

## **‘THANK YOU MYRA’ DAYS DRAWS 4,200+ TO PHILHARMONIC CENTER SUNDAY**

### **Two-day celebration included surprise-filled gala concert and Open House**

It was a weekend to remember, as a near-capacity audience enjoyed a star-studded Grand Gala concert on Saturday night and a record crowd of 4,235 came out to the Phil on Sunday for Community Day Open House – all part of the “Thank You Myra” Days Weekend festivities honoring Philharmonic Center for the Arts founder Myra Janco Daniels.

“It’s inspiring that one person can have a dream and make it a reality,” Governor Rick Scott said Sunday, at the opening of the Community Day Open House in the Philharmonic Center’s Hayes Hall. Also on hand to speak about Daniels were Naples Mayor Bill Barnett, Collier County Commission Chairman Fred Coyle, “Thank You Myra” Days Committee co-chairs David Drobis and Adria Starkey and Philharmonic Center Chairman of the Board Alan Hilfiker.

Collier County and the City of Naples proclaimed January 14 and 15 “Thank You Myra Days” Weekend, as a tribute to Daniels, who retired last September.

The weekend included a Grand Gala at the Phil Saturday with Boston Pops conductor Keith Lockhart leading the Naples Philharmonic Orchestra in a concert that also featured Broadway stars Brian Stokes Mitchell and Kelli O’Hara, opera great

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Harolyn Blackwell, the Philharmonic Center Chorale, the Philharmonic Jazz Orchestra and a performance from Miami City Ballet.

But the evening also included some surprises, including an opening video greeting from Bill Cosby, a live performance by unannounced guest star Michael Feinstein, video messages from Paul Anka and Neil Sedaka and appearances by Miami City Ballet founder Edward Villella and former Westinghouse Communities, Inc. President Byron Koste.

“It was more than a girl could have dreamed – and I’m a dreamer,” Daniels said after the event. “The past 30 years have been an exciting and wild ride. But the tributes this weekend were beyond my imagination. It was wonderful to see the faces who helped make this happen. It was a team effort and I’m grateful to have had such top-notch employees, such a giving board and a community that truly cares about the arts.”

Proceeds from the Grand Gala benefited the Myra Janco Daniels Legacy Fund, which was launched last year and is designed to sustain the standards of excellence in the performing and visual arts established and nurtured by Daniels over the past 30 years. Contributions to the Fund, which is still open, totaled approximately \$5.9 million through the weekend.

Sunday’s free Community Day Open House celebration featured a variety of events and attractions including an instrument petting zoo, a glass-blowing demonstration, admission to the Naples Museum of Art, performances by the Philharmonic Youth Chorale and Youth Orchestra, community children’s ballet, the

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premiere of the documentary film *Box 23: The Myra Janco Daniels Story*, food stations and more. A special Myra Janco Daniels Orchid was bred and named in honor of Daniels for the occasion by R.F. Orchids of Homestead, one of the most prestigious orchid nurseries in the United States. The 100 available orchids sold out over the weekend.

The Open House also featured some surprises, including the unveiling of a major new art acquisition for the Patty & Jay Baker Naples Museum of Art: *Ada Dorada* (2010) by Manolo Valdés. The acquisition was underwritten by Bruce and Cynthia Sherman.

“What a joyous occasion,” Philharmonic Center CEO and President Kathleen van Bergen said of the two-day celebration. “It was a once-in-an-organizational-history event that drew the community together in a wonderful celebration of the arts. Thank you to everyone who made it such a success.”