

February - 1961

LINCOLN CENTER BACKGROUND

Introduction

What is Lincoln Center? In legal terms, Lincoln Center is a tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation, organized to erect, own and operate the buildings on a 14-acre site north of Columbus Circle, between 62nd and 66th Streets, and Broadway, Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues, for the broad purpose of "sustaining, encouraging and promoting musical and performing art--and of educating the general public with relation thereto."

Physically, Lincoln Center is a complex of buildings that will house six artistic and educational organizations: The Metropolitan Opera, the New York Philharmonic, the Juilliard School, the Repertory Theater Association and, hopefully, the New York City Center and a Library-Museum of the Performing Arts. Between the buildings will be wide plazas and promenades, beautiful greenery and splashing fountains, complementing the striking architecture. Also at the Center will be the city-owned Damrosch Park, with its bandshell for open-air concerts, and an 800-car underground garage.

But Lincoln Center is more--more than the stone and glass of its buildings and the landscaped beauty of its grounds. For Lincoln Center represents an idea--a dream born of a concern by many for fostering the performing arts. Lincoln Center is the story of the forming of new and complex

relationships between old and proud institutions, of pioneering in the establishment of new organizations, and of building a working cooperation between private and governmental agencies. With the breaking of ground by President Eisenhower on May 14, 1959, Lincoln Center passed from the stage of a dream, and every day since, has been assuming reality.

History

How did Lincoln Center happen?

Lincoln Center could not have been built a hundred, fifty, or even ten years ago. This Center--a unique product of our age--was made possible only through the concomitance of five developments: (1) A growing audience; (2) A burgeoning talent; (3) A recognized community responsibility; (4) Inadequate physical facilities; and (5) An available site. Let us see how each of these developments has come to bear on the Lincoln Center project.

(1) A growing audience

Millions of Americans are taking advantage of rising incomes, more leisure hours, and higher levels of education to enrich their lives through the arts. The statistics are impressive. Today, America has at least 80 opera companies, close to 1,000 symphony orchestras, 5,000 community theaters. We spend more for music than the entire rest of the world. We buy 17,000,000 classical records a year, spend an estimated \$70,000,000 for them, and pay about \$5,000,000 more every year to attend concerts than to watch baseball.

(2) A burgeoning talent

Attesting to the emergence of brilliant American talent, more than ever before the art and artist we see today is American. In 1903, when "Tosca" made its American debut at the Metropolitan, the cast was all European; the Met's 1960 productions of "Tosca" had predominantly American casts. In 1900, the Philharmonic played only two American works, and most of its musicians had been born abroad; in 1960, it played 34 American compositions and all its 106 musicians were American, two-thirds native-born. Ballet has become an American art form in only the past twenty-five years, and already our companies have successfully toured the capitals of Europe. American drama has likewise attained a stature that merits the establishment of repertory theater on a plane with opera and symphony.

(3) A recognized community responsibility

There is a growing recognition that enjoyment of the arts is important if not essential to the human mind and spirit. Because the arts do affect the happiness and well-being of our people, their advancement is becoming of greater concern to everyone interested in a better America. Once, the great object of American philanthropy was medicine and health; more recently, education. Now the arts are coming into focus, and are becoming a community responsibility along with libraries, museums, hospitals and schools.

(4) Inadequate physical facilities

In 1955, long-felt needs by individual artistic groups in New York for more adequate physical facilities--particularly a permanent hall for the Philharmonic, and a better home for the Metropolitan Opera--challenged the leaders of those organizations. Together with several citizens representative of the public interest, they met informally to explore whether some sort of arts center would be desirable, and feasible. In October of 1955, this "Exploratory Committee for a Musical Arts Center" began to meet regularly twice a month. They secured the advice of experts in artistic and educational fields, consulted management engineers, and studied artistic and educational institutions of Europe. The result was the organization, in June of 1956, of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Its Board of Directors was comprised of distinguished public-spirited citizens, and headed by John D. Rockefeller 3rd as its first president.

(5) An available site

The site for Lincoln Center became available as part of the massive Lincoln Square Urban Renewal project, initiated by the New York City Committee on Slum Clearance and its Chairman, Robert Moses. Lincoln Center bought the property in 1958 in two separate purchases following condemnation by the City and sale at public auction under established procedures for Title I Urban Renewal Projects. The total cost was \$4,483,677.20. Included in the Lincoln Square project as Lincoln Center's neighbors were: a new downtown campus for Fordham University, an American Red Cross headquarters, and middle-income and cooperative housing projects.

Only a few of the 188 buildings in the Lincoln Center area were new or remodeled. Most of the Center's three-and-a-half blocks was a slum. Police of the local precinct recall West 64th Street between Amsterdam and Columbus Avenue as "one of the worst blocks on the West Side". The Center's first task was the relocation of the 1,647 families who occupied these slums. This was accomplished in 21 months--18 months ahead of schedule. Today, a report shows, the average relocated family is living in larger quarters and paying less rent per room. The tremendous work of slum demolition, started in July 1948, is now complete.

Concept

Out of the coincidence of these five developments emerged a great challenge for the leaders of this cultural enterprise--the formidable task of translating the concept of Lincoln Center into clear-cut, achievable objectives. These objectives were fourfold: (1) To bring together in a beautiful and spacious setting America's leading institutions of opera, music, drama and the dance; (2) To present these arts on modern stages to an audience potentially numbering 3,000,000 every year; (3) To imbue these age-old arts with a fresh vitality by means of a new concept of artistic education; and (4) To give New York a new stature as a world capital, and our nation a symbol of its cultural maturity.

What were the first steps taken by the planners of Lincoln Center to bring together the performing arts in an unparalleled setting of spaciousness and beauty? Mindful of the more pressing needs of both the Metropolitan Opera and the

Philharmonic for better houses in New York, they also wished to provide a center, not only for the inclusion of drama and dance, but a site as well for performances by all of America's outstanding artists, individual or group.

When first announcements were made that the capacity of the new Philharmonic concert hall would be 2,600 (160 less than historic Carnegie Hall), and that the already heavily subscribed Metropolitan Opera would have a 3,800-seat house (little more than the 3,620 capacity at the old Met), the questions most frequently asked were: "Why less? Why not more?" In broad terms, the answer lies in the adherence to the constant precept of Lincoln Center's planning: To build for quality, and for tomorrow. But a more specific answer can be found in a closer look at the complex of Lincoln Center buildings.

Philharmonic Hall

First to be constructed is Philharmonic Hall, the new home of the New York Philharmonic, one of America's oldest orchestras. Designed by architect Max Abramovitz, this superb concert hall is supplemented with spacious lobbies, fine orchestral and management facilities, and a 250-seat cafe. This \$14,500,000 building will open in 1962, after extended tests of its acoustical properties and of its magnificent pipe organ.

Every effort is being made to assure that this will be one of the world's finest concert halls. Studies and measurements were made by the Center's acoustical consultants in more than 30 concert halls and opera houses in the United States and abroad.

The world's great orchestra leaders were interviewed for their opinions as to the best halls for the sound of orchestral music. These studies influenced decisions as to the hall's optimum volume and dimensions, thus fixing the 2,600 seating capacity. Factors such as the size and shape of concert halls, as well as the size of audiences, were considered, because all these affect the quality of the music heard. And the planners of Lincoln Center are thinking not only of live audiences, but of millions of others who will hear recordings and radio and television broadcasts in this country and all over the world.

The main concert hall (comprising about one-fourth of the actual building) is rectangular in shape. Its highest seat is 45 feet above stage level (at Carnegie it is 74 feet). The auditorium will have a series of shallow terraces not more than four or five rows in depth, surrounding the main orchestra level and flowing into the stage itself. Flexible platform elevators will permit an increase in the depth of the stage from 40 to 58 feet, to accommodate an augmented orchestra plus a chorus of up to 200. Over the stage, adjustable reflectors of special design will help assure good listening. Consideration has also been given to the comfort and convenience of the orchestra and management staff, with resultant roomier dressing-rooms and rehearsal rooms, lounges for orchestra men, and ample office space.

Each seating level will have spacious promenades (capturing the atmosphere of many concert halls abroad) overlooking a 50-foot high foyer facing the central plaza. Through windows enframed within 70-foot high columns, you will have a beautiful

view of the rest of Lincoln Center, and a panorama of New York by day or night. Thus you may picture the Philharmonic audience of the future, strolling outdoors from the orchestra level to view the surrounding gaiety of illuminated trees, fountains and sculpture, joining thousands of other music and theater lovers attending performances in other Lincoln Center halls.

Metropolitan Opera House

We turn next to the Metropolitan Opera House, which will cost \$37,400,000, with completion scheduled for 1964. Its facilities include the 3,800-seat auditorium, a restaurant seating 300, and 80,000 square feet of rental office space. Its architect is Wallace Harrison--also chief coordinating architect for the Center--who has worked for 30 years on the problem of a new opera house for New York City. Mr. Harrison once said, "In much of today's architecture. . . an architect faces the problem of making a building look appropriate to its purpose. An opera house should not look like a bank, a jail or a drugstore; it should have grandeur."

Grandeur is a quality the new Metropolitan will not lack, in either its building or its program and facilities. Mr. Rockefeller, Mr. Harrison and the Met's president, Anthony Bliss, took a trip through Germany, Italy, France, and England to inspect new postwar opera houses, and review the most advanced technical and artistic concepts. Top designers, architects and scientists have studied the size, shape and acoustical properties of almost every great opera house in the world. Many preliminary models of

the building have been submitted for study. Helpful advice has come from Walther Unruh, one of Germany's foremost stage architects, and Rudolf Bing, Manager of the Met, regarding its six stages: one central, one back, two side, and two supplementary for storage.

The exterior design is now fairly firm: the Opera House, with a facade of stately columns, faces the main plaza, and in the background rises the 17-story Lincoln Center Tower. The Tower Building will fulfill many desperate needs. No longer must scenery be shuttled back and forth between the Met and distant warehouses. An abundance of storage space has been provided for materials and sets in the Tower; and trucks, through an underground garage, can literally unload new properties onto the very stages. Workshops have been provided for costume design and execution, and carpenters' shops for set construction. No longer must performers endure--as at the old Met--the discomfort of rehearsing in unseasonable heat, thanks to year-round air-conditioning throughout the Center. There will, of course, be ample rehearsal rooms and dressing-rooms for soloists and choruses. The Tower will also provide office space for the Lincoln Center administrative staff, and rental space for others affiliated with its operation.

Juilliard

The new Juilliard building, designed by Pietro Belluschi of M.I.T., will cost \$17,400,000. It will combine the facilities of a school, student dormitories, and four auditoriums of varying capacities for chamber music and recitals, experimental theater projects, concerts, and drama-opera-dance programs. Target dates

for completion are the Spring of 1964 for the theaters, with the school opening in the Fall.

In future artistic planning, William Schuman, President of Juilliard School, has expressed a high hope. In Lincoln Center's efforts to create an awareness of the arts among the young, he suggests as a minimum goal that every single child in the City will not only visit the entire Center, but attend at least one major performance by the artists.

As a result of Juilliard's new addition of drama training to its curriculum, Robert Whitehead, co-producing director of the newly organized Repertory Theater Association, has expressed the hope that the exceptionally talented students of the Juilliard drama school will be a great source of supply for his productions.

Repertory Theater

Architect Eero Saarinen and collaborating designer Jo Mielziner are planning the building and stage of the \$7,500,000 Repertory Theater. It is hoped that Fall of 1963 will see the opening of both its main theater (capacity 1,100) and 300-seat student theater.

To theater lovers, the formation of this permanent repertory company, headed by co-producing directors Whitehead and Elia Kazan, is perhaps the most thrilling aspect of all of Lincoln Center's planning. The maiden season in this, the first new theater to be built in New York in more than three decades, is 1963-64. Each season, Mr. Whitehead expects to present about five new productions: possibly two revivals of classical European plays

(not the "musty" variety, but those that have real meaning for today); perhaps two new plays by leading American playwrights, and a revival of an American classic. Each play will be given, not in long runs of consecutive performances, but in repertory about twice a week, with an initial company of about 30 of our leading actors and actresses listed on every program.

Kazan says the stage design "has everything that modern technology can give a stage and will be something that the United States can be really proud of." Flexibility is its keynote. The main stage, whose proscenium can be opened to a width of 60 feet, can accommodate a turntable 46 feet in diameter and narrowed by sliding walls to any desired size. Its unusually commodious apron can be supplemented by a large thrust stage which, unlike any now existent, will have no permanent shape, because it can be altered by horizontal and vertical units slid forward from the main stage. Actors will be able to make their entrances from beneath the stage. The auditorium is sharply raked and curved around the stage in an unusual crescent, designed to provide perfect sight lines from any seating point.

Thus you cannot help but believe Mr. Whitehead when he says, "There's nothing we won't be able to do in this theater." We all share his hope that the new theater will be an energizing force for developing new writers, new acting talents, and new techniques of rehearsal and staging. And so this country may, at long last, offer a theater company of the caliber of the Old Vic or Comedie Francaise.

Dance-Operetta Theater; Library-Museum

Two other buildings will complete the Lincoln Center complex: a Dance-Operetta Theater to cost \$17,150,000, and a \$7,000,000 Library-Museum of Performing Arts. Because of problems of financing and administration in relation to the City and State, as well as questions relating to constituency, these buildings are still in the formative stages, although designs for both are well advanced, under the aegis of architect Philip Johnson on the Dance Theater, and the firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill on the Library-Museum.

Negotiations are currently under way with City Center with a view to its joining Lincoln Center as a constituent. In addition to ballet and modern dance productions, the Dance Theater (its proposed future name is "New York State Theater") would offer light opera and other entertainment such as you have seen at City Center. It would also be host to foreign dance troupes like the Japanese Kabuki or the Moiseyev dancers from Russia.

It has long been Lincoln Center's aim to provide a library-museum for reference and performing arts exhibits, like old musical instruments, rare manuscripts, costumes of period plays, Shakespearian data, and souvenirs pertaining to the lives and performances of the world's great artists. Here students, teachers or private citizens will have ready access to reference material: theater programs, photographs of productions, clipping files, sheet music and scores, and arts periodicals. Also contemplated are displays of scenic designs for theater, opera and dance, and an archive of over 50,000 phonograph records. An

educational program involving close ties with City schools and adult education institutions includes programs, lectures, seminars, and group visits. On a lighter note, a children's theater is planned for puppet shows and plays.

Garage and Underground Facilities; Damrosch Park

Beneath the plaza and Damrosch Park will be an 800-car parking garage on two levels. The plaza, park and garage are being built by the City with a Federal grant-in-aid, and will be City-owned and operated. Underground streets will provide vehicular access to the Opera, Repertory and Dance Theaters, and Philharmonic Hall, with a pedestrian tunnel connecting subways with all of these buildings. A commissary will provide cafeteria and dining room service for Lincoln Center employees, Juilliard students, and performers of the various constituents. A central mechanical plant, to cost \$4,673,000, located next to the commissary, will bring year-round air conditioning to all Center buildings.

Named in honor of the noted musical family, Damrosch Park will be a 2 1/3-acre area south of the Met, with a bandshell to be constructed by the City under a grant from the Guggenheim Foundation. This will provide a lovely landscaped setting for outdoor concerts and theatricals.

Audience Objective

How will Lincoln Center attain its objective to reach a wide audience, numbering in the millions, with the colorful and dramatic cultural spectacles on its stages?

The live audiences who attend Lincoln Center performances (its combined seating capacity is more than 10,000) will be multiplied many times over through the media of radio and television. Thousands of tourists from all over our country and the world will undoubtedly make Lincoln Center a cultural mecca, even as Rockefeller Center and the United Nations have become visitors' landmarks in our City.

We anticipate using all Lincoln Center facilities in connection with the 1964-65 World's Fair. The Center's brand new auditoriums of exceptional quality and variety--all air-conditioned, accessible by transportation, and equipped for TV--are superior to any temporary structures the World's Fair might construct as a setting for its cultural events. Fair audiences, estimated at 70 million, can hope to see not only the Center's resident companies, but also famed international troupes such as the Royal Ballet, the Philippine Bayanihan Dancers, festival troupes of Bayreuth and Glyndebourne, and Milan's LaScala. It should certainly be a program unsurpassed in scope and brilliance.

New Concept in Artistic Education

By adding to performance the catalyst of education, Lincoln Center may make its most vital contribution to the arts through its educational arm, the reorganized Juilliard School. It will combine all material and artistic resources to train the most advanced and gifted students, and to link education in the arts more closely with the great professional institutions. The incalculable advantages to the students of learning in close

association with outstanding artists is easily appreciated. But equally significant will be the electric effect of the students' youthful vigor and fresh imagination upon the artists. It all makes for a stimulating challenge to greater creativity and performance. A program is planned whereby some artists will reach the students through educational TV, and this impressive TV program may be extended nationwide.

A fund of \$10,000,000 has been earmarked by Lincoln Center solely for educational aid and creative artistic advancement. Even before completion of a single Lincoln Center building, the achievement of this third objective has begun with the operation of the Center's Student Program.

Student Program

The first phase of this program (whose chairman is a Center director, Dr. George D. Stoddard, chancellor and executive vice-president of New York University) began last November, when a group of young people attended the first of eight open rehearsals of the New York Philharmonic scheduled for the current season. At the rehearsals, high school students can watch and listen as Leonard Bernstein or a guest conductor prepares the orchestra for the following evening's performance. The Philharmonic will also give a series of concerts for young people at the end of its regular season.

Other participants in the Lincoln Center Student Program are the Metropolitan Opera, which through the Metropolitan Opera Guild is presenting an abridged version in English of Mozart's

"Cosi Fan Tutte" in high schools and colleges in the metropolitan area; and Juilliard School, which in February launched a series of seven different recitals featuring gifted students--"Artists of Tomorrow".

It is anticipated that by next season the Center's Repertory Drama Theater will have ready a selection of dramatic vignettes for presentation to school audiences.

As the Center's building accelerates, the Student Program will be expanded and intensified until it becomes, in the words of Dr. Stoddard, "an integral part of the education of all our children, a cultural advantage to be found in no other city in America."

Organization

Who are the people guiding the policies and directing the operations that will bring Lincoln Center into being? Its 19-member Board of Directors, headed by John D. Rockefeller 3rd as chairman, comprises a roster of this City's most prominent civic and cultural leaders and business men. On the executive staff, General Maxwell D. Taylor is president, Reginald Allen is executive director for operation, and William F. Powers executive director for construction and maintenance. We also have the Lincoln Center Council, an autonomous body composed of the chief professional officer of Lincoln Center and of each constituent. It exists to coordinate the plans of the constituent groups at the professional executive level; to study and make recommendations during the planning and construction phase; to consider the implementation of

the Center concept; and to advise the Board of Directors on matters affecting the Center's artistic operation. The Center has benefited greatly from the high caliber of professional service received from Wallace Harrison and his associate architects, and from General Otto Nelson, executive director for construction until Fall of 1960.

Financing; Campaign

No venture of such magnitude could have made the progress Lincoln Center has made to date without supporting funds. For the unprecedented task of raising \$102,000,000, the Center selected Clarence Francis, former Chairman of the General Foods Corporation, now assisted by William R. Robbins as co-chairman. Volunteer Men's and Women's Committees were organized, headed by Lauder Greenway, chairman of the Metropolitan Opera Association, and Mrs. Robert L. Hoguet, Jr., former founder and executive committee member of the Friends of the Philharmonic.

As the campaign progresses, it is evident that new frontiers of support have been established in foundation and corporate giving to the arts, hitherto supported almost exclusively by private individual contributions. Substantial sums are being sought from the City and State, for New York citizens stand to benefit greatly from the Center's contributions to cultural and business development. In addition, cultural displays, exhibits and performances will be staged at the Center in conjunction with the World's Fair.

Opportunities for Giving

The \$66,781,239 received thus far (February 1, 1961) toward the campaign goal is a positive indication that people want to become personally identified with the building of Lincoln Center. To contribute, you need only consult your telephone book for the phone number or address of the campaign office (PLaza 2-1890 - 717 Fifth Avenue) and your gift or pledge will be warmly received. There are many opportunities for designated gifts in various categories, ranging from \$5 to \$5,000,000 (\$5: Name in "Book of Friends", 18 feet of velvet rope, etc.; \$5,000,000: Opera House auditorium)--all, of course, tax deductible. Gifts to Lincoln Center may be made in cash, by the transfer of securities or real estate, and bequests.

Seat Endowment; Facilities for Handicapped

Recently, a seat endowment campaign was launched whereby \$1,000 donors may have names commemorated permanently on a seat plaque in any of the Center's six main auditoriums. A number of removable seats will provide spaces where wheelchairs may be locked in, endowable at \$5,000. Many architectural barriers to the physically handicapped have been removed, making all buildings accessible from the top level of the underground garage, and eliminating most steps. Restaurants, bars, and rest-rooms--even drinking fountains and telephone booths--will have facilities specially designed to meet the needs of the disabled. We hope that Lincoln Center's example will serve as a stimulus to other architects to help reintegrate the handicapped into the mainstream of our cultural life.

World Arts Capital

What gives us reason to feel confident that Lincoln Center will not only attain its fourth objective to make New York a world arts capital, but go far beyond the inspiration of its creators?

Many factors produce this feeling of confidence. There is evidence all around us that American culture in general is reaching artistic maturity. As LIFE Magazine expressed it, all over America there is taking place "a cultural explosion," even in small towns and suburbs. This appreciation for the arts could not develop without the dedication of those who make the initial effort to provide places where arts can be given expression. The trend can flourish through shared creative endeavors--of composers, musicians, stage designers, actors--and by the interplay between students and professionals, all striving to achieve the best: the best in teaching, the best in performance.

To America, Lincoln Center will give a new artistic force. It will strengthen our performing arts, stand as inspiration for other cities, attract large numbers of tourists, whet the artistic appetite of the nation. Some of its graduates will find places in the Center's permanent companies; many others will go out to carry new life into the arts throughout the country.

To the world, Lincoln Center will present a new view of the American tableau wherein--as others see us--material wealth often overshadows cultural attainment; the soldier, the scientist,

the manufacturer, the merchant loom largest. In its World's Fair participation, and for decades thereafter, Lincoln Center will draw the eye of the world to the American artist--the singer, the dancer, the player--and equally important, to the masses of American citizens who enjoy these arts. Lincoln Center will proclaim that the arts in America have come of age.

Mr. Harrison, our chief architect who also designed the United Nations buildings, said of Lincoln Center: "Who is to say that this exciting project, bringing together the peoples of the world in an exchange of culture, will not be an even greater influence for good will between nations than the United Nations itself."

And so say we all, building toward one world, bringing unity through the international language of the arts.

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