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A weekend of film, dance, wine and food to remember

By Scott Neil

Music and dance from Latin America, a star documentary-featured violinist from South Africa and an acclaimed gospel singer who performed personally for the late US President John F. Kennedy will make it the Bermuda International Film Festival' Reel World Weekend one to remember.

Throw in the opportunity to bid for auction prizes that span the world from Argentina to South Africa, Europe and the US, as well as prized film memorabilia, and it all adds up to three days of delight for film, dance, music and wine fans.

At the same time the BIFF Reel World Weekend will be supporting the festival's educational Programmes as well as the festival itself with funds raised to advance film education, promote filmmaking and support film exhibition.

South African violin virtuoso Samson Diamond, Grammy Award-nominated gospel singer Odetta and the acclaimed Tango Y Mas Dance Company will headline the weekend, which takes place October 10-12.

The auction to raise funds for BIFF's education programmes includes film memorabilia, visits to film sets, original artwork, stays in countries such as Argentina, South Africa, Italy, France, the United Kingdom and United States – and much more. Auction bidders can make their bids at the weekend events, or online during the week leading up to the weekend.

The event kicks off on Friday, October 10 with Colours of Tango at the Mid-Ocean Amphitheatre at Fairmont Southampton Princess Hotel, continues on October 11 with a South African Jol (Party) at the home of Dame Pamela and Andrew Banks where Mr. Diamond will perform, and wraps up with a Gospel Brunch at Fairmont Southampton Princess on Sunday October 12 featuring Odetta and Bermuda's Hamilton Seventh Day Adventist Mass Choir.

"All of us on the organising committee for this event are really looking forward to a great weekend," said festival director Aideen Ratteray Pryse. "The three events are so diverse in nature that there really is something for everyone. The Tango Y Mas dancers have been to Bermuda before, and they are extremely popular. Anyone who saw the film Soweto Strings at BIFF this year will know about Samson's incredible musicianship, and of course Odetta is a legend in her own right."

The three day event includes:

Colours of Tango: The Mid-Ocean Amphitheatre at Fairmont Southampton Princess Hotel will be transformed into an elegant Buenos Aires supper club. Attendees will enjoy wine from the award-winning Catena Zapata Vineyards, located in the foothills of the Andes in Mendoza, Argentina. An Argentinean menu features as attendees are entertained by the highly acclaimed Tango y Mas Dance Company under the direction of choreographer and founder Angel G. Clemente. Colours of Tango is a historical account of the journey of tango from the brothels of Buenos Aires to its ballrooms. Founded in 2000, Tango y Mas Company has thrilled enthusiastic audiences throughout the United States, Mexico, South America and Europe with their intensity and authenticity. After the dinner and show, attendees can try out tango dancing. The event will be produced with the assistance of Salsamania Productions, which presents three Mambo Nights events annually. Guitarist Louise Southwood and violinist David France, who earned a standing ovation at the Bermuda Guitar Festival with their 25-minute piece about the history of the tango, will also feature. Tickets are \$200.

South Africa Jol: The beautiful home of Dame Pamela and Andrew Banks, GateWood, will be the locale for an exclusive evening of music, food and drink - a "jol". South African food and wine will feature at an event. South African violinist virtuoso Samson Diamond, who was featured in the inspiring documentary film, Soweto Strings, which screened at BIFF 2008, is just one of our guest performers. Samson was one of the earliest students of Buskaid, a Soweto-based music school founded and operated by British viola player Rosemary Nalden, who left London for Johannesburg in order to teach young musicians in the South African townships. Samson is now based in the United Kingdom, where he performs with some of the top British orchestras, including the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, the BBC Philharmonic and the Halle Orchestra. He will have just returned from a European tour when he plays in Bermuda. Other performers will bring alive the music and dance of South Africa. Tickets are \$450.

Gospel Brunch – Songs for the Soul: Acclaimed gospel singer Odetta is one of the most important performers of the last 50 years. Awarded the Presidential Medal of Arts in 1999, she took part in the march on Selma, sang for the masses at the 1963 March on Washington, and played for US President John Kennedy and his cabinet on the nationally televised Civil Rights programme "Dinner with the President". Artists as diverse as Bob Dylan, Joan Armatrading, Joan Baez and Tracy Chapman credit her influence. At 76, Odetta's voice is as strong and impressive as ever; she performed in January of this year at a Martin Luther King Tribute in New York. Opening for Odetta is Bermuda's Hamilton Seventh Day Adventist Mass Choir. Tickets are \$125 for brunch and show, or \$75 for the show only.

Tickets may be reserved now by e-mailing events@biff.bm, or by calling the festival office at 293-3456.