

**THE STATE OF THE ARTS IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY**  
**Thursday, February 6, 2025**

**Brian May, Chairman**  
**Miami-Dade County Cultural Affairs Council**

Although we are only just a month into this year, 2025 has already shown itself to be a seminal year for our County and for our Country. It is hard to believe it was just a year ago that I stood in this very spot to deliver the State of the Arts Address.

At that time, together with Mayor Daniella Levine Cava, and with the support of the County Commission and the Cultural Affairs Council, we launched our Arts Energize 305 plan. This focused initiative supports our cultural organizations and artists while shining a spotlight on the economic and social benefits of the arts in Miami-Dade County. As the Mayor just mentioned, Arts Energize 305 reaffirms that the arts are a fundamental way to unite people and build community.

Arts Energize 305 also underscores the important role of the Cultural Affairs Council and the Department of Cultural Affairs in supporting our unique and dynamic cultural ecosystem. Our goal is for our residents and visitors to be able to access excellent cultural activities in new and creative ways across every neighborhood in Miami-Dade County.

The cornerstone of Arts Energize 305 is that the arts are for all. Our Mayor and County Commissioners have been great partners in making sure that the County's investment in arts and culture is made available to artists and nonprofit arts groups in every corner of Miami-Dade County.

This year, in collaboration with our elected officials, the Department of Cultural Affairs has conducted more than a dozen grants workshops in various locations throughout Miami-Dade, including Milander Center for Arts in Hialeah, the Dennis C. Moss Cultural Arts Center in South Dade, the Arcola Lakes Senior Center in North Miami and The Arts and Recreation Center in Opa-locka. These workshops are meant to find and cultivate arts organizations by encouraging new applicants for our competitive grants programs. Our workshops have been attended by more than 350 prospective grantees, and have resulted in 40 new grant applicants so far this year. We must continue to bring people to the arts and bring the arts to the people, and we must do it across ages, incomes and neighborhoods. Thank you, Commissioners for being such great partners in the outreach to arts organizations in your respective districts. Your help is critical to our efforts, and we thank you for establishing culture as a vital service for your constituents. But we must remember that in order to expand the reach of our competitive grants programs, we must have the funding and resources to do so.

We continue to keep an eye on Tallahassee and the State's Division of Arts and Culture, which traditionally provides critical support for our cultural community. However, with the Governor's veto of all cultural grants last year, we have lost ground and many cultural groups throughout Miami-Dade have had to adapt and adjust. The impact of the veto has been staggering. Miami-Dade County lost \$6.4 million in State cultural grants to 132 Miami-Dade nonprofit arts organizations. There is no question that losing State grants has hurt the operational stability of our nonprofit arts groups. Earlier this week, Governor DeSantis released his proposed budget for next year which includes \$27 million for the arts in Florida. While this is an encouraging sign and we appreciate the restoration of arts funding by the Governor in his proposed budget, we have to

stay on high alert and remain vigilant in advocating for a restoration of this funding with the Florida Legislature.

At the same time our cultural community is also wrestling with rising costs; ; and lack of space and cultural venues to create, rehearse, perform, exhibit and produce their work. Finding new space and maintaining existing spaces is always a challenge, and we must ensure that any efforts to generate capital funding for new County facilities include funding for arts and cultural facilities.

Make no mistake that funding is the life blood for the arts. While last year we faced immense funding challenges at the State level, we will face even greater challenges in the coming years. We all know that post-pandemic Federal funding for the arts is no longer flowing. And it remains to be seen what the fate of the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities will be under the new administration. That combined with a leveling of local tourism tax dollars projected for the years ahead means it will not be easy to maintain and grow our current County funding levels. I often say that some of the most innovative and cost-effective operations in our community are in the arts. And we must all be thinking innovatively to do more with less resources, and, more importantly, work collaboratively to identify new sources of private funding for our arts organizations. We are fortunate enough to have a lot of incoming residents and businesses in Miami-Dade, and we must encourage them to support our arts and culture organizations. I want to thank Jorge Perez and The Miami Foundation for assisting us this past year in promoting additional funding for the arts, and we look forward to continuing our work with them in the year ahead.

Yes, these challenges mean we will all have to be more diligent than ever in pushing to maintain and increase our current funding levels, but we also have to be ready to work together as organizations to find economies of scale - this is at the heart of Arts Energize 305. Finding more cost-effective ways to collaborate and deliver performances by way of pop-ups or repurposing commercial spaces and facilities, or by combining warehousing and storage space is in everyone's best interest. If we are able to sustain and increase funding, while also being more efficient with our collective resources, we all end up better off. Many institutions, like Miami City Ballet and Florida Grand Opera, are already implementing innovative delivery mechanisms for their art forms by performing in non-traditional venues, engaging younger generations and using technology to attract new audiences. We need to see more of this growing trend across our cultural community.

While we face great challenges, we also possess great characteristics as a community. These characteristics have taken decades to develop, and they are what will ensure our success into the future.

- 1 - Our political and community leadership is committed to the arts;
- 2 - Our corporate leaders understand that the arts are good for business and quality of life;
- 3 - The volunteer board members that serve as stewards for our nonprofit arts groups are relentlessly determined to ensure the sustainability and success of their organizations;
- 4 - We have a rich, unique and diverse cultural landscape. We have something here for everyone; and
- 5 - We have a strong infrastructure of stellar major arts institutions and cultural facilities, from the Westchester Cultural Arts Center to the Frost Science Museum; from The Bass Museum to The Moss Center; and from Miami New Drama to the recently named Marshall L. Davis Sr. African Heritage Cultural Arts Center. But as I have said to Marshall Davis more than once, I like to simply call it "The Davis!" And I want to recognize Marshall. You have made a difference in our community, my friend, and we thank you!

These undeniable strengths, combined with the fact that our courageous artists and intrepid cultural institutions are always ready for anything, make our cultural community unstoppable.

And this is no secret! Our artists and arts groups are receiving well-deserved recognition for cultural excellence. Just to name a few recent honors: artist Lee Pivnik received the 2025 Creative Capital Award; artist Rudi Goblen received the 2025 United States Artists Fellowship; Locust Projects received an award from The Ruth Foundation for the Arts; Miami Light Project Director Beth Boone was awarded the national Berresford Prize; and both Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator and Teatro Avante were each named a “Southern Cultural Treasure” by SouthArts. Congratulations to all and thank you for continuing to elevate Miami-Dade County’s brand nationally and internationally.

I also want to recognize the incredibly talented and hardworking team working behind-the-scenes as exemplary public servants - the dedicated staff of our Department of Cultural Affairs. We are all so much better thanks to your tireless work and dedication.

Miami-Dade County continues to be the leader in developing a great cultural life for our community. Thank you, Mayor Levine Cava, Chairman Rodriguez, Vice Chairman McGhee and each of the members of the County Commission, for your commitment to the cultural development of our community. This year, despite lower than anticipated tourism revenue, you helped minimize the negative impact to the County’s cultural budget. We really appreciate your leadership, and the Cultural Affairs Council remains dedicated to working with you to find the resources needed to restore and increase support to meet the needs of our artists and cultural institutions. While the challenges we face may be great, I have all the confidence that we will face them together, and our collective resolve will prove to be greater.

A recent article in Forbes Magazine reported that the findings of a national public opinion survey affirm the belief that “we are better people with the arts in our lives.” According to the study, 86 percent of Americans believe that “arts and culture improve my community’s quality of life and livability,” and 79 percent believe “arts and culture are important to my community’s businesses, economy, and local jobs.”

The bottom line is that the arts are indispensable to making communities better places to live, work, raise a family and grow a business. And the evidence shows that Miami-Dade County is on the right track. Our cultural industry has an impressive \$2.1 billion annual impact on our economy. According to the national Arts and Economic Prosperity 6 study, our nonprofit cultural industry employs more than 30,000 people and is assisted by 88,000 volunteers. The return on investment is clear. Every dollar Miami-Dade County invests through our cultural grants programs leverages an additional \$43 for our community. The arts are bringing home the bacon for our local workforce, providing close to \$1.5 billion in personal income to residents and generating a whopping \$443 million in tax revenue to local, state, and federal governments.

Thanks to an incredible, well-developed arts ecosystem, thousands of individual artists are making our County their home and their source of creative energy. Today, our rich cultural life ranges from major opera, theater and dance companies, symphony orchestras, and museums, to folk art and heritage festivals, historic preservation societies, a major international book fair, several film festivals, international art shows, art galleries in various art districts, and artists working in all disciplines. This is complemented by the great cultural and educational activities presented by our colleges and universities – and ALL available to the public.

The evidence is clear, the arts are an important industry; the arts create jobs; the arts are good business; and the arts attract high quality tourism. The growing reputation of our cultural community has made us an

exciting place for major hemispheric and international art events. What entices the 4.2 million cultural tourists that visit Miami each year? It's the same reason Art Basel Miami Beach chose us as a location over two decades ago: Miami-Dade County is acknowledged as one of the most exciting and enterprising international cultural centers in the world.

We are grateful to have an award-winning cultural tourism partnership with the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau, led by President and CEO David Whitaker. This includes our comprehensive online events calendar where residents and visitors alike can find first-rate cultural activities for the whole family.

The arts offer more than economic prosperity and enhanced tourism; they improve the education of our children. Kids receive important skills from their involvement in the arts. Writing a story involves critical thinking; making a drawing demands creative problem solving; learning music requires personal discipline; and performing in an orchestra or band builds teamwork. These are important ingredients for success in life and in the workplace. They are also qualities that make great human beings. I want to personally thank our longtime arts education partners, The Children's Trust, led by President and CEO James Haj, for their major support of our youth arts initiatives.

Our arts institutions are creating pathways to success for our kids. Armour Dance Theater annually serves more than 1,000 kids, regardless of income level, across six Miami-Dade County locations. They are producing superbly trained young dancers and providing scholarships to 600 students from under-resourced areas. This innovative, lifelong success strategy for underserved youth has proven effective for decades, fostering exceptional dancers, creative problem-solvers, and high-achieving professionals.

The Jorge M. Pérez Art Museum of Miami-Dade County brings the arts directly into neighborhoods through their PAMM in the Neighborhood program. This innovative initiative deploys teaching artists into neighborhoods offering interactive art experiences for children and youth.

The Adrienne Arsht Center offers several education programs serving thousands of students each season. Their Jazz Roots Sound Check, a partnership with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, gives aspiring jazz musicians an in-depth look at the behind-the-scenes workings of a Jazz Roots concert. These are just a few examples, and there are dozens of cultural organizations, big and small, doing this very same type of invaluable work all across Miami-Dade County.

I believe in the arts in Miami, and I believe in our Arts Energize 305 strategy because I believe in all of you: the cultural, civic, and political leaders of our community. Collectively, your leadership, your determination, commitment and generosity are our most important strength. We have come a long way but there is always more to do, always another challenge to meet. So, let's continue our work together to secure the increased resources absolutely essential to ensure that our vibrant cultural life can continue to fully engage and serve all of Miami-Dade County.

To close, I am very happy to premiere a new video reel that captures the unique richness of the arts in Miami-Dade County. It is the brainchild of my fellow Cultural Affairs Council Member and former Chairman Adolfo Henriques. And it is meant to honor, celebrate and promote the extraordinary work of you, our artists, performers, cultural organizations and cultural colleagues! Just as importantly, it demonstrates the cultural vitality that gives our community its competitive edge internationally. And before we watch it together, I say thank you for coming today. And thank you for strongly supporting the arts and for sustaining our collective success!