

Mendes, Marsalis cued for Festival of the Arts

BY MARCI SHATZMAN
STAFF WRITER

Tickets are on sale for the 11th annual Festival of the Arts BOCA 2017 from March 2 to 12. Among the performers are Branford Marsalis, Sergio Mendes & Brasil, the first showing of "The Pink Panther" movie with a live orchestra, and a mystery violinist.

There's already a countdown at festivalofthearts-boca.org for ticket buyers who log on before the new content appears on the website.

Herb Alpert's sellout show with his wife Lani Hall, who sang with Brasil '66, inspired the festival to bring in Sergio Mendes on March 12, said Charles Letourneau, artistic administrator.

"I presented him this summer in Napa Valley and people were dancing in the aisles," he said, recalling the California wine country festival. "He has a great show with 10 musicians and singers on stage, and he does his hits and new material."

Showing an iconic film with a live orchestra has become a tradition for the festival, after "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and "West Side Story." This time, the 1963 "Pink Panther" movie and the Henry Mancini Institute Orchestra at the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami will perform together for the first time.

"Nobody knew where the music was and they finally found it at [the University of California, Los Angeles]. This is a huge



MENDES

deal and a legacy project," Letourneau said. "The whole [Mancini] family will come in for this, and we're honored the premiere will be in Boca. It's like finding a new Beethoven manuscript."

The festival has been reaching out to the country's first family of jazz, and this year sax player and composer Branford Marsalis reached back.

"Finally the schedules

lined up, and he loves playing with an orchestra," Letourneau said. "He'll do two pieces, a contemporary concerto written for him ... and John Williams' music from 'Catch Me If You Can,' 'Star Wars' and 'Harry Potter.'"

Marsalis will play March 3 with The Symphonia Boca Raton.

Also on the program in the seated and roofed Mizner Amphitheater is a semi-staged version of "La Boheme" March 4 with The Symphonia and a cast of young opera singers.

"A part of our mission is to introduce people to new arts forms," said Charlie Siemon, festival founder, chairman and co-producer. The plan is to sell \$9.99 seats through the Kickstarter funding program to encourage a

younger audience.

"We'll have subtitles in English above the stage" for the first time this year, he said.

Two performers are considered prodigies.

"We think Joey Alexander was stunning last year and we were able to get him back," Siemon said. The Indonesian jazz pianist will perform March 5 with Daniela Liebman, a classical pianist from Mexico. They're both 13.

"We're not allowed to reveal the name of the violinist until in January" because of noncompetes, Siemon said of the March 10 performance with 18-year-old pianist Daniel Hsu. In the past, the festival has hosted world-renowned violinist Itzhak Perlman, who will perform at the Kravis Center for the

Performing Arts on Dec. 18.

Finally, four authors will be speakers in the festival's Authors & Ideas program. They are Pulitzer prize winner Jennifer Egan, who wrote "A Visit from the Goon Squad"; presidential historian Jon Meacham; and Brian Greene, a theoretical physicist and author of "The Elegant Universe." Also coming is in Bob Mankoff, cartoon editor for *The New Yorker*.

"Brian Greene has dedicated himself to bringing science to the people," said Cynthia Brown, who puts the program together every year. "He'll talk to AP physics students at West Boca High."

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