

MIRAMAR

# NEIGHBORS

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MIRAMAR



EILEEN SOLER/FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

**OPENER:** Elementary schoolkids in patriotic costumes delivered a Veterans Day tribute to initiate the new arts center.

## Cultural Arts Center opens

**BY EILEEN SOLER**  
Special to The Miami Herald

Lights — check.  
Sound — testing, one-two.  
One-two — check.

The curtain is about to rise at Miramar Cultural Center, but while Sunday's Caribefest Jazz Gala concert at the impressive 800-seat full-service theater marks the first official staged

### MIRAMAR'S LONG-AWAITED FULL-SERVICE CULTURAL ARTS CENTER RAISES THE CURTAIN ON ITS INAUGURAL SEASON

event, it was christened last week by kids.

"What could be a better way to initiate the theater than with the voices of children honoring veterans?" said Richard Kidney,

a retired Marine who's now a first-grade teacher at Silver Lakes Elementary School.

Dozens of students in patriotic red, white and blue or military garb stepped into the spot-

light at the sparkling new theater still sweet with the scents of fresh wood, paint and carpeting for the school's annual *Tribute to Our Heroes* Veterans Day pageant.

Theater General Manager Mitch Morales said the two-hour show, which brought the

**\*TURN TO CENTER, 3**

MIRAMAR

# Lots of firsts for Cultural Center

\*CENTER, FROM 1

house's first standing ovation, served as a dry run and a test opening for the facility at 2400 Civic Center Pl.

"We had Silver Lakes with a production ready to go and we had the need for a soft opening. It was a great way to combine two efforts," Morales said. "It was a magical sensation."

Edna LaRoche, marketing manager, said the show fulfilled the city's tradition of honoring American troops for Veterans Day, and it kicked off the city's mission to use the theater for cultural community experiences.

Management and programming are through a partnership with the Broward Center for the Performing Arts.

A crew of five technical staffers led by tech director Craig Walk operated sound, lights, the spotlight, the fly system and stage management. But it took 14 10-hour days to fine-tune functions at the \$20 million, 48,000-square-foot center.

"Our motto is get 'er done," Walk said.

Sunday's high-culture event, at \$30 to \$50 per ticket, follows Saturday's free outdoor Caribefest street festival featuring food vendors, roving musicians and dancing in Miramar Town Center plaza just outside the culture center.

Miramar, a city with a population punctuated with Caribbean culture, will crown the art center's opening with the electric show starring Sonny Bradshaw, founder of the Ochos Rios Jazz Festival in Jamaica, vocalist Myrna Hague, saxophonist Dean Frasier, Grammy-nominated Reginald Poliard on keyboards and trumpeter John Katz.

An explosion of entertainment will unfold in 2009.

The Florida Sunshine



**FAMILY EFFORT:** The Root family of Pembroke Pines, led by dad James, a first sergeant in the U.S. Army Reserve, delivered a poem at the Veterans Day gala at the Miramar Cultural Arts Center.

PHOTOS BY EILEEN SOLER/FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

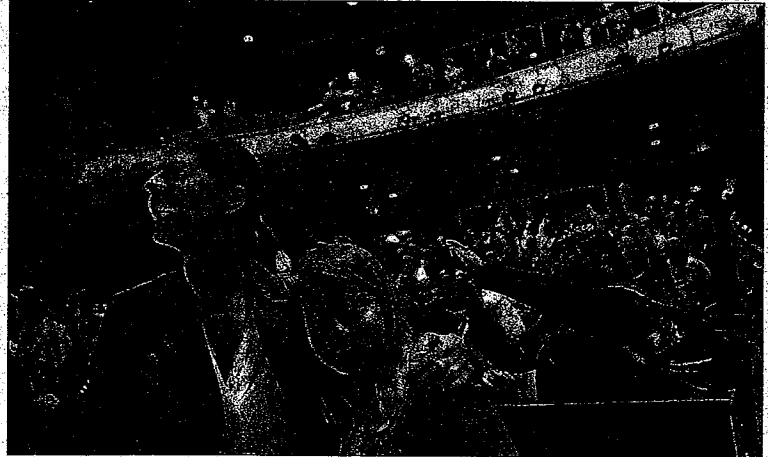
Pops Orchestra will stage *Fascinating Gershwin* on Jan. 15; *Pavarotti Tribute* on Feb. 12; and *Rodgers and Hammerstein Celebration* on April 2.

Also coming to Miramar is the Gold Coast Opera with *Aida* on Jan. 20; *La Bohème* on Feb. 17; and *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci* on March 17.

Kids' theater is also on the menu: *School House Rock Live*, *Cinderella*, *The Spencers* and *Junie B. Jones* are scheduled January through April.

Elizabeth Spivey, the events services manager, said tickets are on sale now for all upcoming events, but volunteer opportunities — such as ushering and other service-oriented positions — are available for free. Training is provided.

"It's for people who just love to be here. They love the theater. They love the environment," Spivey said.



**PACKED HOUSE:** A sellout crowd of 800 enjoyed the Nov. 7 Veterans Day program.

Spivey, who practically grew up in her grandparents' Miramar home, said she waited a lifetime for the city

to open a regional cultural center. "Finally, the box office is open," Spivey said.

For more about the Miramar Cultural Center, visit [www.miramarculturalcenter.org](http://www.miramarculturalcenter.org) or call 954-602-4500.