

Water Music to Soothe the Soul

Nu Deco Ensemble Perform Signature Sound at Deering Estate

By Doris D. Meneses

On a recent Sunday, January 10th at 6 p.m., the sun slowly set presenting a pink sky to the west. Water lapped at the retaining wall to the east between the large span of grass in front of the Deering Estate home. A stage stood stoic with lights ablaze. Families gathered with blankets, chairs and picnic baskets. Food and beverage vendors offered their goodies for sale. Children played tag as families and friends gathered and then it happened.

Maestro Jacomo Bairos, a former Homestead resident, took the stage along with members of the Nu Deco Ensemble where they commenced performing their signature music of genre-bending eclectic styles. A beautiful location for beautiful music as they performed featured music of JS Bach, Andy Akijo, Georges Bizet, Aaron Copland, LCD Soundsystem, Daft Punk and most importantly, the music of co-founder, Sam Hyken.



Nu Deco Ensemble shown ABOVE at their recent South Dade performance. Principals pictured to the RIGHT.

A riveting performance of a new style of classical-pop kept feet tapping and children dancing and many did not want the evening to end. "This guy conducts in a way that will have everyone taking note," stated Dr. Lawrence Feldman of the Miami-Dade County School

Board. Bairos and Hyken have very ambitious plans for a permanent contemporary music ensemble for our area and the youth of the South Dade area schools will reap the benefits as their education outreach is focused on the Homestead/South Dade

area schools. Hyken, a Miami resident, has had a very diverse musical career which has spanned the globe. As a composer, his music has been commis-



sioned by many orchestras and he is currently composer-in-residence with the Miami Symphony

Orchestra. Jacomo Rafael Bairos enjoys an emerging career as an imaginative and inclusive conductor, dedicated educator, and ardent champion of new American music. He attended Avocado Elementary School, Homestead Middle School and Homestead Senior High School. He is currently the music director of the Amarillo Symphony Orchestra. Nu Deco Ensemble's next performance will be on January 28th at 8 pm at the North Beach Bandshell in Miami Beach. The following concert will be on March 3rd and 4th at the Light Box in Miami. For more information, go to info@nu-deco.org.

Keys Soldier Ride Features Chance to Interact with Dolphins

To Raise Awareness Participants Biked Across the Seven Mile Bridge

Interacting with bottlenose dolphins in the Florida Keys provided a form of therapy for 38 wounded military personnel at a stop during the Soldier Ride cycling event that concludes Sunday in Key West. Soldiers swam with the dolphins at Dolphin Research Center Friday afternoon, sharing dolphin kisses with the mammals as they "showed off" by mimicking movements and giving flipper shakes and dorsal pulls.

For Palmdale, Calif., resident Rachael Rodgers, an injured active duty U.S. Army specialist who lost her left leg, this was her second consecutive Soldier Ride experience. "Just by the interaction and getting time to spend with battle buddies and fellow veterans, it's awesome to see," Rodgers said. "Smiles erupt, everybody has a blast; they won't stop talking for the next two days."

Rodgers remarked about the dolphins' ability to provide almost custom therapy for participants whose injuries ranged from lost limbs to post-traumatic stress syndrome. "I think the sensitivity is a big thing because they're (the dolphins) so perceptive

of the injuries and people's swimming abilities," she said. "Especially for people with brand new injuries who aren't very comfortable in the water or are hurtin'." "They (the dolphins) acknowledge and realize that and are going to work around that," she said. Before the dolphin interaction experience Friday, participants pedaled across the Seven Mile Bridge, the longest span of 43 that help comprise the Florida Keys Overseas Highway. Some riders, missing one or more limbs after combat injuries,

used specially adapted bicycles to participate with their injured comrades. The Wounded Warrior Project raises public awareness and support for the needs of severely injured members of the military involved in Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, provides rehabilitative opportunities and funds basic comfort items for wounded soldiers upon their return to the U.S. The cross-country and bicycle trips raise money to help foster independence among those with cata-

strophic injuries, transport soldiers and their families between home and hospital and develop supportive peer-mentoring programs.



Local Miss Florida Junior Pre-Teen, Carla Lombardo, Helps Create Library

Like many girls her age Carla Lombardo collects money from selling cookies, but she also collects books. The Miss Florida Jr Pre-Teen has also used her time to not only raise money but to create a library for the children of migrant workers. "I saw relay for life bake sale and I wanted to help out," said Lombardo. She took five dollars from her mother to buy cookie supplies and started creating her supply. Every week she brings new batches to her adult friends to help maximize the profits. They see her as an example for all children, and so they sell cookies on her behalf. The library she helped create was for Tiny Kingdom, a center for migrant workers, and their children. "I got a box with supplies but didn't know what to do

with it, so I decided to build a library for them. Plus I read to them to help them learn the importance of literacy," she said. "Every Monday I read to those children, and help them," Carla said. To get enough books she hit up her family first. For her birthday party, in lieu of presents she asked her friends to bring books to donate to the Tiny Kingdom. "I collected 273 books from only 9 kids," she recalls. Then she asked her entire school to donate. After a speech pleading for books, the school came up with a total of 1000 books. "That's how I collected my books," Carla said.



Carla Lombardo shown with Michael Hitt, Jill Alonge, Jackie Pilkington, Anthony Oliver. Photos by Frank Maradiaga.