

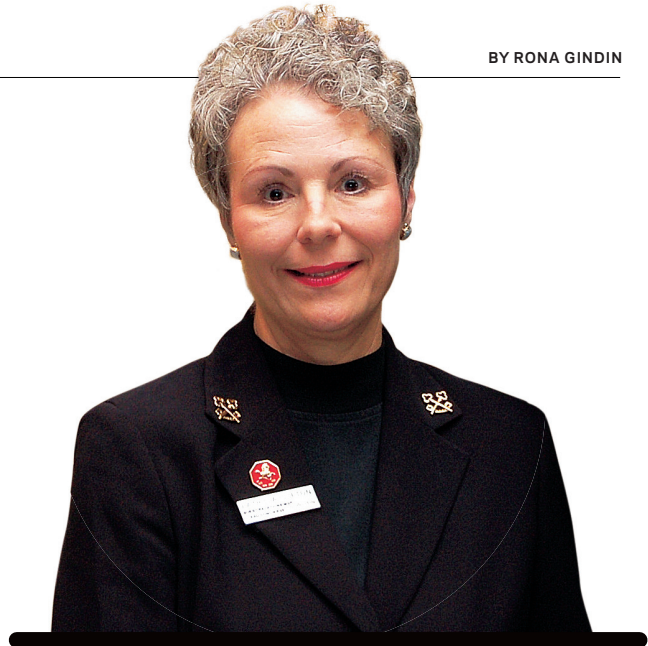
ASK A CONCIERGE

BY RONA GINDIN

Patricia Clifton

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When Patricia Clifton started at the Grand Bohemian in 2001, the Orlando native had no idea the city would build a performing arts center next door. She lucked out. In addition to its artsy neighbors, her hotel's music-and-art focus paired well with Clifton's passions. Here, this aficionado reveals her favorite local venues:



How do guests expecting Mickey Mouse or a typical convention hotel react to the Grand Bohemian? "Our guests are savvy travelers who know that this is an adult-oriented business hotel. Still, they find that the Grand Bohemian is 'an experience in art and music' (which is why it's our slogan). We have a director of music who coordinates our entertainment program, a 9-foot-long, \$250,000 grand Imperial Bösendorfer piano, more than \$2 million in original art and a gallery where you can buy a \$35 [pair of] earrings or a \$10,000 painting."

What will guests find nearby?

"The Orlando Museum of Art has traveling exhibits by artists from around the world. Right now, it has Of Cloth and Culture II on display, featuring textures and textiles from places like Africa and [made by] the Aztecs. Plus, there's always permanent art on display such as a group of paintings from the mid-19th century called Art of the American Landscape. I like that OMA has a cross-section of different types of art, not just painting and sculpture, but often other media, as well, from another culture or historic period."

Where do you tell guests it's worth schlepping to?

"Orlando has a cultural corridor with several art venues. I'm especially fond of the Mennello Museum of American Art."

It was founded by Marilyn Mennello, a lady who had a store on Park Avenue where brides shopped for china and crystal. She [collected the work of] Earl Cunningham, and put the museum together based on some of his paintings. You can go into any museum and see art from the masters, but folk art is the local view by everyday people who've never gone to school to learn how to paint. I love the rawness and realness of it. When you look at a folk painting there's no doubt you see a river, a stream, a farm. You don't have to stand there trying to be inspired by a color or a shape."

What if someone's looking for an outdoor activity?

"One of my favorites is the Albin Polasek Museum & Sculpture Gardens. Polasek was an artist from the Czech Republic who retired to Winter Park. He designed and lived in the home the museum is now housed in, and indoors and out are 200 sculptures by him and others. It's a 3-acre enclave on Lake Osceola. The Polasek offers visitors an inside view of large, sculpted pieces. Orlando has minimal public art, so just the magnitude of the size of the pieces is a big deal and brings inspiration to all of us."

