

Have you ever held the door for a stranger, or sat next to someone you didn't know at a recent performance? You may not have realized it, but at *that* moment *you* were creating community. That's what I want to talk about tonight. Community and the arts are critical to the wellbeing of our neighbors, our family, our city, and what most people don't know is that the arts are at a critical inflection point. The arts are in jeopardy. And it's up to us to keep it alive.

Now you probably don't need to guess why that is. It's because everyone is saving up for eggs. No I'm kidding. It's because of the pressures of this current administration that arts funding is declining and in this moment of uncertainty it needs your support not just this year or next year, but for multiple years. It needs you to help sustain it as one of the most crucial parts of our city and our community.

The first thing I know to be true is that when donors reach into their pockets, they don't always think the arts are that important! They are shifting their priorities away from the arts as a category and don't understand the overarching impact of an *entire arts institution*. Instead, they're turning to other causes, *easier* causes to support. Ones that seemly have more importance, but the truth is our education of this ecosystem and what it provides *barely scrapes the surface*.

beat

I recently attended a dance performance during our summer festival, and sitting around me were all different types of people. And while I was waiting for the performance to start I got to talking with the woman next to me and I learned that after months of being ill she was finally well enough to attend a performance, and **this** was her first outing. So we talked until the lights dimmed and in that moment I thought to myself, how *critical* this performance was to this woman. For me it's just another Tuesday evening, but to her it was months of waiting for the music to start.

The second is, arts organizations are layered in their funding and they're fragile. The MINUTE you pull government funding, and eliminate the National Endowment of the Arts, you put strain on the entire system. Federal cuts truly cascade into other areas and before you know it, I'm reading about fellow nonprofits who are closing their doors.

And the third is, inflation. I'm sure we're all feeling it! Economic anxiety has *seeped* through everyone, but we forget that no matter how different the world looks today, or tomorrow, or 10 years from now, Lincoln Center must **always** be here. It's our **responsibility** to provide the same opportunities and benefits to our community as we did before. It's been our responsibility since 1969! People have relied on us for an escape, for inspiration, for relief, and the truth is, that's not always a guarantee.

So as you watch a performance tonight I urge you to look, and consider the thousands of people that are sitting nearby, or two isles down from you, or throughout the entire theater! And then imagine, what would happen to them without the next 2 hours of performance you're about to witness. Give back to those people. Give back to your neighbors, your family, your colleagues... because a world without the arts, is really a world without each other.

Thank you! Please eat, have fun, enjoy the performance this evening, and if you like what you see come back! Summer for the City runs all summer long.