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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Piano Slam 2025 to Rock Adrienne Arsht Center Stage with Top Teen Poets in Annual Spoken Word/Classical-Pop Music Mash-Up With Live Judges**

Miami's Teo Castellanos Returns to Direct Competition Finals April 23, 2025, 7:30 p.m.

**Miami – March 13, 2025** – Dranoff 2 Piano Fusion and the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County will proudly present **Piano Slam 2025** in the Arsht Knight Concert Hall for FREE on **Wednesday, April 23 at 7:30 p.m.** in celebration of National Poetry Month.

Although admission to **Piano Slam 2025** is free, First-Access Passes are necessary for admittance, which provide guests with early access to general admission seating. Passes are reserved online at [arshtcenter.org](http://arshtcenter.org) or by calling the Arsht box office at 305- 949-6722.

In the spirit of live competition shows like *America's Got Talent*, finalists in the wildly popular Piano Slam poetry competition will vie slam style for \$1,000 prizes on the Arsht stage after beating out hundreds of their middle and high school competitors. Finalists undergo rigorous performance training from spoken word coaches and participate in extensive rehearsals with theatre professionals, preparing diligently for their stage debut in this dynamic, cross-genre music and poetry extravaganza.

"I believe when I got to the performance, the potential inside me was unlocked. I felt like a professional ... as a young performer it was mind-blowing to be a part of something so grand," said Piano Slam 2017 alumni Ayeisha Kirkland, now a graduate student at American University in Washington, D.C.

Finalists will perform alongside renowned international pianists Jeroen van Veen and Mike Del Ferro, accompanied by synth player/music arranger Anthony “Smurfio” Laurencio, and directed by the award-winning actor/director/playwright Teo Castellanos. This year’s theme is “Music of My Past ... Sounds of the Future.”

“I’m very excited to return to directing Piano Slam after a seven-year hiatus, not only create a new show but more importantly to participate in the kind of experience for blooming artist that is only possible when young people are coached, mentored and perform alongside professional musicians, poets, a choreographer and a director,” said Castellanos.

The judges panel includes presidential poet laureate Richard Blanco, Haitian American poet Mecca “Grimo” Marcelin, Miami-Dade poet laureate Caridad Moro-Gronlier and Miami Book Fair Executive Director Lissette Mendez. Scores are tabulated live, and winners will be announced at the end of the night.

The countywide Piano Slam Poetry Competition is an extension of Dranoff 2 Piano Fusion’s Piano Slam in Schools initiative, a unique and transformative STEAM performance program for youth developed in 2009 with curriculum specialists at Miami-Dade County Public Schools to enhance core subject learning in roughly a dozen schools annually. The program provides schools with creative writing workshops and live piano duo concerts, partially underwritten by The Arsht. Participating schools also benefit from experiential learning science field trips provided by Dranoff.

“Piano Slam is more than just a concert or program. It’s a platform -- a space where students like me are seen, heard, and given the opportunity to share their stories,” said Piano Slam 2020 alumni Brenis Bostick, a senior at the University of Miami.

Dranoff 2 Piano Fusion is a non-profit organization dedicated to creating community by fusing 2 piano repertoire with music of many genres and cultures through concerts, collaborations and education. For more information, visit [www.Dranoff2Piano.org](http://www.Dranoff2Piano.org).

### **Photographs and interviews are available upon request.**

*Piano Slam is supported by The Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the Kathleen Kennedy Foundation, The Kirk Foundation, Knight Foundation, CDR Health, The Children’s Trust, the Peacock Foundation, The Batchelor Foundation, Mike and Constance Fernandez, Withers Worldwide, Terra Group, The Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County, numerous private donors and the offices of County Commissioners Oliver Gilbert III, Juan Carlos Bermudez, Kevin Marino Cabrera, Marlein Bastien, Micky Steinberg, Roberto J. Gonzalez, Eileen Higgins, Renee Garcia, Keon Hardemon and Anthony Rodriguez.*

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**About the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County**

The Arsht proudly serves as the cultural pulse of Miami – the heart of magical live arts experiences that spark the imagination and connect people to one another. Whether on our stages or in your neighborhood, the Arsht is alive year-round with international artists, innovative programming from [resident companies](#) and local arts partners, free community events that reflect Miami’s unique identity and more than 100 culturally diverse and impactful learning experiences for 80,000 children every year.

Since opening in 2006 in the heart of downtown, the Arsht, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, has been recognized as a leader in the city’s cultural transformation, a catalyst for billions of dollars in new development and a host venue for historic events. The 300+ annual Arsht events include a robust series of touring Broadway musicals direct from New York, star-studded jazz and classical music concerts curated for South Florida, a major annual Flamenco Festival and an award-winning Miami-based theater program. In addition, Family Fest, Gospel Fest Miami, Art + Mind Day, Heritage Fest and our LGBTQ+ Pride celebration are among dozens of free events that bring people from all corners of our community together. For more information, visit [arshtcenter.org](http://arshtcenter.org).

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### ***About the Artists***

#### **Martin Bejerano, Music Director**

Acclaimed pianist and composer Martin Bejerano heads the Jazz Piano Studio at the University of Miami’s acclaimed Frost School of Music. He has performed and recorded with more than two dozen jazz luminaries and has graced the stages of most of the world’s major jazz clubs, festivals, and venues. He composed original works for Chamber Music America, Sonos Chamber Orchestra and Dranoff 2 Piano Fusion where he also serves as music director.

#### **Teo Castellanos, Director**

Miami-based Teo Castellanos is an acclaimed independent actor, writer, and director with more than 30 years of experience in devised theater, film, and television. He is a Doris Duke Artist, a United States Artist Fellow, and a Sundance Institute Screenwriters Intensive Fellow. His award-winning solo stage performance, “NE 2nd Avenue,” commissioned by Miami Light Project, toured extensively for a decade and earned the Fringe First Award at the 2003 Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland.

#### **Mike del Ferro, Pianist**

International award-winning pianist and composer Mike del Ferro is a distinguished Dutch jazz musician, recognized for his extensive career and profound curiosity for global musical traditions. He has released numerous acclaimed albums and collaborated with jazz greats like Toots Thielemans, Branford Marsalis, Jack DeJohnette, Randy Brecker, Oscar Castro Neves, Deborah Brown, Erik Truffaz, Jorge Rossy, Scott Hamilton, Richard Galliano, and others.

#### **Anthony “Smurfio” Laurencio, Synth Player/Music Arranger**

Devotion to merging organic and electronic music has made Tony “Smurfio” Laurencio an iconic figure in the South Florida music scene for the past 20 years. A master of the synthesizer, Laurencio has worked for many pop music acts like Pitbull and Badilos. He

also co-founded Suenalo and Afrobeta. Laurencio is endorsed by Roland US, one of the largest and most renowned synthesizer/music companies in the world.

### **Jeroen van Veen, Pianist**

Jeroen van Veen is the leading exponent of minimalism in Holland today. His compositions blend minimal music with elements of jazz, blues, soundscape, avant-garde, techno, trance, and pop. Van Veen is the current director of Van Veen Productions, the chair of several foundations and artistic director of a variety of music festivals. He has recorded more than 250 Albums. Van Veen and his brother were prizewinners at the prestigious 4th International Murray Dranoff Two Piano Competition in Miami in 1995.