

NY 2/4/98

City Proposes a Gift for Jazz: A Swinging Hall of Its Own

By PETER WATROUS

After wandering in the desert of Lincoln Center for seven years, the organization's youngest constituent, Jazz at Lincoln Center, seems closer to finding a home of its own.

Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani announced yesterday at a news conference that projected new development plans for the New York Coliseum site at Columbus Circle would house a 100,000-square-foot space for the seven-year-old program, whose artistic director is the trumpeter Wynton Marsalis.

The project would include badly needed rehearsal rooms — Jazz at Lincoln Center now rehearses opposite the Port Authority bus station at 41st Street and Ninth Avenue — space for educational programs and, most important of all, a 1,100-seat concert hall with acoustics designed primarily for jazz. It would be the first such space anywhere.

The plan was put forward enthusiastically by the Mayor and officials of Jazz at Lincoln

Center yesterday. But there are a number of hurdles. No developer has been chosen to rebuild the Coliseum site. Plans for the redevelopment would have to be approved by both the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the state agency that owns the site, and the board of Lincoln Center, which represents an array of organizations whose assent would also be needed.

The overall cost of the space would be \$40 million to \$45 million. Jazz at Lincoln Center would provide \$20 million, of which, it said, \$10 million has already been raised. The city has committed \$18 million for the building.

"This is wonderful," said the Mayor. "It'll make the Lincoln Center area the greatest performance area in the world. It's a terrific new direction for Lincoln Center."

The new space would eliminate a host of problems faced by Jazz at Lincoln Center, which says it is the fastest-growing of Lincoln Center's constituent parts. Today, when requesting the use of Avery Fisher or Alice Tully Hall, it has to accept a place in the

Continued on Page 4



Stephan Berger for The New York Times

son, left, and Wynton Marsalis at Lincoln Center.

NYT 2/5/98

City Plans to Give Jazz Its Own Swinging Hall

Continued From First Arts Page

pecking order behind such groups as the Julliard School of Music and the Film Society of Lincoln Center. The new performance space would be used 50 to 60 percent of the time by Jazz at Lincoln Center. About 20 to 30 percent of the time, other Lincoln Center constituents could use the performance hall.

The announcement was greeted with enthusiasm by members of Jazz at Lincoln Center's staff. Jazz and Latin music programs held in Lincoln Center venues by Jazz at Lincoln Center have struggled with acoustical problems. In concert hall design, sound amplification is typically considered in terms of classical music.

The new hall, dubbed "Anonymous Donor Hall," by Jazz at Lincoln Center's chairman, Gordon Davis, would seat the same number of people as Alice Tully, but the distance between the stage and the back wall would be shortened by some 40 feet in an attempt to create more intimacy. And Jazz at Lincoln Center has started discussions with acousticians.

"I'm really excited about the prospect of a new hall," said Mr. Marsalis. "I travel the world playing places that were designed for classical music. Half the time I can't hear myself play because the spaces can't handle drums. So we're going to design a place that has swing, the way it looks, the way it sounds."

The space is a result of a collabo-

ration of the city, the M.T.A. and Jazz at Lincoln Center. When the M.T.A. proposed a redevelopment initiative for the Coliseum last year, the Mayor demanded that any plan include a large theater space. The city looked to Lincoln Center, which had been planning to expand across Broadway from its campus. When that plan fell through, the city and Jazz at Lincoln Center started conversations.

"This sort of collaboration is exactly like the city and private sector collaborations that have made the cultural life of New York City," Mr. Davis said. "The Museum of Natural History, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the library system were all products of this sort of collaboration. But with the cultural significance of Jazz at Lincoln Center, the idea becomes not just a 19th-century idea, but a 21st-century idea."

Why would the city give such a valuable piece of property to the jazz program?

"The city came to us and asked us to fill the space with culture," said Mr. Davis. "The city realizes that culture is a big part of the economy. It's part of the city's identity, financially and politically."

Critics of the plan have suggested that the new home, two blocks from the southern tip of Lincoln Center, would remove the jazz program from the center's mainstream.

Mr. Marsalis scoffed at the idea "They voted us in," he said referring to the constituents of Lincoln Center. "We spend time collaborating with them all. We're closer to the other constituents than we were before."