

pittsburgh applause!

arts & entertainment newsletter

Arts Funding Flat In State Budget

On February 7, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett announced his proposed 2012-13 state budget, which keeps most arts funding at or just below 2011-12 levels. But there are concerns a big cut may still happen as the Republican controlled state house has been threatening huge reductions for the last three years. At press time, the house had already begun holding hearings on the budget. They are scheduled to end March 8.

Overall, the proposed \$27.1 billion budget does not include any tax increases. But it does call for deep cuts to higher education and reduces spending on the poor, elderly and disabled. State Senator Jim Ferlo (whose district includes Allegheny County) decried it in a press release claiming that it “hurts working people, vulnerable families and the Pennsylvania economy while giving another pass to huge corporate interests and gas drillers.” The biggest

arts-related change from last year is a 5% cut in funding for the **Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission**.

Key non-profit organizations are reaching out to their members and supporters. The **Pennsylvania Council on the Arts** (PCA) issued a call on February 21 asking their grant recipients to contact legislators. Information can be found on their web site at <http://www.pacouncilonthearts.org>.

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Pittsburgh A&E Group

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New Film Partnerships

A partnership has been reached between **31st Street Studios** (aka Gateway Entertainment Studios) and three leading entities to increase business and benefit the region’s film community.

Originally called Mogul Mind Studios, the developing facility comprises former warehouses and a steel plant in the city’s historic Strip District that are being converted into sound stages. Several major films have already used the campus including “Abduction” starring Taylor Lautner and “Dark Knight Rises” starring Christian Bale.

32st Street is partnering with film technology firm **Knight Vision** and the equipment rental division of Viacom’s Paramount Pictures to house their local offices. In addition, **Carnegie Mellon Uni-**

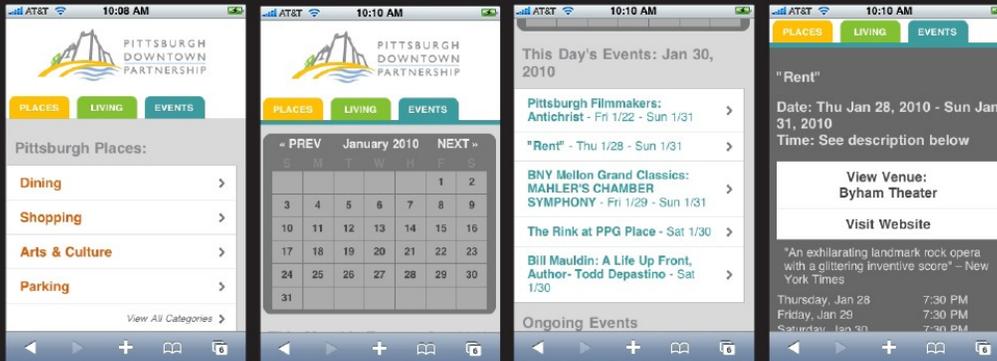
versity will be holding classes at the studios through their Entertainment Technology Center. Knight Vision specializes in using motion capture technology to create realistic computer-generated animation.

At a press conference, 31st Street’s Chris Breakwell declined to get into details. But the arrangement is expected to strengthen Pittsburgh as a center for film and television production.

“The vision has always been that, in order to have the [film] industry, you need to have resources that are connected,” Carl Kurlander, the founder of the **Steel-town Entertainment Project** told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette’s* Ann Rodgers. “Pittsburgh has had the resources, but they haven’t been marshaled. This pulls it together.”

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Merger Opponents File Lawsuit

A group of performers have organized in their opposition to the pending merger between the **American Federation of Radio & Television Artists (AFTRA)** and the **Screen Actors Guild (SAG)**.



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 commercials, stunt persons and specialty acts. Both unions have hundreds of members in the region and AFTRA maintains a full-time Pittsburgh office. Last month, both union boards voted overwhelming to merge and ballots have been mailed to the rank-and-file.

Several prominent actors have come forward with a 1,000-word statement decrying the merger claiming that it will create a "bloated bureaucracy," increase dues and diminish pensions especially for current SAG members. These actors include Martin Sheen, Valerie Harper, Elliot Gould and Scott Bakula, among others. They are part of a group of 68 SAG members who have hired attorney David Casselman to file a lawsuit hoping to block the vote.

"It is not just that the members are not getting all of the facts," Casselman told TheWrap.com's Brent Lang. "The message SAG is sending is often partially true, but overall it is deceptive and misleading."

In a written statement, SAG called their claims "preposterous" pointing out that there have been more than 50 informational meetings held across the country. The statement also calls the lawsuit "a clear attempt at circumventing the will of the membership." The unions have made detailed information online at <http://www.sag.org/sag-aftra-merger-documents-now-available>. SAG is trying to get the case dismissed.

PSO Wins Major Music Award

A recording by the **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (PSO)** has won a prestigious International Classical Music Award for symphonic music.



Originally called the Cannes Classical Awards, they have been presented annually since 1994 at the Marché International du Disque et de l'Edition Musicale (MIDEM), the world's largest music industry trade fair, in France.

The CD was of the PSO performing Symphony No. 4 by Austrian composer Gustav Mahler (1860-1911). A jury chose it among the 250 CDs and DVDs nominated

from around the world. The orchestra and other winners will receive their trophies at a ceremony this May in Nantes, France.

In other news, the PSO has announced their next European tour. The orchestra will visit 12 cities from October 25 to November 10. This includes a week-long residency in Vienna at the prestigious Musikverein, a legendary concert hall that opened in 1870. Music director Manfred Honeck, whose contract has been extended to 2020, leads the tour.

The PSO is also launching a unique new competition that will allow an instrumental soloist --- someone who is unrepresented by management --- to perform with the orchestra. People all over the world will be able to pick that

soloist by voting online. For more information, visit http://psoculturaldistrict.org/psos_home/web/concerto-competition

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Comcast Beats Wall Street Forecasts

Despite losing subscribers and a drop in advertising revenue, **Comcast** has announced fourth quarter earnings that beat analysts' expectations.



In Pittsburgh, Comcast operates the city's cable television franchise. The company also owns controlling interest in **NBC-Universal**.

Profits Up At CBS

Fourth quarter profits at **CBS Corporation** rose an impressive 17% compared with 2010,



In Pittsburgh, CBS Corporation owns two television and four radio stations. Most prominent are KDKA-TV and KDKA-AM.

Revenue dropped slightly, but costs remained low and the company saw improvements in streaming deals as well as affiliate and subscription revenues. "CBS' strategy of producing and distributing industry-leading content around the world and across multiple platforms continues to pay off," Sumner Redstone, the company's chairman, said in a statement.

Comcast's performance was boosted mostly by improvements in NBCU's cable networks with additional growth in high-speed internet and phone subscribers. The company plans to increase shareholder dividends and a stock repurchase program.

Meanwhile, the company has also announced their first effort in distributing more independent networks. Comcast agreed to this stipulation with federal regulators as part of its 2011 acquisition of NBCU. These include a new Hispanic network called El Ray and an African-American network called Aspire.

A Teen's Tickets

A local teenager is trying to raise awareness for her own charity --- by giving away free concert tickets.

At the age of 12, Lexy Allen created the **Blue Lion Foundation** to build a medical center in Haiti. The project requires she raise \$30,000. To encourage donations, and to increase awareness of the foundation, she is offering a free online contest. The winner will be chosen in a random drawing and receive two tickets to a concert of their choice.

For more information, visit <http://www.bluelionfoundation.org/index.php?>

Images

Photos Celebrating Pittsburgh's
Arts/Entertainment History & Community



This year marks the 25th anniversary of the death of legendary artist — and Pittsburgh native — Andy Warhol, whose life and career continues to inspire. Source: Wikipedia

To have an image considered, email Jim Richards at jim@james-richards.com

St. Patrick's Day is this month, so be sure to check out the calendar's special feature section for relevant event to green your day.

THU 1 The play "Freud's Last Session" at the **O'Reilly Theater** is a clever imagining of two great minds meeting

FRI 2 One of Pittsburgh's most disturbing racial incidents is investigated in "The Gam-mage Project" at the **August Wilson**

FRI 2 The **David Lawrence Convention Center** gets domestic again with the return of the Pittsburgh Home & Garden Show.

FRI 2 Local band Crash City lands hard at **Stage AE**.

THU 8 One of the coolest tribute acts around revive stops at the **Byham Theater** to recreate the unforgettable Blues Brothers.

FRI 9 The Pittsburgh Ballet offers an innovative version of the Pulitzer Prize winning play "A Streetcar Named Desire" at the **Benedum Center**.

MON- 9 Legendary composer Andre Previn is at **Heinz Hall** tonight to debut his newest work as performed by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

SAT 10 The play "Monster In The Hall" at **City Theatre** is a high-octane, comic joyride about a dysfunctional family.

TUE 13 The classic farcical musical "La Cage Aux Folles" comes to the **Benedum Center** with its closet-busting tale of a modern family.

THU 15 This year's J Film opens with its annual screenings of Jewish-American and Israeli film at various venues.

SAT 17 The hot teen sensation Fresh Beat Band performs pop at the **Byham Theater**.

SAT 17 The brilliant Henry Rollins combines music with humor at the **Carnegie Music Hall**.

THU 22 Grammy Ward winning singer/songwriter Kimya Dawson is at the **Andy Warhol Museum** to perform some great folk songs.

FRI 23 The **David Lawrence Convention Center** welcomes Farm To Table, a wellness event centering on the benefits of locally grown food.

TUE 27 The band Miniature Tigers grows out some great acoustic pop songs tonight at

Stage AE.

FRI 30 Rock out with Van Halen at the **Consol Energy Center**.

FRI 30 Attack Theatre debuts "Traveling" at the **New Hazlett Theater**, a full-throttle night of amazing dance.

SAT 31 The play "Tigers Be Still" at **City Theatre** is the funny tale of a therapist who could benefit from some therapy herself.

SAT 31 Steelers legend Franco Harris is honored at the annual Children's Home fundraiser at **Heinz Field**.

First begun by Jim Richards in 1999 as PGHEvents.com, this remains the region's #1 online event calendar.

Everyone in the local A&E community is encouraged to take advantage of it to promote their events.



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National/World A&E News Round-Up

Houston Dominates Grammys

The music world was stunned when, on February 12, Grammy Award winning singer Whitney Houston suddenly died in a Beverly Hills hotel --- only a day before the 2012 Grammys.

Presented annually since 1959 by the **National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences**, the award recognizes outstanding achievement in the music industry. Houston won an impressive six Grammys in her 35-year career. During that same period she achieve dizzying highs and lows in both her personal and professional life which is detailed by Wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitney_Houston

Her death gave the Grammy telecast a ratings boost --- more than 39 million people watched --- and almost eclipsed the awards themselves including singer Adele's sweep of six awards. For a complete list of winners, visit <http://www.grammy.org>

From Silent To Silent

With host Billy Crystal delivering laughs (or at least trying to), the internationally acclaimed film "The Artist" was the big winner at this year's Academy Awards.

Since 1929 and commonly called Oscar, the award is presented by the **Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences** to recognize excellence in the film industry. "The Artist" is a homage to the classic Silent Era that focuses on the relationship of an older silent film star and a rising young actress as talkies are about to arrive. Unusually,

"The Artist" is largely a silent film itself and shot in black & white. It won five statuettes including Best Picture --- the first time a silent movie won the top prize since "Wings" in 1929. Its star, Jean Dujardin, won Best Actor and Meryl Streep won Best Actress for "The Iron Lady".

Christopher Plummer, at age 82, became the oldest winner of Oscar by winning Best Supporting Actor for "Beginners". Respected character actress Octavia Spence won Best Supporting Actress for "The Help". Michel Hazanavicius won Best Director for "The Artist."

One of Crystal's running jokes through the night involved the venue. Formerly called the Kodak Theater, the name had to be stripped away with the bankruptcy filing of naming sponsor Eastman Kodak Company. At one point he called it "The Chapter 11 Theater".

A full list of winners is available at <http://www.oscars.org>

Untangling The Web

Through her union, director/choreographer Julie Taymor has reached a settlement with the producers of the expensive and controversially Broadway musical "Spider-Man: Turn off the Dark."

Taymor had been fired last year after the musical's suffered from development problems, went on for interminable preview performances and ran up a record budget. She responded by filing suit. The settlement worked out between **8 Legged Productions** and the **Stage Directors & Choreographers Society** that will make sure Taymor gets the royalties she

deserves for co-creating the musical. "We are very happy to have reached an amicable compromised . . . that will allow us to move on" producers Michael Cohl and Jeremiah Harris were quoted by TheWrap.com's Joshua L. Weinstein. "Now we can focus our energies on providing an amazing entertainment experience for our audiences, who have come to see the show in record numbers and made it a tremendous hit."

Breaching The Great Wall

In a significant move, the government of China has agreed to increase access to US films as part of a resolution to a trade dispute. China had been putting up serious roadblocks to American films entering that country, forcing the involvement of the World Trade Association which ruled in favor of Washington.

Excited studios are estimating anywhere from a 25% to 50% increase in Chinese ticket sales may result.

What's It All About, Twickie?

One of the most storied companies in film history, **Twickenham Film Studios** in London, is shutting down.

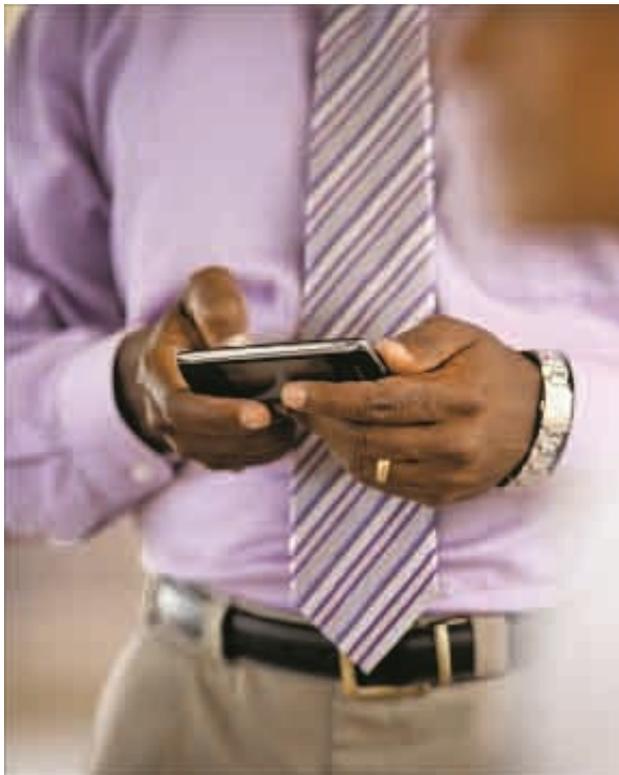
Established in 1913 in a former ice rink, it was for years the largest film studio in the United Kingdom. Administrator Gerald Krasner, who is handling the shutdown, told *The Telegraph* that the studio has been losing money for years and that it "will not be retained as a film studio, because there is no way of making it pay."

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Richards Hires Sponsorship Pro

James A. Richards has announced that Constance Capiotis has agreed to spearhead sponsorship solicitation for a new edition of *The Pittsburgh A&E Book*.

Pittsburgh A&E Group

First published in 2001, *The Pittsburgh A&E Book* is the region's only professional directory to the arts and entertainment community. There have been five editions since then and an accompanying web site was launched in 2009 at <http://www.pittsburghaebook.com>. Richards also writes, edits and publishes *Pittsburgh Applause*.

In the past, Richards has handled all matters regarding the *A&E Book* himself. But the project has become too big. "For more than a year I have been trying to dedicate resources --- especially time --- to this important project, but it has been an enormous challenge." In addition to *Applause* and *The A&E Book*, Richards manages two online event calendars (<http://www.post-gazette.com/events> and <http://www.doingnyc.com>), does pro bono marketing for the Pittsburgh International Lesbian & Gay Film Festival and, as an author, multiple writing projects including a trio of novels that reinvent the groundbreaking television series "Faraway Hill."

A student of business and marketing at **Kutztown University** and

Robert Morris University, Capiotis has worked with **Reese Advertising, Sheraton Hotels & Resorts, Education Management Corporation** (owners of the Art Institute of Pittsburgh) and **Comcast**. On her LinkedIn profile, she calls marketing "a beautiful blend of creativity and analysis."

Anyone interested in being a sponsor is welcome to contact her at ccapiotis04@hotmail.com

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City Theatre May Move Downtown

It is beginning to look more and more likely that the Pittsburgh Cultural District will get yet another theater as **City Theatre** ponders a move to downtown.



Began in 1975 as the City Players by a group of Carnegie-Mellon University graduates, the company originally performed at schools, parks and housing projects. In 1991 the renamed City Theatre acquired a South Side church creating a 270-seat main stage and a smaller, 100-seat studio theater.

In a February 15 article, the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review's* Bill Zlatos reports that City Theatre is actively considering a move, even though Managing Director Mark R. Power insists that they "are really just looking at our options." **The Richard King Mellon Foundation** provided a grant last year to study the feasibility of a move, but Power declined to give Zlatos details.

Selling City Theatre's four-building campus would wipe out the company's debt. The most obvious choice for a new home is a former movie theater on Sixth Street near the Renaissance Pittsburgh Hotel (aka Fulton Building). That building began as a movie theater but has spent most of the last two decades as a health

club (initially City Club and later a Bally's). It has been vacant for several years.

Being in the center of the Cultural District would certainly boost the company's attendance and revenue. But it will require significant investments to convert the structure into a contemporary theater. Moreover, there is concern about what would happen to the South Side when a new owner takes over the former church --- an owner who may not continue it as the neighborhood's only professional stage. "If they were to move from the South Side," the **Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council's** Mitch Swain told Zlatos, "a big concern for me would be coming to fill its place."

Pittsburgh Applause Editorial

PA State Budget: Vigilance, Not Panic

By James A. Richards

Governor Tom Corbett has released his proposed budget, and non-profit arts funding has been spared any major hits. Despite this fact, there are few people who seem on the verge of panic.

They shouldn't. We learned last year that the arts community has a very important advocate: Susan Manbeck Corbett. As *Pittsburgh Applause* reported in our July 2011 issue, the First Lady is chairwoman of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and used her dual position to the arts community's benefit. She will certainly do the same this year.

But even as I advise against panicking, I am also advising against

complacency. There are people in the state legislature who are more than a little anxious to cut arts funding for political and ideological reasons at least as much as budgetary ones. And one person -- no matter how well placed or influential --- can be the sole guardian.

Organizations like the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council are encouraging members of the arts community to contact the people in Harrisburg [see the article on page 1].

Meanwhile, a bigger concern should be on the national level, where Republicans in the House continue seeking ways to cut money to important institutions such as the Corporation for Public

Broadcasting and the National Endowment of the Arts.

Vigilance is required all around.

Letters to the editor are welcome via email to jim@james-richards.com

They may be edited for publication.

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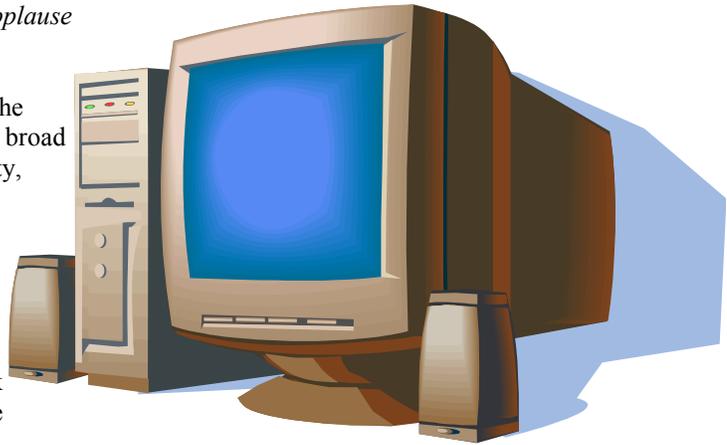
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Jim hopes to eventually bring *Pittsburgh Applause* back to the real world!

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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

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