



Introduction to Jonathan Plutzik. 5:53 min.

Drone video: Zachary Plutzik. Music: The (New) Beethoven Quartets. The 32 Piano Sonatas Reimagined. By Jeffery Briggs. Piano Sonata in C-minor, op. 13. Performed by the Amernet String Quartet. Photo & Design: Raymond Elman.

# The Remarkable Jonathan Plutzik

By Elman + Cheek

**H**ow does the son of a poet become the owner of the most culturally advanced hotel in the world? Practice, practice, practice. (The hyperbole is mine until proven otherwise.)

And with a “little” help from his family and friends — for the glorious cultural achievement at The Betsy Hotel on Ocean Drive in South Beach is truly a family affair, with participation from an ever-growing circle of admiring friends.

Jonathan Plutzik, with high-quality, hands-on support from his wife Lesley, his son Zach, and his sister Deborah has created a cultural Mecca in the heart of South Beach – offering chamber music, opera, jazz, poetry in many forms, writers’ breakfast salons, a writer-in-residency program, art exhibitions, a cappella festivals, and much more – all free of charge to the public. PLUS all of the cultural happenings occur within the incredibly tasteful and well-appointed ambiance of the renovated and refurbished Betsy Hotel, accompanied by top-notch food and beverages.

Plutzik was born in New Haven, CT, when his father, the noted poet Hyam Plutzick, had a teaching fellowship at Yale University. Following Yale, the senior Plutzik became the first Jewish faculty member at the University of Rochester, serving in the English Department as the John H. Deane Professor of English until his death in 1962 (when Jonathan was only seven years-old). So Jonathan Plutzik and his sister Deborah Plutzik Briggs grew up in Rochester, where their mother kept them steeped in the notion that pursuing art is a high calling.

Before purchasing The Betsy Ross Hotel out of bankruptcy in 2005 and constructing the concept of an arts-oriented hotel, Plutzik graduated from Brandeis University, received an MBA from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, and had a distinguished career in the Financial Services industry in New York, retiring as vice chairman of Credit Suisse / First Boston to devote the majority of his time to The Betsy. However, he has kept his hand in the Financial Services Industry through his role as Vice Chairman of Fannie Mae.

The videos below are organized by topic and run between 30 seconds and 6 minutes. Click on any video. You must be connected to the Internet to view the videos.

**INSIGHT & INSPIRATION:**  
2:16 min.



*What was it like to grow up with a poet as your father?*

**INSIGHT & INSPIRATION:**  
2:30 min.



*Even though your father died when you were very young his vision infuses everything you are doing culturally at The Betsy — including your motto “Expect no more. This is happiness.” Has your father been spiritually present in all of your endeavors?*

**SEIZES OPPORTUNITIES:**  
3:59 min.



*We recorded Miami-Dade County Superintendent of Public School Alberto Carvalho’s version of how you talked him into reading your father’s poems before a full orchestra and a large audience at the New World Symphony. Can we please hear your version of the story?*

**CREATES A UNIQUE PERSONAL BRAND:** 5:16 min.



*What was your initial vision for cultural programming at The Betsy, and did you ever envision doing as much programming as you’re doing today?*

**COMMITMENT:**  
0:28 sec.



*Are you still engaged in the Financial Services industry?*

**COLLABORATION:**  
3:39 min.



*When you say that “we” explored the options for transforming The Betsy into a cultural center, who was on your team?*

**CRITICAL THINKING:**  
3:15 min.



*Did you do any research to see if there was any precedence for the kind of hotel you wanted to create?*

**INSIGHT & INSPIRATION:**  
3:45 min.



*Does The Betsy actively cultivate an older demographic? The ambiance would certainly change if the hotel was filled with Millennials and pounding techno music.*

**CREATIVE FLEXIBILITY:**  
2:30 min.



*What type of recorded background music do you play at The Betsy?*

**CREATES A UNIQUE PERSONAL BRAND:** 1:24 min.



*The Betsy has a very sophisticated, comfortable interior design. How did that evolve?*

**UNDERSTANDS THE AUDIENCE’S PERSPECTIVE:**  
5:26 min.



*What are your biggest challenges?*