

**FOCUS 20/20: Your Theatre, Your Town
33rd Annual Conference and Theatre Tour
Cleveland, Ohio July 15-18, 2009**



Last updated 6/3/09; Subject to change.

Recession Survival Techniques: Lessons from the Great Depression

Friday, July 17, 2009

2:00-3:30 PM

Reinberger Chamber Hall, Severance Hall, University Circle

Visit Severance Hall, home of The Cleveland Orchestra and hailed as one of the most beautiful concert halls in the country for more than half a century and learn how historic theatres around the country are weathering these turbulent times. What strategies and tactics have they developed? How are they investing limited resources in new ways and developing new alliances or collaborations? What do their communities need most from them? *Presenter: John Vacha, author and theater historian, and panelists: John Hemsath, Director of Theatre Operations, PlayhouseSquare, moderator; James Boese, Vice President, Nederlander Producing Company of America; Edward Kelsey, General Manger, Orpheum Theatre; Lance Olson, Manger, Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College; Deborah Smith, Executive Director, Newberry Opera House; and Donald Telford, President & CEO, San Diego Theatres*

SPEAKER BIOS

JAMES A. BOESE

Vice President

Nederlander Organization, New York, NY

James A. Boese currently serves as Vice President of the Nederlander Organization, one of the largest owners of legitimate theatres in the world, as well as one of the largest theatrical producing organizations in North America. He is primarily responsible for the overall operations of Nederlander's nine Broadway theatres in New York City. He is a member of the Broadway League and serves on the Finance and Marketing Committees. As a member of the Board of Directors for the Times Square Alliance, he serves on the Policy, Planning and Design Committee. In addition, he is currently serving a two-year term as President of the Board of Directors for the League of Historic American Theatres (LHAT), an organization dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation and sustainable operation of historic theatres throughout North America. Jim received a Master of Fine Arts Degree from California Institute of the Arts.

JOHN HEMSATH

Director of Theatre Operations

PlayhouseSquare, Cleveland, OH

John Hemsath began his career in professional theater management in 1973 with the Playhouse Square Foundation. His first task was the development of the group sales office. The development of the special events department followed. While continuing these activities, he was made the assistant to the producer and became responsible for the productions at Playhouse Square.

From modest beginnings in the early 1970's, Playhouse Square Foundation has developed PlayhouseSquare into the largest performing arts center in North America outside New York City. Comprising five theaters (four of which are contiguous) in downtown Cleveland, PlayhouseSquare has over 9,000 seats and entertains approximately one million guests per year.

In 1982 John was promoted to his current position of Director of Theater Operations. He has participated in the design and renovation of much of the Center. His day-to-day responsibilities include the supervision

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of the technical department, maintenance, housekeeping, house management, volunteers, food and beverage, and security. He also works closely with the Center's constituent companies, and coordinates theatrical rentals of the Center. From time-to-time, John has served as a consultant on various theater renovation projects around the country.

John holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from Case Western Reserve University. A board member of the League of Historic American Theatres, John is also a member of the International Association of Assembly Managers, and has served on the League's Peer Advisory Review Program.

EDWARD KELSEY

General Manager
Orpheum Theatre, Los Angeles, CA

Edward Kelsey is the General Manager of the Orpheum Theatre in downtown Los Angeles as well as the Construction Manager for Anjac Fashion Buildings, the owner and operator of the Orpheum. Edward has been with Anjac since 1999, first as construction manager for the renovation of the historic Wurlitzer Building and then as project manager for a \$3.5 million renovation of the Orpheum Theatre in 2001. Since then he has acted as general manager of the theater while assisting Anjac in the ongoing renovation of their other properties in the historic center of Los Angeles. The Orpheum currently operates as a rental venue, with a variety of productions ranging from music to dance to awards shows and film screenings as well as many TV and film productions.

Prior to joining Anjac Edward was on the technical staff of the Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts for over six years, as well as continuing to operate his own consulting business – Historic Theater Services. He is a board member of the League of Historic American Theaters and a long-time volunteer for the Los Angeles Conservancy, and is also on the board of directors of the Theater Historical Society of America. He has contributed articles on historic theaters to various national publications.

LANCE OLSON

Theatre Manager
Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College, Boston, MA

Lance joined the Emerson College staff in 1993. During his tenure at Emerson College he has promoted partnerships with Boston's finest not-for-profit resident arts groups which have served to stabilize and strengthen the Majestic, and make it the most active, serving the most diverse communities, among Boston's Historic Theatre District facilities. He has raised funds for and supervised nearly \$500k in restoration and improvement projects that have created a 21st century theater inside a landmark 19th century shell.

Treasurer and board member of the League of Historic American Theatres, Olson serves as President of Massachusetts Advocates for the Arts, Sciences and Humanities (MAASH), a member of the Legislative Advocacy Committee of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, a trustee of Dance Makers, Inc., a member of the steering committee of the Boston Historic Theatres Charrette, a member of the board of New York's Improvisational Arts Ensembles, Inc., on the Education Advisory Council for the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark and as a member of The National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Boston Preservation Alliance. He is a graduate of the University of Minnesota, and of Brooklyn College, holding an M.F.A degree in Performing Arts Administration.

Olson has worked in the professional performing arts since 1969. Most recently he served as the presenter at Rutgers University, where he was one of the founders and the Executive Director of Rutgers SummerFest. While at Rutgers, he expanded outside presentations and residencies from five classical music concerts in 1986 into a 110-event multi-disciplinary community service program. Olson conceived

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and executed Rutgers' Nikolais/Louis Residency and Retrospective Program, during which the University commissioned the reconstruction of twelve works from the first 25 years of the multi-media geniuses Alwin Nikolais and Murray Louis. The project received the largest grant ever awarded by the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Arts Partners Program administered by the Association of Performing Arts Presenters.

DEBORAH SMITH

Executive Director
Newberry Opera House, Newberry, SC

The Executive Director of the Newberry Opera House Foundation, Deborah Smith manages the facility and works extensively with the economic development of the region. Prior to Newberry, Smith was Arts Coordinator for, Middlebury College, in Vermont, where she was responsible for the construction and management of the new 20 million dollar facility with 3 performance spaces plus museum, library and restaurant, as well as classrooms and teaching spaces.

She was the founding General Manager of the Stamford Center for the Arts, in Stamford CT, where she directed the day to day activities of arts complex with 3.5 million dollar annual budget, overseeing the construction of one new building including an 800 seat theater, a 200 seat black box and a radio/television facility. She assisted in the renovation of the Shubert Performing Arts Center in New Haven, Connecticut as the Assistant to Director. Smith has also served as an arts consultant in Alaska, Connecticut, Texas and throughout the country. She began her arts experiences as the Concert Manager/Administrative Assistant at the Yale School of Music, where she managed Sprague Hall, and over 1,000 student and professional concerts and events a year. She has lectured on Arts administration in various institutions including the Yale School of Music, and most recently Clemson University.

As a producer, she has worked on Broadway productions and produced plays and events for the American Shakespeare Festival at the University of Connecticut, The American Place, NYC, and at the Edinborough Festival. She completed Fred Vogel's course for producers and has worked on projects with him. She has served as a panelist for the National Endowment, the South Carolina Arts Commission, South Carolina Department of Tourism, the Vermont Arts Commission and Connecticut Commission on the Arts, and on many boards in Connecticut, New York, Vermont and now South Carolina.

She was educated at Elmira College and pursued graduate degrees at the University of Connecticut and the University of Vienna, Austria. A board member of the League of Historic American Theatres, Deborah is also a member of the Society for Women Geographers, and travels and writes extensively.

DONALD M. TELFORD

President & CEO
San Diego Theatres, San Diego, CA

Don began his career at the San Diego Civic Theatre over 30 years ago and has worked under diverse governance models leading up to the creation of San Diego Theatres in 2003. San Diego Theatres manages, markets and operates the Civic Theatre and is preparing for the December 2007 reopening and management of the historic Balboa Theatre. Don led the start-up of this corporation, including development of board/staff relations, mission, vision, benchmarking, personnel guidelines, reporting structures, and stakeholder relationships. In 1977-78, Don assisted in transitioning the historic Fox Theatre from cinema to the site for major Broadway tours, international ballet companies, and concerts. From 1997-2004, Don served as Executive Vice President of San Diego Convention Center Corporation. A board member of the League of Historic American Theatres, Don has served as an IAAM District Vice President and board member and as member of San Diego Mayor's Millennium Committee, Diversity Marketing Committee, and currently serves on Downtown Partnership's Arts & Culture Committee.

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JOHN VACHA

Author and Theatre Historian
Cleveland, OH

John Vacha is “a retired teacher who has become Cleveland’s Theater historian,” in the words of *Plain Dealer* critic Tony Brown. He has written *Showtime in Cleveland: The rise of a Regional Theater Center* (Kent State University Press, 2001), *The Music Went ‘Round and Around: The Story of Musicarnival* (2004), and *From Broadway to Cleveland: A History of the Hanna Theatre* (2007).

A graduate of Case Western Reserve University, he taught history and journalism in the Cleveland school system and Cuyahoga Community College. Currently, he is coordinator of Ohio District 3 History Day at the Western Reserve Historical Society.