

# Hear music of Billy Joel at BBMANN

BY SANDRA YEYATI  
Special to Florida Weekly



CAVANAUGH

Billy Joel fans are in for a treat as Michael Cavanaugh and his band join the Gulf Coast Symphony to play the rock icon's greatest hits at the Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall Sunday, Feb. 20, at 7 p.m.

"The Music of Billy Joel Starring Michael Cavanaugh' promises to be an incredible evening of symphonic rock and roll. If you're a fan of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, this is the concert for you," says GCS Musical Director Andrew Kurtz, who will be conducting the 70-piece orchestra.

Chosen by Joel to star in the hit Broadway musical "Movin' Out" for more than 1,200 performances over three years, Mr. Cavanaugh is an accomplished pianist and consummate interpreter of Joel's beloved repertoire. He also happens to be one of the superstar's biggest enthusiasts. "I don't try to impersonate him, but I've been listening to Billy's music for so long that naturally, some of my inflections in certain lines come out the same way he does them, just because I'm such a fan."

According to Mr. Cavanaugh, Joel can do no wrong. "There aren't any weak spots. He nails the lyrics. He nails the melody. And he nails the chord changes," he explains. "When I hear a Billy Joel song, I can picture the story he's telling in my head. I can see the village green. I can see the angry young man with his fist in the air."

Much like his idol, Mr. Cavanaugh honed his own skills in piano bars, where he began playing professionally when he was a teenager. He was performing in a dueling piano bar at the New York-New York Hotel and Casino, in Las Vegas, when Joel first walked into his life 20 years ago. Mr. Cavanaugh remembers that moment as if it was yesterday.

"There's no stage, just two pianos in the

center of the room — very intimate — and his table is about seven feet away from me. I'm saying to myself, 'I am not going to play a Billy Joel song in front of Billy Joel.' So I open with an Elton John song, 'Saturday Night's Alright,' trying not to look at him, except out of the corner of my eye. People start requesting Billy Joel songs. Everyone wants to hear 'Piano Man,' and I think, 'I can't do this.' People keep yelling, 'Piano Man.' I look over to him and he says, 'Ah, go ahead.' So I play 'Piano Man' in front of him, invite everyone to sing along, and there he is singing along. I couldn't believe it."

For one night in February, Billy Joel's super fan will come to Southwest Florida to celebrate one of America's greatest rock and roll songwriters, and the Gulf Coast Symphony will be there to super charge the night.

Tickets for "The Music of Billy Joel Starring Michael Cavanaugh" range from \$39 to \$69. The BBMANN is located at 13350 FSW Pkwy. in Fort Myers. For more information or to purchase tickets, call the box office at 239-481-4849. ■

### In the KNOW

#### "The Music of Billy Joel Starring Michael Cavanaugh"

- » When: Sunday, Feb. 20
- » Where: Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall, 13350 FSW Pkwy., Fort Myers
- » Information: 239-481-4849

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