

# AS SEEN IN *n*FOCUS

## It's the Hall, y'all

by Mark Lee Taylor

*Planning an event? Check out the Country Music Hall of Fame*

In a town with hundreds of special events, it takes more than creativity to render a special occasion "special." If your event is a fundraiser, your guests' expectations will be highly rigorous. In Nashville, some partygoers attend so many special events each year that they consider themselves to be event judges nonpareil.

Orchestrating a successful event is like cooking. It requires the right ingredients. One also needs an experienced chef who knows the most desirable methods to successfully prepare proven and tested recipes. And, the chef must be highly skilled in the art of proper presentation.

Retailing genius Stanley Marcus of Neiman Marcus once wrote, "The most pleasing and successful parties are those that appear to be joyously spontaneous, but are in fact, meticulously planned and imaginatively executed."

Nearly 500 times yearly, grateful mothers-of-brides, party chairmen, corporate planners and other lucky individuals who schedule events in Nashville discover a surefire shortcut to a memorable event. They book theirs at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. That automatically puts their event at a one-of-a-kind location.

But that's not the only reason a great party is virtually guaranteed. They will also get to work with Jo Ellen Drennon and her small but talented group of event experts. "Because we are a not-for-profit organization, we started our department with a very small staff. Even now, there are only around 10 of us who conceive and execute all the events," Jo Ellen says.

In addition to the 200-300 events booked by outside hosts, Jo Ellen and company are also responsible for managing all the events required to stage the outreach programs and community events held by the Country Music Foundation at the Hall of Fame and Museum. This pushes the annual events total closer to 500.

Jo Ellen says, "The unique musical heritage memorialized by this building adds a special dimension to our work. Each of us feels the presence of our country music legends, and we want our guests to experience it, too."

The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum is operated by the non-profit, educational Country Music Foundation (CMF). The mission of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum is to identify and preserve the

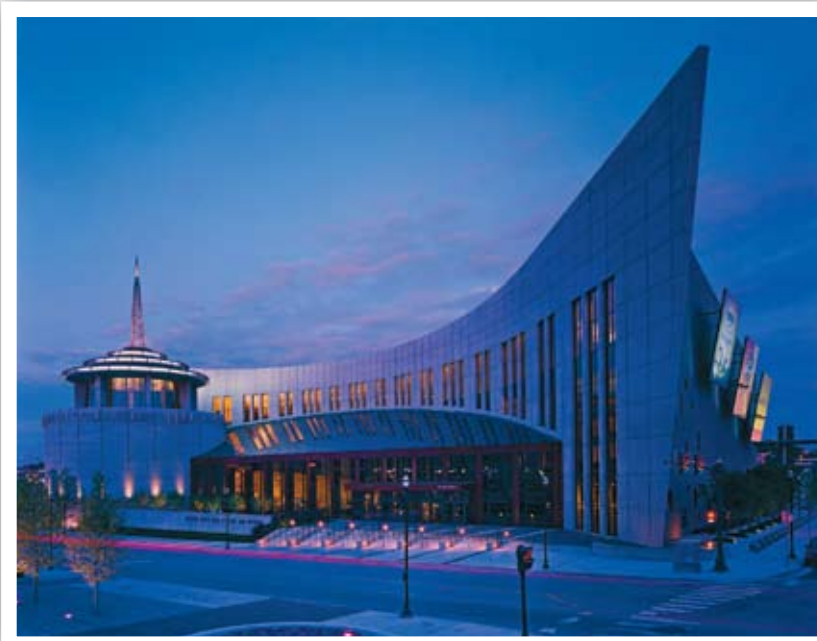
evolving history and traditions of country music and to educate its audiences. Functioning as a local history museum and as an international arts organization, the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum serves visiting and non-visiting audiences including fans, students, scholars and members of the music industry.

The distinctive and iconic architectural architecture of the building contributes greatly to the events held there, whether the event is in the Ford Theatre, the library, the SunTrust Community Room, the Curb Courtyard and Conservatory or the Hall of Fame Rotunda.

The newest space for y'all to rent at the Hall is Crump Terrace, which "offers open sky and dramatic views of downtown Nashville. The energy and atmosphere of the city spread out before you and your guests. The Crump Terrace has the feeling of an urban green space, accented by a fountain, roses, ivy and sweet gum trees."

to have an additional revenue-producing rental space, but there is also a sweet love story behind it. The terrace is planted with white roses, the signature flower that Mr. Crump has always presented to his beloved wife on special occasions throughout their more than 60 years of marriage.

Many of the private events scheduled at the Hall or Museum are, of necessity, scheduled at nighttime because the Hall and Museum are among Nashville's most-visited tourist attractions. Thousands of school children visit the museum each year as well.



a project he particularly wanted to undertake. The completion dragged on, but Hart had finally almost finished the painting that depicts the birth of country music. He told his wife he was going out to his studio to add the final touches. He went to the studio, but he never returned. Apparently, he died that same day without signing the canvas. You'll also note that there are no wires between the telephone poles. Thank goodness he got most of it completed."

The plaques in the Hall of Fame Rotunda memorialize musicians, writers and others who made invaluable contributions to our musical history. Most plaques bear a likeness of the individual, their birth date and, in some cases, the date when they left this one-night-stand called life to join that eternal band playing in Country Music Heaven. But one dearly departed member does not have a date indicating the day she passed away: "Minnie Pearl's

plaque has a birth date, but not a date of death. Mrs. Cannon was adamant that although she might pass away, Minnie Pearl, the beloved character that she brought to life, Minnie Pearl would never die," said Jo Ellen.

The original Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum was located on Music Row from 1967-2001. If you haven't visited the current location, you may have an erroneous picture in your mind's eye about the type of place it is. Executive Director Kyle Young—who has devoted his entire professional career to the institution—and his team have created a place that is undoubtedly special, but also very welcoming. And events here contribute funds to ensure that the Museum's programs continue to tell Music City USA's wonderful story. Visit [countrymusicshalloffame.org/venue-rental](http://countrymusicshalloffame.org/venue-rental) to learn more.

In fact, the museum can provide a one-of-a-kind experience for those hosting a private party there. Giving guests an opportunity to visit the museum is a "wow factor" at many events, including weddings. Jo Ellen says, "More than one of our wedding parties has sent their guests through the museum while family wedding photos were being made. It's another dimension beyond party favors and it makes the time fun, rather than a wait," Jo Ellen said.

In addition to SeabTuck's iconic architecture featuring Tennessee Crab Orchard stacked stone and pine flooring laid to visually highlight the similarities between tree rings and the grooves in LP recordings, spectacular features abound within this building. It has fabulous views of American music's capital city, and, in addition to so many things to see and hear, there are as almost as many tales about the building as there are music notes.

Of course, it is an added treat to hear some of these tales told in Jo Ellen's honey-drenched voice that still bears faint traces of her Wilson County, Tennessee origins. "Do you know the story behind that beautiful painting by Thomas Hart Benton?" Jo Ellen asks.

She continues, "Mr. Benton was a friend of Tex Ritter's who convinced him to do the painting, even though it wasn't