

# Intent's

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The magazine for the tent-rental and special-event industries

## Small celebrations

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**Fresh and famous**  
Cultural events take center stage

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Industrial Fabrics Association International



A celebrity tent took center stage at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center's opening night, where guests dined in elegance with a view of the night sky.

## Fresh and famous

Two tent rental companies create elegant cultural galas with brand-new equipment and celebrity style.

### Classic Tents Torrance, Calif.

For Nashville's Schermerhorn Symphony Center opening night, Classic Tents and the center's event planners envisioned an elegant, 160-foot-wide circular Aztec tent similar to the one Classic used for Sir Elton John's 2005 Academy Awards party. In fact, the event's production designer, Jim Mees, was so impressed with the cleartop structure Classic provided for that celebrity event, he wanted to pull off a similar structure in Nashville—and thus he had to have Classic.

The arrangements were underway. "The structure we originally envisioned for the opening gala would have been magnificent," says Howard Tabackman, VP of sales for Classic Tents. "We made all the necessary preparations to erect the structure, and we received verbal approval from the city's building inspector."

All was not well, however. Less than three weeks prior to delivery, Tabackman received word that there had been a miscommunication—the permit process hadn't gone through as planned, and the permit hadn't actually been approved.

Nashville city officials felt the structure would be too heavy for the intended site, which sat atop an underground parking garage. In addition, the tent couldn't be staked due to the lot's false



topsoil and waterproof membrane—instead, weights and cement spikes would have to be used, requiring further approval.

Classic Tents and the event planners sprung into action. “We were determined to utilize the original cleartop structure and stay on location at Hall of Fame Park,” says event coordinator Karen Casey of On-Site Event Services. “With less than three weeks until the event, Howard offered an alternative—a new oval-shaped tent, and he suggested we use foundation piers in the garage beneath the tent’s base plates to provide the needed extra support.”

Three days before the trucks left Torrance, Calif. with the new tent, Classic redesigned the entire structure to reduce the weight and reposition the anchor drilling points. Final approval had not yet been granted, but Classic had to ship anyway, hoping for the best.

The gamble paid off, and Classic set about with the installation—but not without further problems. The forklifts, which

had already begun work, had to be replaced with boom cranes in order to meet the park’s weight restrictions. All in all, the setup took around five days for a crew of 12 people. “It probably would have gone faster had we been able to drive our equipment on site,” Tabackman says.

In the end, a 100-foot-wide by 160-foot-long oval cleartop Aztec tent offered guests an elegant, air-conditioned dining area. “Events like these make this job worth the hard work,” Tabackman says. “We rallied around the clock for days at a time to make this structure a reality, and after seeing the result, it was worth every second.”

Everyone was pleased with the outcome, including Casey. “Classic Tents truly rose to the occasion for us,” Casey says. “In the end our gala was perfect and the final inspection of the parking garage showed no signs of damage or stress at all. The success is a tribute to the massive team effort, and we could not have done it without Classic Tents’ willingness to go above and beyond.”

## Planner’s perspective

Karen Casey, of On-Site Event Services, was hired in August to coordinate the production of the symphony center’s September opening gala. Here Casey gives *InTents* an idea of how the team pulled off the spectacular event.

“Around 2,000 people attended the concert in the new Schermerhorn Symphony Center, and 813 of those guests attended the white-tie dinner afterward. We fit 83 tables [into the tent] with room to spare. Jim Mees wanted a silver and white ultra-elegant look that was different from any other event that Nashville had seen before. Since the event was to commemorate the opening of our new Symphony Center, we left three of the sidewalls of the tent clear to provide a spectacular view of the new Schermerhorn Symphony Center across the street. Additionally, we wanted to emphasize the unique oval shape of the venue, so an elevated round stage was used in the center of the tent. It also virtually eliminated the problem of having tables that were in less desirable locations, which was a real bonus. Since the tent had a clear top, we used skylight balloons inside the tent and outside above the clear top to create an incredibly



“open sky” type of ambience. These five skylights were on dimmers and were the only lighting we used other than votives on the tables. The moon was nearly full that night, too, which added beautifully to the effect! Classic was willing to handle any challenges that were thrown at them and believe me, there were many in this unique venue. Their ability and willingness to adapt on the fly was impressive. I would definitely work with them again. For all the challenges we faced in getting this event up and in the venue, and with all of the restrictions imposed on us by the city and the structural limitations, the evening was the most flawless event I’ve ever been a part of. Everyone was extremely pleased at the outcome. It was one for the books!”