

Miami Herald

Miami Herald arts writers pick their top stories of 2014

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Taylor Swift performing at Miami's American Airlines Arena, Wednesday, April 10th, 2013.

PETER ANDREW BOSCH / MIAMI HERALD STAFF

pop music

1: Ladies Rule: From Lorde to Katy Perry, Beyonce to Taylor Swift, Miley Cyrus to Ariana Grande, Mary Lambert to Mary J. Blige, smart, bootylicious, defiant, aggravating, powerful and vulnerable female artists dominated charts, headlines and the conversation in 2014.

2: Children Too: Songs created for kids' movies — Pharrell's irresistible *Happy*, from *Despicable Me 2*, and the self-empowerment anthem *Let It Go*, from Disney blockbuster *Frozen*, (another girl-powered hit), were not only two of the year's biggest songs but cultural phenomena.

3: Taylor Swift: The million-plus sales of her first avowedly pop album, *1989*, gave hope to a dwindling music industry and marked her as that increasingly rare creature, a major star. Swift used that power to defy streaming service Spotify, sparking a crucial debate about money, control and the future of pop music.

4: Beyonce & Jay-Z On The Run Tour: The power couple of pop music and culture continued their rule with a mega tour that kicked off at South Florida's Sun Life Stadium in June. Love them or not, the spectacle showed no one is more astute at channeling their lives, image and music to capture the zeitgeist.

5: Death of Pete Seeger: The pioneering troubadour of social activism, whose influence reached from Woody Guthrie to Bruce Springsteen and the Great Recession, left us on Jan. 24. But his legacy — of music as a source of power and delight for all — lives on.

dance

1: Nora Chipaumire's *Miriam*: A wrenching and dark (literally and metaphorically) portrait of Miriam Makeba, by the singularly radical and thoughtful Zimbabwean choreographer Nora Chipaumire, presented by Miami Light Project and MDC Live in January. *Miriam* brilliantly layered views of women, Africans, identity and performance.

2: Miami City Ballet's nervy tackling of Jerome Robbins' *West Side Story Suite* in February. Their first attempt at singing, naturalistic dance-acting, and the exuberance of musical theater, was a vibrant theatrical experience.

3: MalPaso: The Miami debut in June of this electrifying Cuban modern dance troupe — courtesy of fledgling presenter Copperbridge — let us see a new side of Cuban dance beyond folklore and ballet. Miami got MalPaso fresh from the rave reception given their New York and U.S. debut, in Ronald K. Brown's *Why You Follow* and artistic director Osnel Delgado's *24 Hours and a Dog*.

4: *Bare Bones*: Carlota Pradera and Lazaro Godoy's raw, intimate and unnerving dance theater work was a different vision for Miami dance. It premiered in June at Miami Theater Center's Sandbox Series, the final commission from departed director Octavio Campos.

5: Shen Wei's *Black, White & Grey*: The world premiere of this brilliant choreographer and artist's amalgam of painting exhibit and dance performance was a hypnotic highlight amid Art Basel mayhem. Probably the most high-profile project ever for presenters MDC Live and Miami Dade College' Museum of Art + Design at the Freedom Tower.

latin music

1: Calle 13's *Multiviral* (<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=calle+13+multiviral&FORM=VIRE1#view=detail&mid=FFB1FC4BEB094D3D0040FFB1FC4E>)
Once again, the Puerto Rican duo led the musical and political conversation and challenged the status quo. They collaborated with Wikileaks' Julian Assange for the rage-against-control title track to their provocative *Multiviral* (a prescient precursor to the current spate of protests), and used a headlining spot on the Latin Grammys to support the massive Mexican protests over the murder of 43 students there.

2: Romeo Santos: The Bonx-raised, Dominican-American heartthrob continued to reign over Latin pop charts and hearts, as his mix of bachata and R&B powered the immensely popular *Formula, Vol. 2* and a best-selling tour that filled Yankee Stadium (twice!)

3: Enrique Iglesias' *Bailando* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUsoVIDFqZg>):
Enrique Iglesias re-emerged on top of Latin crossover with this megahit (more than half a billion Youtube views and climbing), energized by his Cuban collaborators – co-writer Descember Bueno and reggaeton duo Gente de Zona. Iglesias' name comes first, but in a way *Bailando* is the biggest Cuban hit in the United States since the days of mambo.

4: La Santa Cecilia: The rise of this Mexican-American L.A. band, fronted by the audacious and soulful La Marisoul, represented a rare new authentic and original voice in Latin music. Their accolades – the only Latin act at Bonnaroo, a Grammy for Best Latin Rock, Urban or Alternative Band – brought attention to their urgent message of help for immigrants.

5: Siempre Fresco: The collaboration of salsa pioneer and legend Larry Harlow with a new generation of eager electronic-Latino musicmakers, sponsored by Red Bull and presented by MDC Live in October, was provocative, creative and a whole lot of fun.

movies

1: The South Florida arthouse exhibition scene continued to thrive, with seven single-screen theaters in Miami (the Coral Gables Art Cinema, the Bill Cosford Cinema, the Miami Beach Cinematheque, the Tower Theater, and three O Cinemas in Wynwood, Miami Shores and Miami Beach) and two in Broward (Cinema Paradiso in Hollywood and Fort Lauderdale) booking films year-round that would have skipped our region altogether as recently as three years ago. We even got a drive-in, the Blue Starlight, which quickly outgrew its original Wynwood base and moved to Coconut Grove, with occasional screenings on Virginia Key.

2: Like a horse leading a cart, the arthouse boom fueled a growing Miami filmmaking community of thriving established groups such as the Borscht Corp., a collective of artists and filmmakers that put on their ninth film festival last week, to smaller but equally devoted associations such as the Indie Film Club Miami and the Miami Filmmakers Collective. What's more, many of their movies traveled outside Miami and screened at film festivals around the world, while the prestigious Sundance Film Institute visited the city twice with two intensive labs and panels designed to help aspiring moviemakers.

3: While there were still plenty of smaller, adult-oriented movies to be found, Hollywood continued to chase after the almighty blockbuster with a newfound fury, making movies designed to be seen on giant 3D screens to get people out of their homes, from *Godzilla* to *Interstellar*.

4: Young adults and children continued to drive the Hollywood box office: All of the 10 highest-grossing films of 2014 were either comic-book adaptations (*Guardians of the Galaxy*, *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*, *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, *X-Men: Days of Future Past*), cartoons (*The LEGO Movie*), remakes (*Godzilla*), sequels (*The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1*, *Transformers: Age of Extinction*, *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*) or fairy tales (*Maleficent*).

5) The controversy over Sony Pictures' *The Interview*, about two journalists (Seth Rogen and James Franco) asked by the CIA to assassinate North Korean president Kim Jong-Un, resulted in a major hack of the studio's website, online piracy of several of their biggest movies of the year and bomb threats against theater chains that booked the film. On Wednesday. Sony canceled the planned Christmas Day release of *The Interview*. In 2014, anyone who said movies no longer matter wasn't paying attention.

theater

Developments on local stages were so significant in 2014 that we're presenting a top 10.

1: *Antony and Cleopatra*, a GableStage presentation at the Colony Theatre: Tarell Alvin McCraney's set-in-Haiti version of William Shakespeare's tragedy, a joint effort of GableStage, the Royal Shakespeare Company and New York's Public Theater, began the year with an ambitious, attention-getting production.

2: *Assassins*, a Zoetic Stage production at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts: The young Zoetic Stage took a shot at its first musical and scored with a production of Stephen Sondheim's shooting gallery-style show about presidential assassins. Nicholas Richberg was particularly powerful — and period-perfect — as the "pioneer" of the group, John Wilkes Booth.

3: *Once* at the Arsht Center: Director John Tiffany and movement wizard Steven Hoggett turned an indie movie hit into a glorious theatrical love story involving two lost souls, an Irish street musician and a Czech pianist. The aching signature song *Falling Slowly* and beguiling performances by the intimate show's singer-actor-musicians made audiences fall hard, too.

4: *The Mountaintop* at GableStage: Katori Hall's two-character play, imagining an encounter between Martin Luther King Jr. and a mysterious Lorraine Motel maid on the night before King's assassination, was propelled by multifaceted, riveting performances from C. Anthony Jackson as the civil rights leader and the magnetic Karen Stephens as another kind of angel.

5: *Clark Gable Slept Here*, a Zoetic Stage production at the Arsht Center: Michael McKeever's dark world premiere comedy, starring the prolific playwright himself as an agent with a crisis, spun the tale of a married movie star, the dead male hooker in his

bed, a rattled hotel manager, a sneaky maid and a sexy stop-at-nothing Hollywood fixer played by the sublime Lela Elam. This snappy farce with teeth also has legs, with multiple productions in the works.

6: *Paradise Motel*, a Mangrove Creative Collective production at Miami Theater Center's SandBox: Playwright Juan C. Sanchez artfully tied disparate stories together by placing them in the same Little Havana motel room over nearly half a century. Blending humor and intensity, the artfully acted play reflected the evolution of a society and a neighborhood.

7: *Miss Julie*, a Naked Stage production at Barry University's Pelican Theatre: The Naked Stage put together a fiery, memorable version of August Strindberg's drama about a count's spoiled daughter and her disastrous sexual encounter with his manservant. Stellar work all around, especially from actors Katherine Amadeo and Matthew William Chizever in a sadomasochistic *pas de deux*.

8: *Evita* at the Arsht Center: Director Michael Grandage's reimagined revival of the best of the Andrew Lloyd Webber-Tim Rice collaborations was something of an artistic bust on Broadway, but the far superior touring production featured star-making performances by Caroline Bowman as Eva Duarte de Perón and Josh Young as Che.

9: *Gidion's Knot*, a New Theatre production at the South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center: Patrice DeGraff Arenas and Christina Groom gave two of the year's strongest, most harrowing performances as a mother and a teacher brought together by a student's suicide in Johnna Adams' play, gracefully staged by Ricky J. Martinez.

10: *The Whale* at GableStage: Samuel D. Hunter's widely produced play about a dying, 600-pound gay teacher estranged from his angry teen daughter got a brilliantly acted production at GableStage. Director Joseph Adler's sharp, illuminating staging yielded across-the-board riveting performances by Gregg Weiner, Arielle Hoffman, Amy Miller Brennan, Deborah L. Sherman and Karl Skyler Urban.

books

1: Maya Angelou dies. The beloved novelist, poet, essayist and actress, author of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, died in May, but hers wasn't the only significant literary loss this year. Among the others: poet Mark Strand and novelists P.D. James, Kent Haruf, Nadine Gordimer and Billie Letts.

2: Amazon and Hachette finally make a deal. The battle raged for most of the year: Who gets to set the price for ebooks? Popular authors such as Stephen King and James Patterson took sides against Amazon, while self-published writers, who have a stake in the dismantling of traditional publishing, argued for the net-based company. Amazon refused to allow pre-orders for Hachette titles, earned the jokey wrath of Stephen Colbert (and possibly the real wrath of Hachette author J.K. Rowling, who knows a bit about dark magic). In November, the foes came to an agreement with Hachette retaining its rights – and a lot of questions about the future of publishing remaining.

3: Great book or great fraud? Earlier this year Donna Tartt's novel *The Goldfinch* won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction – and sparked a backlash among such literary critics as James Woods and Francine Prose. "A book like *The Goldfinch* doesn't undo any clichés – it deals in them," Lorin Stein, editor of *The Paris Review*, told *Vanity Fair*. Tartt may have the last laugh, though – the novel, about a boy protecting a priceless painting, has spent the past 54 weeks on the bestseller list.

4: Author behaving badly. Daniel Handler, author of the Lemony Snicket books, made an appalling gaffe at the National Book Awards presentation by making a watermelon joke at the expense of the winner in the young adult category, Jacqueline Woodson. But give Handler credit for his apology: Calling his comments "monstrously inappropriate" and "racist," he then donated \$10,000 to the nonprofit We Need Diverse Books and offered to match other contributions up to \$100,000.

5: Miami Book Fair International keeps growing. With a slew of new partnerships – including a first-time agreement with the National Book Foundation to bring award winners and finalists to the fair – one of Miami's great cultural institutions celebrated its 31st year in style.

visual arts

1: New museums: Dissent between the Museum of Contemporary Art and its former board of directors boiled over into the courts but eventually was negotiated to a deal that left MOCA with 70 percent of the collection and the community with a new institution. Now operating in the Design District is the Institute of Contemporary Art Miami, established by members of the former board. ICA is building permanent quarters due to open by late fall 2016. Meanwhile, two more private museums were announced. When it opens in 2017, the Fairholme Foundation will house James Turrell's spectacular *Aten*

Reign and a 200-foot-long Richard Serra sculpture, among other works. Gallerist Gary Nader also announced a Latin American arts and culture museum that he hopes to open in early 2016.

2: Art invasion: Events surrounding the 13th edition of Art Basel Miami Beach stretched from Pinecrest to Hialeah and Opa-locka to Little River, underscoring the pervasive expansion of visual arts in all quarters of South Florida. You can thank Art Basel, the Knight Arts Challenge, private collectors and yes, even condo developers.

3: El Anatsui retrospective: Our reviewers hailed “Gravity and Grace,” the exhibition of monumental weavings by Ghana-born artist El Anatsui at the Bass Museum of Art last summer, as the best show of 2014. Anatsui’s “quilts” and “paintings” made from discarded objects, — such as bottle labels and drink can tabs — swept throughout the museum, speaking to both the beauty and pain of life in Africa.

4: Caribbean crossroads: Though the show “Caribbean: Crossroads of the World” originated in New York, by the time it arrived here last spring, the exhibit had been reshaped with a distinctly Miami accent. The curatorial staff at the Pérez Art Museum Miami added new works, including Glexis Novoa’s depiction of the view from PAMM and Edouard Duval-Carrié’s portrait of Toussaint Louverture, the leader of the Haitian Revolution. Paired with Duval-Carrié’s simultaneous solo show, the exhibit was a must-see.

5: Civil rights recalled: Bob Adelman’s moving civic rights-era photos at the NSU Fort Lauderdale Museum last fall recalled a critical past — and presciently foreshadowed this fall’s protests against police violence. It was one in a series of evocative shows at the Fort Lauderdale Museum since former MOCA director Bonnie Clearwater took over.