

Cutler Bay NEWS

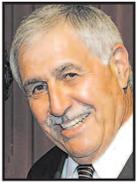
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Cultural Arts Center: Too great a venue to ignore

BY ERNIE SOCHIN



Many times I have exclaimed how much I enjoy living and participating in all of the things that Cutler Bay has to offer. One of the best, and it seems least utilized, is the fantastic South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center.

When something comes along that I want to see and hear it seems almost too good to be true that I can hop in my car, and in 10 minutes be at this beautiful facility, easily park in the huge parking lot and then go sit in one of the most comfortable theaters anywhere in South Florida.

Yes, I suppose I could go downtown, drive around forever looking for a parking space, fight the traffic both in and out, but that is not me. Call me lazy if you wish, but why not take advantage of something in my own backyard.

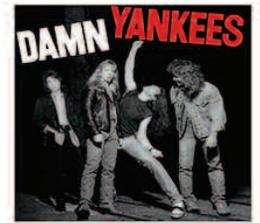
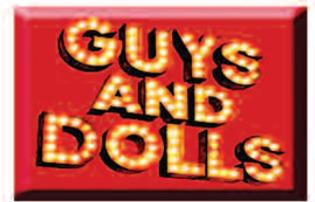
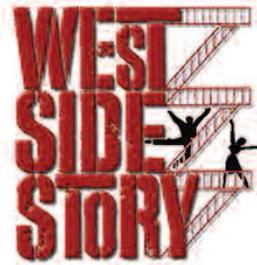
Recently there was a show called *Broadway! The Big Band Years*. Who doesn't like hearing music from that great era? It seems that I was able to know virtually all the lyrics to all of the songs that were sung and played. Who can forget *Luck Be a Lady*, *Everything's Coming Up Roses*, *The Lady Is a Tramp* and so many others? Hearing these songs performed by the magnificent voices of Eddie Egan and Katie Reid, I only wished that I could get up on the stage with The Curtain Call UPI Orchestra and belt out one of those fabulous songs myself, especially with that incredible bunch of talented musicians. Too bad I have no talent, though.

One thing that disturbs me is that the theater should have been jam packed with people as excited about this performance as I was and yet at least half the seats were empty. Usually when I attend any type of event in and around Cutler Bay, I see dozens of people that I know. In this case I only met two, and they were from Palmetto Bay.

There was a brief intermission to allow you to go to their beautiful lobby, have a drink and discuss the show with others. When I returned to my seat, it seemed that virtually half of the audience did not return. I have no explanation for this. Perhaps it is a cultural thing but anyone who has any appreciation of music especially the Big Band Era, could not help but tap their feet and attempt to sing along.

I remember seeing the full performance of *Guys and Dolls* at this theater and experiencing similar thoughts. What is wrong? The event certainly was publicized enough both on the Internet and in the newspapers. Some shows seem to draw more than others but there is no reason that this theater isn't filled to capacity every week.

Eric Fliss, the managing director, has done his best to bring some astounding performances here feeding into all ethnic and musical tastes.



All these in one night!

What will it take to get people to take advantage of this incredible arts center?

Keith Levenson, the conductor and arranger for this event, took the time between songs to tell us a little bit about the writers, and performers attached to each song. That in itself made it worth attending. Ask yourself, when was the last time you attended an event at the cultural arts center?

Here is this absolutely beautiful facility, right in your own backyard with no traffic getting in or out, comfortable seating, great performances, great artists, and what are you doing? Watching TV? Going to a sports event which may or may not prove entertaining? Or just staying home and allowing your mind to atrophy?

I don't mean to be insulting, but what in the hell is wrong with this town? If someone wants to develop a piece of land in our town, everyone comes out shouting and waving signs. Then there are those who somehow feel that all of our traffic problems will be solved with either more buses or various forms of light rail lines. They too come out in droves. Frankly, when the week is over, I would prefer watching some wonderful performers perform in a wonderful venue that I would hate to lose in the future due to lack of activity or attendance!