



Miami-Dade middle school students shine at 6-week artistic summer program

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Watch here: <https://www.cbsnews.com/miami/news/miami-dade-middle-school-students-shine-at-6-week-artistic-summer-program/> (2:51)

CBS News Miami's Lisa Petrillo speaks with Jairo Ontiveros, the Arsht Center's vice president of art education, in addition to Wesley Wray, a former Ailey camper now performing on Broadway. Whether it's jazz, ballet, West African dance, or personal development, it's all about an artistic and safe program for Miami-Dade County public middle school students at [AileyCamp Miami](#), a six week summer program at the [Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts](#).

"It is really a program of the community. It is fully free, so all our campers are on full scholarship. They get daily transportation to and from breakfast, lunch and all of their uniforms. They perform on the stages of the Arsht," Jairo Ontiveros, the Arsht Center's vice president of art education, said. Since its inception in 2009, over 1,600 students have had the opportunity to participate in the program.

"Every summer we welcome about 100 to 110 middle schoolers here from Miami-Dade County to experience six weeks of free summer programming," Ontiveros said. "We bus in students from all across Miami-Dade County, 11 to 14 year olds, and really it's about them exploring who they are, stretching their minds, their bodies."

Twenty-year-old Wesley Wray, who is from Miami, is now performing on Broadway in the Tony Award-winning musical "Buena Vista Social Club." He started at AileyCamp Miami when he was 12-years-old. Wray said his passion for performance started from the care he received there.

"When I was there it was just treated with so much love," Wray explained. "I think that was what cultivated me and inspired me to keep doing this because of the love that I was receiving from it." Wesley returned in 2023 as a camp leader and teaching artist at AileyCamp, helping to inspire the next generation of performers.

"Receiving the love back is something so special with the kids, and they loved it. I was also learning with them. I think that's what brought us together is the fact that I'm still learning as well," Wray said.

Ontiveros praised Wesley as an example of the program's impact. "Wesley is that prime example of how a community can come together and really elevate and boost a young person into chasing their dreams, and he will be a prime example for our campers to look up to him and that's just so inspiring," he said. When asked who wanted to be on Broadway, enthusiastic campers responded with a chorus of "me!"

The program's impact on students extends beyond dance training. One student shared how "being here has helped me be more social and speak openly more." Another camper expressed gratitude for the opportunities, "It's so amazing how we're offered all these opportunities and we're able to be with these amazing teachers and get better at our craft."

AileyCamp Miami culminates with a big free show at the Arsht Center's Knight Concert Hall where the students perform. The 2025 performance is scheduled for July 26th.