

# Lincoln Center

## Big Umbrella Festival Returns to Lincoln Center

### ***Big Umbrella Outdoors***, Groundbreaking Initiative Dedicated to Creation and Presentation of Arts Programs for Audiences with Autism and Developmental Disabilities

September 17-19, 2021



Swingset Drumkit

New York, NY (August 10, 2021) – Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts welcomes audiences with autism and other developmental disabilities and their families to ***Big Umbrella Outdoors***. The weekend of programming beginning September 17 is part of *Restart Stages*, the new outdoor performing arts center constructed on the Lincoln Center campus to champion the city’s cultural and economic revival.

***Big Umbrella Outdoors*** is an extension of the [2018 Big Umbrella Festival](#), an international endeavor that offered performances across New York City for children on the autism spectrum. It also gathered arts professionals and thought leaders from across the globe in-person and virtually to share best practices on serving these unique audiences. Held during Autism Acceptance Month, the festival was the first of its kind dedicated to arts programs for young people on the spectrum and their families.

In 2013 Lincoln Center became the first major cultural institution to commission an original work for children on the autism spectrum, titled *Up and Away*, created by Trusty Sidekick Theater

Company. While some institutions had offered sensory-friendly programming or adapted versions of existing works, *Up and Away's* model was groundbreaking because it was created specifically for an audience on the autism spectrum across all production aspects: script, design, and experience. In the years following, Lincoln Center continued this trailblazing model with a second original commission, *Campfire*, also created by Trusty Sidekick Theater Company.

*Restart Stages* is a program of the [Stavros Niarchos Foundation-Lincoln Center Agora Initiative](#) with the **Stavros Niarchos Foundation** (SNF), which activates outdoor space through artistic and community initiatives that speak to our current moment, and reimagines cultural engagement in public space for a new era.

“Lincoln Center’s commitment to audiences with disabilities continues, and as we consider our approach to creating spaces that are radically welcoming and socially inclusive, we are eager to experiment with multi-sensory work in an outdoor setting and are thrilled to be sharing it with you,” said Jean E. Taylor, Assistant Director of Education at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

This year, *Big Umbrella Outdoors* kicks off with a special event at 6pm on Friday night welcoming teens and young adults for an evening of art, dance and music activities. The evening begins with an offering from neurodiverse theatre company **E.P.I.C. Players** in a performance that explores the autistic experience through authentically conceived and portrayed stories and concludes with an inclusive **Silent Disco** featuring *Music: Not Impossible*, wearable technology which translates sound onto the skin through vibration, allowing users to feel the music. The Silent Disco offers the unique experience for audience members to control sensory elements, by adjusting volume on personal devices and being within socially distanced circles.

Children and their families are invited to experience the festival on Saturday and Sunday in a two-hour ticketed window that begins at 11am or 2:30pm, each including the same offerings. Each visit begins and ends with a live performance, with time between for attendees to choose and explore additional interactive installations: Squonk’s **Big Hands for a Big Umbrella** immersive experience; a sonic soundscape from **Swingset Drumkit**, the sensory sculpture **OrchidsPlayscape**, as well as music and dance performances featuring artists with disabilities.

In addition, an at-home, action-packed experience for kids, *Sun Runners*, an intergalactic audio adventure by **Audioplay & Windmill Theatre Company**, will be available at [LincolnCenter.org/BigUmbrella](https://LincolnCenter.org/BigUmbrella) from September 13-26, 2021.

Photos are available [here](#). For tickets and more information, please visit [LincolnCenter.org/BigUmbrella](https://LincolnCenter.org/BigUmbrella).

### **Big Umbrella Outdoors**

**Friday, September 17 – Sunday, September 19, 2021**

#### **Friday:**

##### **Inclusive Silent Disco**

(Josie Robertson Plaza)

A silent disco made accessible for all due to groundbreaking technology. *Music: Not Impossible* is an applied Vibrotextile™ technology that allows users to experience the rich nuances of music, using the skin as a canvas. Initially inspired by deaf music fans, the system goes beyond accessibility to create a radically inclusive experience. *Music: Not Impossible* not only provides a kind of accessibility that has never before been achieved but enhances the musical experience for all.

### ***Songs and Stories from the Spectrum* by E.P.I.C. Players**

(Josie Robertson Plaza)

The E.P.I.C. Players are a nonprofit, neuro-diverse theatre company dedicated to creating professional performing arts opportunities and supportive social communities in the arts for persons with developmental disabilities. Join the company as they sing songs and share stories about resiliency, empowerment, and hope for the future.

### **Saturday and Sunday:**

#### ***Big Hands for a Big Umbrella* by Squonk**

(performance at Damrosch Park)

Performance collective Squonk draws from their “Hand to Hand” project to create an immersive, open engagement just for Lincoln Center. This relaxed performance will allow all to express themselves and be comfortable: close or far, touch or not, quiet or loud. Drawing on Squonk’s command of multi-sensory performance and their nationally renowned work in participatory inclusiveness, they offer an intimate experience that invites free expression, where stimming, moving, and vocalizing are all welcome.

#### **Swingset Drumkit**

(interactive installation at The Deck at Damrosch Park)

Swingset Drumkit is a unique, interactive sonic sculpture encouraging people to build rhythmic sounds through their swinging. Swings are attached to large colorful wheels that trigger multiple drumsticks, striking percussive instruments. The speed and swinging height is translated into varying rhythms and sounds. Make your own music by swinging!

#### **OrchidsPlayscape by Sean Ahlquist**

(interactive installation at Josie Robertson Plaza)

The term “orchid” in behavioral science refers to a unique ability to thrive when immersed within a desirable environment. Knowing what may be a motivating, preferred environment at any particular day and time for someone with autism is near impossible. Therefore, instead of trying to predict a single design solution, the effort is to hand over design authorship, to let function of environment play out within the hands of those immersed within it. The OrchidsPlayscape attempts to do this through richly textured knitted textiles and interaction with multi-sensory objects. Born of the artist, Sean Ahlquist, and his architectural research, and driven by ever-changing experiences with his autistic daughter, Ara, the project hopes to enable those with autism to communicate their creativity for space-making and unique sense of play.

#### ***Écoute pour voir* by Danse Carpe Diem / Emmanuel Jouthe and Ballet For All Kids**

(performance at Josie Robertson Plaza)

*Écoute pour voir* is eight solo artists, scattered in space and dancing simultaneously. Originally created and choreographed by Emmanuel Jouthe and Danse Carpe Diem, performances at Lincoln Center will feature dancers from Ballet For All Kids, which teaches classical ballet technique and other dance styles using TheSchlachte Method, a certified curriculum developed to accommodate all abilities, body types, and learning styles. In *Écoute pour voir*, one dancer and one audience member equipped with a pair of headphones attached to an iPod share a two-to-three-minute choreographic exchange. Audiences will engage in these artistic experiences in shared celebration of human beings and their abilities. (Cleaned headphones will be provided for this experience. If you prefer to bring your own, please note that they must have a traditional headphone jack of 3.5 mm. For example, iPhone headphones will not be compatible.)

#### ***Songs from the Spectrum* by E.P.I.C. Players**

(performance at Hearst Plaza/The Grove)

The E.P.I.C. Players are a nonprofit, neuro-diverse theatre company dedicated to creating professional performing arts opportunities and supportive social communities in the arts for persons with developmental

disabilities. Join the company of E.P.I.C. Players as they sing songs about resiliency, empowerment, and hope for the future.

### ***Sun Runners* by Audioplay & Windmill Theatre Company**

(virtual experience)

With a pair of headphones and a mobile device, your kids plunge headfirst into an immersive space adventure, hurtling across the farthest reaches of the galaxy in your own living room. *Sun Runners* infuses imaginative, physical play with a cinematic score to create a thrilling action-packed experience. It's technology without the screens.

(This experience can be accessed at home via mobile device. Links and episodes will be available beginning September 13 at 10:00 a.m. at [LincolnCenter.org/BigUmbrella](https://www.lincolncenter.org/BigUmbrella).)

### **Accessibility**

*Big Umbrella Outdoors* centers the experience of individuals with autism and other disabilities, with a focus not only on accessibility in terms of accommodations, but also with social accessibility. All activities and performances are designed with multiple ways to interact, as well as tools to support engagement, including quiet spaces, noise-reducing headphones and fidgets.

All participants will receive social narratives and visual schedules prior to the event.

Assistive listening devices with headphones and fidgets are available.

All performance spaces will have socially distanced viewing with flexible seating on accessible routes. Accessible restrooms are available on the Concourse level, just below Lincoln Center's Josie Robertson Plaza.

Interactive installations, including headphones will be cleaned between participants. Masks are strongly encouraged. All elements of the festival are outdoors and capacity for this event is limited to provide ample space between participants.

For additional information about COVID safety protocols or accessibility, or to request additional accommodations, please contact [access@lincolncenter.org](mailto:access@lincolncenter.org) or 212 875 5375.

### ***About Restart Stages***

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts is spearheading *Restart Stages*, a sweeping initiative creating 10 outdoor performance and rehearsal spaces—an outdoor performing arts center—as well as other civic venues to help kickstart the performing arts sector and contribute to the revival of New York City.

As one of New York City's leading arts institutions and an anchor of its cultural and public life, Lincoln Center is embarking on this effort as a symbol of its commitment to the city and to an equitable revitalization that elevates all New Yorkers. *Restart Stages* is a major, public-facing component of its broader effort to provide resources in this moment not just to Lincoln Center's resident companies, but to the performing arts community as a whole — helping get artists back to work and supporting institutions from Brooklyn to the Bronx to engage their communities in the elevating power of the arts.

Designed with expert advice from medical and public health professionals, *Restart Stages* will create a safe, welcoming, accessible, and dynamic environment for arts and community organizations from across New York City, including Lincoln Center resident companies.

The initiative is being developed in coordination with NY State PopsUp, part of Governor Cuomo's New York Arts Revival, in a partnership to help extend reach of the initiative far beyond Lincoln Center's campus.

*Restart Stages* is made possible through the generous support of the Lincoln Center Board of Directors and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) as part of the [Stavros Niarchos Foundation-Lincoln Center Agora Initiative](#), a collaboration that reimagines and reactivates cultural engagement in public space for a new era. The transatlantic exhibition, [Faces of the Hero](#), a partnership with the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC) is currently on view.

Select Restart Stages events are being offered via livestream on Lincoln Center and partner organization digital platforms, increasing access nationally and internationally, well beyond those able to travel to the physical campus. Visit [RestartStages.org](#) for more information.

### **About Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts**

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts is the steward of the world's leading performing arts center, an artistic and civic cornerstone for New York City comprised of eleven resident companies on a 16-acre campus. The nonprofit's strategic priorities include: supporting the arts organizations that call Lincoln Center home to realize their missions and fostering opportunities for collaboration across campus; championing inclusion and increasing the accessibility and reach of Lincoln Center's work; and reimagining and strengthening the performing arts for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond, helping ensure their rightful place at the center of civic life. [LincolnCenter.org](#).

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The Honorable Corey Johnson, Speaker, New York City Council

The Honorable Mark Levine, New York City Council, Chair of the Committee on Health

The Honorable Farah Louis, New York City Council, Chair of the Committee on Mental Health,  
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