

Topics

Urbane Renewals

Lincoln Center Aglow

Son et lumière is a long way from slum clearance. Lincoln Center, which began as an urban renewal project in the 1950's, has had an equally impressive impact on New York's culture and real estate; the city's performing arts complex has been a success on many levels. Its 20th anniversary is about to be marked officially by a light show and disco dancing, but the occasion can be celebrated by anyone who walks through the center's plaza on a warm summer evening. The pleasures of the public spaces are a prelude to the pleasures inside.

It has not, of course, been all high notes. Philharmonic Hall was transformed into Avery Fisher Hall after extensive acoustical tinkering, then complete remodeling. The Beaumont Theater has failed to support repertory drama, so one of the center's most important elements is still missing. The constituent companies, increasingly pressed for funds, guard their autonomy, and the complex's operating and maintenance costs continue to climb.

But none of this diminishes 20 years of artistic triumphs and public delight. The uniqueness of Lincoln Center is that on any given night it has it all — the superb singers, dancers and musicians, the great performances, the concentrated artistic energies that turn it into a gala place. These have been only the first two decades of those memorable occasions that make life in New York a continuing special event.

Cabbages and Kings

The high cost of cabbage had been getting us down, but as spring took hold, we heard the voice of the Walrus and became aware of some crowns still bobbing around:

§ A team of Italian geologists reports "definitive and final" evidence that Venice has not only stopped sinking, it is actually rising a bit. This welcome news comes from a seven-year study which shows that water pressure is building again under the queen of the Adriatic.

§ Speaking of queens, how nice it was to see Elizabeth II firm upon her

throne in the House of Lords despite the pressures that sometimes build around it. What young lady in any house was not thrilled to see the Queen — crowned, bejeweled and sceptered — carried in her coach of state, with outriders to herald her procession, and sitting in a swirl of ermine-trimmed cape as she outlined the program of her Prime Minister. Mrs. Thatcher is said to have been a shrewd supermarket shopper before moving to Downing Street. She and the Queen may well find time for talk of cabbages and even kings.

§ The election of a king, meanwhile, is being arranged out in Kuala Lumpur. The Paramount Ruler of federal Malaysia is chosen for a five-year term from among the nine hereditary sultans of the Malay states. It is a unique system of royal rotation that lets each state stand as a symbol of central power for a decent period, maintaining national unity while venting the old feudal pressures. Some sultans are said to be reluctant to run for king this time around, for complex reasons of state. But too little cabbage does not seem to be one of them.