

SPRING TRAVEL

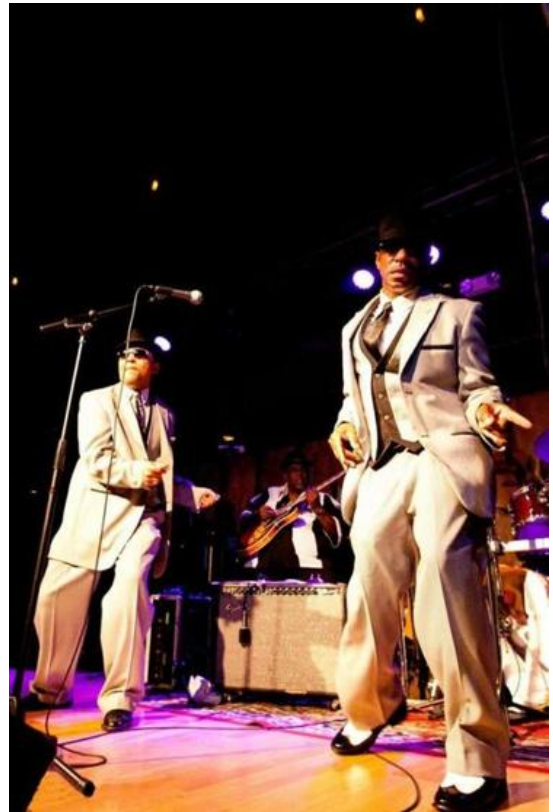
Best music options for a Miami vacation

Sample classical, Cuban tunes, opera, soul, and more on a song-infused visit to this Florida destination.

By Nectee Regis | MARCH 23, 2014

You're apt to miss **Bardot**, an artsy-hipster heaven with music five nights a week, unless you know exactly where it is. Tucked into the urban Miami neighborhood known as the Wynwood Arts District, it has no sign outside and no phone number on its website. You can't enter through the doors at 3456 North Miami Avenue, but if you stroll around the corner you'll find the rear entrance. It's worth the hunt. Bands set up and play in the center of the large room at Bardot (305-576-5570; bardotmiami.com), outfitted with couches, art and knickknacks, a pool table, and a bar where chatty mixologists are illuminated by low-hanging bulbous copper lamps.

Music director David Sinopoli books the talent, including soul, funk, rock, underground house music, and old-school hip-hop. "We bring in acts before they hit it big," he says. "We invest in acts, and then they'll have a home here in Miami." The crowds are eclectic, with ages ranging from 21 to 70. "There is no age here," Sinopoli adds. "Depending on the time, it's a whole different vibe at 11 than it is at 4 in the morning."



VALA KODISH

Avenue D in Miami satisfies fans of jazz and blues.





VALA KODISH

Bardot's offerings range from funk to hip-hop.

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Bardot is just one of the rewards of a music-focused visit to Miami. With its mix of cultures and languages, the scene here is vibrant and diverse. In my 15-plus years wintering in Miami, I've sampled everything from operatic arias to rhythmic Latin beats, classical sonatas to an electronic fusing of South American, Caribbean, and urban American sounds. No matter your taste, Miami is certain to please, and may even surprise.

The **New World Symphony** (800-597-3331; nws.edu), a Miami Beach orchestra that trains up-and-coming musicians and is headed by cofounding artistic director Michael Tilson Thomas, explodes any myths about classical music being old and stuffy. Its innovative New World Center, designed by architect Frank Gehry, features a concert hall with screens for multimedia projections, and flexible seating and stage configurations bring the audience close to the performers. In addition to traditional concerts, New World Symphony offers adventurous formats that include Mini-Concerts, 30-minute classical programs (tickets only \$2.50); Encounters, 60-minute multimedia events with narrations and video projections (\$25); and Pulse, a late-night lounge that combines classical and contemporary orchestral or ensemble pieces with a DJ spinning electronic dance tunes (up to \$45). One of its most popular series of events is Wallcast, free concerts projected on a 7,000-square-foot wall in an adjacent park. Bring a chair or blanket and a picnic supper and revel in the music in the silky night air.



RUI DIAS-AIDOS

Crowds gather for the free outdoor wallcast concerts hosted by Miami Beach's New World Symphony.



ROBIN HILL

CONTINUE READING BELOW ▼

In downtown Miami, the **Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County** (877-949-6722; arshtcenter.org) hosts classical, jazz, flamenco, and gospel concerts, Broadway shows, ballet, and more, and is home to resident companies, including the impressive Florida Grand Opera. At a recent performance of Giuseppe Verdi's *Nabucco*, the audience — wearing a range of attire from floor-length gowns to jeans — was invited to sing along with the cast in an encore of the haunting “Va, Pensiero,” a song of exiles longing for their homeland. In a city populated with many Cuban exiles, the moment was particularly poignant.

AT VENUES other than concert halls, be prepared to stay up late. The music at bars and clubs often starts at 11 p.m. or midnight and continues into the wee hours. In Little Havana, **Hoy Como Ayer** (305-541-2631; hoycomoayer.us) is the place to go for live Cuban music. Owned for almost 15 years by Cuban-born Fabio Diaz, this club (the name translates as “Today As Yesterday”) is an intimate cabaret with round bistro tables, plush red chairs, and framed photos of Cuban singers and celebrities covering the walls. “This place is a little part of Cuba outside of Cuba,” says Diaz.

Though many flock to Hoy Como Ayer for traditional ballads crooned by notables such as Malena Burke, I stay up late at least once a season to hear the rhythmic creations of the Spam Allstars, a group that has played the club most Thursday nights since 2001. Andrew Yeomanson (a.k.a. DJ Le Spam) defines its sound as “electronic *descarga*, a jam session with electronic samples combined with a horn section and Latin percussion.” Yeomanson records his own sounds or creates samples from his vast selection of vinyl — offerings include Latin music, reggae, funk, blues, and hip-hop — and is joined onstage by six or more musicians playing flute, congas, sax, trombone, guitar, and timbales. The result is a dynamic wall of sound that gets the audience up and dancing between the seats.

The music starts a little earlier (about 9 p.m.) at **Lagniappe** (305-576-0108; lagniappehouse.com), a combo wine bar and music venue with a casual New Orleans-style vibe located at the intersection of Wynwood, the Design District, and Midtown Miami.



The interior has concrete block walls, mismatched tables and chairs, and refrigerator cases stocked with craft beer, bottles of wine, and cheeses that you pay for at a counter. All ages, including children, are welcome for live music six nights a week, featuring jazz, blues, soul, folk, and bluegrass. You can't hear the band in the vast yard, but you can sit beneath strings of small white lights — chowing down offerings from the backyard grill — at perhaps the coolest, least pretentious joint in Miami.



VALA KODISH

Lagniappe, a modest wine bar, features live tunes most nights.

Jazz and blues are center stage at **Avenue D** (305-371-4823; avenueddowntown.com), a sophisticated retro-speakeasy with old-Miami charm. Next door, hardcore jazz aficionados arrive before 10 p.m. to get a seat in the cellar at **Le Chat Noir** (305-377-8899; lechatnoirdesalis.com), a no-frills, no-cover wine bar with a downtown New York vibe.

Two other spots worth checking out: **Jazid** (305-673-9372; jazid.net), a fixture in South Beach's club scene, is your best bet to hear a multicultural mix of music from bands like Xperimento, which combines merengue, ska, kuduro, and jazz. **Grand Central** (305-377-2277; grandcentralmiami.com), a former train station in downtown Miami, hosts a wide variety of musical acts and — important in this sultry city — offers an outdoor space.

IN ITS SIMPLEST DEFINITION, music is sound. Enter Gustavo Matamoros, Venezuelan-born composer and sound artist and longtime Miami resident. For more than 20 years, Matamoros has curated experimental music and “sound art” events at his Subtropics Festival. This year, he's running a monthly Listening Club at **Audiotheque** (786-206-7886; subtropics.org), his studio in Miami Beach. If you miss the Listening Club, simply stand beneath the awnings of ArtCenter/South Florida (305-674-8278; artcentersf.org/listening-gallery) and experience the Listening Gallery, an ongoing sound art installation. “My function in the community is to promote a listening attitude,” says Matamoros.

To hear music in Miami, you don't need to go to a club or concert hall. Walking down the street, I'm apt to encounter it anywhere. From rhythmic thumps made by dreadlocked drummers on the steps of the community pool to the strumming of flamenco guitars on Ocean Drive, I always pause to listen and enjoy. “Music is at the very heart of Miami's identity,” says Craig Hall, spokesman for the New World Symphony. “The city itself has a rhythm, and if there were a soundtrack for Miami, it would be wonderfully eclectic.”

GETTING THERE

American Airlines flies direct from Boston to Miami. Flights are approximately 3½ hours.

WHAT BOSTONIANS RECOMMEND

Local users of Newton-based TripAdvisor rank these hotels and attractions as their favorites. Visit [tripadvisor.com](https://www.tripadvisor.com) for the reviews.

Top 5 Hotels in Miami

1. EPIC HOTEL

866-760-3742; [epichotel.com](https://www.epichotel.com)

2. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL MIAMI

305-358-3535; [fourseasons.com/miami](https://www.fourseasons.com/miami)

3. HAMPTON INN & SUITES MIAMI AIRPORT SOUTH - BLUE LAGOON

800-426-7866; [hamptoninnmiamiairport.com](https://www.hamptoninnmiamiairport.com)

4. HAMPTON INN & SUITES MIAMI BRICKELL DOWNTOWN

800-426-7866; [hamptoninnmiamibrickell.com](https://www.hamptoninnmiamibrickell.com)

5. HILTON MIAMI DOWNTOWN

305-374-0000; [hiltonmiamidowntown.com](https://www.hiltonmiamidowntown.com)

Top 10 Attractions in Miami

1. VIZCAYA MUSEUM & GARDENS

305-250-9133; [vizcaya.org](https://www.vizcaya.org)

2. ZOOLOGICAL WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

305-969-3696; [zoologicalwildlifefoundation.com](https://www.zoologicalwildlifefoundation.com)

3. BAYSIDE MARKETPLACE

305-577-3344; [baysidemarketplace.com](https://www.baysidemarketplace.com)

4. MIAMI CULINARY TOURS

888-213-3761; miamiculinarytours.com

5. MIAMI SEAQUARIUM

305-361-5705; miamiseaquarium.com

6. AIRBOAT IN EVERGLADES

888-893-4443; airboatineverglades.com

7. SAILING ON BISCAYNE BAY

305-323-0783; sailingonbiscaynebay.com

8. ZOO MIAMI

305-251-0400; miamimetrozoo.com

9. GATOR PARK

800-559-2205; gatorpark.com

10. LIV NIGHTCLUB

305-674-4680; livnightclub.com

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