

Remarks at Dedication Exercises of P. S. 199, Manhattan  
The Jesse Isidor Straus School  
Tuesday, March 24, 1964

by Mark Schubart  
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The Lincoln Center Fund

It is a privilege for me to join you this evening in dedicating this newest addition to the schools of the City of New York, and I bring an especially warm welcome to the community from one of your neighbors-- Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. It is good to know that this school will bear the name of a man whose family has long been active in support of our City's cultural life.

Since its inception, Lincoln Center has worked closely with the schools of the metropolitan area in finding new ways to bring the riches of the performing arts to the young people of our City. For all of us at the Center recognize that the arts can play a significant role in stimulating the imagination of young minds.

As the buildings of Lincoln Center near completion, and thus make possible a broadening of the Center's activities, we hope to be able to work closely with ever larger numbers of students and teachers, at all levels, in carrying forward the educational objectives we have in common. Needless to say, the schools located in our own community--such as this one--will occupy a particularly significant place in our thinking and planning.

I hope that this school will itself take an active role in bringing its students into contact with the arts, not only as passive observers but as active participants. And working as it will, with the very young, this school will have a golden opportunity to achieve this end. For the young take easily and naturally to the arts, recognizing in them a challenge to their ingenuity and a delight to their free-wheeling minds. The young do not bring to the arts the prejudices acquired later in life, inspired by the over-commercialized aspects of our society. The soil is still fertile, and the seed can still grow.

I would hope that ways can be found for the young people in this school to encounter the arts during their years here. Those who have devoted their lives to the training of young artists know that the physical dexterity indispensable to the artist, is acquired most easily at very early ages. The fingers of the future pianist, the legs of the future dancer, can be trained at age eight in one-fourth of the time required at age eighteen.

Of course, not all of the students attending this school will show unusual talent for the arts. But among the thousands of youngsters who will be educated within these walls, there will be some who have these unusual qualities. They must be sought out; their talents must be nurtured

and developed. It is a pity that so often the arts are relegated to the status of an extra-curricular activity. Why should not these talented youngsters be able to develop their God-given abilities in their school as a normal part of their education? We recognize exceptional talent in mathematics, in languages. We must find better ways of doing the same for artistic talent.

I hope I may be forgiven for having devoted these few remarks entirely to the arts, for I am well aware of the many problems and challenges involved in educating the young in this complicated world of ours today. But I do believe that in the arts there is to be found a civilizing force which can exert a lasting influence for good on the citizenry of tomorrow. Lincoln Center is determined to work hand-in-hand with our educators in placing this civilizing force at the disposal of our community.

We welcome our new neighbor, and look to many years of cooperation in the future.