

May 7, 2008

As a resident and activist, it is always easy to complain about the things that are wrong with Miami Beach or about why things take so long to accomplish but today, I want to be positive because, honestly, there is no better place than Miami Beach to live. It is this City's commitment to Arts and Culture that make it all worth while and I, for one, am very happy and proud to live in Miami Beach.

Here is a summary of the diverse cultural events available for just one week in Collins Park.

Thursday, May 1st, was the free opening of the Bass Museum of Art's new video exhibit, Voom Portraits by Robert Wilson. This exhibit was astutely brought to the Bass by long time curator, Ruth Grim having the foresight for what was needed to bring in a new generation of art appreciators.

Hundreds came to the opening party sponsored by the David Barton Gym and Miami Leisure. The Bass had never seen such vitality and excitement outside of Art Basel. This is headed to be a big money maker for the Bass Museum and will bring many visitors to Miami Beach.

Then on Friday, SoBe Music Institute under the direction of Carson Kievman, hosted Intimate Sounds - Baroque Terraces at the Open Friday Series at the Carl Fisher Clubhouse. SoBe sponsors free events every Friday at 7:30 PM open to the public. Last Friday over 80 people took advantage of this event. The audience base included small children through the "walker" generation. Everyone was attentive and enjoyed this concert. We have to thank the City for making this great space available to SoBe Music Institute and thank SoBe for bringing music education and free

concerts to Collins Park.

Sunday was a fabulous concert at the Botanical Garden with the South Beach Chamber Ensemble. Although there was a small cost of \$10, it was a great value and they played to a capacity crowd of over 100. Just a few years ago, the future of the Botanical Garden was uncertain but again our city stepped up and under the leadership of Laura Jamieson and a great Board of Directors, the Garden has turned into a profit center featuring not only a well manicured garden but also curates art and sculptures in the garden most of the time. The garden always has free entry and offers many classes and seminars. Only special events have nominal fees.

Then on Monday and Tuesday, world acclaimed, Miami City Ballet paid tribute to Augie and Margo Rodriguez, one of the all time famous dance partners of last century, with Open Barre 4, a series developed to bring dance to Collins Park at their studios after they stopped performing at the Jackie Gleason Theater in favor of the Performing Arts Center in Miami. Miami City Ballet's intimate 200 seat Wolfson Theatre was packed both nights. The performance was breath taking and a great collaboration between MCB and the NY City Dance International Champions. The Rodriguez were on hand to receive a standing ovation along with all the performers of the evening. The price for the super event, a mere \$25.

None of this would be possible if it wasn't for the Mayor and Commissioners of Miami Beach who realize the importance of Art and Culture in Miami Beach and who continue to fund these great organizations. They have even formed the CANDO Arts District to help further define Miami Beach and more closely Collins Park with the Arts movement. We are all lucky to benefit from their good judgment and financial incentives. If our City Government continues to look forward, they could actually create a Theater District. Every major

metropolitan area in the world has one but not South Florida, not the Great Miami Area. What better place than Miami Beach? We already have the restaurants and hotels with more on the way. We are already the close knit walking urban environment needed for such a district to be successful. Lets work together to make it happen. Lets make Collins Park the 3rd destination in South Beach. It started with Art Basel over five years ago and has been bubbling ever since. If you don't believe that, look at the cranes all around Collins Park. Thanks to the City of Miami Beach with their help and foresight, Collins Park's destiny has been planned and mapped out. It is way past time to thank them for creating this Cultural Center.

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