



Carlos Alvarez, Mayor

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THE STATE OF THE ARTS IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
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delivered by
Adolfo Henriques, Chairman
Miami-Dade County Cultural Affairs Council

What a year we've had! They say that "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger." If that's true, I am looking at a chamber full of super heroes!

Last summer, our budget for this year was facing dire circumstances. Miami-Dade County was starting with a \$400 million revenue gap and, given the state of the economy, there was no appetite to even maintain the existing level of taxes. A seemingly insurmountable budget gap and lower taxes left us with few to no options.

In spite of these overwhelming odds, we forged forward. Every person in this chamber and hundreds of our citizens called and visited our elected officials. Then, last September, hundreds of citizens spent two days downstairs waiting in the lobby and pulled two all-nighters with me and my fellow Cultural Affairs Council members right here in this auditorium.

This coming together had a huge impact. There are moments that I will never forget. Our message was delivered with courage and artistry by the kids from Roxy Theater and the Greater Miami Youth Symphony. These amazing young artists sang and played at the podium before the entire County Commission and the County leadership. This is what we are about: kids, parents, and hard-working people who want a better, more fulfilling life through the arts. And they – and we - were heard.

More than \$10 million was restored to our grants budget. We were able to plow every dollar into maintaining grant funding at approximately 85% of the previous year's levels. This would not have been possible without the steadfast support of the County Commission. They truly understand how important the arts are to our economy and to the future of our community. I particularly want to thank Commissioner Barreiro for his resolve in securing additional funds, and Commissioners Sosa and Jordan who joined him in making the motions to restore this vital funding for grants. We are so grateful to Chairman Moss, all of the members of the Board of County Commissioners, Mayor Alvarez and County Manager George Burgess for hearing our voices and finding a creative solution for our budget.

I want you to know how proud I am personally of our cultural organizations and artists for your level-headed and enterprising approaches to surviving these tough times. You have done what any sound business would do in a difficult economy: you have made very tough, timely and “no nonsense” decisions for your organizations. You have down-sized; you have presented shortened performance seasons and left exhibitions on view for longer periods of time; and you have, unfortunately, had to eliminate staff.

More than ever, cultural groups are working more closely together to share resources and save money. The Miami Light Project, with the support of the Knight Foundation and Goldman Properties, is putting together a cultural co-op, a hub for creative activity in Wynwood. It will provide shared office, performance and gallery space for a diverse group of arts organizations. GableStage is embarking on an institutional expansion plan. It will restore outstanding professional theater to the Coconut Grove Playhouse, and secure a permanent home for itself for the future. The New World Symphony’s new, Frank Gehry designed concert hall and the South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center are preparing to share live performance and educational experiences simultaneously, through fiber optic connections in these state-of-the-art concert venues. Many organizations, like Tigertail Productions, Rhythm Foundation, Miami Contemporary Dance Company, and FundArte, are sending email and Facebook alerts out to their followers and fans, promoting other arts groups’ activities. Seraphic Fire has designed a way to allow season subscribers to pay for their subscriptions in 12 easy, monthly payments. Cultural organizations are doing business differently.

All of these proactive and creative approaches to enhancing the efficiency of our cultural organizations have been incorporated into the report that the Commission will be receiving from the Task Force on the Performing and Visual Arts in Miami-Dade County, created by the County Commission last year at the urging of Commissioner Sosa. With her support, a group of very committed individuals met with and heard from most of the constituents of our Arts and Cultural organizations to understand first hand the issues facing our groups. The Task Force’s charge was to develop innovative solutions to ensure the viability and continued success of this industry in Miami. Their report will be presented to the Commission in the next few weeks.

Still, there is only so much you can do with less. Happily, our Department of Cultural Affairs secured the maximum grant offered by the National Endowment for the Arts through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for job restorations. Last month, 22 arts jobs were restored with the two hundred and fifty thousand dollars we received through these federal funds. It’s a start.

We are also seeing other local leaders make bold decisions about holding firm in their support of the arts. They know what it takes to build the great community that we all want. Facing similar revenue pressures, The Children’s Trust renewed funding for our Department’s cultural grants at 100% of last year’s levels. I want to thank The Children’s Trust Chair Maria Alonso, President and CEO Mo Abety, Communications Director Emily Cardenas, and the entire Board of The Children’s Trust. You have ensured that almost 200,000 kids have free or discounted arts experiences and training opportunities this year.

Through the Knight Arts Challenge, the Knight Foundation has reinforced the value of strong investments in our arts community. This 5-year, \$40 million challenge affirms that the

arts generate a remarkable return on investment for our entire community. The Knight Foundation's commitment to the arts sends a strong signal to others that our cultural community is distinguishing Greater Miami as a world-class cosmopolitan center. Ideas matter and cultural ideas can make places great. I want to thank Alberto Ibarguen, Dennis Scholl and the Knight Foundation for this transformative cultural initiative.

The coming year is not going to be any easier. It is going to take strong partners and smart strategies to see us through. I believe in leading by example, and our Department has launched a number of new initiatives that are both progressive and cost-effective. I am particularly proud of the new iPhone application that we created for Culture Shock Miami. This free application connects \$5 ticket purchasing directly to its target market of students ages 13 - 22. Our partnership with, and the generous support of TicketMaster allow this program to remain affordable and accessible. Participation in Culture Shock Miami continues to grow. This year, sales increased by more than 20%. We are succeeding in developing the next generation of arts audiences.

Our Department also kicked off our new Cultural Survival Initiative. CSI Miami, as we call it, consists of a series of workshops and resources to help cultural groups fundraise, build strong boards, and attract new audiences. Our Cultural Survival Initiative provides arts organizations with an arsenal of tools and resources specifically formulated to help them succeed in the current economic environment.

Two months ago, our Department introduced CultureGrants Online, our electronic grants management system. This potent tool is enabling us to re-imagine and environmentally upgrade the very way we do business. Not only will fewer trees die in the name of the grants making process, but cultural groups now have online access to all of their data for grants seasons to come. This online grants system already is transforming our capabilities to help the cultural community.

We are using new marketing technology, focused technical assistance initiatives, and sophisticated electronic management systems to revolutionize the way that we work. We are living the lessons of a changed world, and of the necessity to adapt and to do business in a different, better way.

As we enter a new and even more difficult budget season, it is also important to remember the advocacy lessons we have learned. The arts industry is a major factor in the local economy, supporting tens of thousands of jobs directly and thousands upon thousands more in the community. We employ not only dancers and directors, but carpenters and accountants, and contribute more than \$1 billion of product each year to the local economy.

The National Endowment for the Arts recognized this not only with their major jobs grant to us, but by choosing Miami as one of the first "site visits" for their newly installed Chairman. Rocco Landesman has declared that "Art Works" -- that's the slogan he has adopted for his positioning of the NEA -- and he told me in February of this year that he considered Miami to be the model for the rest of the nation. We have the whole package: diversity, excellence, and a landscape flourishing with vibrant arts groups, outstanding artists and exciting cultural facilities.

It reminded me that we have a lot to be proud of; but it also brought into even more stark contrast how precarious this immediate moment is. We have to be more vigilant and more unified than ever in making our case to community leaders. We have reduced and restructured, but we cannot get by with any less without significantly compromising services and quality. Demands and expectations keep growing, and our human and financial resources are stretched to the breaking point.

Here are five things that you can do now to help:

- 1st. Pick up a fact sheet on the way out and spread the word to your friends, family and co-workers about the tangible benefits of support for the arts.
- 2nd. Join the Arts Action Alliance and the Florida Cultural Alliance. You will receive alerts on important cultural issues. Membership information is on the fact sheet.
- 3rd. Write a letter to the editor. Make it personal - tell a story about why the arts are important to you.
- 4th. Support the arts. Buy a ticket, make a contribution, join an arts board.
- 5th. and most importantly, write, call or visit your County Commissioner and the Mayor now. Thank them for their support and let them know what the arts mean to your family, your business and your neighborhood.

As an investor, I know that it makes every bit of sense in the world to leverage your highest producing sectors to be successful. We know that every dollar of County support allocated for the arts produces 27 other dollars in revenue. That alone would be enough; but the fact is that the arts also produce revitalized neighborhoods, a better education for our children, a more sophisticated workforce, a destination more competitive for tourism and business, and a place that we can be proud to call home. Our community and our kids deserve nothing less.

Thank you.