



PRETTY, BIG



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It's all in the details: Tent decor mimics an 18th century mission's architecture in an event from Poko Event Productions (top left and right).

Harlequin Marquees creates a real-life mirage in Dubai's desert (above, at right). ►





Grass act: A canny installation makes a redesigned tent seem to float in a park thanks to the team at Classic Tents.

architecture, while between each pole a 4-by-6-foot lighted frame created a “window” effect. Amber lighting with cerulean accents projected onto the courtyard fountain completed the look.

Besides working around the mission’s fragile stonework, the event team had to work around the mission’s religious services. “We could work five hours and then had to stop five hours for choir practice and church services,” Poncher explains.

In the end, “Clear plastic tents are clear plastic tents,” Poncher says. “But we didn’t want to give that feeling. All the decor elements were custom-made or purchased from exclusive suppliers that combined into a completely unique, individualized look.”

PAPER CHASE Sometimes the best-laid plans for beautiful tents are ruined not by weather, but a piece of paper. It was a permit—or, more correctly, the lack of one—that jettisoned the plan for a dramatic, 160-foot-wide circular tent for the

Sept. 9 gala celebrating the opening of the Nashville [Tenn.] Symphony’s Schermerhorn Symphony Center.

The tent plan had worked well before; Torrance, Calif.-based Classic Tents had made news with just such a structure at Elton John’s Academy Awards party in Los Angeles last year. But Nashville city officials were skittish about replicating the structure in the large grass field just outside the Schermerhorn. The park’s soil sat atop a three-level underground parking structure, which was protected by a waterproof membrane. The officials believed the structure would be too heavy, and they would not authorize staking.

Despite the setbacks, the event team was determined to move forward with the park site. Classic Tents vice president of sales Howard Tabackman came up with a new, oval-shaped tent, and turned a negative into a positive—using the underground garage’s foundation piers to provide support for the tent’s base plates. Classic redesigned the 100-by-160-foot

structure to reduce weight and reposition its anchor drilling points just three days before the company’s trucks left California for Tennessee. Only hours before the trucks arrived in Nashville, the city approved the plans—not without a last-minute decision to require boom cranes in place of forklifts to protect the park’s topsoil.

With air conditioning keeping out the evening’s heat and humidity, 800 guests dined beneath the stars thanks to the event team’s blend of flexibility and determination. “We rallied around the clock for days at a time to make this structure a reality,” Tabackman says. “And after seeing the result, it was worth every second.” ■

RESOURCES *Classic Party Rentals* Classic Tents Division, 310/328-5060; *De Boer International*, +31 72 750 11 00; *Harlequin Marquees and Event Services*, +00 971 4 347 0110; *Poko Event Productions*, 310/441-5500