

# pittsburgh applause!

arts & entertainment newsletter

## Boards Approve Big Union Merger

As expected, the boards of both the **Screen Actors Guild (SAG)** and the **American Federation of Television Arts & Sciences** have approved their proposed merger.

Formed in 1933, SAG represents over 200,000 film and television principal performers. AFTRA, formed in 1937, represents 80,000 actors in radio and television, as well as radio and television announcers and newsmen,

singers and recording artists, promo and voice-over announcers and other performers in commer-



cials, stunt persons and specialty acts. Both unions have hundreds of members in the region and AFTRA maintains a full-time Pittsburgh office.

The SAG board approved the merger by 87.1% on January 27 and the AFTRA board did the same the following day by 94%. Now their respective memberships are to cast their vote, which is considered primarily a formality.

The leadership of both unions feels that by combining their strength, they will be better able to represent their members in the changing media landscape. The combined organization will be officially called SAG-AFTRA. Details are available online by visiting [http://](http://www.aftra.com/6D4AAFE63943E7BE41C0314393AFA0.htm)

[www.aftra.com/6D4AAFE63943E7BE41C0314393AFA0.htm](http://www.aftra.com/6D4AAFE63943E7BE41C0314393AFA0.htm)

In other union news, the CEO of SAG's pension fund, Bruce Dow, has taken a leave of absence. As reported in past issues of *Pittsburgh Applause*, the fund and Dow have been facing allegations of embezzlement. A statement issued claimed that the leave is "for personal reasons."

### Inside This Issue

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## PG's Performer Of Year

Actress Laurie Klatcher has been named by the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* as the 2011 Performer of the Year.

The California native is a **Carnegie-Mellon University** graduate who appeared in two high profile productions in 2011. The *Post-Gazette's* Christopher Rawson specifically called out her performance in the play "Precious

Little" in which she played three very different roles: an ape, a pregnancy counselor and an elderly immigrant. She played the ape without make-up or costume, which Rawson called "an unsettling, impassive, inscrutable portrait you couldn't get out of your mind."

The newspaper has been issuing the award for 28 years.



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## Center Gets Funds

The financially struggling **August Wilson Center for African-American Culture** has secured the necessary funding to restructure its debt, reports Bob Bauder of the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*.



August Wilson  
Center for  
African American  
Culture

Named in honor of the Pulitzer Prize winning Pittsburgh playwright August Wilson, the center opened in 2009. Last summer it was revealed that the center is \$9 million in debt and head a hefty \$750,000 in annual operating expenses. [*Pittsburgh Applause*, August 2011 – Ed]

According to Bauder's article, the center has secured over \$4 million in support from foundations along with a \$2 million loan by the Pittsburgh Urban Redevelopment Authority. It is believed that this gives the center the financial stability it will need in negotiating a loan with a consortium of banks.

In other news, *Dance Magazine* has named the center's dance ensemble as a "one to watch" in 2012 commenting on its "quicksilver agility" and "innate theatricality." Read the full article online at <http://www.dancemagazine.com/issues/January-2012/2012-25-to-Watch>

## PSO Prez On Deficit

Through an article in the *Pittsburgh Tribune Review* written by Mark Kanny, James A. Wilkinson, the new president of the **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra**, is assuring Pittsburgh's classical music community that the orchestra can and will pull out of its current financial situation.



Wilkinson immediately succeeded Larry Tamburri, who abruptly resigned in November 14 [*Pittsburgh Applause* December 2011 –ed.] only weeks after it had been publicly revealed that the PSO expected to lose over \$1 million within its fiscal year [*Pittsburgh Applause* October 2011 – Ed.]

He has an interesting mixture of experience in both the business and non-profit worlds, working with companies like **USX Corporation** and organizations such as the **Carnegie Museums**. He feels that the PSO has a solid strategic plan, but lacks the financial framework to make it happen. "My job," he explained to Kanny, "is to work on the development of that financial framework and the implementation of various tactics" that have already been agreed on.

Despite the financial issues, the PSO's artistic quality remains high. As a result, they orchestra has been invited by **Carnegie Hall** to perform in 2014 as part of its annual music festival. According to a press release, the PSO will perform Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's famous "Requiem."

## Pappas Re-Ups

Ted Pappas and the **Pittsburgh Public Theater** (PPT) have agreed on a new four-year contract.

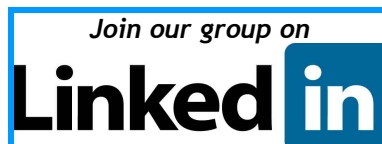
Established in 1974, the PPT is (along with **Pittsburgh City Theatre**) one of the re-



gion's leading professional theater companies. Pappas has been artistic director since 2000.

"Ted has been a visionary and skillful leader of Pittsburgh Public Theater for more than a decade," PPT's board president Michael H. Ginsberg told Alice Carter of the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. "His artistic and fiscal management has been second to none." Ginsberg told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's* Sharon Ebersson that he hopes the company will begin commissioning new works, as City Theatre often does. "We want to grow the organization and to expand," Ebersson quotes him saying. "We will work with Ted to develop new shows and new themes and new ideas for the theater."

The new contract keeps Pappas with the PPT through 2018.



## More Nightclub Troubles; One Closes

Another nightclub is shutting down after an act of violence, this time a shooting incident that took the life of a 27-year-old mother of two.

In the early morning of January 1, Shateecha Roach was shot as she walked to her car from spending the night welcoming 2012 at the **Fever Nightclub** in the Strip District. The owner has decided to close it.

The Strip District used to be the city's hot spot for nightlife but due to a confluence of reasons --- including crime --- most clubs have failed. According to the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review's* Bill Vidonic, the 19<sup>th</sup> Street site that Fever called home has seen six clubs come and go in five years. Fever itself had only been open for two months. Vidonic's January 3 article also reports that the State Liquor Control Board has

recorded a long history of violations at the location.

Last year, two South Side clubs were closed for legal problems. One, Zen Social Club at Station Square, shut down after shootings in November.

Meanwhile, the strip club **Blush**, located in the Pittsburgh Cultural District within steps of the Pittsburgh High School for the Creative & Performing Arts, has dropped plans to expand into an adjacent property. **The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust** (PCT) was among those who objected, saying that the expansion plan would impact its \$500 million residential, hotel and retail project River-Parc.

Last March, Blush owner Albert Bortz and PCT's Kevin McMahon made their respective cases to the city's zoning board. According to the city's regulations, Blush

needed a "special exception" to expand into what Bortz envisioned as an entertainment complex. [*Pittsburgh Applause* April 2011 - Ed.] The board approved it, leading to a lawsuit. A state judge overturned the approval in December. Bortz has decided not to pursue the matter any further and will expand by renovating the club's existing building.

One club, though, isn't having these problems: **Club Zoo** has moved from the Strip District out to the little town of Harmar (population 3,000) not far from the county border. The alcohol-free club targets youth ages 15 to 20 years old. "[We're] not promoting drink specials," owner Chris Firman told the *Aspinwall Herald's* Mary Ann Thomas. "We're selling a good time for kids to hang out in an environment that is cool and safe."

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# Mellon Foundation Makes Key Grants

On January 24, the **Westmoreland Museum of American Art** (WMAA) announced that it has received an impressive \$8 million grant from the **Richard King Mellon Foundation**. The news came roughly a week after the **Carnegie Museums** announced that the natural history museum is getting \$730,000 from the foundation.

Richard  
King  
Mellon  
Foundation

The foundation was created in 1947 by internationally known financier and civic leader Rickard King "RK" Mellon (1899-1970). It focuses on economic development, conservation, education,

human services and non-profit capacity building.

WMAA's grant is to go toward its capital and endowment campaign. In an article published on January 25, the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review's* Jennifer Reeger explains that the museum plans a new wing, renovation of its existing building and the redesign of its grounds. "A gift of that magnitude is really significant for us and bodes very well for our success in the campaign going forward," CEO Judith O'Toole explained to Reeger.

The other grant is going to the Carnegie Museum of Natural History's Center for Biodiversity & Ecosystems. It will help establish the center as the authority on Ap-

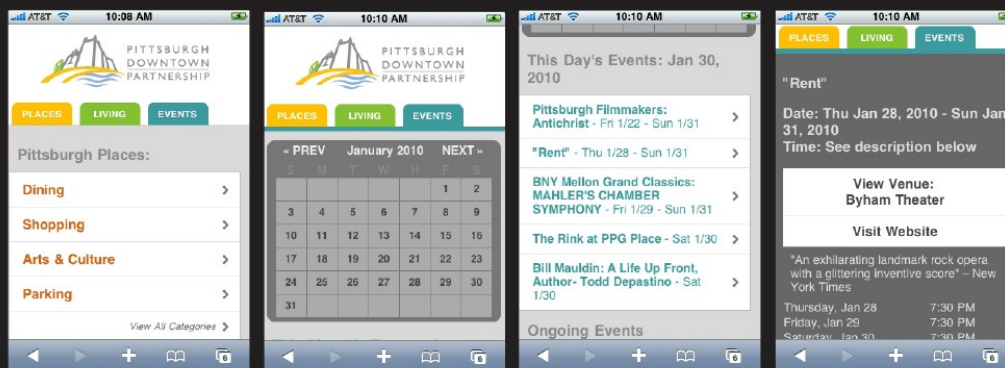
palachian ecosystems. The center will be based at the Powdermill Nature Reserve in Rector. "This generous grant allows the center to assume a leadership role in understanding the ecosystems of Appalachia," says director John Wenzel in a press release.

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## EDMC Layoffs

The much beleaguered **Education Management Corporation** (EDMC) has begun laying off employees, reports the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's* Ann Beiser.

The locally based Education Management Corporation operates chains of private, for-profit post-secondary schools that include the Art Institutes. There have been rumors of layoffs for months as the company faces massive legal issues over their recruitment tactics.

Last summer, a lawsuit began against EDMC contending that the company fraudulently obtained student loans and other federal financial aid by using aggressive recruiting tactics and tying recruiter compensation to the number of new student enrollments. [*Pittsburgh Applause* June 2011]. In December, the federal government, a pair of whistleblowers and eleven states attorney general formally filed their claims with the courts. EDMC has denied the charges. [*Pittsburgh Applause* January 2012]

According to Beiser's article, the layoffs focus on the company's division that offers online courses. But the bad news doesn't end there. In a separate article, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's* Kaitlynn Riely reports that a bill has been introduced into the US Senate that would eliminate a funding loophole that some say for-profit schools exploit in recruiting veterans as students.

EDMC insists that recruiters are paid based on a number of factors.

## City Honors Joe Vos

Not all cartoons are for kids as the latest deal between the **ToonSeum** and **East End Brewing Company** clearly draws.



Founded in 2007 and moved to a storefront in The Pittsburgh Cultural District in 2009, the ToonSeum is a museum dedicated to the cartoon arts. The museum has reached an agreement with the local East End Brewing to release a limited edition Belgian beer called Illustration Ale. Each bottle's label is decorated with an illustration by a local artist.

In other news, Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl officially declared January 27, 2012 as Joe Vos Day. Vos is the founder and curator of the ToonSeum. He also received a Citizen Service Award. "I am deeply and truly honored by this recognition," Vos said in a press release and joked "my only disappointment is that Joe Vos Day apparently does not come with any real power . . . with that in mind, the Pittsburgh Militia can stand down, we will not be invading Cleveland at this time. However, my decree that the ToonSeum be made a mandatory pilgrimage for all comic and cartoon geeks will remain in effect."

## Images

Photos Celebrating Pittsburgh's  
Arts/Entertainment History & Community



*How things change: here are the Carnegie museums and library in a place we now know as Oakland circa 1900. Source: Library of Congress American Memories Project*

To have an image considered, email Jim Richards at [jim@james-richards.com](mailto:jim@james-richards.com)

February is Black History Month and, as always, we have a special feature section on relevant events!

**WED 1** Using songs written by pop legend Elton John, the **Benedum Center** welcome the hit Broadway show “Billy Elliot: The Musical.”

**FEB 3** Grammy Award winning baritone Thomas Hampson joins the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra at **Heinz Hall** to perform Brahms’ enigmatic requiem.

**FRI 3** Take the family to the **Pittsburgh Glass Center** for their monthly Hot Jam.

**FRI 3** Written by Pittsburgh native Eric Burns, the play “Mid-Strut” bows at the **Pittsburgh Playhouse** with its tale of a witty man with only a year left to live.

**SAT 4** The exciting motocross Nuclear Cowboyz saddle up at the **Consol Energy Center**.

**MON 6** Rock out with heavy metal band Black Stone Cherry at **Stage AE**.

**WED 8** Got someone about to graduate high school? Then head over to the **David Lawrence Convention Center** for a college fair.

**FRI 10** Tonight and tomorrow night, idiosyncratic actor/director Crispin Glover will be at the

**Andy Warhol Museum** to screen the first two films he’s directed.

**SAT 11** The **Carnegie Museum Of Art** unveils an exhibit dedicated to world acclaimed architect Maya Lin, the genius behind the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

**MON 13** Singer/songwriter Allen Stone graces **Stage AE** with his catchy pop-blues tunes

delivered with his smart, soul-filled voice.

**TUE 14** Acclaimed guitarist, composer and songwriter Trey Anastasio joins the Pittsburgh

Symphony Orchestra at **Heinz Hall** for a romantic night of pop-rock songs.

**WED 15** The world famous Shen Yun Performing Arts brings classical Chinese dance and music to the **Benedum Center**.

**WED 15** A collection of journalists — including several from the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* — gather at **Carnegie Mellon University** to discuss the effects of new media.

**WED 15** Local favorite Heather Kropf melds jazz, folk and pop at **Club Café**.

**THU 16** Embrace your inner Dane at the Distinctively Dutch Festival, which officially begins tonight. We have a special feature section online.

**FRI 17** Rev up for some thrilling motorsports at the **Consol Energy Center**.

**FRI 17** Or you can rev up at the annual Pittsburgh International Auto Show at the **David Lawrence Convention Center**.

**FRI 17** You can switch gears and go instead to **Heinz Hall** for a special Pittsburgh Symphony concert dedicated to naturalist Rachel Carson.

**FRI 24** The life of legendary blues man Louie Armstrong is retold in an engaging play at the **August Wilson Center**.

**WED 29** 65 Disney characters come alive at the **Consol Energy Center** for an irresistible ice show musical.



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# National/World A&E News Round-Up

## 2012 Award Season Well Underway

Nearly 17 million people tuned in on January 15 to watch this year's Golden Globes to watch comedian/actor Ricky Gervais razz the celebrities.

The awards are presented every year (since 1944) by the **Hollywood Foreign Press Association** (HFPA), an organization composed of international journalists who cover the United States film industry. The telecast is produced by **Dick Clark Productions** (DCP), which was formed by entertainer Dick Clark in 1957 and was acquired by businessman Daniel Snyder in 2007.

Unfortunately, not everything is golden with the Globes as the lawsuit filed by the HFPA against DCP began little more than a week later. The HFPA claims that DCP deceptively negotiated an extension of NBC's rights to broadcast the show, while DCP claims to have a perpetuity clause in their production contract that gives it control so long as NBC continues to air the show --- and has negotiated a \$150 million with the network to do so.

In a story published on January 27, TheWrap.com reported some of the ploys and bluffs used to make that big deal with the company's CEO, Mark Shaprio, admitting in his testimony that he made false statements in his negotiations with NBC.

A complete list of winners can be found at <http://cdn.goldenglobes.org/nominations>. Meanwhile, the

award season continues with the biggest of them all: the **Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Science's** Oscars on February 26.

### Never Mess With Wikipedia, Dude

The fight over internet piracy, free speech and the dimensions of Fair Use was tested last month when several leading web sites deliberately went dark to defeat proposed legislation meant to curb online theft.

The U.S. Senate was considering the Protect Intellectual Property Act (PIPA) at the same time the U. S. House was considering the similar Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA). Heavily supported by the entertainment industry, they are meant to protect copyright material. But several web companies contended that both bills are poorly written, are tantamount to censorship and put too much of a burden on them. To protest, several of them --- including Craig's List and Wikipedia --- went dark, at least for their English language editions, on January 18. The protest worked and the bills were stopped. But supporters have vowed to try again.

Meanwhile, file sharing site **Megaupload** was shut down as part of an international raid highlighted by arrests in New Zealand that included company Kim Schmitz (who goes by the hipper name, Kim Dotcom).

### The Youngster Gets Hired

After a 16-month search, the **New York Philharmonic** has named Matthew VanBesien to replace

the retiring Zarin Mehta as their executive director.

Founded in 1842, the New York Philharmonic is the oldest symphony in America and based at Lincoln Center. VanBesien is just 42-years old --- fairly young in the classical music world --- and, though American, has spent much of his career working overseas. He is currently running the **Melbourne Symphony Orchestra** in Australia.

Contract details have not been disclosed, but the Philharmonic's chairman, Gary W. Parr, told Daniel J. Wakin of the *New York Times* that "we expect him to be here for a long time."

### Oh, What A Tangled Web!

The legal tussle over the expensive, beleaguered, but popular Broadway musical "Spider-Man: Turn Off The Dark" entered a new phase as the show's producers fought back hard against co-creator and former director Julie Taymor in her lawsuit.

Taymor was fired by the producers and filed suit claiming that she is owed \$1 million and royalties from the show. In their 66-page rebuttal, the producers insist Taymor was fired over contract violations after a behind-the-scenes showdown. *The New York Times'* Patrick Healy reports that the producers "essentially seek to erase Ms. Taymor from the 'Spider-Man' universe going forward."



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## New Division Name

Is it still radio if you don't call it radio?



That seems to be the thinking of **Clear Channel**, the nation's largest broadcast radio group (including six stations in Pittsburgh), when it announced on January 13 that its Clear Channel Radio division has been renamed Clear Channel Media & Entertainment.

In its press release, Clear Channel insists that their core business "will remain it's more than 850 radio stations, but the new brand name clearly signals its successful expansion into new areas. Clear Channel Media & Entertainment

delivers music, news, talk, sports and other content to diverse audiences across multiple platforms including broadcast stations; online; via iHeartRadio and on its stations' hundreds of websites."

Six days later, the division named Hartley Adkins as Executive Vice President of Operations for its "mid-major markets" which include Pittsburgh.

Locally, the company has also announced a revamping of its popular morning program on WDVE-FM after letting go long time host Jim Krenn [*Pittsburgh Applause* January 2012 – Ed.]. The new hosting team will comprise Randy Baumann, Val Porter, Mike Prisuta, Scott Paulsen and Bill Crawford.

## Going Big

Going from local to national are the following:

Nine singers from the region have earned a chance to appear on the next season of "American Idol". They each received a "golden ticket" to participate in another round of auditions.

16-year-old violinist Inori Sakai, who attends The Ellis School, has been named a national finalist in the **Music Teachers Association** performance competition. She will travel to New York in March for the nationals.

Local drag artist Aaron "Sharon Needles" Coady is appearing on this season's edition of "RuPaul's Drag Race," which airs on the cable channel Logo.

## WESA Fixes Trans; Audience Drops

After resolving a serious transmitter problem, local public radio station WESA-FM continues to be having another problem: a huge drop in audience.

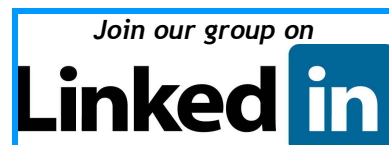


Last year, a consortium led by **WYEP-FM** called **Essential Public Media** bought WDUQ-FM from **Duquesne University**, dropped its jazz format and took the call letters WESA-FM. It is now a primarily news station, airing programs from **National Public Radio** (NPR) and the **British Broadcasting Corporation** (BBC).

The station began having transmitter issues after a storm on November 14. Marketing Director Suzanne Meyer told the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review's* Bob Karlovits that moving equipment to WYEP's south side headquarters were also complicated by the storm.

In a January 11 article, Adrien McCoy of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported that the station has lost 50% of its audience since the changes were instituted. Programming Director Tammy Terwelp explained to McCoy that the drop is common for a newly launched format and that the station is not worried. Moreover, with the technical issues resolved,

Meyer told McCoy that resources are now being directed at marketing. "This is only the beginning of the process," McCoy quotes a public radio consultant.



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## Comcast-Disney Deal

Two of the entertainment world's giants --- **Comcast** and the **Walt Disney Company** --- have announced a long-term distribution agreement to deliver Disney programming to Comcast Xfinity customers.



Comcast operates Pittsburgh cable television franchise and has a controlling interest in **NBC-Universal**. Disney owns a local radio station as well as the ABC television network and various cable networks such as ESPN and ABC Family.

In a press release, Comcast describes it as a "multichannel business model and supports the companies' mutual goal to deliver the

best video content to customers across multiple platforms using the latest technology and cloud innovation." Comcast subscribers (including those in Pittsburgh) will be able to watch programming on demand via cable, online and handheld devices.

"This is a landmark deal for us," Comcast CEO Neil Smit told the *New York Times*. "It's the first time customers can watch ESPN, ABC and Disney across multiple platforms both in and outside the home."

In other Comcast news, the company has decided to invest \$20 million in improving NBC's ten owned-and-operated television stations and that NBC Sports will broadcast the 2012 Olympic Games in 3D.

## Local TV Pilot Taped

The pilot for "Anea" was taped last month and hopes are high that the local production will become a syndicated TV series. The series is a project of the **Steeltown Entertainment Project** and produced by **Fred Rogers Studios**.



Founded in 2003, Steeltown's mission is to nurture promising talent and to incubate meaningful and commercially viable entertainment projects in Southwestern Pennsylvania. As *Pittsburgh Applause* reported in its October 2011 issue, the incubator program is an effort to make Pittsburgh a hub for television production.

The proposed series is a talk show built around life coach Anea Bogue, who will provide advice and cover issues involving women and girls five days a week. "Women and girls make up 51% of the population," series host Anea Bogue told Michael Machosky of the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. "Girls and women face a lot of obstacles. [In the show we] look at what those obstacles are and the actual steps they can take to improve their lives." The pilot was directed by Pittsburgh native James Widowses, who is also the director of the hit TV series "Two & A Half Men."

The next challenge is finding a distributor.

## New Studio Plan Dies

A plan to convert the former home of the **Pittsburgh Brewing Company** has died.

The Pittsburgh Brewing Company --- also known as the Iron City Brewing Company --- began in 1861 by a young German immigrant and was one of the first American breweries to produce a lager. The company grew so fast that just five years later, its iconic facility in Lawrenceville was constructed. This handsome brick building was the brewer's home until 2009 when production was moved 40 miles away in Latrobe.

A year ago, two entrepreneurs, Michael Yom and Robert Mason, had taken out an option to buy the 500,000-square-foot brewery with the intent of converting for film production. [*Pittsburgh Applause* April 2011 - Ed.]. The result was to have been called Iron City Studios. But in a January 6 article, the *Pittsburgh Business Times*' Tim Schooley confirmed that Yom and Mason have allowed their option to lapse. Mason told Schooley that his company was unable to reach a final deal with Pittsburgh Brewing. Without clear control of the property, Mason and his partner could not generate the necessary funds to make the studio happen. An independent horror movie was shot at the brewery in 2011.

# Pittsburgh Applause Editorial

## Becoming Part Of The Big Time

By James A. Richards

This year marks my 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Pittsburgh. I had come simply as an intern helping get a low power TV station started. But I started to notice something, that this city had conservable potential as an arts and entertainment center. Unfortunately, it was largely unrealized.

Consider what has happened since:

The Andy Warhol Museum opens in 1994 as the largest museum in the US dedicated to a single artist. The city's collection of smaller, privately owned art galleries blossoms. New movie festivals and theater companies are established. Independent filmmakers start setting up shop.

The Pittsburgh Cultural District is almost fully realized.

Major entertainment companies acquire local assets or expand on the ones they already have here: Comcast, CBS Corporation, Walt Disney Company, Clear Channel, etc.

I, myself, have contributed in multiple ways: launching PGHevents.com in 1999 (which, since 2006, has been the web calendar for Post-Gazette.com), debuted *The Pittsburgh A&E Book* professional directory in 2001 and have been publishing *Pittsburgh Applause* (on and off) since 2003. I have also provided pro bono marketing for the Pittsburgh International Lesbian & Gay Film Festival, the sixth oldest LGBT film festival in the world.

Pittsburgh also got its own real sound stages for film production, on 31<sup>st</sup> Street in the Strip District and has seen its movie production grow. We may soon even have one or more national television series shot here.

Let's face it folks: with just a little more work and patience, Pittsburgh will become part of the Big Time.

Letters to the editor are welcome via email to [jim@james-richards.com](mailto:jim@james-richards.com)

They may be edited for publication.

# Linked



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As a member of this group, you'll be able to connected with your A&E peers in Pittsburgh!

Membership is free, but you must have a LinkedIn profile to participate.



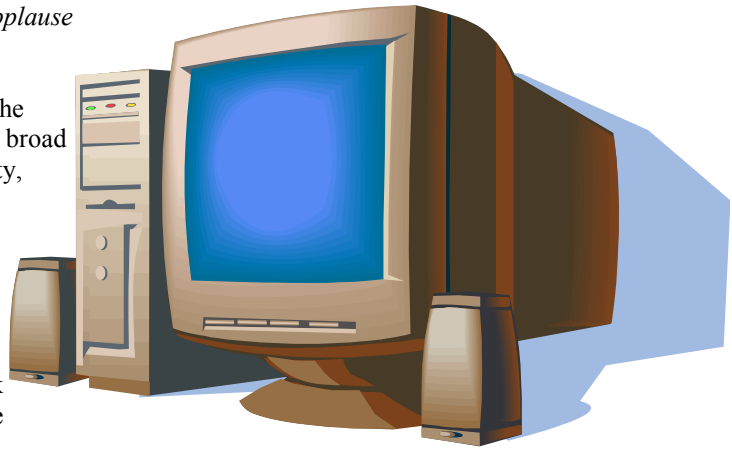
# Keep The Applause Coming!

Advertise in the digital version of *Pittsburgh Applause* and reach over 1,000 readers each month!

The list of subscribers is culled primarily from the *Pittsburgh A&E Book* database and represents a broad swath of the area's arts/entertainment community, both non-profit and commercial.

Full page (8" wide x 10" high): \$100  
Half-page (8" wide x 5" high): \$75

Each ad should be built to size and be in a JPG format. All ads must be pre-paid, with the check payable to the Pittsburgh A&E Group. For more information, contact Jim Richards



Jim hopes to eventually bring *Pittsburgh Applause* back to the real world!

The goal is to produce 10,000 full-color print copies each month distributed primarily through Crazy Mocha coffee shops.

But Jim needs a collection of advertisers willing and able to commit to at least six months of advertising. For more information, contact him at [jim@james-richards.com](mailto:jim@james-richards.com)

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