



International Festivals & Events Association

**2019 IFEA Hall of Fame
Tom Bisignano, CFE
Freelance Producer
Orlando, Florida, United States**

From a very young age Tom knew he wanted to be part of the celebration, no matter what it was. Growing up in a large Italian family there was always a gathering on the calendar - weddings, baptisms, graduations, and holidays were always celebrated with great fanfare. This early initiation into the world of celebrations would lay the foundation for a nearly 40-year career in the events industry.



Today, Tom is an Executive Producer of live shows, spectacles and special events. He has a diverse blend of talents with an extensive background in the ideation, creation and delivery of large-scale events and entertainment productions.

Tom believes festivals and events are unique art forms that should educate as well as surprise and delight guests. "They ought to make you think, laugh, dance, cheer and sometimes weep". He considers himself a bit of an alchemist, connecting different experiences and always searching to see what he can bring together for the next event. His goal is to wow the guests with something new and unexpected each and every time. He embraces the quote from Walt Disney, "If you can dream it, you can do it!"

Having worked in both the theme-park world as well as large scale special events, Tom has a unique background. He spent the early years of his career at Walt Disney World Creative Entertainment. It was there that he managed and produced countless special events for Disney. Some of the highlights include the 75-city tour promoting the Disney MGM Studios, two Superbowl Half Time Shows, the opening ceremony of the Pan American Games, The LiMOUSEine Tour, The EarForce One Tour, Disney parade units in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and the Chicago Magnificent Mile Holiday Parade.

Tom moved from Disney's Creative Entertainment to the Marketing Division for Walt Disney Parks & Resorts where he was Director of Special Events for fourteen years. In this role he was responsible for organizing thousands of special events and festivals for Disney. Tom and his team oversaw a portfolio of 11 annual attendance and revenue generating signature events at Disney Theme Parks; like the award-winning EPCOT International Food & Wine Festival, the EPCOT International Flower and Garden Festival, the ever-popular Mickey's Not so Scary Halloween Party and Mickey's Very Merry Christmas Party. In addition, Tom was responsible for producing the activities surrounding Disney's media and PR events. Highlights include the grand opening of Disney's Animal Kingdom, The 100 Years of Magic Year-long celebration, the christening of the Disney Magic and Disney Wonder Cruise Ships, Disney's Dreamers Academy and Disney's Kids Day Celebration.

After 25 years at Disney, Tom decided to venture out on his own and become a Freelance Producer. Tom has developed, produced and delivered ceremonies and special events with a myriad of companies around the world. Working with FiveCurrents, a firm that specializes in

creating live content, Tom produced the Emmy-nominated opening ceremony of The Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia, the 1st ever European Games opening and closing ceremonies in Baku, Azerbaijan and The National Day Celebration for Sheikha Maryam bin Zayed in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

In 2011, on behalf of the IFEA, Tom was asked by the Saudi Commission on Antiquities and Tourism to deliver an event assessment for one of the oldest events in the world, Souq Okaz. Under the direction of HRH Prince Sultan bin Salman Al Saud, Tom laid the foundation to expand Souq Okaz into a destination driving festival to encourage travel and tourism to Saudi Arabia.

Closer to home, Tom worked with Sea World Parks to develop the programs surrounding their 50th anniversary, the "Sea of Surprises Celebration". The assignment included integrating all the divisions of the three Sea World parks to drive awareness and attendance during the 15 month-long Special Event.

Rounding out his theme park experience in Orlando, Tom spent a year at Universal Studios as the Senior Director of Entertainment Events. During his tenure at Universal he was the executive in charge for the grand opening of Universal's newest theme park, Volcano Bay, and produced the opening festivities for the attraction "Race through New York Starring Jimmy Fallon".

Recently Tom produced the opening and closing ceremonies for the Department of Defense Warrior Games. The games showcase the incredible potential of wounded warriors through competitive sports. Tom believes "our industry really shines when we help others shine. No other event truly touches the heart like the Warrior Games. These brave men and women are true heroes". The patriotic ceremony was hosted by Jon Stewart and featured performances by Kelly Clarkson and Weezer.

Tom is humbled and honored for being chosen for induction into the IFEA Hall Of Fame. "What a privilege it is to be recognized by your peers, who are some of the best in the business". Thanks to his work with IFEA and the invaluable connections made through the organization, Tom has made lifelong friends with fellow colleagues in the event industry. "The IFEA has been instrumental in Festival and Event improvements and innovations. They have helped shape better event leaders who in turn have managed better event staffs which ultimately leads to a better guest experience for all at festivals and events." He loves to ignite the creative flame when it comes to events. Tom has given countless speeches to event professionals and lectures to students around the world on lessons learned in his career. He truly enjoys attending events as much as producing them and has been fortunate enough to have been to some of the best in the world. "One of the bonuses of working in the event industry is benchmarking what our peers have created...it's not only enlightening, it's a ton of fun!"

Tom is a graduate of Fairfield University and attended The Crummer leadership program at Rollins College. He is a Certified Festival and Event Executive (CFEE) and has received The President's Volunteer Service Award from the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation. He has served as the Chairman of the World Board for the International Festival and Events Association and serves on the Board of Advisors to Pictureworks. He resides in Orlando, Florida with his wife Terri, daughter Kelsey and son Justin.

Please help us congratulate our 2019 IFEA Hall of Fame inductee, Tom Bisignano, CFEE.