**Gina Vernaci, Senior Vice President of Theatre Operations Audio Transcript**

I remember two things in my early theater-going experience. In my family, I was raised by my mother. And, we actually were on the poverty level, so, we didn’t have a lot of resources. I remember going to The Muny in St. Louis.

And The Muny is an 11,000 seat outdoor theater. And we were in the last 3 rows, where the free seats were. I could have been in the front row, frankly, I was having so much fun. I just recall the thrill of being there, and I’m still that excited today.

My name is Gina Vernaci, and I am the Senior Vice President of Theatre Operations at Playhouse Square in Cleveland, Ohio.

The scope of my responsibility includes everything that it takes to bring a show to playhouse square, engage the community in that event, sell tickets to that event, seat the audience, and the fiduciary responsibility of keeping track of all of the ticket sales, and settling that with the show every night.

You look to bring shows that really showcase the craftsmanship that it takes to do a Broadway musical.

MUSIC PERFORMANCE (Blue Suede Shoes): “Well, it’s one for the money…two for the show…three to get ready, well go cat go, but don’t you step on my blue suede shoes…”

That could include costumes, orchestration, scenery, the writing, the directions. I probably see usually at least 30 Broadway shows a year.

When you see good and bad, you understand why good is good, and what the components are that make it good.

I was an Art major in college, in the visual arts. Art is problem solving. If you’re a writer it’s a blank page, if you’re an artist it’s a blank canvas, and if you’re a performer, it’s a blank stage and you have to create the thing that happens there.

When I started here at Playhouse Square, the organization was in debt, I was hired for three months, when I came to Cleveland, but they said that’s all we can hire you for, because we have a hiring freeze and we have this million dollar debt. We can’t bring people on, but we desperately need help. What has evolved for me from that is that I was here as the organization grew from two theaters to being the second largest performing arts center in America.

Even though in college I was an Art major, I was tutoring students in trig and calculus, because I also loved math.

Finance plays a very big role, because this is a business. It’s not show hobby, its show business. I am responsible for $30 million in gross revenue every year. So, you have to settle the show every night. Settling the show means anytime there’s a show, this seat right here has a ticket price, and it could have several discounts associated with it. And, for the show, you’re the bank, so you have to be able to account for every seat, every discount, for every performance that night.

All of the work you go through, all of the cajoling, planning, managing, strategizing, motivating, all of that, for me, comes in that moment, before a curtain goes up. And, the overture begins, and, the magic happens.

The greatest show for me is seeing the expression of an audience’s face. Y’know, as much as I love seeing what’s on stage, I love being in the house and turning around, and seeing how the audience is reacting.

(Audience applause)