

# Lincoln Center

## David Rubenstein Donates \$10 Million to Expand Arts and Civic Engagement Initiatives at Lincoln Center

### Gift Supports Renewed Vision of David Rubenstein Atrium as Civic Hub for Exploration of Arts and Democracy, Engaging Partners from Across NYC

New York, NY (September 27, 2021) – David Rubenstein has generously donated \$10 million to Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts to support an expansion of arts and civic engagement initiatives, focused on the Atrium that bears his name.

To mark the beginning of its second decade, the Atrium will deepen this work, collaborating with artists and nonprofits to engage community members with important cultural and civic issues of the moment, and exploring new initiatives that break ground in the realm of the arts and civic practice.

The Atrium, a successful public-private partnership, is one of over 500 Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS) in New York City. Managed by Lincoln Center, the location has been home to programming featuring artistic voices from nearly 100 countries and a range of cultures, viewpoints, and disciplines. Pre-pandemic, the Atrium hosted at least one performance each week, all year round, and always free. In recent months, it has been utilized as a polling location, a food distribution site, and home to a “Create-a-thon” in support of the 2020 census. New programs will be rolled out in the coming months, building on many of these recent initiatives.

“With David’s founding gift a decade ago, he opened up Lincoln Center even further to offer free programming to diverse audiences,” said **Katherine Farley**, Chair of the Lincoln Center Board of Directors. “This new gift will expand this service and delve more deeply into so many of the shared values of the arts and democracy.”

“I believe passionately that our cultural landscape and our civic one are inexorably connected; that the arts introduce us to world views beyond our own, and that civic engagement is made more whole, more consistent, by enjoyment of and participation in the arts,” said **David Rubenstein**. “I am so impressed with how Lincoln Center has transformed during these incredibly difficult times. As we look towards the next decade at the Atrium, I’m proud to support the expansion of this work, with the arts and civic engagement at its core.”

“As we begin a new decade of the Atrium, we will celebrate our thousandth performance in the space,” said **Henry Timms**, President of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. “And, in the next

ten years, we're committing to finding new, creative ways to not just tell America's story but to help write it, together – through partnerships with local community organizations, exploring new, innovative art forms, and much else besides.”

## **HISTORY OF THE DAVID RUBENSTEIN ATRIUM**

Over the past 10 years, the Atrium has hosted nearly 1000 performances by artists from 98 countries, all free to the public; it has commissioned 45 pieces of original work from beloved creatives like Taylor Mac, Burnt Sugar, Martha Redbone, and Eddie Palmieri; hosted artists such as Meredith Monk, Rubén Blades, Viggo Mortensen, and Audra McDonald; partnered with local and international organizations, including HBO, VICE Media, Rockwood, Joe's Pub, Celebrate Mexico Now, India Center Foundation, Korean Cultural Center, Brasil Summerfest, and France Rocks; and welcomed over 3 and a half million New Yorkers and visitors, bringing the best of established and emerging artists to New York City.

Synonymous with New York's penchant for reinvention, the Atrium space has had a broad history. Originally opened as the music and vaudeville venue Colonial Music Hall in 1905, the Victorian style hall featured performances by icons Fred and Adele Astaire, and introduced Charlie Chaplin to U.S. audiences for the first time. Next, the building transformed into the New Colonial Broadway Theater in the 1920s, and brought the dance craze The Charleston to America in the show *Runnin' Wild*.

The space spent the 1930s and '40s as a movie house, and by 1953 it was converted to the first ever full color television studio for NBC. ABC took over the studio and filmed the hit show *The Price Is Right* at the Colonial and *The Jimmy Dean Show*. After ABC left the studio in 1971, philanthropist Rebekah Harkness bought the Colonial, renamed it Harkness Theater, and renovated the space for use by her acclaimed ballet company and school.

Less than ten years later, the entire space was torn down, replaced by condominiums and a forgotten public plaza, remaining underutilized before becoming a destination for the best in performing arts.

Starting in 2009, the space has presented year-round free performances – as one of NYC's Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS) – including a Thursday night concert series *Atrium 360°*, the lively monthly Latin dance party *iVAYA! 63*, and Saturday morning family programs with LC Kids. Its curation includes collaborations with Lincoln Center constituents like the New York Philharmonic, presenting the in-depth panel series *Insights at the Atrium*, featuring classical composers, major artists, and cultural leaders.

The design, by Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, reflects a respect for materials used throughout Lincoln Center and achieves an open, accessible, and inviting environment that was an essential goal of the redevelopment of the 16-acre campus. The Atrium is also the first LEED certified, “green” building at Lincoln Center.

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