

February 23, 1961

TO: General Taylor

FROM: Jack McNulty

Attached is a transcript of Tony Bliss' broadcast interview of last Saturday. It is an excellent presentation.

I suggest you add it to the other papers you are collecting as background for your talk before the Dutch Treat Club.

Jack
LC
To Speech file
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LINCOLN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
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FIRST INTERMISSION
LINCOLN CENTER PROGRESS REPORT
SIMON BOCCANEGRA - FEBRUARY 18, 1961

BLISS: Thank you, Mr. Cross, and good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts is a project of a scope never before attempted. And if one stops to think about the cultural splendors of ancient civilizations of Asia, the Age of Pericles in Greece, or Renaissance Italy - and searches for a comparable project - only one conclusion comes to mind! - Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts is literally unique. Within an area of fourteen acres in the center of New York City, six auditoriums will be built for the presentation of opera, symphony, drama and ballet - complemented by educational opportunities and facilities in all of these arts. We hope it will be the cultural capital of the world - a capital where every artist and every performing company will aspire to perform as the crowning point in their careers.

To me, opportunities at Lincoln Center for new educational and experimental ventures seem more exciting and important than even the potential increase in performances of the professional companies. To provide training in the performing arts to young talent and young audiences is more of a challenge, in many ways, than organizing any kind of enterprise with experienced professionals.

The Juilliard School of Music, expanded to include drama and ballet, will be an integral part of Lincoln Center.

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BLISS:
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Juillard would not have to be located in Lincoln Center to have the finest available teachers and the best physical equipment.

But Juillard's new home will provide its students with the opportunity to live, work and learn in constant association with all of the world's greatest artists and, at the same time, have available in Lincoln Center's library museum the tools to study the great artists, the great works and the great productions of the past. Think of this for just a moment. These new opportunities that will arise for Juillard students when Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts is completed will be the equivalent of making your local high school not only a school but the office of all the world's great leaders. Imagine your son and daughter living and working in daily association with the Lincolns, Churchills and Roosevelts of their times. In the world of the performing arts, this is what music, drama and ballet students of tomorrow will enjoy at Lincoln Center.

Before I discuss some of the new vistas that will open up for the professional companies at Lincoln Center, I want to say a word about what I know must be uppermost in your thoughts - the new Metropolitan Opera House. Undoubtedly many of you share my own sentimental concern at the thought of moving from this very impractical and yet very beautiful house in which I am now sitting. But do not allow sentimentality to blind you to the future. We are building a

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BLISS:
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new and efficient plant to improve the operating conditions of the company and the comfort and vision of the audience. But we are not forgetting the aesthetic values which are so closely connected to operatic production. We confidently expect that the new auditorium will retain and, indeed, enhance all of the color, beauty and atmosphere of the old and it will be surrounded by public areas of unparalleled decorative and architectural beauty and excitement.

To me, bricks and mortar provide nothing new to the cultural world that Lincoln Center is striving to create. The real products of the Center will come as Juilliard School and the professional performing companies begin to grow into the new opportunities that the Center will provide. These opportunities will not be developed by laymen such as myself but by the professionals in our various organizations. At the same time, all of us who have dedicated a part of our time to the cause of the opera and the other constituents of Lincoln Center are susceptible to dreams. And I'm not immune. There are many operas designed for intimate audiences that cannot be produced in a theater with an audience of three thousand, but which should be produced by the Metropolitan. Even if we had the theater for these operas under today's conditions we would have no place to rehearse or prepare them. At Lincoln Center in the new repertory theater and in the theaters within the Juilliard School, we will have the ideal setting for such works.

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In the new opera house, we will have the rehearsal facilities to make it possible to prepare them. It is my dream that the move to Lincoln Center will open up a vast new area of operatic material that the Metropolitan can bring to its audiences and to the radio and television public. Even though the various auditoriums are not ready for performances, some of our dreams are being realized.

The New York Philharmonic schedules concerts exclusively for students in our regular schools. The Juilliard is sending its young instrumentalists and vocalists directly to the schools to perform. The Metropolitan Opera, in an ambitious program, brings opera to schools - giving the majority of youngsters their first operatic experience. Although the Metropolitan Opera Guild has for years scheduled afternoon performances exclusively for school children within the Metropolitan area, now, under the sponsorship of Lincoln Center's educational program, the Metropolitan is bringing opera to the schools - the mountain to Mohammed. We put together a group of attractive and talented young American singers - some of them junior members of the Metropolitan Opera, audition winners, and other talent - and called that group the Metropolitan Opera Studio. This group has been going on its merry way ever since last December. What does it perform?

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An abridged and yet somehow complete version of Mozart's COSI FAN TUTTE, in the excellent English translation by Ruth and Thomas Martin, presented with a minimum of props, a maximum of pretty Metropolitan costumes, and staging that can be put on practically anywhere with a piano in place of an orchestra.

As we see it, the benefits derived from this project are manifold. For the young Metropolitan singers, it offers a wonderful and much desired chance to step out of the roles of the chambermaids and messengers and to perform such exciting roles as Fiordiligi and Dorabella, or their two sweethearts, Ferrando and Guglielmo. To the young non-Metropolitan singers it offers a chance to be heard and seen in performance rather than in audition. And, incidentally, this has already led to the engagement of one member of the Studio to appear with the big company.

Of course, the most exciting aspect of this program is the chance for us to present opera (however modestly) to thousands of eager youngsters, many of whom have never seen an opera in any shape or form before.

I hope I have been able to give you an idea of the goals and aims of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. And I'd like to add that however exciting the many auditoriums and buildings I've been talking about are in their internal programs - the external aspect of Lincoln Center has not been neglected.

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The Center will not be just a row of buildings - side by side - which is so typical of much New York architecture. The buildings will all be separate units - divided by spacious plazas planted with trees and, we hope, even gardens. The approach to the Center's fourteen acres should give you a feeling that you are entering a special world - which indeed it will be.

Surely, the Center will be an added incentive for everyone to visit New York. All of Lincoln Center's new auditoriums will be air-conditioned, and they will be open fifty-two weeks of the year, so that at long last our summer visitors will have an opportunity to hear the world's great artists performing.

Like all enterprises, this one costs money. Dreams don't come to life just for the wishing. The financial help of the city and the state of New York, industry and private individuals has brought us closer and closer to realization. Our problems in this direction are not yet solved -- but we have great faith in the American spirit that has made it possible to build and maintain hospitals, research laboratories, museums, libraries, schools, and institutions for every conceivable necessity - to evaluate the importance of our cultural progress, and help us achieve, for the enjoyment of everyone, the reality of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

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If any of you wish to participate in making this great dream come true, write to me, Anthony A. Bliss, Metropolitan Opera House, New York City, New York.

Thank you.