes place weeks after football wraps up, and NASCAR and professional golf also host high profile events in February. Most sports would be loath to compete against the NFL. Last year's Super Bowl was the highest rated television show of all time, drawing 106 million viewers. Often, an NFL preseason game can draw the same television rating as a World Series game.

Miller said he doubted that an expanded schedule would affect Reliant Stadium's other tenant, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, but he did add that it might affect the stadium's ability to host future Super Bowls.

Also watching the NFL schedule closely is Ken Hudgens of Feld Motorsports. The company typically tours Supercross and Monster Jam during those

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-Marketing Manager

months, and said it's spent years building a fan base around early winter shows.

"Right now, in the places that we're playing stadium-wise that have NFL teams, we're either working around their schedules in the off-week between the NFC-AFC Championship and the Super Bowl, or we're rolling the dice in places like the Georgia Dome (Atlanta) and Qualcomm Stadium (San Diego) and hoping that a home playoff game doesn't bump us out," he said.

Goodell is expected to push the expanded schedule during the next round of collective bargaining talks, Collier explained, "because they hold all of the cards. Their \$4.5 billion in TV contracts are guaranteed, whether the players play or not. The NFL still gets the money, while the players will be sitting on their hands not earning a dime" if they get locked out.

Regardless of what happens, Thornton said many facilities will work to give the NFL whatever it wants.

"Rest assured that we'll make it work," Thornton said. "As facility managers, it's not who you book, it's who you move around the schedule."
— Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this article: Matthew Collier, (585) 943-8110; Mark Miller, (832) 667-1775; Doug Thornton, (504) 587-3827; Ken Hudgens, (630) 566-6200

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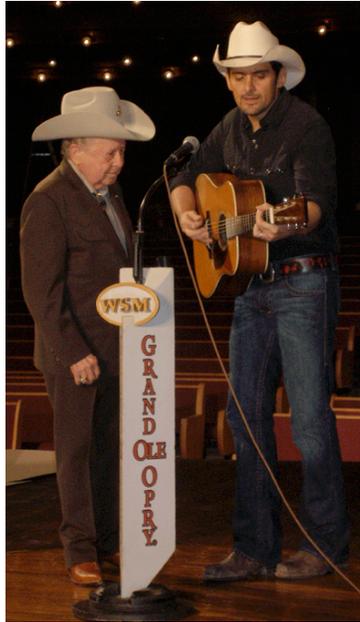
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BEHIND THE HEADLINES

GRAND OLE OPRY HOUSE READY FOR SHOWS AFTER FLOOD



Little Jimmy Dickens celebrates the rebuilding of the Grand Ole Opry house with Brad Paisley.

When the Cumberland River went over its banks in May, the Grand Ole Opry house in Nashville, Tenn., sustained major damage, including the loss of much of its electrical system, lights, pews and carpet on the main floor and the stage's wooden floor, all covered by 46 inches of water. The balcony area of the venue was not affected by the flood waters.

When all repairs were complete, the rebuild of the venue cost in the neighborhood of \$20 million, according to Debbie Ballentine, executive director of operations at the Grand Ole Opry. After months of hard work, the Opry house will finally reopen its doors on Sept. 28, several weeks ahead of schedule.

On Monday morning after the flood, Opry staff members had to find a place to hold the Tuesday night Opry house, and alert ticket holders about the location of the new venue. A remediation company brought fans into the building to start drying the wood so workers could get inside.

"Sally Williams, general manager of the Ryman, began contacting Nashville area venues on Monday to book the Opry shows in other venues," Opry Vice President and General Manager Pete Fisher, explained. "We secured War Memorial Auditorium for that first Tuesday night show. It had been the home of the Grand Ole Opry from 1939-1943. It probably took two to three weeks to finalize all the dates with different venues."

The Opry held shows at Lipscomb University, Two Rivers Baptist Church, Nashville Municipal Auditorium, War Memorial Auditorium, the Ryman Auditorium and the Tennessee Performing Arts Center's Jackson Theatre. The Opry did not miss a show during the five months it was on what Fisher calls the High Water Tour.

R.W. Matthews of Nashville was the general contractor overseeing the construction. Wolfe & Travis Electrical was the electrical contractor, and Anderson Design worked on the interior of the venue. David Plummer of PLAD Studio worked on getting the inside of the house ready.

"For the most part, it was truly a rebuild, but we definitely had an architect looking at everything we did," Ballentine said. "We were very fortunate that the contractors we worked with were people who had worked there before and were familiar with the building."

"Clair Brothers in Nashville did the audio and video, Bandit Lites in Knoxville did the lighting, and United Staging out of Alabama handled rigging and soft goods," Fisher said. "Music manufacturers like Peavey and

Yamaha stepped up to help out in a big way.”

The new stage, which sports a teak floor, has all new moving lights by Vari-Lites and a new audio monitor system. The new stage curtains remain a deep burgundy color, and the riggings and backdrops were repaired. The signature barn backdrop now sports a high definition video projection system including an LCD video wall. There are new front-of-house amplifiers and additional speaker cabinets. The main floor of the Ryman has newly built pews identical to the ones that were lost in the flood and new carpet.

The new entry doors have stained glass, a reminder of the stained glass windows at the Ryman Auditorium, which was home to the Opry from 1943 to 1974.

The backstage entrance now has a warmer and more inviting look to it as artists and guests enter the building. The 18 dressing rooms have a slightly different layout and each is themed to tell a chapter about the Opry. Roy Acuff’s dressing room remains the one closest to the stage. Workers were able to salvage the brass plate on his door which reads “Ain’t nothing gonna come up today that me and the good Lord can’t handle.” Porter Wagoner’s dressing room, designed by Marty Stuart, remains, and a Minnie Pearl room has been added. The administrative offices, also located backstage at the Opry house, were completely renovated.

The stage doors inside the house were preserved to be displayed in the Opry Museum because there was a clear line where the flood waters reached. The Green Room has a bronze marker that shows how high the water was in the building.

“The backstage at the Opry house will have accommodations and aesthetic appeal unlike any backstage I’ve ever seen in any venue,” Fisher said. “We have done all that can be done to weave the Opry’s legacy through this newly renovated Opry house.”

Studio A, located behind the dressing rooms, is being retooled to accommodate mobile productions. Fisher said now that the Opry house is finished, they will determine what to do with the Acuff Theatre, the Grand Ole Opry museum and other facilities at the complex.

When the Grand Ole Opry returns to its home, Opry members including Trace Adkins, Jason Aldean, Dierks Bentley, Charlie Daniels Band, Montgomery Gentry, and Brad Paisley will be on hand to celebrate. The two-hour show will air live on GAC: Great American Country.

Special events and artist appearances will follow throughout October in celebration of both the show’s return and its 85th Birthday. The Opry will resume its regular schedule the weekend of Oct. 2, when there will be an open house for fans to see the renovated venue. There will be music on the plaza and free tours of the building, plus regular Opry shows on Friday and Saturday night. — Vernell Hackett

Interviewed for this article: Debbie Ballentine and Pete Fischer, (615) 316-6000



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DEALS

OTTAWA PARTNERS WITH ARAMARK; PACIOLAN INTEGRATES PURDUE AND FLORIDA ST. WITH STUBHUB; CENTERPLATE RETOOLS BI-LO CENTER DEAL

Rendering of the Ottawa (Ontario) Convention Centre



Ottawa (Ontario) Convention Centre

Full Services Provider: Aramark

Date: Sept. 8, 2010

Terms: The 15-year deal is traditional in that it involves a percentage of the gross and an investment by Aramark. It's non-traditional in that it is "seamless," offering clients a one-stop shop branded Ottawa Convention Centre, rather than dealing with various and multiple providers and contracts. Aramark will coordinate all event services, including catering, retail food and beverage and set up. Jennifer McCrary will serve as general manager of the Ottawa Convention Centre for Aramark.

The \$180 million Ottawa Convention Centre opens in April 2011. Paul

Keough, senior VP, redevelopment and client services, said the Ottawa Convention Centre management staff used focus groups and facility tours to vet the best way to handle the concessions contract. It became clear, he said, that “clients just want a simple way to use the facility, with no hidden costs and no surprises. They do not want to be ping-ponged about, making more than the necessary handshakes.”

The most successful convention center operations they saw in North America and Europe were those that had a seamless relationship with service providers. The Ottawa Convention Centre will be that type of operation. The name Aramark will not be on the cups and contracts. It will all be the Ottawa Convention Centre and McCrary, an Aramark employee, is titled general manager for facilities for the center. The OCC person will be the Aramark person.

“It’s not just food and beverage; it’s delivery of services,” he emphasized.

The convention center will do a projected 700-900 events annually, grossing \$25 million in total revenue, including food and beverage, rental and ancillaries, Keough said.

Aramark’s Dan Smith said McCrary moved to Ottawa from their Palm Beach (Fla.) Convention Center operation. She will coordinate all event services, from managing catering and retail food to overseeing plant management, including engineering and mechanical maintenance, housekeeping and grounds.

Aramark also will be responsible for cleaning the facility’s exterior windows, consisting of 1,045 triangular window panes.

Interviewed for this story: Paul Keough, (613) 563-1984; Dan Smith, (215) 409-7403

Paciolan and StubHub

Clients: Purdue and Florida State

Date: Aug. 30

Terms: Paciolan has signed an agreement with secondary ticket marketplace StubHub to enable fans to buy and digitally resell tickets to games at Purdue in West Lafayette, Ind, and Florida State in Tallahassee.

The deal allows season-ticket holders to digitally list and sell their tickets on StubHub, while buyers can easily purchase tickets and print them at home, all digitally. The deal is the first of its kind for both companies and is similar to a StubHub deal in place for Major League Baseball, which Paciolan facilitates for both the Colorado Rockies and the Philadelphia Phillies.

“StubHub is a great partner for this deal because they have won the consumer wars,” said Kim Damron, VP of Client Partners. “Each year they spend millions and millions on advertising in the college market.”

Paciolan Founder Jane Kleinberger said both Purdue and Florida State approached her about piloting the program after she announced the partnership at a recent PacNet user conference. Paciolan expects to add two more schools by the time basketball begins. Kleinberger said the partnership allows buyers to purchase tickets without worrying about fraud, while box offices are better equipped to deal with tickets that are purchased through StubHub and can provide better customer service.

“We’ve definitely been in the college market for a long time in terms of college partnerships,” said Danielle Maged, head of Partnerships and Business Development for StubHub. “We now have 18 college partners. We’ve had the University of Southern California for a number of years, and Alabama (too).”

StubHub often lists tickets below face value for basketball and baseball, but Maged said that’s not necessarily the case for large conference football.

“On the college front it matters what the record is, how far along the season is and opponent,” she said. “Just from the naked eye, I haven’t seen a ton of listings below face value.”

Interviewed for this article: Jane Kleinberger and Kim Damron, (866) 722-4526; Danielle Maged, (415)222-8412

Bi-Lo Center, Greenville, S.C., and Charter Amphitheatre, Simpsonville, S.C.

Management: Greenville Arena District

Concessionaire: Centerplate

Terms: The Greenville Arena District (GAD) assumed management from Centerplate, effective Sept. 1. GAD owns the 15,000-seat Bi-Lo Center and manages Charter Amphitheater at Heritage Park. Centerplate will continue to provide food and beverage service at Bi-Lo Center through an extension of its existing contract for 10 years from this year (2020) and will expand that concessions agreement to include the Charter Amphitheater in Heritage Park, which has 3,500 fixed seats and 11,700 lawn seats.

Roger Newton, general manager of Bi-Lo Center, said that in the transition from Centerplate management to GAD “all staff was rehired. Everyone is staying.”

GAD owns the Bi-Lo Center. The board is appointed by the state. Originally, under the management agreement with Centerplate, Centerplate was the backstop for the bonds that built Bi-Lo Center. When the Greenville Grrrowl hockey team left the building four years ago, those bonds, though paid, were technically in default because Centerplate was no longer obligated to be the backstop.

Now, everything is back on track, Newton said, including addition of a new hockey team, the Greenville Road Warriors of the ECHL. That team, formerly the Johnstown (Pa.) Chiefs, begin play at Bi-Lo Center this season.

GAD bought Centerplate’s management contract for \$2.5 million, Newton confirmed. Centerplate had been paid \$1 million a year in management fees. That contract was due to expire in September 2013.

The concessions side is a percentage deal. Centerplate now pays 35 percent of the gross, down from 40 points before.

Centerplate also added the Charter Amphitheater to its venues. It had been a Premier Events food contract. GAD took over the venue from SMG in February and has booked eight shows this season. Newton said it will probably end the year with 50,000 attendance. Per caps on concessions have been as high as \$18 and average about \$8, he said. The city added a VIP tent area this year, which offers an upscale menu and liquor and drinks.

Centerplate's Bob Pascal said the deal is a good one for the concessionaire, extending the company's presence in Greenville. It does not portend an exit from venue management for Centerplate, he said. Each deal is case by case. — Linda Deckard and Dave Brooks

Interviewed for this story: Roger Newton, (864) 250-4917; Bob Pascal, (203) 975-5943

HOTTickets

HOT TICKETS is a weekly summary of the top acts and ticket sales as reported to VT PULSE. Following are the top 20 concerts and events, the top 5 in each seating capacity category, which took place since Aug. 11.

AREOSMITH STILL LIVIN' ON THE EDGE WITH \$1.2M GROSS IN JERSEY

15,001 or More Seats	10,001-15,000 Seats	5,001-10,000 Seats	5,000 or Less Seats
<p>1) Paul McCartney Gross Sales: \$4,885,207; Venue: Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia; Attendance: 31,077; Ticket Range: \$250-\$42; Promoter: Live Nation; Dates: Aug. 14-15; No. of Shows: 2</p>	<p>1) Aerosmith Gross Sales: \$1,251,313; Venue: Atlantic City (N.J.) Boardwalk Hall; Attendance: 10,512; Ticket Range: \$195-\$59.50; Promoter: Caesars Atlantic City; Dates: Aug. 28; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>1) Cirque du Soleil "Alegria" Gross Sales: \$1,244,897; Venue: Prospera Place, Kelowna, British Columbia; Attendance: 19,185; Ticket Range: \$89.65-\$42.47; Promoter: Cirque du Soleil; Dates: Aug. 25-29; No. of Shows: 8</p>	<p>1) Cats Gross Sales: \$368,076; Venue: David A. Straz, Jr. Center For The Perf. Arts, Tampa, Fla.; Attendance: 6,368; Ticket Range: \$67.50-\$20; Promoter: In-house; Dates: Aug. 13-15; No. of Shows: 5</p>
<p>2) Justin Bieber Gross Sales: \$734,604; Venue: Air Canada Centre, Toronto; Attendance: 15,859; Ticket Range: \$51.34-\$32.59; Promoter: AEG Live; Dates: Aug. 21; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>2) Atlantic City Comedy Festival Gross Sales: \$615,211; Venue: Atlantic City (N.J.) Boardwalk Hall; Attendance: 8,867; Ticket Range: \$85-\$45; Promoter: North American Entertainment Group; Dates: Sept. 3-4; No. of Shows: 2</p>	<p>2) Cirque du Soleil "Alegria" Gross Sales: \$929,726; Venue: Interior Savings Centre, Kamloops, British Columbia; Attendance: 13,812; Ticket Range: \$94.75-\$45.11; Promoter: Cirque du Soleil; Dates: Sept. 1-5; No. of Shows: 8</p>	<p>2) The Sound of Music Gross Sales: \$253,727; Venue: David A. Straz, Jr. Center For The Perf. Arts, Tampa, Fla.; Attendance: 5,370; Ticket Range: \$67.50-\$20; Promoter: In-house; Dates: Aug. 20-22; No. of Shows: 5</p>
<p>3) Justin Bieber Gross Sales: \$640,937; Venue: Scotiabank Place, Ottawa; Attendance: 14,284; Ticket Range: \$51.39-\$32.63; Promoter: AEG Live; Dates: Aug. 24; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>3) Justin Bieber Gross Sales: \$496,038; Venue: John Labatt Centre, London, Ontario; Attendance: 9,308; Ticket Range: \$49.95-\$30.92; Promoter: AEG Live; Dates: Aug. 22; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>3) Powderfinger Gross Sales: \$608,758; Venue: Newcastle Entertainment Centre (Australia); Attendance: 7,234; Ticket Range: \$90.67; Promoter: Secret Service Entertainment, Village Sounds; Dates: Sept. 1; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>3) Shen Yun Performing Arts Gross Sales: \$240,602; Venue: Cobb Energy Perf. Arts Centre, Atlanta; Attendance: 2,007; Ticket Range: \$220-\$60; Promoter: New Times Cultural & Education Center, Inc.; Dates: Aug. 21; No. of Shows: 2</p>
<p>4) Justin Bieber Gross Sales: \$639,505; Venue: Conseco Fieldhouse, Indianapolis; Attendance: 14,490; Ticket Range: \$51.50-\$31.50; Promoter: AEG Live; Dates: Aug. 12; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>4) Justin Bieber Gross Sales: \$441,009; Venue: Dunkin Donuts Center, Providence, R.I.; Attendance: 9,679; Ticket Range: \$51.50-\$31.50;</p>	<p>4) John Butler Trio Gross Sales: \$299,871; Venue: Hordern</p>	<p>4) Jeff Dunham Gross Sales: \$233,863; Venue: The Colosseum at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas; Attendance: 3,394; Ticket Range:</p>

<p>5) Justin Bieber Gross Sales: \$639,255; Venue: Prudential Center, Newark, N.J.; Attendance: 13,942; Ticket Range: \$52.50-\$32.50; Promoter: AEG Live; Dates: Aug. 28; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>Promoter: AEG Live; Dates: Aug. 27; No. of Shows: 1</p> <p>5) Drake Gross Sales: \$384,542; Venue: Hoosier Lottery Grandstand, Indianapolis; Attendance: 12,289; Ticket Range: \$45-\$25; Promoter: Indiana State Fair, Live 360; Dates: Aug. 13; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>Pavilion, Sydney; Attendance: 5,172; Ticket Range: \$64.26; Promoter: Butler Brown Pty. Ltd.; Dates: Sept. 3; No. of Shows: 1</p> <p>5) Norah Jones Gross Sales: \$296,400; Venue: Greek Theatre, Los Angeles; Attendance: 5,817; Ticket Range: \$65-\$35; Promoter: Nederlander; Dates: Aug. 25; No. of Shows: 1</p>	<p>\$81.36-\$45; Promoter: AEG Live; Dates: Sept. 3; No. of Shows: 1</p> <p>5) Norah Jones Gross Sales: \$198,800; Venue: Santa Barbara (Calif.) Bowl; Attendance: 3,509; Ticket Range: \$69-\$44; Promoter: Nederlander; Dates: Aug. 24; No. of Shows: 1</p>
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Compiled by Rob Ocampo and Josh Huckabee. To submit reports, e-mail HotTickets@venuestoday.com or fax to (714) 378-0040.

THE BEAT

BOOKINGS

RAVINIA WRAPS SUMMER WITH IMPROVEMENTS IN MIND

Since 1904, the Ravinia Festival has provided a forest sanctuary for music lovers in Highland Park, Ill. Despite climbing artist fees and a dismal economic forecast, Ravinia has managed to book superstar acts, add new improvements to its facilities, continue its community outreach, and keep people coming back for more.

“We have been very fortunate. We think we’re going to hit our goals from a ticket sales point of view and a fundraising point of view, which in this economy is cause for maybe not jubilation, but at least relief,” said Welz Kauffman, president and CEO of Ravinia Park. Although official numbers will not be available until later in the fall, Kauffman explained that current ticket sales are hovering around the venue’s annual average, which is between 550,000 and 600,000 tickets sold.

Ravinia has seen artist fees climb for the past 10 years as recording revenues drop and the competition from other entertainment venues in the Chicago area increases. The casino market has burgeoned in the past couple years, particularly in nearby Indiana. “It’s just one more place where artists can play, and the more places they have possible to play, the higher their fees,” said Kauffman.

This summer, Ravinia Festival presented 92 acts. Popular performances included Yo-Yo Ma, Renee Fleming, Earth Wind & Fire, Sheryl Crow, Rodrigo y Gabriela, and Sting, whom Kauffman dubbed the biggest artist Ravinia has had in its 106-year history. Sting performed to a sold out crowd in Ravinia’s 3,200-seat theater, the Pavilion, as well as attendees on the lawn, which fits approximately 14,000 people.

At four Chicago Symphony concerts this summer, Ravinia offered seats on the Pavilion for \$25. Normal symphony seat prices can range from \$50 to \$90. Other popular promotions that Ravinia has been offering are special dining packages that range from \$35 to \$60 and include a meal, parking and performance ticket, and \$10 seats in its 450-seat theater, Bennett-Gordon Hall.

After summer is wrapped, the Ravinia staff will get started on restoring the grounds and preparing them for the cold winter months. The staff drops from 500 to 50 from summer to off-season months, but Kauffman explained that the Ravinia staff continues to work hard after the music stops.

“We do a lot of prep work so [the grounds] can kind of hibernate,” said Kauffman. However, the large project expected to be completed by spring of 2011 is a new, handicapped-accessible, 42-foot pedestrian underpass that will connect the main parking lot to the Tyler Gate entrance on the festival grounds.

Because a train company constructed Ravinia as an amusement park in 1904, the train still stops at the front door of the park. This new pathway will pass under the train tracks, which have proved problematic for festival goers that park in the main lot, and have to wait as long as 30 minutes for trains to pass before being able to cross. "There have been some waiting issues, and it's a real customer service problem. So we're investing quite a lot of resources in building this underpass. It will be the major off-season project," said Kauffman. The project, which has been in the works for the past eight years, will cost \$5 million and will be privately funded by Ravinia. — Linda Domingo

Interviewed for this article: Welz Kauffman, (847) 266-5415

FAIRS & FESTIVALS

EVEN WITH TWISTER, MONTANA FAIR IS A HARD-TO-RESISTER



This youngster enjoys corn-on-the-cob at the MontanaFair, Billings.

MetraPark officials in Billings, Mont., had their work cut out for them when the 10,000-seat Rimrock Auto Arena was gutted by a tornado less than eight weeks before the start of the annual MontanaFair, which took place Aug. 13-21.

A tornado ripped through Billings on June 20, Father's Day, and hovered over and swirled inside the Rimrock Auto Arena for at least 12 minutes.

"The grandstand is in perfect order, but it spent 12 minutes scouring the inside of the arena," said Sandra Hawke, marketing director for MetraPark. "It just broke

through the roof and sat there for 12 minutes."

The bones of the building remain intact and most of the soft seats are salvageable, but the roof was ripped out and other damage was done to the interior.

"Not a soul" was on the grounds June 20 and no one was hurt, although people nearby had video cameras and images of the tornado ripping off the arena's roof can be viewed on YouTube.

The community rallied to help pick up the debris and 1,500 volunteers showed up instead of the requested 500.

"Once we came out and said, 'We are not canceling the fair, we're going to move ahead,' the community gave us kudos for that quick and definite response," Hawke said.

The community also showed support by attending the fair at almost the same rate as the year before, with the final number ending up at 232,657 compared to last year's 233,015.

The loss of the use of the arena for the fair meant finding a place to hold the event's three large opening weekend concerts, so Hawke contacted Tim Kohlmeyer of Theatrical Media Services in Omaha, Neb., who set MetraPark up with an outdoor stage on the track of the grandstand. Insurance covered most of the cost of the outdoor staging.

Jason Aldean opened the fair Aug. 13 with tickets costing \$45, \$35 and \$25; the Scorpions played Aug. 14, \$45, \$35 and \$25; followed up by Hinder with Finger Eleven on Aug. 15, \$35 and \$25. The budget for the entertainment buys was \$350,000 plus production, Hawke said.

The grandstand has a capacity of about 6,200 and the concerts all averaged about 5,600, so the loss of the arena's extra seats was not a problem, Hawke said.

Those were the only concerts planned for the fair; however, Hawke had booked Celtic Woman for the day after the fair closed. That show could not be converted to an outdoor production.

Hawke called the Brick Breeden Fieldhouse in Bozeman, Mont., which picked up the Celtic Woman concert. Hawke also had to cancel concerts by Brad Paisley and Carrie Underwood, who already were

routed to Brick Breeden Fieldhouse. Ticket sales were under way for those appearances; a concert by Rodney Carrington was about to go on sale and did not. Carrington now is playing the Adams Event Center in Missoula, Mont., on Nov. 18.

As to what it will cost to repair the Rimrock Auto Arena, "Let me first preface that by saying we are insured up to \$121 million, and we're probably in the vicinity of half of that, plus a little money for lost business."

Insurance also will help pay for the code upgrades that will be required at the arena, which was completed in 1975, 15 years before the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 mandated handicapped accessibility.

Charlie Smith and David Forkner, formerly of HOK Smith Forkner in Knoxville and now with the global design firm Populous, have been retained and will work with CTA Architects Engineers in Billings, Hawke said.

"Populous will return this week with concept drawings for consideration," said Hawke, who noted that the designs will go before the three Yellowstone County commissioners for approval.

"Based on the outcomes of those presentations, we'll be better able to adjust the timeline, but right now the target date (for completion) is sometime in March."

In addition to doing what will be necessary to take the building up to code, "We hope to make a few enhancements," Hawke said. "Instead of simply rebuilding, it's a nice opportunity to make some updates that may not be covered by the insurance at replacement cost but would be logical to do in the process."

Austin, Texas-based Mighty Thomas Carnival provided 33 rides on the midway, said co-owner John Hanschen, with the popular rides being the Century bumper cars, the Thunderbolt, Pharaoh's Fury and the three-lane, 100-foot long Frederiksen slide.

The situation with the arena actually might have helped the carnival achieve a 2 percent gain over last year because the grandstand is closer to the midway, Hanschen said.

Pay-one-price, all-you-can-ride wristbands cost \$20 or \$2 off with a coupon, Hawke said, and were good either for afternoon or evening hours. There also was a "Buddy Day" that basically was a buy-one-get-one-free event from 6 p.m. to midnight.

Admission cost \$8 for ages 13 to 64 and \$5 for ages 6 to 12 and 65-plus, Hawke said. Gate revenues of \$467,829 were on par with last year. "Our record was \$496,781, in 2008, the year before the recession, so it's a good report," Hawke said.

The entire fair budget was about \$1.2 million but with some cost overruns that will be covered by insurance.

MetraPark was four years into a 10-year naming rights sponsorship deal with Rimrock Auto of Billings. The deal will be suspended for a year and then resumed because of the time the building will be out of commission.

Next year's fair dates will be Aug. 12-20, by which time the renovated arena should be up and running for several months. - Mary Wade Burnside

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