

**Remarks by SNF Co-President Andreas Dracopoulos
June 1, 2026**

Good evening. On behalf of all of us at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF), thank you to Lincoln Center for this recognition, by which we are deeply honored, and congratulations to Misty Copeland on her supremely well-deserved award. Artistry like yours is the reason we are here and is at the heart of what I would like to say this evening.

We live in very challenging times. We all have our own views on the risks and benefits of AI, but wherever we land on the doomer-booster spectrum, we should all be able to recognize that now more than ever, arts and culture are core pillars of our humanity, and they must be actively nurtured and protected, an effort Lincoln Center has been on the front lines of for decades.

We are honored and happy to have shared a longstanding collaboration with Lincoln Center, one that officially dates to 2009, but whose roots go back even further, to our founder and the 1960s.

Connecting the dots of SNF's grants to Lincoln Center over the years points to today's Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) Lincoln Center West Initiative, which just broke ground on a major undertaking to extend Lincoln Center's welcome equally in all directions with improved physical access, a broadly appealing range of new programming, and inviting public space in the form of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) Gardens.

This is Lincoln Center's "Tear down this wall!" moment, and tearing down the walls that have formed a physical barrier to campus for everyone living to the west was simply the right thing to do: right for its neighbors, right for visitors from around the world, right for artists and performers, right for Lincoln Center itself. It's a win-win-win-win.

Credit and thanks go to Katherine Farley, Henry Timms, Steven Swartz, Mariko Silver, and countless others for thinking big about what Lincoln Center can offer the future and ensuring that, unlike when it was created, the local community has a meaningful role in the process. Lincoln Center is, to borrow a phrase attributed to Benjamin Franklin, "doing well by doing good," and this is a new chance, a new beginning for Lincoln Center—in a way, even a reincarnation.

Lincoln Center as it is now has a clear front and back. Approaching from the front is magical; approaching from the back is kind of foreboding. Now, campus is being reinvented as a true 360-degree experience, inviting from every direction, and the result is a new platform for arts and culture.

The physical transformation is important, but the programming Lincoln Center will offer to go with it is just as critical in helping people truly feel that the arts at Lincoln Center are meant for them.

We first started talking about the seeds of this idea during COVID; people couldn't come to Lincoln Center, but what if Lincoln Center could come to them?

The result was Restart Stages, an initiative to bring back live, outdoor performances, plus the SNF-LC Agora Initiative, a transatlantic bridge of artistic and cultural exchange between Lincoln Center and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center in Athens focused on how to create popular public spaces that meet the moment.

In 2022, Restart Stages morphed into Summer for the City, which, it goes without saying in this crowd, quickly became a summertime institution in New York, turning this campus into the city's welcoming, laid-back front porch for two months each year. A big part of that success is the free and choose-what-you-pay model, in service of which we are here tonight. From Summer for the City, our collaboration with Lincoln Center continued to develop with the Legacies of San Juan Hill project, which shares memories of the vibrant neighborhood that existed here previously.

This programming is all part and parcel of Lincoln Center's current effort to open up its campus and tear down barriers, physical and metaphorical, to do even more what's right for the arts and what's right for the public.

Lincoln Center has always been a good partner to SNF in looking for ways to bring quality arts to an ever-broader swath of the public. We're looking forward to welcoming the Lincoln Center team in Athens later this month, where SNF Nostos 2026 will celebrate 30 years of SNF grantmaking and toast 70 years since Lincoln Center's incorporation.

I'll close with words that our founder, an early supporter, wrote to Lincoln Center President John D. Rockefeller III in 1966. They're relevant to what Lincoln Center is doing today with the SNF LC West Initiative. Quote: "You and all the others who have had a part in the development of this project are to be most sincerely congratulated on a magnificent achievement."

Indeed you are. Thank you, and happy 70th! Stay human!