

Wednesday, November 15, 1995

# Lincoln Center Plans An 'Intense' Festival

By ALLAN KOZINN

Just over three years after the idea was first proposed, Lincoln Center yesterday announced the program details of its new annual summer festival, an ambitious series that will draw on its resident companies and artists from around the world. To be called Lincoln Center Festival 96, it is to run three weeks, from July 22 to Aug. 11.

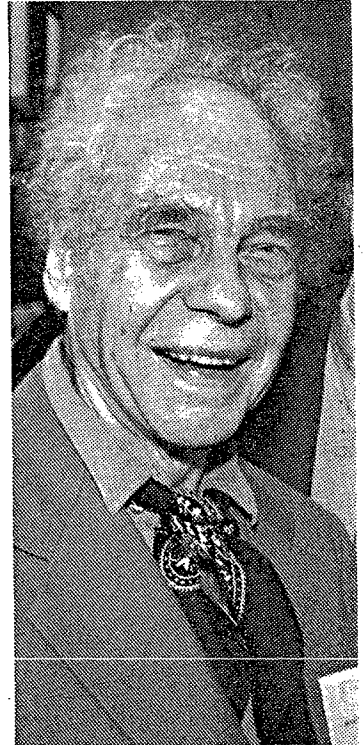
All told, the festival is to offer 206 performances of 61 programs. Nathan Leventhal, the president of Lincoln Center, said that the festival was the largest artistic venture the center had ever undertaken at a single stroke. John Rockwell, who as festival director is responsible for the programming, said that the events were packed into only 21 days because he wanted the festival to be "dense and intense."

Among its highlights are Virgil Thomson's "Four Saints in Three Acts" in a new staging by Robert Wilson and several concert operas, including Beethoven's "Leonore," an early version of "Fidelio" to be performed by John Eliot Gardiner and the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, and "Fidelio" itself, to be played by Kurt Masur and the New York Philharmonic.

The Kirov Orchestra and its Opera Chorus are to perform separately and together. The Merce Cunningham Dance Company is to give the New York premiere of "Ocean," the final collaboration between Mr. Cunningham and John Cage, who died in 1992. The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra are to introduce a newly commissioned work with music by Wynton Marsalis. Works by the composers Tod Machover and Lois V. Vierk were also commissioned for the festival.

There are also several mini-festivals within the larger structure. The Gate Theater of Dublin is to present all of Samuel Beckett's stage works. The Kronos Quartet, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the soprano Joan La Barbara and the pianist Aki Takahashi are to collaborate on a Morton Feldman retrospective. An Asian concentration includes a Chamber Music Society program of works by young, Western-trained Asian composers, as well as performances by the Thang Long Water Puppets from North Vietnam and Reigakusha, a full-scale gagaku ensemble (a traditional court orchestra, with dancers) from Japan. And the Film Society of Lincoln Center will present 12 programs in the New York Video Festival.

The budget for the festival is \$8.5 million — significantly less than the



Stephanie Berger

Merce Cunningham at Lincoln Center Festival 96 announcement.

## From Beckett to the Thang Long Water Puppets.

\$14 million that had been reported earlier this year. That figure, which had been authorized by the Lincoln Center board, caused consternation among the 11 resident arts organizations at Lincoln Center, who complained that the center, with its Great Performers and other series, was already a formidable competitor for corporate support and that an expensive festival would strain the resources unduly.

The current budget is the result of a compromise between Lincoln Center and the resident companies and is predicated on a three-year cycle of festivals, each costing \$8.5 million, for which about \$5.5 million (or \$16 million for the full cycle) must be raised in contributions. Ticket sales are expected to cover the rest.

"We have to sell this as a three-year package," said Beverly Sills, the chairwoman of Lincoln Center, who has been in charge of the fund

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raising. "There is no way to begin planning for 1997, as we are doing now, unless you are already raising money. But this has not been a difficult sell. People are looking for good, sexy, interdisciplinary projects, and that's what this is."

The principal sponsors of the festival are I.B.M., Philip Morris Companies, Lexus and the American Express Company.

Miss Sills pointed out that in some ways the resident companies stand to benefit from the festival. Besides performance fees they would earn for their participation, they will receive rental income from the halls that would otherwise be dark during the summer. And although they may still be grumbling about the difficulty of raising money in the current climate, they have all come around to support the festival. Six are participating in the 1996 festival, and Mr. Leventhal said that he expected all 11 to be represented by 1998.

Mr. Leventhal began to think about presenting a festival in 1992, and the project represents the joining of two currents that have been his principal interests ever since he came to Lincoln Center in 1984. One is finding ways to bring the center more fully to life during the summer. The other is fostering collaborations between Lincoln Center's residents.

At first, the festival was the province of Jane S. Moss, who was hired in 1992 as vice president in charge of programming, and who signed on the New York Philharmonic and the Kirov. But last summer, Mr. Leventhal decided to divide Ms. Moss's job in half, leaving her to program Great Performers, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Mostly Mozart and Serious Fun (which ended its nine-year run this past summer), and hiring Mr. Rockwell — who had just returned to New York after two years as the

European cultural correspondent of The New York Times and who had been a music critic at The Times since 1972 — to run the festival.

"I think it was a daring choice, to bring in someone who has not actually put on a production of any kind," Mr. Leventhal said, "but it was his creative mind and his prodigious knowledge of the arts that we went for."

Mr. Rockwell said that the practicalities of running a festival, and even keeping to a budget, have not been particularly daunting. Still, he had wanted to present more staged opera: his original wish list included "Rosa" by Louis Andriessen and Peter Greenaway and Julie Taymor's production of Stravinsky's "Oedipus Rex." He said they might turn up in future festivals, but their projected

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## A 3-week event, neither pilgrimage nor escape.

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deficits of more than \$1.5 million each weighed too heavily on this year's budget.

"It was understood that this was going to be a bigger, grander festival than Serious Fun," Mr. Rockwell said in an interview before the news conference, "but that it would not abandon the innovative programming that Serious Fun represented. And we had to think about what Lincoln Center is. We're not a place of pilgrimage, or a place where people go to escape the cares of the everyday world. We're an urban festival in the middle of New York City, and we hope to reflect the energy, diversity and clashing spirit of New York."