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E1

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Jazz Suite With a Park View

Lincoln Center Unveils Its Columbus Circle Plan

By JON PARELES

A dance floor with a 50-foot window on Central Park will be the new face of Jazz at Lincoln Center. At a news conference today the organization is to unveil plans for its new home, including what are billed as the world's first concert halls built especially for jazz: a 100,000-square-foot complex at Columbus Circle with two auditoriums, a club-size jazz cafe, two rehearsal studios and a classroom, all wired for recording, broadcast and Webcast.

In its new spaces the organization intends to present jazz 365 days a year, with its larger rooms also available for opera, dance and the Lincoln Center Festival in the summer.

Wynton Marsalis, the artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center, said, "Everything is going to be integrated: the relationship between one space and another, the relationship between the audience and the musicians will be one fluid motion because that's how our music is."

The jazz complex includes a 1,100-seat concert theater that can be configured with or without a proscenium stage. It also includes a 600-seat performance atrium with a dance floor surrounded by tiers of tables, like a latter-day Rainbow Room, where musicians will perform in front of a window overlooking the park from six stories up.

The 140-seat jazz cafe will also have a park view. And on the way to performances visitors will pass through a multimedia Jazz Hall of Fame. The complex is to be named Frederick P. Rose Hall for the donor who gave \$10 million to get the project started.

The jazz center is a \$103 million project to be built within the \$1.6 billion, 2.5 million-square-foot corporate, condominium and hotel complex called Columbus Center, on the



Top right, Vincent Laforet/The New York Times; above and top left, Rafael Viñoly Architects



renderings of the atrium, above, and theater, top left, of Rose Hall. Top right, discussing plans, from left: Rob Gibson, executive director of Jazz at Lincoln Center; Gordon J. Davis, chairman; Wynton Marsalis, artistic director; and the architect Rafael Viñoly.

Continued on Page 3

Jazz Suite With a Central Park View

Continued From First Arts Page

former site of the New York Coliseum. Rose Hall is to fit into Columbus Center between between two 750-foot towers holding the headquarters of AOL-Time Warner, broadcast studios, stores, condominiums, a garage and a Mandarin Oriental Hotel. Construction is to begin in April 2001, and the new center is to open in 2003.

The performance spaces are designed for the acoustics and ambience of jazz performance, drawing on inspirations that range from New Orleans street parades to Greek amphitheatres.

"The first thing was the quality of the sound," Mr. Marsalis said. "We're going for the clearest sound, but with warm and golden overtones: golden but not too dark."

Traditional concert halls have been built for classical music, and their long reverberation often makes jazz sound muddled, with too much echo. With the new theater, Mr. Marsalis said, "we're trying to find a space in which the tail of the echo is long enough to be slightly dry as a classical hall but perfect for us." The acoustics will be adjustable.

The jazz center has been designed by Rafael Viñoly, who is also the architect for the new home of the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Philadelphia Regional Performing Arts Center, and for the Tokyo Forum, a convention center and railroad station. For Jazz at Lincoln Center, he said, the building "is an attempt to create a space that puts jazz where it should be, which is essentially at the geographic and symbolic center of this city."

Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani's initial mandate for the Columbus Circle space, which was owned by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, was that it include a new theater or opera house. Jazz at Lincoln Center first sought to design a theater that could accommodate both opera and jazz. But as it became clear that the two forms had very different needs, Mr. Viñoly suggested creating both the theater and the performance atrium, a jazz room with a view.

The theater has a larger stage than the New York State Theater, but is more intimate, with a seating area that is 30 feet shorter than Alice Tully Hall. Its stage can be framed by a proscenium and raised for dance or opera performances, or lowered for jazz concerts, bringing the musicians closer to the audience.

"I personally don't like to be above people when I'm playing," Mr. Marsalis said. There is fly space above

the stage for scenery but also a ceiling that can be closed so that sound does not escape upward.

With the proscenium removed for jazz performances, 200 additional seats can be placed behind the stage, bringing the audience into the performance. "A majority of the musicians you talk to would rather have the feeling of people being part of their ensemble, rather than being separate from them," Mr. Marsalis said. "It engenders a feeling of community, which is why most musicians got started in the first place."

Jazz at Lincoln Center expects to use the theater space for its own productions about three months a year and rent it for dance, world music and classical programs, including part of the Great Performers series. The theater is the same size as a multipurpose hall that Lincoln

Drawing on models from New Orleans to Greece.

Center had hoped to build in 1997 at Broadway and 64th Street, a plan rejected by Lincoln Center's board.

"It will be a place for the other constituents of Lincoln Center to do their programs as well," said Rob Gibson, executive director of Jazz at Lincoln Center. "Now we can have the Philharmonic down to our place."

The Lincoln Center Festival has agreed to use the theater, and Mr. Gibson said many dance companies had already shown interest in booking the space. Because the new building is not governed by Lincoln Center's current contracts, Jazz at Lincoln Center will be negotiating new ones with stage and technical workers' unions.

Mr. Marsalis and Mr. Gibson envision the atrium, with its bandstand by the huge window, as a place where the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra can settle in, they said. Programs that they might have presented for three nights at Alice Tully Hall could be performed for two weeks. Although the glass wall — a huge, hard, reflective surface — presents a challenge for the room's acoustic design, Jazz at Lincoln Center and Mr. Viñoly are confident that the room can sound good.

The entire building's design, Mr. Viñoly said, is intended to lessen the separation between audience and

performers that is reinforced in most concert halls. "This is what distinguishes jazz as a social statement," he said. "There is a sense of integration, of participation beyond just enjoyment."

Mr. Gibson described the new complex as a place where interdisciplinary connections could be made. The performance spaces share the lobby, so dance or opera audiences might mingle with jazz fans. He also envisions a subscription series that could combine, for example, the Ballet Hispanico in the theater with Chico O'Farrill's Afro-Cuban big band in the atrium.

"Jazz intersects with every performing art form," said Gordon J. Davis, chairman of Jazz at Lincoln Center, "and the hallmark of the program created by Rob and Wynton is to make that clear to everybody. Of all the institutions at Lincoln Center we're probably the ones who collaborate the most with other art forms, from City Ballet to Juilliard to the Philharmonic and the Film Society."

The 600-seat performance atrium overlooking the park would be used for jazz eight months a year, while there would be jazz in the cafe every night. With daytime educational programs in the jazz cafe, classroom and studios, Rose Hall would probably be open from 8 a.m. to 2 a.m., and Mr. Marsalis said he would like to see the cafe become a place for jam sessions into the wee hours.

Mr. Rose, who died in September, was a real estate executive who also endowed the new planetarium at the American Museum of Natural History and the Rose Building at Lincoln Center. Along with his donation, Jazz at Lincoln Center has received \$10 million from Irene Diamond, \$18 million from the city, \$2 million from the Ford Foundation and \$1 million from the Manhattan Borough President's office. Ahmet Ertegun of Atlantic Records will underwrite the Jazz Hall of Fame.

Jazz at Lincoln Center still needs to raise more than \$55 million; donors are being sought to name the performance atrium (for \$10 million) and the jazz cafe (\$5 million). Large donors can also buy season tickets for boxes in the theater.

"The building is not the most important thing," Mr. Davis said. "The most important thing is what will go in it: the spirit, the program, the education. We believe deeply that the building will make all of that more powerful. This is not simply a hall, this is a much more complicated and, we hope, extraordinary mix of possibilities."