

They Told Me Not to Take that Job: Tumult, Betrayal, Heroics, and the Transformation of Lincoln Center

Reynold Levy

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When Reynold Levy became the new president of Lincoln Center in 2002, *New York Magazine* described the situation he walked in to as "a community in deep distress, riven by conflict." Ideas for the redevelopment of Lincoln Center's artistic facilities and public spaces required spending more than \$1.2 billion, but there was no clear pathway for how to raise that kind of unprecedented sum. The individual resident organizations that were the key constituents of Lincoln Center—the Metropolitan Opera, the New York City Opera, the New York Philharmonic, the Juilliard School, and eight others—could not agree on a common capital plan or fundraising course of action. Instead, intramural rivalries and disputes filled the vacuum.

Besides, some of those organizations had daunting problems of their own. Levy tells the inside story of the demise of the New York City Opera, the Metropolitan Opera's need to use as collateral its iconic Chagall tapestries in the face of mounting operating losses, and the New York Philharmonic's dalliance with Carnegie Hall.

Yet despite these and other challenges, Levy and the extraordinary civic leaders at his side were able to shape a consensus for the physical modernization of the sixteen-acre campus and raise the money necessary to maintain Lincoln Center as the country's most vibrant performing arts destination. By the time he left, Lincoln Center had prepared itself fully for the next generation of artists and audiences.

They Told Me Not to Take That Job is more than a memoir of life at the heart of one of the world's most prominent cultural institutions. It is also a case study of leadership and management in action. How Levy and his colleagues triumphantly steered Lincoln Center—through perhaps the most tumultuous decade of its history to a startling transformation—is fully captured in his riveting account.



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