

CAPITAL

A large crowd of people is gathered in a large arena, likely for a concert. The audience is seen from behind, looking towards a stage area where bright lights and smoke are visible. The arena's structure, including tiered seating and overhead lighting rigs, is visible in the background.

The Anthem, which opened last fall in Washington, D.C., was designed with sightlines in mind.

A NEWCOMER AND SOME
VETERANS CELEBRATE SOLID
BUSINESS IN D.C., VIRGINIA
AND WEST VIRGINIA

SPOTLIGHT

IMPROVEMENTS

BY NOELLE RILEY





The Filene Center at Wolf Trap in Vienna, Va., prides itself on its diverse lineup.

SPOTLIGHT

THE OPENING OF A NEW VENUE, more two- and three-night shows with a single artist, and renovation projects were some of highlights last year for venues in the Mid-Atlantic region.

In Washington, D.C., The Anthem is celebrating its one-year anniversary. The Foo Fighters played the opening show at the 6,000-seat, three-story venue Oct. 12, 2017, but the band's lead singer, Dave Grohl, toured the concert spot with The Anthem's owner and developer, Seth Hurwitz, months before it opened.

Grohl had a question for Hurwitz, said Audrey Fix Schaefer, communication director for I.M.P., the independent promotion and production company for which Hurwitz is chairman. He wanted to know where the video screens were.

"Seth told him the sight lines are so perfect in this place that it didn't need video screens," Schaefer said.

When designing The Anthem, he purposefully chose not to install LED video screens — an amenity most venues have these days, said Audrey Fix Schaefer, communication director for I.M.P. In other words, Hurwitz constructed the stage so fans could see the artists no matter where they were sitting or standing at the venue.

After the Foo Fighters opened the venue, Grohl told Hurwitz that he was right about the sight lines and that he had an intimate experi-

ence with the audience, Schaefer said.

"Only (Seth) could do this... build a place from the bottom up for music. There's so many choices he made in developing it. He has it in his gut, an understanding of what artists need and what audiences want," Schaefer said.

Besides The Anthem, Hurwitz's I.M.P. manages Washington, D.C., venues the 9:30 Club and the Lincoln Theater, plus Merriweather Post Pavilion in Maryland.

Throughout the year, other big-name artists filled The Anthem, including Lorde, The Killers, Bob Dylan and Beck. The venue had 139 events in its first year, and it continues to gain momentum, Fix Schaefer said.

Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts runs an outdoor amphitheater called the Filene Center at Wolf Trap in Vienna, Va., as a nonprofit. It's situated on national park land that's dedicated to the performing arts. It's also home to the National Symphony Orchestra.

The 7,000-seat Filene Center is the largest venue on the 117-acre park grounds. The Barns at Wolf Trap is another venue on site that's much smaller and more intimate, seating only 382. The Filene Center operates from May to the beginning of September each year, and The Barns offers music and events year-round.

"We had a really good season at Wolf Trap this year. We had a number of sold-out shows that were great," said Sara Beesley, vice pres-

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ident of programming and production at the Filene Center. "We had a debut this year from the Avett Brothers, who was our fastest seller of the year."

A three-night Sting show tallied the strongest ticket sales at Wolf Trap.

"He brought in the highest-grossing run of shows in our history," Beesley said. "We can do these big headline acts, which are

incredible, but we also have classical soloists, musicals ... every type of artists."

The nonprofit status of the venue allows Beesley and the Wolf Trap team to keep ticket prices affordable, she said.

"We have a mission to present something for everyone," Beesley said, highlighting that the average ticket costs \$30. "We have a really strong built-in audience. We have people who really trust what we're booking each year."

The Wolf Trap Foundation for the Perform-

ing Arts helps fund the venues and amenities at the park, which also has hiking trails, picnic areas and sledding in the winter.

"We really are right outside of D.C. We're really easy to get to from downtown," Beesley said. "You are allowed to bring in food and beverage and really make a night of it."

Roughly 25 miles to the east of Wolf Trap is the largest venue in the Mid-Atlantic region:

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WHEN A CHAMPIONSHIP IS AT STAKE, CONSTRUCTION CAN WAIT

VENUE MANAGERS KNOW it's tough to be a fan and run an arena at the same time, especially when your team is winning and it interrupts construction schedules.

That's how Capital One Arena General Manager Michele Powell felt last spring when two of the arena's home teams made the playoffs and one won a championship.

"They always say whenever you have something major planned, your team is going to win and make the run," Powell said with a laugh. "There are consequences when your team wins. It's a double-edged sword."

Although she was elated that the Washington Wizards made the NBA playoffs and that the Washington Capitals not only got to the NHL playoffs but won their first Stanley Cup, she knew what that meant for the \$40 million renovation planned for the 20,000-seat venue.

It had to be pushed back.

Construction could have begun in April if neither team had advanced past the first round, but it didn't start until June 12 because of the hockey team's success.

"The schedule definitely got crunched. We closed down for two- and three-week periods," Powell said.

She was biting her nails the whole time, worried that she would have to move or cancel concerts during the renovation. Luckily for the venue, the entertainment schedule didn't have to change during the spring, summer and fall months.

The renovation was completed Oct.



The MGM National Harbor VIP Lounge, new at Capital One Arena.

3, and the only major snag was not completing six of the 24 concession stands that were getting face-lifts.

Aramark runs the concessions for the venue, and Liz Noe is Aramark's resident district manager at Capital One Arena, meaning she's in charge of food and beverage decisions.

"We ran through one of the most successful years we've had on the ice ever," Noe said, highlighting that it took tons of teamwork and patience once construction finally began.

"We broke apart the work. We had a rock-star construction crew, and you had to have that from the very beginning," she said.

Most of the concession stands were renovated, as well as two clubs and the suites. It's hoped that the six stands that still need work will be com-

pleted next spring, Noe said.

Perhaps the biggest change was installing a self-serve beer wall. "The beer wall was historically a 20-foot concrete wall on the 400 level that was hiding a massive walk-in cooler," Noe said.

They wanted to make something eye-catching out of the wall, and it made sense to do something with food or beverage since a walk-in cooler was behind the concrete, she said. "There's 21 taps on the wall," she said.

Noe said keeping a positive attitude was also important throughout the process. "You become successful no matter what your time line is," she said. "You're only successful based on the people you surround yourself with."

—Noelle Riley

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TOPSTOPS

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, VIRGINIA AND WEST VIRGINIA 2018

Ranked by tickets sold. Based on data from concerts and events Sept. 1, 2017-Aug. 31, 2018, as reported to Pollstar. Data updated as of Oct. 3.

RANK	VENUE	TICKETS SOLD	CAPACITY	GROSS	SHOWS
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MORE THAN 15,000 CAPACITY

1	Capital One Arena, Washington, D.C.	566,540	20,500	\$50,118,361	49
2	Veterans United Home Loans Amphitheater, Virginia Beach	138,978	20,000	\$5,567,747	11
3	Jiffy Lube Live, Bristow, Va.	131,189	23,237	\$5,998,898	8

10,001-15,000 CAPACITY

1	EagleBank Arena, Fairfax, Va.	152,774	10,200	\$10,503,596	35
2	Richmond (Va.) Coliseum	143,575	13,000	\$6,521,877	27
3	John Paul Jones Arena, Charlottesville, Va.	48,639	14,200	\$3,934,561	7
4	Hampton (Va.) Coliseum	42,432	13,800	\$2,835,924	4
5	Charleston (W.Va.) Civic Center Coliseum	31,795	13,500	\$1,720,262	5

5,001-10,000 CAPACITY

1	The Anthem, Washington, D.C.	355,077	6,000	\$19,709,200	81
2	Filene Center at Wolf Trap, Vienna, Va.	269,310	7,028	\$16,384,750	55
3	Constant Convocation Center, Norfolk, Va.	57,566	9,100	\$1,590,101	17
4	Big Sandy Superstore Arena, Huntington, W.Va.	28,567	7,200	\$1,286,133	11
5	Salem (Va.) Civic Center	20,206	8,000	\$873,691	5

2,001-5,000 CAPACITY

1	Altria Theater, Richmond, Va.	115,392	3,606	\$6,847,407	59
2	Chrysler Hall, Norfolk, Va.	63,591	2,488	\$3,590,296	40
3	Sprint Pavilion, Charlottesville, Va.	13,534	3,800	\$578,183	5
4	Echostage, Washington, D.C.	12,841	3,000	\$497,630	5
5	DAR Constitution Hall, Washington, D.C.	9,413	3,702	\$753,548	4

2,000 OR LESS CAPACITY

1	9:30 Club, Washington, D.C.	171,480	1,200	\$5,062,066	217
2	Clay Center for the Arts & Sciences, Charleston, W.Va.	49,575	1,883	\$1,935,750	60
3	The Hamilton Live, Washington, D.C.	47,923	700	\$1,414,432	146
4	Carpenter Theatre, Richmond, Va.	33,978	1,800	\$1,888,148	34
5	Jammin' Java, Vienna, Va.	29,371	200	\$538,958	267

Note: Capacity shown is legal capacity listed in Pollstar database. Compiled by teamboxoffice@pollstar.com.



Capital One Arena.

The 20-year-old arena had a lot of shows with artists performing two-night gigs, said Michele Powell, the venue's senior vice president and general manager. "We had more doubles this year than usual," she said.

The arena had two nights with Pink, U2, Ed Sheeran and Bruno Mars, Powell said.

Arena officials worked around construc-

tion while the arena received a \$40 million face-lift. Capital One is home to the NBA's Washington Wizards and the NHL's Washington Capitals.

The Capitals won the Stanley Cup last season for the first time in their history, pushing construction work later into June (see story, Page 84). Renovations included upgrading all the concourses and the scoreboards, replacing

The Filene Center at Wolf Trap seats 7,000.

seats, upgrading concessions, and upgrading the sound system and the arena's overall technology.


"The LED boards give us so much more flexibility, versus having the same look every night," Powell said.

Capital One Arena is operated by Monumental Sports & Entertainment, which also runs the 10,200-seat EagleBank Arena in Fairfax, Va.

EagleBank Arena sits on the campus of George Mason University and hosted a number of big shows last year, including Disney On Ice, Marc Anthony and Tool.

In D.C., I.M.P.'s 9:30 Club, which opened in 1980, is an "intimate place and no matter the you stand ... it's the perfect sound," Schaefer said.

Someone once said that artists need to get their passports punched at the 9:30 Club, she joked. "We provide them with a laundry room, we feed them, we want them happy and we want them to come back," Schaefer said. "We treat them like family, because that's what they are."

The Yonder Mountain String Band and Gary Newman were a couple of the acts that played at the 9:30 Club last year. 

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