

Beach invests \$3 million for spring entertainment

BY MONICA CORREA

Miami Beach is investing close to \$3 million to produce a thematic month-long concert series to activate South Beach's next spring break, as the city hopes to attract a mature crowd.

Miami Beach Live, produced by Tom Bercu Presents – an events production service company based in Los Angeles – would be a carefully curated four-weekend concert series with daytime events through March that would provide diverse and including programming to reach and engage diverse audiences, said Lissette Garcia Arrogante, director of the tourism and culture department at City of Miami Beach.

Each weekend through March, the city, which has been working with tourism and cultural partners, would provide programming in Lummus Park, 1130 Ocean Drive.

“We’re going to be appealing to this diverse older demographic because we do not want to be positioned for Spring Break – we do not want Spring Break,” said Commissioner Mark Samuelian. “We want to have arts and cultural programming.”

There would be a Friday night “movie under the stars, followed by a Saturday night concert, and on Sunday Dine-Arounds, which will be programmed in partnership with the Ocean Drive Association and the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau (GMCVB). “In

addition, during the daytime hours, we will provide a Zen village that includes health and wellness activities, group exercise, sports, in a family zone,” said Ms. Arrogante.

The first weekend, March 4 to 6, is to be dedicated to the LGBTQ+ community with a dance theme. “We partnered with the Winter Party Festival, which is a very successful annual event,” she said. Talent for that weekend has been confirmed and booked.

The second weekend (March 11 to 13), would be popular culture themed, and the third weekend (March 18 to 20), would be a world or international themed event. Talent for those two weekends is yet to be confirmed.

The last weekend, March 25 to 27, is to be dedicated to symphonic and classical music and Broadway. “We’re working with the GMCVB to successfully market it,” said Ms. Arrogante. “We’ll be launching our campaign in the next few weeks, so we’re really excited.”

Last June, Miami Beach city commissioners approved \$2.4 million for programming. In October, another \$750,000 was added to the budget to cover talent and production costs driven up by pandemic-related delays and increases in price. This addition will ensure that talent for the Pop weekend would be successfully booked before March, said City Manager Alina Hudak in an October memo to the commission.

“Availability of talent has de-



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creased due to continued scheduling delays from the last 18 months due to Covid-19 and intense competition for those dates,” she told the commission. “In addition, overall production costs have increased approximately 30% due to staffing shortages and other costs.”

Of the \$2.4 million previously approved, \$1.4 million is for infrastructure for the production, including staging and fencing, and \$1 million is for paying talent and performers.

“We have set aside [this funding], and the commission has voted to fully fund this,” said Mr. Samuelian, “because it is strategically important for South Beach.”

Municipalities opening door to traditional holiday events

BY ABRAHAM GALVAN

Just like old times, major municipalities throughout Miami-Dade are welcoming back their residents to enjoy traditional cultural arts and holiday events.

The City of Doral invites residents and members of the community to be a part of its tree lighting and movie night at Doral Government Center at 8401 NW 53rd Ter. This is the first of a series of Holiday events. The celebration kicks off Dec. 1, with a special ceremony, which features Santa Claus.

Dress up with festive holiday pajamas as the Christmas tree lights up, which will be followed by a special screening of the “Polar Express” on the lawn.

The “Holiday Series of Events” continues with “Light Up the Night” on Dec. 2, at the government center. Join city officials and show holiday pride as the menorah is lighted recognizing all first responders for keeping the city safe during the holidays.

The holiday fun keeps on going with the “Holiday Celebration at the Park” Dec. 10 at Doral Meadow Park at 11555 NW 58th St. There will be a full night of entertainment for the family with activities that include inflatables and live performances. The festivities culminate with a virtual storytime with Santa and Mrs. Claus, airing Dec. 23 on the Doral TV Channel or on the city’s website.

Coral Gables will also light up its Christmas tree on Dec. 3 at Mer-

rick Park in front of city hall at 405 Biltmore Way during “The Annual Holiday Tree Lighting Spectacular.” Festivities include carnival games, holiday crafts and food vendors, with Santa arriving on a fire engine and helping city officials light up the tree. Coral Gables residents will have the opportunity to purchase VIP tickets starting Nov. 19 for \$30 at PlayGables.com.

The North Miami Community Redevelopment Agency (NMCRA) is inaugurating the “Caribe Arts Festival” Nov. 20 at Griffing Park. This one-of-a-kind celebration will honor the arts of the Caribbean and Latin America and will showcase a broad range of artistic creations across various mediums by both local and international artists like Boukman Eksperyans, Gio Betta, Nadia Harris, and more. This festival represents the rich culture and creativity of the diverse community that has deep historical roots in North Miami.

North Miami’s recently renovated public space, Griffing Park at 1220 NW Griffing Blvd., which will act as the main stage for major headliner performances, including artists like Boukman Eksperyans from Haiti, Gio Beta from Colombia and the School of Rock North Miami.

The public will also enjoy over 40 visual artists showcasing their talents spanning from classic to contemporary, an array of artisan vendors, and offerings provided by over a dozen local food trucks.

The first step to minimize risk and keep yourself, family, friends and the community safe is to get vaccinated. You should also:

- ❄️ Hold festivities outdoors ❄️ Wear a mask in indoor public spaces ❄️ Limit size of group gatherings
- ❄️ Get tested if exposed or symptomatic

For more information, visit miamidade.gov/coronavirus

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY



Arts & Culture

Book Fair turns the page with its most flexible programming

BY MARILYN BOWDEN

After devising an all-virtual work-around in compliance with pandemic restrictions a year ago, Miami Book Fair is back at Miami Dade College's downtown Wolfson Campus with its most flexible programming yet. The 2021 edition, continuing through Sunday, Nov. 21, offers programs in several formats.

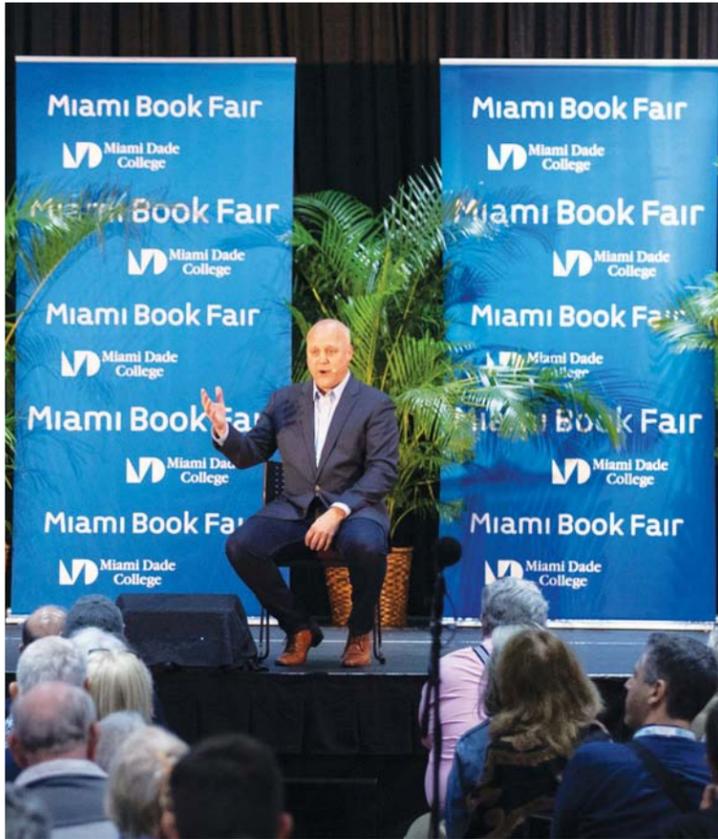
"Last year covid restrictions forced us to go entirely online," said Lissette Mendez, the fair's director of programs. "So instead of in-person presentations, we created an online platform and author conversations, and also recorded videos of those conversations so that they could be streamed at any time on a Netflix-like platform."

Since planning for this year's event began in January and February, she said, "we've been rolling with the punches, making changes as necessary depending on what was recommended."

With Miami-Dade's vaccination numbers up and covid cases down, a hybrid format seemed the most practical solution in the end.

Fair organizers are still taking special precautions this year to keep everyone safe. To keep numbers to recommended levels, tickets are required for all author readings and conversation as well as scheduled programming at Children's Alley. Chairs and tables will be positioned appropriately. At the end of each author conversation or reading, the room will be cleared out for cleaning.

This year's fair offers almost 300 programs, about 150 of which are accessible by streaming.



Mitch Landrieu, former New Orleans mayor and author of "In the Shadow of Statues: A White Southerner Confronts History," at fair.

They include authors writing in English, Spanish, French and Haitian Creole.

"A number of the writers are from other countries," Ms. Mendez said, "and were unable to come in person because of travel restrictions. Those folks are participating online. It's a great way to bring them to our audience."

Diversity has always been a priority.

"Our city is home to people from all over the world," Ms. Mendez said, "including American Latinos, African-Americans

and a large Haitian community. We try to pay attention to the dialogues all these communities are having. I am a firm believer that what concerns me should concern you, whether we are in the same community or not. We need to make sure that dialogue is accessible to all. This is true also of race and gender, and even of genres – mysteries and romance as well as literary fiction.

"This is one reason I like that the fair is returning to downtown, where people of different communities can come together and recognize ourselves in others."



About Miami Book Fair

Location: Miami Dade College's Wolfson Campus, 300 NE Second Ave.

Parking: There is free parking at Building 7, between Northeast First and Second avenues and Fifth and Sixth streets.

Street Fair Admission:

\$10 for adults

\$5 for 13-18, 62+

Free for those 12 and under

Tickets: A ticket is required to attend all programs, author conversations and readings, and other events taking place in person. To register for tickets, visit [MiamiBookFair.com](https://www.miamibookfair.com) and click "Purchase tickets" (<https://www.miamibookfair.com/street-fair-hours-and-admission/>)

For further information:

Website: [miamibookfair.com](https://www.miamibookfair.com)

Hash tag: #miamibookfair2021

Handle: @miamibookfair

While virtual programming has been essential to the fair's survival in recent times, Ms. Mendez said she doesn't see it as a replacement for in-person encounters.

"They're two different kinds of things," she said. "Connecting in person with an author is one type of conversation and dialogue. In essence, the writer performs for the audience. It's an invitation to come on in and listen to another point of view."

"In the online format, where the audience is invisible, that intimacy takes place between

author and interviewer, and conversations can get really deep.

"Though it's true that when the audience is brought into the space where the author lives, funny things that happen can create a feeling of intimacy. A kid opens the door, or a dog or cat comes in."

Tomorrow evening (11/19) starting at 5 p.m., the Miami Book Fair invites guests to enjoy Downtown Happy Hour, featuring live music and free drinks, at The Porch on the Wolfson Campus. This event requires a ticket for admission.

Miami Beach strengthening its arts and cultural organizations

BY MONICA CORREA

As part of Miami Beach's aim to replace the Entertainment District with an Art Deco Cultural District, the city is strengthening arts and cultural organizations by providing local programming and funding the city's major cultural anchors and their organizations.

Mayor Dan Gelber proposed last year a 12-point plan to transform South Beach into an Art Deco Cultural District.

His plan seeks to control short-term rentals; increase city funds for cultural festivals and events; pedestrianize Ocean Drive; increase security cameras around the city; regulate use of scooters, jet skis and slingshots among "pesky toys that degrade quality of life," according to the published plan; implement more curfew and protect causeways for residential use; strengthen South Beach code enforcement; enforce policing; heighten the code of conduct for cafés on Ocean Drive, including a possible ban of oversized drinks and hookah devices; encourage a Live-Work-Play environment; look to eliminate excessive noise, especially on Ocean Drive; and restrict the

sale of alcohol with a 2 a.m. rollback from its current 5 a.m. limit.

Miami Beach residents showed, in a non-binding referendum question Nov. 2, that they favor a 2 a.m. end of the sale of alcohol.

"At the City of Miami Beach we recognize that arts are a key factor in providing resiliency and vibrancy to our community," said Lissette Garcia Arrogante, director of the city's Tourism and Cultural Department. "We understand the many ways the arts affect the character of our city and residents, and so we will position Miami Beach as a leading arts and culture destination."

Last summer, the city commission approved investing \$2 million in local arts and the cultural community, Ms. Arrogante said. \$1 million was allocated to cultural anchors – such as the Bass Museum of Art, the Jewish Museum of Florida, the Miami City Ballet, Miami New Drama, the New World Symphony, the Wolfsonian-FIU, the Holocaust Memorial Committee, the Miami Beach Film Society and the Rhythm Foundation – for operational costs. Another \$1 million was allocated for citywide cultural programming, like the Miami Beach

On Stage program.

"Miami Beach On Stage engages smaller cultural, non-brick-and-mortar presenting organizations, by commissioning visual performing arts activations in all of our city parks," Ms. Arrogante said. "After many months that our residents have been indoors [because of the pandemic] we're providing free programming in all of our public spaces."

The program was created to help smaller organizations that are mostly producing live performances. "The organizations that we worked with provided different performances, from live Cuban to Venezuelan [theater] to opera in parks like Lummus Park and Collins Park," she said. "This gave them an opportunity, after such a tough year, to help incentivize our local arts in the streets."

The 2021 program ran from Sept. 9 to Oct. 14; the 2022 schedule is yet to be announced.

In addition, the Miami Beach arts and culture department commissioned three large-scale public art installations by Carlos Betancourt and other artists, two of which will be unveiled during Art Week in De-

cember. "We're really excited about this," said Ms. Arrogante. "We feel we're well on our way to advancing towards our goal, being a resilient arts vibrant community."

The push for a more cultural district comes from an aim to make Miami Beach, and especially South Beach, a place where residents could feel safer.

"We are also exploring and implementing incentives for more of a live-work-play environment in the entertainment area," said Commissioner Mark Samuelian in an interview. "Specifically, we recently passed an ordinance eliminating parking requirements for certain residential uses."

The city commission also recently voted to bring back one lane of traffic southbound on Ocean Drive. Mr. Samuelian said the long-term vision for the street is pedestrianization. The lane, he said, could also be considered for the exclusive use of Freebees – the cost-free transit vehicles.

"For me the most important thing is that Ocean Drive is friendly to pedestrians, cyclists and especially our residents," he added. "And I want to make sure, whatever we do, that we put the priority on people, not cars."