

April 28, 2004

Reynold Levy  
President  
Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts  
70 Lincoln Center Plaza  
New York, New York 10023

Dear Ren:

Special thanks to you, Liz and Ric, Rebecca, Douglas and the rest of the team for helping to put together a truly enlightening discussion for our group on April 19. The presentation was, quite simply, stunning and set the stage for a very positive exchange of ideas – a dialogue we look forward to continuing as the plans for West 65<sup>th</sup> Street, the Juilliard School and Alice Tully Hall, and Plaza North enter the refinement phase.

In addition, we would like to participate in a briefing similar to our April 19<sup>th</sup> conversation once Lincoln Center begins to formulate its approach to Josie Robertson Plaza, Damrosch Park, and the other buildings that make up the campus. As you know, we also have a keen interest in planning for Dante and Tucker Parks (the “bow-tie” sites) and are eager to know the outcome of your recent meeting on this project.

Lincoln Center is so much more than the sum of its parts. Decisions that impact the 65<sup>th</sup> Street phase of the project will inevitably inform other aspects of the overall project. Recognizing this, we offer the following comments on the design elements we have seen thus far:

**West 65<sup>th</sup> Street:** We applaud the goal to enliven West 65<sup>th</sup> Street, remove the overhead bridge, create more generous sidewalks for pedestrians, and enhance the visibility of and access to the various constituents’ spaces centered on this block. Of course, so much of the project’s aesthetic – and ultimately functional – success will depend on the materials, construction, and detailing, especially in terms of how the new elements integrate into the old, about which we anticipate receiving more specific information as plans develop.

**Juilliard School:** We have somewhat more difficulty with the proposed addition to the Juilliard School. Architecture critics unanimously endorsed Pietro Belluschi’s Brutalist-style building when it opened in 1969; Ada Louise Huxtable called its design “timeless.” We recognize the dilemma posed by the need to accommodate the School’s much-expanded program in keeping with the building’s strong horizontality, which, as Liz pointed out, is one of its key, character-defining features. However, we question how much square footage would actually be gained by altering the Broadway façade – the character of which would be utterly transformed. We do not, at present, have an alternative suggestion, but we hope that other solutions can be explored – for example, a sensitive roof-top addition, if designed in such a way as to be structurally feasible,

conform with the visual “datum” of uniform heights among the original campus buildings, and allow Juilliard to continue operating during construction.

As for Alice Tully Hall, the proposal to re-introduce the wood elements that were “value-engineered” out of the original design is laudable.

**Plaza North:** Huxtable poetically described Plaza North as “the sole moment [in Lincoln Center] that lifts the spirit of those to whom the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a very exciting time to be alive.” Although sadly altered today, Dan Kiley’s carefully orchestrated, minimalist geometry was integral to the original success of this space and still suggests the landscape design that gave “a sense of order and continuity to the complex as a whole,” according to landscape architect Ken Smith. Along with Damrosch Park and Josie Robertson Plaza, Plaza North still stands as a remarkable example of Modern landscape architecture.

Even so, our group believes that new elements can be introduced to great benefit.

Restaurant/Campus Green: For instance, creating a dual-purpose restaurant/campus green along the north edge of the plaza seems to be a practical and potentially artful way both to link the north and south campuses and preserve the tranquility of the plaza. As proposed, however, the structure’s footprint intrudes on the reflecting pool, forcing it to shift to the south and become narrower. This would appear to impact the symmetrical relationship between the pool and the Lincoln Center Theater, a balanced arrangement of space which Kiley worked closely with the theater’s architect, Eero Saarinen, to create. We wonder whether the restaurant could be shifted north and partially cantilevered over 65<sup>th</sup> Street, or otherwise configured to minimize the impact on original geometry of the plaza.

Trees: We also have reservations about removing the travertine planters from Plaza North. Kiley purposefully used these well-proportioned, architectural elements to create a balanced relationship between the open plazas and tree-shaded areas. By using travertine, Kiley also established a visual link between the landscape design and that of the surrounding buildings. The planters play an even more important role in defining the space in Damrosch Park, which still retains a high degree of integrity as the “urban orchard” envisioned by Kiley. It would be unfortunate if the decision to remove the planters in Plaza North set a precedent for eliminating them elsewhere on the campus.

All of these comments are offered in the spirit of constructive collaboration. We feel very positive about the general approach that has been adopted, and we look forward to learning more as the process unfolds.

Sincerely,

Arlene Simon  
President

Kate Wood  
Executive Director