

Web Extras

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Festival of the Arts speaker Bruce Feiler

VIRTUAL REALITY

Even though Festival of the Arts Boca is happening online-only this year, we'll be covering the events at bocamag.com; you may even see us hosting a Zoom author or two. Reserve your free digital tickets at festivalboca.org and join in the conversations.

MO(RE) VAUGHN

We couldn't fit all of our discussion with former Boston Red Sox All-Star first baseman Mo Vaughn onto page 30. Visit bocamag.com/march-2021 for some more stories from the Hit Dog about his time in the big leagues and beyond.



Mo Vaughn

JOHN CORDES/ICON SMI VIA ZUMA PRESS

City Watch

Boca Raton is anything but sleepy, and **Randy Schultz** is the go-to for all the city politics, development and business news you need to know. For updates delivered straight to your email every Tuesday and Thursday, visit the City Watch tab on our website.



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Best Bites

Think our dining guide is long? You haven't seen anything until you've visited our digital version. We've got critic-reviewed restaurants from Jupiter to Miami on the web. Visit the **food tab** to view the guide.



Join the Club: Be a Member

We've curated a brand-new membership program tailored just for our loyal readers! We're redefining what it means to be a subscriber by introducing experiences that go beyond the pages of our magazine. Register at bocamag.com to join this exclusive group and start enjoying a wide array of special discounts, events, giveaways, and more throughout South Florida.



Soprano Nadine Sierra
opens the virtual Festival
of the Arts in March
(page 26)

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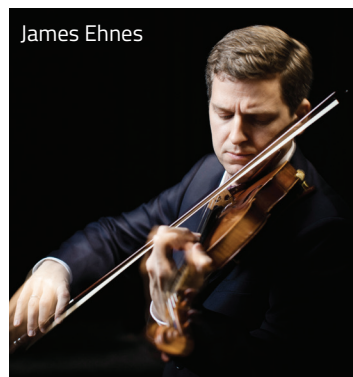
The Zoom Where It Happens

Festival of the Arts Boca goes entirely online—and free

Written by JOHN THOMASON

The show must go on, sort of. Festival of the Arts Boca could have thrown in the towel and opted for a gap year, but given the circumstances, its organizers have split the difference. There will be no in-person attendance this year, but the performers will be playing (and streaming) live, in Boca Raton, and the authors will be speaking live via Zoom. Every show is free with advance registration at festivalboca.org; each performance and discussion will stream on the website at 7 p.m. The shows won't replay, so be there or be square. Here's what we have to look forward to.

MARCH 6: NADINE SIERRA AND FRIENDS: Sierra, a native South Floridian, won Palm Beach Opera's Junior Division Vocal Competition in 2007, and has since ascended the peaks of operatic stardom. The soprano has performed at the Met and Paris' national opera, toured with Andrea Bocelli, and released a major-label album. She'll kick off the Festival at what is likely the most unusual venue she's played yet: the Boca Raton Airport.



MARCH 7: JAMES EHNES AND FRIENDS: A Grammy winner and a virtuoso violinist with a resume as long as pi, Canada's James



Sonia Shah

GLENFORD NUNEZ

Ehnes has played with every major orchestra and at the most glittering venues around the world. He's as comfortable in full symphonies as in chamber orchestras, and his Festival performance, in the intimate confines of Boca Raton Innovation Campus, will certainly be the latter.

MARCH 8: ADMIRAL JAMES STAVRIDIS: This decorated retired Navy admiral and best-selling author is used to carrying worlds on his shoulders. As the leader of the NATO Alliance on Global Operations from 2009 to 2013, his responsibilities included Afghanistan, Libya, the Balkans and Syria—not exactly the cushiest of military purviews. Over his 37-year career, he has acquired much insight about leadership, which will be the topic of his Festival discussion.

MARCH 9: BRUCE FEILER: An expert TED talker whose 15 books have touched on subjects from the Bible to the Nashville music scene to the contemporary Middle East, Feiler will discuss his latest tome, *Life in the Transitions*, an account of how ordinary Americans in all 50 states adapted to fundamental and unexpected life changes. Published just months into a global

pandemic that has affected just about everyone, Feiler's road map is more prescient than the author could have imagined.

MARCH 11: SONIA SHAH: A science writer extraordinaire, Shah has published two of the genre's most influential books of the past five years. Released in 2016 and reissued in 2020 with a new preface, *Pandemic: Tracking Contagions from Cholera to Coronaviruses and Beyond* is a chilling account of how viruses spread; and 2020's *The Next Great Migration: The Beauty and Terror of Life on the Move* explores migrations through the centuries, and how climate change is auguring the next one.



Constantine Kitsopoulos

MARCH 13: FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS BOCA ALL-STARS: Typically a multi-day presence at Festival of the Arts, Music Director Constantine Kitsopoulos will have just one orchestral performance this year. The lively and dexterous conductor will lead master musicians through another spirited and eclectic program.

MARCH 14: Latin jazz flautist Nestor Torres will close the Festival with a full-band set at Boca Resort. For more on Torres' performance and career, turn to page 120.

2007

The year Festival of the Arts Boca debuted

15 thousand

Annual attendees of a typical Festival of the Arts

\$1.3 million

The Festival's annual impact on South Florida

Nestor Torres

Though separated from his audience at Festival of the Arts Boca, the Latin jazz maestro aims to bring us together

Written by **JOHN THOMASON**

"When we connect our hearts through [music]—when it's really creating with the intention to create, rather than produce or manufacture something to sell—it's a powerful and urgent and necessary tool of transformation."

—Nestor Torres

A Latin jazz fixture around the world but especially in his home base of South Florida, Nestor Torres won't have to travel far on March 14, when he takes the stage at the glittering Boca Raton Resort & Club to close out Festival of the Arts Boca. Nor will his audience, which will be tuning into a free livestream of the concert, owing to the damn pandemic.

A consummate professional with a passionate command of the jazz flute, Torres will make the best of the situation, with or without the synergy of an in-person audience. "Life is creativity," he says, of COVID-related challenges. "Whether artists or not in terms of music or visuals or drama, in a sense we're all artists of life. This is our opportunity to create and re-create our lives in a way we're able to endure and persevere."

A Grammy nominee and Latin Grammy winner, Torres has brought his mellifluous mastery of the flute to a range of genres, collaborating with artists as diverse as Herbie Hancock, Gloria Estefan and Dave Matthews. At his headlining show at the virtual Festival, he'll be accompanied by a four-piece band, and is expected to perform his interpretations of jazz flute and American Songbook standards, as well as original compositions with a spicy Caribbean flair.

1 *What is it like playing virtual concerts, and not having the energy exchange of an audience in front of you?*

It's certainly a different experience. At the same time, the awareness that there are people [watching], combined with the opportunity to interact with musicians—which has become a rare occurrence in and of itself—really makes up for it, so we can create excitement and the magic of the music-making.

2 *How has COVID affected your creativity, being isolated for so long?*

The way that my creativity has been bolstered or ignited through this whole COVID thing has been beyond the purely compositional element. It has been about how do you create a new reality? How can I activate my creativity to seize this moment and do my work as an artist with the resources available, via technology and so forth? So in that sense

I've had no choice but to begin to rethink how to convey messages.

I have written a few compositions. There is one specifically that came through very naturally. In the beginning of the pandemic, I created a series of haiku poems, which I then improvised [musically].

3 *What attracted you to the flute at a young age?*

My father was a musician, so I have been around music my whole life. In middle school, I had the opportunity to study music, in an after-school program. When it came time to decide, they asked me in the application, what instrument do you want to learn? I had been playing the drums since I was 5. But I didn't see me studying the drums and percussion in the context of music; I wanted to learn notes and scales. I was surrounded by saxophones and trombones and trumpets, and they were fine, and then I looked up at the blackboard and saw a photograph of the flute. I said, 'oh, that's different. Yeah, I'll try that!' ... I haven't looked back since.

4 *You've written music, like the "Dances, Prayers and Meditations for Peace" album, in response to tumultuous events such as 9-11. We're in one of the most challenging times in our history right now. How can music help heal us now?*

As it always has. Music is a universal expression. I was tempted to say that it is the most human way of expression, but when you think of it, throughout nature, birds and dolphins and all kinds of different creatures have songs and sounds to express themselves and communicate. To me, it's almost a shame that the phrase can become so trite, when we say that music is a universal language. But it just really is.

5 *You tour often in normal times, but are the South Florida shows special for you?*

Always. When I was getting started here in South Florida, I always remember the Boca Raton audiences to be the warmest and the most embracing. And to this day they continue to be so.



Nestor Torres