

Boca Festival

Festival of the Arts Boca announces lineup for March culture bash

By Lucy Lazarony
ArtsPaper Writer

The ninth annual Festival of the Arts Boca will feature its own version of the 3 B's — Beethoven, bluegrass and Bernstein — as well as a lineup of authors that includes four Pulitzer Prize winners, festival officials announced last month.

The festival, which will take place March 6-15 at Mizner Park in Boca Raton, will begin with a showing of the film *West Side Story* with live orchestra and close with the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven, featuring the Master Chorale of South Florida.

"You can't beat the excitement of a full symphony orchestra and one of the best films made in America," said Charles Letourneau, a cultural management consultant for the festival who works for IMG Artists. "And you can't go wrong with Beethoven's Ninth. It always works."

In between are talks by Pulitzer Prize-winning authors Richard Ford, Thomas Friedman and Siddhartha Mukherjee, banjo performances by Bela Fleck, the 10-time Grammy-award winning artist, and a Mozart gala featuring rising star violinist Arnaud Sussmann, a protégé of Itzhak Perlman, legendary flutist Sir James Galway and pianist-composer Conrad Tao, who was only 13 when he made his debut at the 2008 festival.



Bela Fleck and wife Abigail Washburn perform March 7.

The lineup for the festival was announced Nov. 14 with a preview video and a performance by Time For Three, who first performed at the festival two years ago.

Described as a classically trained garage band, violinist Zachary De Pue, violinist Nicolas Kendall and bassist Ranaan Meyer wowed the audience with a mix of classical pieces and their own arrangements of songs by Bon Iver and Mumford & Sons.

Tickets for the festival range from \$15 to \$125 per person and are available at www.festivalboca.com or by calling (866) 571-2787.

Festival events are held at the Mizner Park Amphitheater or on the second floor of the Mizner Park Cultural Arts Center.

The March 6-15 festival will

be preceded by two events: On Jan. 18, the Israeli Chamber Project, composed of award-winning musicians Tibi Cziger, Sivan Magen, Assaff Weismann and Carmit Zori will perform at 3 p.m. in the Cultural Arts Center at Mizner Park.

And on March 4, Jamie Bernstein, one of Leonard Bernstein's two daughters, will speak about her father's legacy and *West Side Story* in a 7 p.m. appearance at the Cultural Arts Center.

The lineup for the festival (some events are still to be announced):

Friday, March 6: The Florida premiere of the newly remastered movie musical *West Side Story* with a score by Leonard Bernstein. The film's score is performed live by Festival Orchestra Boca alongside the film's original



Lucinda Franks

vocals and dialogue. With Jayce Ogren conducting.

Saturday, March 7: At 4 p.m. in the Cultural Center, the film *Girl Rising* will be screened. On the mainstage at 7:30 p.m., banjo superstar Bela Fleck and his wife Abigail Washburn perform.

Sunday, March 8: Pulitzer-prize winning author Richard Ford (*The Sportswriter*) speaks at 4 p.m. at the Cultural Arts Center about his latest book, *Let Me Be Frank With You*. At 7 p.m. on the mainstage, principal dancers from American Ballet Theater, Boston Ballet, National Ballet of Canada and the Washington Ballet perform.

Monday, March 9: Physician, researcher and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Siddhartha Mukherjee (*The Emperor of All Maladies*) will give a talk called "The Cancer Puzzle" at 7 p.m.

Tuesday, March 10: Author

Clive Thompson speaks about his book, *Smarter Than You Think: How Technology Is Changing Our Minds for the Better*. 7 p.m.

Wednesday, March 11: *New York Times* columnist and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Thomas Friedman will speak about his new book, *That Used to Be Us*, at 7 p.m.

Thursday, March 12: Journalist and author Michael Grunwald (*The Swamp*) will give a talk at 7 p.m. called "Saving Paradise."

Friday, March 13: A Mozart gala, featuring flutist Sir James Galway, pianist Conrad Tao, violinist Arnaud Sussmann and Festival Orchestra Boca conducted by Constantine Kitsopoulos at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 14: Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author Lucinda Franks (*My Father's Secret War*) will give a talk called "Love and Politics" at 4 p.m.

At 7:30 p.m. the Festival Orchestra Boca performs a *West Side Story* medley and the Symphony No. 9 of Beethoven, with soloists Measha Bruegggosman, Margaret Mezzacapa, Joseph Kaiser, Soloman Howard, the Young People's Chorus of New York City and the Master Chorale of South Florida, conducted by Constantine Kitsopoulos.

Sunday, March 15: Radio personality and author Martin Goldsmith speaks at 4 p.m. about his book, *Alex's Wake*.

Film

Brilliance well-depicted in 'Theory,' brilliance all around in 'Birdman'

The Theory of Everything

OK, so there are a few cringe-worthy moments in *The Theory of Everything*, a muted and respectful biopic about an intellectually towering icon.

The real Stephen Hawking, who is played in the film in a career-defining embodiment by Eddie Redmayne, might find overly literal the director James Marsh's decision to

run important images from Hawking's life in a backward spool, as a formal complement to Hawking's pioneering work on the nature and malleability of time.

Pickers of nits can point at these moments of misguided stylization, but the more you become invested in this touching story, the fewer of them you'll notice. These flourishes are anomalous, after all; for the most part, director Marsh, who launched his brand through powerful documentaries such as *Man on Wire* and *Project Nim*, prefers hushed tones and minor keys, observing small wonders and letting the drama sell itself. It's a lovely and sincere picture that takes pity on no one.

Too much praise cannot be leveled at Redmayne's transformation, which never once feels like acting. Given the film's quarter-century in narrative length, he's tasked with realizing Hawking at all levels of decline, and the result is a triumph in acting by gradation. It's a testament to the miraculous acting and direction that even the sound of his mechanical voice box eventually disappears, and his

conversations feel perfectly "normal."

Redmayne certainly captures his physicist's dry wit, but I would have liked more screen time devoted to just why Hawking was so brilliant, and why his ideas were so revolutionary — more scenes like the dinner-table lecture in which Jane explains the theory of relativity versus quantum mechanics, to Cox's bemused choral teacher, using a pea and a potato. — *John Thomason*

Birdman

Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Birdman* dares you to look away. And it does so by never cutting. At least, that's the way it appears — like one long, continuous, two-hour tracking shot somehow encompassing several days in the narrative, if not weeks.

Birdman is a film of astonishing forethought and ambition whose very subject is the relentlessness of time and space, the endless locomotive propulsion of life, the many stages and corridors of fame and the human mind. It's a staggering movie unlike any other, and it opens with an exterior shot of a fireball

plummeting to earth.

Then we cut to a man levitating in his dressing room in the St. James Theatre, on Broadway. This is Riggan Thomson (Michael Keaton), an actor whose notoriety peaked in the '90s in a franchise of shallow blockbusters in which he played Birdman, a beaked superhero. He's on Broadway now to rehearse his solemn comeback — an adaptation of Raymond Carver's short story "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love," a project he's writing, directing and starring in, as a way to prove to himself and the world that he's an artist, not a washed-up action star.

Unpredictable every step of the way, *Birdman* is both mystical and grounded, technically acrobatic yet fully invested in the earthbound struggles, heartbreak and minutiae of putting on a play. *Birdman* is a repository of show business fears, anxieties, insecurities, hubris, and delusions, all of which feed into one thing: the universal — but especially American — quest to matter. It's what we talk about when we talk about art. — *John Thomason*

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