



## THE 30-MINUTE INTERVIEW

### VICTORIA J. CERAMI

*Ms. Cerami, 54, is the chief executive of Cerami & Associates, a company based in New York that provides acoustical, audiovisual and technology design work for commercial and residential properties. Its recent projects include work at the Hudson Yards development, One World Trade Center and the Barclays Center.*

*Cerami & Associates was started in 1965 by Ms. Cerami's father, Vito Cerami.*

*Interview conducted and condensed by VIVIAN MARINO*

**Q.** How is business?

**A.** We're really busy, and we're really busy because there's a lot of repositioning for companies.

**Q.** How so?

**A.** What's happening now is that there are three generations in the work force, and people work very differently.

The millennials are coming in with a different work mentality — they're more likely to work out there in a collaborative way as opposed to an enclosed space. So more collaborative space, more bring-your-own-device-sit-down-let's-work-and-let's-do as opposed to these 30-person big, strapping meetings in conference rooms. They like that cacophony of sound. My generation is much happier in a quiet environment.

**Q.** So appropriate acoustics would be important for all workers.

**A.** When you have good acoustics in place and design, it makes for a better work experience.

**Q.** How many projects are you working these days?

**A.** It's quite a number — I'll say around 300.

**Q.** Is much of it in the New York area?

**A.** I'd say 70 percent of our work is in the Northeast corridor: New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Washington. And it's New York-centric: A lot of the major developers are here, and there are tentacles to many other places in the country.

**Q.** One of your biggest projects is Hudson Yards.

**A.** We're doing most of the office and residential buildings and some of the interior space.

We're working also with Brookfield on Manhattan West — they did the transformation of the World Financial Center — and with Silverstein; all of the buildings at the Trade Center are projects of ours as well.

**Q.** Including One World Trade Center.

**A.** Yes. All the acoustics.

We're not doing the Condé Nast space. We did the core and shells, all of the air-conditioning, all of the slabs. We did the base building.

**Q.** Do you do much residential work?

**A.** We're doing a lot of residential property. With former Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's quality-of-life edict for the city, it has fallen into acoustics. Buildings, for instance, on the West Side Highway have a requirement for the facade of the building to meet acoustical requirements for a sound barrier.

**Q.** Noise is typically the No. 1 complaint of apartment dwellers in New York City. Any advice?

**A.** It's usually with a tenant above. Maybe they have wood floors and they're hearing the clickety-clack. You put carpet down. A tenant that plays a lot of music — the bass of it is what you feel. There's no simple answer for that. That's called structure-borne noise.

*The 30-Minute Interview continued...*



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We designed for a very famous actor and he wanted to play his piano any time of day or night, so we designed his apartment to be able to do that. Basically what you do is float a room within a room and isolate it from the entire building. But unless you have an awful lot of cash, the simple things are all you can do from a practical perspective.

**Q.** You do sound masking, too.

**A.** That's white noise. Remember in the day there was Muzak. Sound masking with white noise is a blanket of sound.

The New York Times Building is one of the first to do this; we did the acoustics for The New York Times Building. We actually input sound into your space and create this blanket. If we turned off the sound masking, it would be dramatically different.

We create an environment that you can't see, can't touch, but the outcome is one that creates a good collaborative work space or a great residential property.

**Q.** You came to the helm of Cerami & Associates in 1987, just a couple of years after joining the firm.

**A.** I graduated college, worked for General Electric in the management program and then came to work for my dad. My dad had a partner, Fred Shen, and Fred left to start his own business in 1986, and then my dad died the following year.

**Q.** It must have been a scary time for you.

**A.** My Plan B was to be a patent attorney. But I real-

ized I had an opportunity, and I'm a fighter. I bought the company from my mom.

There are a lot of people in this industry that really mentored me and that are clients today, like Hines, an international developer. People knew my dad — this goes back a lot of years — and then my dad's legacy has evolved to be my legacy.

**Q.** Where would you like to see the company in the next five to 10 years?

**A.** Developing more skill set isn't on my docket right now. I'd like to do a few things really, really well. I think it's taking that brand and seeing how we can create a larger representation across the country, and to be a national firm.

**Q.** Your bio says that besides being a chief executive and a mother of three, you're working on a master's in business administration at M.I.T.

**A.** We all fit what we want to fit into our lives. It is really a major accomplishment for me to graduate M.I.T. in June.

I think many people become stagnant, and that's something I never want to happen to me. Going to M.I.T. has really allowed me to look at the world and my business with many different lenses.

NOVEMBER 22, 2013 - CERAMI ASSOCIATES IN THE NEWS

## Two Cerami Projects Recognized By Council on Tall Building and Urban Habitat



The Bow- Calgary, Alberta, Canada

*THE BOW in Calgary, Canada Wins "Best Tall Buildings Americas" Award for 2013; Devon Energy Center in Oklahoma City Cited as Finalist*

Two recently completed skyscrapers with acoustical design by Cerami [www.cerami-associates.com](http://www.cerami-associates.com) have been recognized by the prestigious Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, and chosen from 60 submissions representing new construction from around the world. The projects comprise "Best Tall Buildings Americas" award-winner, THE BOW, the tallest building in Calgary, Alberta Canada; and finalist, Devon Energy Headquarters, in Oklahoma City, OK, the tallest tower in Oklahoma. In addition to excellence in design, qualifying buildings had to meet criteria concerning "everything from energy consumption to integration with the urban realm on the ground."

"It is an honor to be recognized alongside truly great architects and designers," says Victoria J. Cerami, CEO of the preeminent acoustics, audiovisual and technology design firm. "Tall buildings inherently present a wide range of challenges. Our role has been to find solutions that conform to the design, massing and scale in the most efficient and natural ways."

For "Best Tall Buildings Americas" award-winner, THE BOW, a 58-story, 2 million-square-foot circular glass and steel mixed-use tower designed by Foster + Partners and Zeidler Partnership Architects, with interiors designed by Gensler, Cerami implemented a series of base building and interior systems to enable superior acoustic environments. Intricate acoustical systems were developed by Senior Associate and Project Manager Matthew Schaeffler, for a 250-seat auditorium located at the tip of THE BOW on the 54th level of the building. By constructing a 3-D acoustic model of the space, Mr. Schaeffler and his team were able to address the many challenging issues presented by the massive room's high ceilings and unusual shape, which conforms to the building's curved façade. Their solution was to place a solid glass interior wall at the front of the auditorium that maintained the aesthetic qualities of the design while evenly distributing the sound throughout the space and eliminating the possibility of sound becoming focused in any sections.

Cerami Chief Technical Officer James Perry was in charge of CTBUH finalist entry Devon Energy Headquarters, a 50-story, 180,000-square-foot corporate skyscraper designed by architects Kendall/Heaton Associates, Pickard Chilton and Gensler. The building's unique footprint necessitated creative technology in the workplace design in order to present collaborative environments and maintain the acoustical integrity of the conference rooms. Their acoustical modeling of the atrium space provided Devon Energy Headquarters with "undiscovered" capabilities of a flexible event hall that, otherwise, would have just served as transient space. The 300-seat auditorium currently serves as a corporate lecture hall, but may be adapted for other types of events.

The awards were given at the CTBUH 2013 Awards Dinner & Symposium on Thursday, November 7, 2013 at Herrmann Hall Auditorium at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. More information about the Council on Tall Buildings and Habitat is available at <http://ctbuh.org>.

### About Cerami

Cerami, [www.ceramiassociates.com](http://www.ceramiassociates.com), is an internationally recognized leader in acoustical, audiovisual and technology consulting, providing creative design services for a wide range of world-class projects, such as the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport (Mumbai), Devon Energy Tower, Zuckerman Research Center at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, and The New School's University Center. It is an advisor on sustainable solutions and consults on numerous LEED-certified projects. In addition, Cerami is a certified Woman-Owned Business Enterprise (WBE).

DECEMBER 9, 2013 - CERAMI & ASSOCIATES IN THE NEWS

## Professional Profile: James Casterton 2013



James Casterton, Cerami & Associates, Inc.



Name: James Casterton

Title: Chief Financial Officer

Company: Cerami & Associates, Inc.

Location: 404 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10018

Birthplace: Nottingham, England

Education: University of Leeds, BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance - 1993 - 1996, Institute of Chartered Accounts of England & Wales, Qualified November, 1999 (first time passes).

First job outside of real estate: Brebner Allen Trapp, trainee chartered accountant

First job in real estate or allied field: WSP Group London, corporate finance manager

What do you do now and what are you planning for the future? I am currently the chief financial officer at Cerami & Associates. As chief financial officer, I will work closely with the firm's leadership team to strategically grow and expand the firm's

geographical reach and service offerings.

How do you unwind from a busy day in real estate? Reading, cooking, watching Liverpool Football Club and New York Yankees.

Favorite book or author: Books about Roman and Greek history

Favorite movie: "Inception"

Last song you downloaded? "Get Lucky" by Daft Punk

One word to describe your work environment: Rewarding

Rules to live by in business: A good work - life balance makes you more productive

If you could invite one person to dinner (living or dead) who would it be and where would you go? Sir Winston Churchill, his home.

What is your dream job? Chief financial officer of the New York Yankees.

NOVEMBER 27, 2013 - CERAMI & ASSOCIATES IN THE NEWS - By REW Staff

## Engineering her own future puts Victoria Cerami in the spotlight



Victoria Cerami's life changed forever when she was just 27 years old.

That was when her father, founder of the acoustical engineering firm Cerami and Associates, died suddenly of a heart attack. His partner had left the firm only the year before, Cerami recalled, and

at the time she had been eager to reassure her father that the company would continue to succeed.

"I said, don't worry, pop, it'll be fine. It's you and me," she said. "I had no idea what I was talking about."

Acoustical engineers play an obscure but important role in the design of buildings and interiors, a role that is amplified (literally) as structures increase in scale.

"Any high-rise that was going up anywhere, they called my father," Cerami said.

Armed with her father's notes, his old briefcase and his college ring from Pratt, Cerami, who had studied mechanical engineering at the University of Hartford, set out to keep the company's clients on board.

One of her first projects was Canary Warf in London, working with Olympia and York. She was called on to approve a mock-up of a mechanical room that would be re-created 40 times throughout the complex, knowing how the vibrations of the mechanical systems are handled in the building could make or break its leasing potential.

Compared to the work she had been doing before her father's death, she said, it was like going straight from college baseball to playing for the Yankees.

"I had to dig deep," she said. "I think today, I don't know how I did it." In her first year in charge of the company, she established a relationship with the renowned architecture and design firm, Gensler, and expanded Cerami and Associates' service to include working on interiors. This new service line allowed Cerami and Associates to weather the economic downturn of the late eighties, when new construction waned.

Again, in hindsight, Cerami emphasizes how naive her young self seems to the accomplished business owner she has become.

The economics of the change, she says, were all over her head.

"I had no idea how that shift went from base-building to interiors," she said. "But somehow or another I got onto that wave and we corrected, we adjusted and we continued on."

The firm had a staff of six when Cerami took the helm in 1986. Today it employs 56 people, and has expanded its offering to include not only acoustical engineering services, but also audiovisual and multimedia technology services. Cerami and Associates has worked on the CNN Studios at Time Warner Center and the US Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs. Current projects include One World Trade Center, Hudson Yards, the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum in Dallas and the Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport in Mumbai.

In the early 90's she moved the company's office from Long Island City to Fifth Avenue in Manhattan.

"That was another pivot-point for the company," she said. "I wouldn't say clients looked at us differently, but maybe they did. We were hiring a different kind of people, kids weren't getting off the subway at Queensborough Plaza and saying, what is this place."

Three quarters of the employees in Cerami and Associates' acoustical department are musicians. Cerami herself played the accordion when she was growing up in Queens ("My father thought I could be very popular if I played the accordion,") but the last time she used her instrument it was paired with a toy organ-grinder's monkey as part of her Halloween costume.

Instead, in her spare time the CEO competes in triathlons and serves on the boards of a number of organizations, including the New York Building Congress. She lives in Connecticut and has three sons; the youngest two are still in college.

Cerami is also currently working towards an executive MBA from MIT's Sloan School of Management – fulfilling a long-standing dream of studying at the prestigious university.

To this day, Cerami says, her father is "the sun, the moon and the stars to me." But she also recognizes the process she went through all those years ago, as she took on the mantle of head of the company in her own right — taking the reputation that came with her family's name as a starting point and growing it into something new for a new generation of real estate.

"Everyone knew my father, and people referred to me as 'Vito's daughter,'" she said. "I was 'Vito's daughter' and then I became 'Victoria, Vito's daughter.' And then ultimately I became 'Victoria.'"



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**What is your dream job?** Chief financial officer of the New York Yankees.

## Christopher Peltier, PE, Joins the Cerami Team As Associate Principal in Acoustics



Christopher A. Peltier

*West Coast Expert in Acoustics and Audio-Video Forensics Moves East to Work with Leading International Consultancy*

**Cerami** [www.ceramiassociates.com](http://www.ceramiassociates.com), the renowned acoustical, audiovisual and technology consultancy, has hired **Christopher A. Peltier** (35) as Associate Principal. In his new capacity, Mr. Peltier is currently consulting on a number of prestigious engagements, including buildings at Hudson Yards, a Related Oxford venture, and the new headquarters for a major software company.

“Chris is an important addition to the Cerami team,” says **Victoria J. Cerami**, CEO. “His extensive experience with acoustic design for major television networks and film studios brings exceptional value to our group.”

Mr. Peltier’s depth of experience encompasses a wide range of work, including projects in mixed-use, residential and commercial properties, laboratories, convention centers, performing arts centers, corporate offices, fitness centers and educational facilities. In addition, he has worked on product development spaces for West Coast-based technology companies, which are sensitive to vibration.

An expert in audio-video forensics, Mr. Peltier has published several journal articles addressing such topics as “Analysis Criteria for Forensic Musicology,” which proposes scientific criteria for analyzing copyright infringement of published compositions and musical recordings.

Prior to joining Cerami, Mr. Peltier served as a principal consultant for a San Francisco-based firm. He is a member of the Audio Engineering Society, where he served as Vice Chair of the Technical Committee on Audio Forensics; the American Society of Mechanical Engineers; American College of Forensic Examiners; Law Enforcement Video Association; and International Association for Identification. Mr. Peltier earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, CA.

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OCTOBER 11, 2013 - CERAMI & ASSOCIATES IN THE NEWS - Published Oct 11 2013 by Citybizlist

## Cerami's Chris Pollock to Speak on "Acoustics in the Future Workplace" at DORMA Design Center, Tuesday, October 22nd



*Acoustics Design Leader Teaching Session at 1040 Avenue of the Americas, 22nd floor, 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.; Provides 1.0 LU towards AIA CEU Requirements*

Noise is a key issue in green and conventionally designed office buildings. Open-plan work spaces, glass partitions, and unfinished ceilings result in plenty of unwanted sound. As a result, workers must struggle to concentrate or simply hear their colleagues.

**Christopher J. Pollock**, PE, CTS, LEED, AP, BD+C, a Partner at Cerami [www.ceramiassociates.com](http://www.ceramiassociates.com) will be presenting "Acoustics in the Future Workplace" on Tuesday, October 22nd, from 6- to 7:30 p.m., at DORMA Design Center, 1040 Avenue of the Americas, between 39th and 40th Streets, 22nd floor. The 45-minute talk will be followed by a 15-minute Q&A session and is worth 1.0 LU (Learning Unit) towards the AIA CEU requirements.

"Current data shows that while people may prefer to work in sustainable and LEED-rated buildings, noise still remains a key issue," points out Mr. Pollock. "My talk will clarify what 'good' acoustics mean in terms of design criteria and how proper acoustical design can be employed while maintaining sustainable objectives."

### Among the pertinent issues that Mr. Pollock will be discussing, are:

- Understanding how to translate a client's key business performance criteria into acoustical design criteria for the project;
- Understanding what design tools need to be employed from inception to optimize alignment with the overall project design strategy;
- Understanding the types of work modes within an integrated office design and the optimal acoustical environments and design options for each;
- Understanding how to address additional acoustical challenges presented in projects designed to either achieve LEED certification or simply comply with sustainable project objectives.

Mr. Pollock, who is also the Regional Director for Cerami's Washington, DC office, has extensive acoustical design experience, having worked on projects in commercial offices, music and arts facilities, broadcast and educational institutions. Among his most recent workplace projects are Gensler DC and the law firms of Covington & Burling, Arnold & Porter, and Cohen Milstein. Other Cerami projects for which he has been responsible within the past few years include the Smithsonian Institution, the National Institutes of Health, the USO Warrior Family Center, National Public Radio and the Chesapeake Shakespeare Theater.

Adds **Victoria J. Cerami**, CEO, of the preeminent acoustic, audiovisual and technology design firm, "Chris is a gifted speaker who never fails to offer illuminating insight. Over the years, there have been rapidly changing models in workplace environments, with acoustics as a central component. I am sure the design community will want to hear what is currently being implemented and what is on the horizon."

### About Cerami

Cerami is a global leader in international acoustic, audiovisual and technology design consulting, providing creative design services for a wide range of world-class headquarters including the Northwestern Mutual Tower (Milwaukee), Prudential (Newark), Devon Energy Tower (Oklahoma City), Bank of America (New York) and Ogilvy (New York). It is an advisor on sustainable solutions and consults on numerous LEED-certified projects. In addition, Cerami is a certified Woman-Owned Business Enterprise (WBE).