

Global projects, such as Dubai Opera, entice international visitors and inspire the construction community.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF CONSOLIDATED CONTRACTORS CO.

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International Construction Spotlight

# Global Perspective

Partnerships and creativity allow industry leaders to expand

By Kate Gawlik

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# Crossing Borders

**Construction forecasts in general show growth across the globe** during the next several years. While those working internationally feel the same, they note that the global construction industry has changed since the 2009 construction crash.

As companies expand across many borders, they share their perspectives on how to be an effective global entity.

## Thinking Globally

Wim Sarens has been the CEO of Sarens, Wolvertem, Belgium, for eight years. Although the name indicates that Sarens is a family-owned company, Wim did not grow up in the business. He's an engineer with vast experience around the world, particularly in Africa and Europe, and he joined the company in 2008. He's a young CEO, but his experience and perspective have taken the company to another level.

"When I joined Sarens in business development, there was a global crisis happening within the construction industry," Wim says. "We needed to refocus our efforts to places like India and Brazil to expand our footprint."

Today, Sarens has about 4,000 employees in 63 countries. It reached this level by researching what it must do to stay in a country on a permanent basis. When going to India, for instance, each market sector was reviewed and analyzed to determine what was currently happening and what was forecasted for future growth. Sarens brings its own employees, hires new talent and slowly expands.

Sarens also has grown by acquiring companies, like Canada Crane services in 2011. "This was a solid business with a solid share of the market," Wim says. "We have been able to build on the strengths of this local company and make it more of a global player."

Sarens is a fourth-generation, family-owned business, but Wim is quick to point out that only 10 employees have the Sarens family name. The other 3,990 employees make up an international

workforce that is culturally diverse and driven. The company recruits people who think outside the box because they are more likely to be visionaries in the workplace.

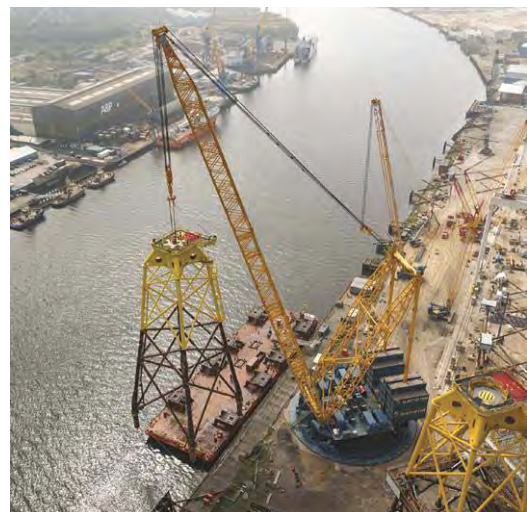
Such a way of thinking was needed when Sarens assembled the second-largest crane in the world in Newcastle, England. The SGC-120 recently was assembled on a long-term basis to install offshore windmills, and a video is available at [www.sarens.com](http://www.sarens.com).

MWH Constructors primarily works in the United States and United Kingdom. It is a merger of three companies that now has more than 180 global offices in 35 countries. The company's expansive reach stems from partnerships. "The right partner will help you understand the culture, labor force and supply chain in an area," President Blair Lavoie says. "MWH Constructors has tapped into our 200-year global industry experience and our local partners to help us manage diverse workforces across the globe."

Although MWH Constructors is spread across the globe, it has the capability to work as one unified team. An example is one of its international clients that has multiple projects occurring simultaneously around the world. "By having consistency in process and policy across our operations, we are able to establish productive cross collaboration to deliver these projects efficiently," Lavoie says.

## Market Outlook

As Sarens looks to other countries and markets, it does so knowing the construction landscape has changed. "There are a lot more delays and uncertainty with our clients," Wim says. "It was quite clear a few years ago that construction was a very linear process, and we talked through the process with clients. Today, we have many contracts pending final financial business approval, and the start dates change all the time. We have responded by being more organized."



The SGC-120, the second-largest crane in the world, recently was assembled in Newcastle, England, on a long-term basis to install offshore windmills.

While markets are picking up, Lavoie believes workforce issues are affecting the progress. He says, "Much like in the United States, the global construction industry is encountering a shortage in the major trades/skilled labor force. Following the construction downturn of 2009, many specialty trade workers switched industries, which continues to impact our teams around the globe."

Wim believes Australia is seeing more construction activity, particularly in onshoring wind turbines. An example is a 32-wind-turbine park called Hornsdale Farm in South Australia. The energy generated by the turbines is going to be stored in the world's largest lithium ion battery, currently being constructed by Tesla. Sarens is performing all lifting works, relocation of the cranes and small transport onsite.

Regarding other areas, Wim says, "In Europe, we have civil and offshoring projects taking place. The U.K. is expanding its nuclear program, and we see more general construction in the United States. The Middle East is doing more upgrade projects right now to petrochemical facilities."

Lavoie adds to that, saying, "One global trend we are currently seeing is offsite fabrication/construction. The infrastructure industry is learning from vertical builders that offsite fabrication brings huge efficiencies to the jobsite." ♦

## Bridging the Gap

Portable sectional barges continue to prove their versatility in the American and international markets. Parsippany, N.J.-based Acrow Bridge ([www.acrow.com](http://www.acrow.com)) has been using Poseidon Barge's P1 40 x 10 x 5 model as part of its rapid-deployment temporary road bridge sections both in the United States and globally.

The barges are used to act as supports for the bridge sections. This system can be used to assist in establishing permanent access routes, or it can create emergency access to areas otherwise unobtainable. The P1 system also has both commercial and military applications, allowing Acrow Bridge and other companies to enter a variety of markets.

"Working with Acrow Bridge illustrates that when great companies work together, outstanding results can take place," says Scott Sprunger, sales



Portable sectional barges are used internationally to create temporary road bridge sections and for other applications.

for Ft. Wayne, Ind.-based Poseidon Barge Ltd. ([www.poseidonbarge.com](http://www.poseidonbarge.com)). "The team at Poseidon is ready to help others navigate the international construction industry and bring portable sectional barges into global waters."

Poseidon Barge portable sectional

barges have a full line of accessories, including cleats, ladders, spuds, pockets, safety railings, pushers and winches. A patented rollform deck design boasts a 20,000 psf point load capacity. Poseidon Barge provides engineering support for platform configurations and analysis. ♦

PHOTO: COURTESY OF POSEIDON BARGE

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## Versatile Theatre Fills Dramaturgical Void

**Dubai's latest development will boost cultural life** in the Gulf's chief business hub. Dubai Opera is a dhow-shaped theatre nestled at the base of the world's tallest tower, and it is the cultural heart of a circuit of galas and galleries scattered across the Business Bay area.

Filling the dramaturgical void felt by theatregoers and aestheticians, the 2,000-seat auditorium, designed by Janus Rostock of WS Atkins & Partners, satisfies a range of artistic needs with convertible and expandable spaces.

### Project Scope

Brought to life by EMAAR Properties and general contractor Consolidated Contractors Co., the project started in November 2013 and was completed in August 2016. The 65,000-sq-m structure is supported by more than 70,000 cu m of concrete and 12,000 tons of steel.

Designed to resemble a dhow (a nod to the traditional sailing vessel used by Emiratis), the bow of the structure houses the opera's main stage, orchestra and seating, while the elongated hull accommodates the waiting areas, taxi drop-off areas and parking.

### Inside and Out

Upon arrival, guests are greeted by the venue's wide-open landscape framed by futuristic skyscrapers and pristine waterways. Despite its aesthetic

groundwork as an imitation of a traditional dhow, the structure's wall-to-wall glass panes and metal inlays and frames convey a modern elegance that is synonymous with the area.

Beyond its central edifice, Dubai Opera boasts a number of spaces and venues for guests to visit and explore, including a stunning rooftop restaurant and sky garden with views of The Dubai Fountain and the world's tallest building, Burj Khalifa.

Dubai Opera's entrance is a tempered grandeur. Its capacious hall, made bigger by its wall-to-wall windows, helps create an impressive space and sets the stage for what lies within. While the emirate's seafaring heritage is clearly conveyed in the dark wooden panels of the theatre and the rolling arches of the ceiling and walls, the main hall emulates this theme through its modest yet specific selection of materials. From the cascade of pearl-like chandeliers and undulating, white panels reminiscent of frothy waves, the main hall echoes the maritime theme.

The building's exquisite design by architect Janus Rostock equips the venue with an exceptional ability to transform from a theatre into a concert hall and into a flat-floor mode suitable for a banquet or event hall. This seamless flexibility enables Dubai Opera to host a wide variety of performances and events, including theatre, opera, ballet,

orchestras, concerts, fashion shows, live entertainment, conferences, galleries and art exhibitions.

In theatre mode, the space is suitable for large-scale drama productions, musicals, ballets, lectures and conferences, seating up to 2,000 people. It's fortified with state-of-the-art acoustic walls and fabric, a proscenium, a lattice ceiling (that can be raised and lowered as per performance specifications) and mobile VIP boxes elegantly shaped to emulate the smooth curves of a ship. When transformed into a concert hall, a series of towers and reflectors on stage and overhead are designed to create an acoustic shell around the orchestra, enabling an impeccable acoustic environment for a perfect sound quality.

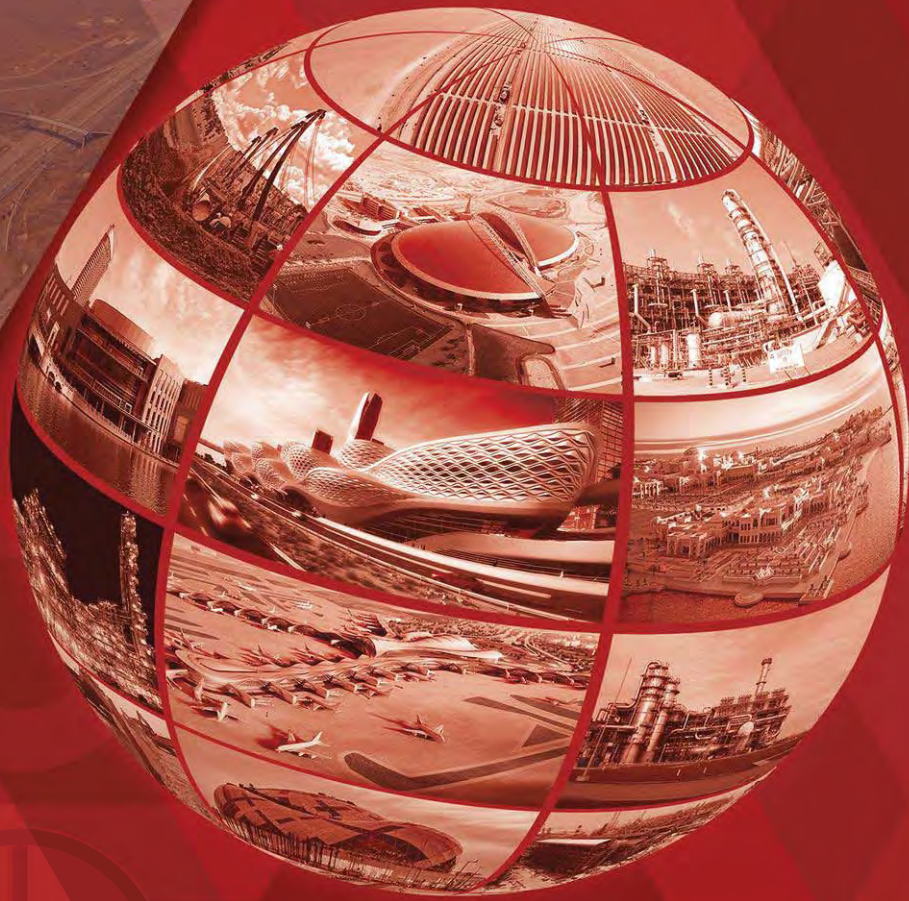
Tucked away in the underbelly of Dubai Opera is a network of changing rooms. Large enough to support dozens of staff members, performers, and store props and additional stage items, the lower level provides peace and privacy as well as easy access to the theatre when needed. The changing rooms are airy and minimalistic, akin to those on Broadway with their fluorescent, beaming lights and alabaster tables, with plenty of space for costume changes and fittings.

Though most will never see it, the illusive magic of the backstage is clear. A throng of ballets, concerts, traditional dramas, musicals and events will be staged at this multifaceted arena. This uniquely versatile stage has the ability to satisfy them all. Equipped with a range of mobile stage lights, slips and hidden entrances for stage staff, and a ceiling and floor that shift to meet the specifications of a show, this new addition to Dubai's culture scene will give dramaturgists the unique ability to compose a drama and direct its representation on a stage-wide scale.

Dubai Opera opened to a performance by legendary tenor Plácido Domingo. As the creative heart of the city, Dubai Opera is changing the performing arts experience. ♦



Dubai Opera is a dhow-shaped theatre, giving a nod to the traditional sailing vessel used by Emiratis.



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