

Ready-to-Wear Report

Showtime for Designers at Lincoln Center

By Rosemary Feitelberg and Marc Karimzadeh

NEW YORK — Memorial Day has yet to arrive but many designers are already mapping out their post-Labor Day plans for New York Fashion Week.

With much fanfare and a healthy dose of hype, Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week is ready for its Lincoln Center debut, but at this stage the lineup is not looking all that different from the one at Bryant Park. Michael Kors, Tommy Hilfiger, Carolina Herrera, Anna Sui, J.Mendel, Badgley Mischka, Isaac Mizrahi, Lela Rose, Dennis Basso and Ports 1961 plan to be back in the tents, albeit uptown. Cynthia Rowley and Charlotte Ronson are among the few who will return to the fold. And a host of others plan to remain off-site — including Oscar de la Renta, Calvin Klein, Donna Karan, Jason Wu, Maria Cornejo, Costello Tagliapietra and Ohne Titel, just to name a few.

Financial incentives to sweeten the prospect of joining the pack uptown are nonexistent, according to several designers and officials at IMG, the organizers of the shows.

Hilfiger, who has shown his collections at both the New York State Theater and Avery Fisher Hall in the past, will bring his spring 2011 show to Damrosch Park. “Lincoln Center has such a wonderful atmosphere and unparalleled sophistication,” he said.

But leaving the Garment Center, a neighborhood whose demise has been well-documented, is bittersweet for Sui. “Of course, my heart is in the Garment Center and I am sad we will not be in this area, but I will support it,” she said.

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One upside to the new set-up should be the smoother commute up 10th Avenue from Milk Studios to Lincoln Center, as opposed to having to zigzag across town to Bryant Park. Having worked closely with IMG and Lincoln Center, Council of Fashion Designers of America executive director Steven Kolb noted the new locale is a straight shot to West Chelsea and the West Village. It is also near the subway and bus stops and has more space for cars to be organized. “Once you accept that change is good and inevitable, you look forward and not backward,” he said.

But not everyone has been swayed by the razzle-dazzle of Lincoln Center. Calvin Klein plans to once again use its own West 39th Street venue, while Donna Karan will be back in her usual digs at the Stephan Weiss Studio to stage her Collection and DKNY shows. Not one to follow the flock, Wu is going for a yet-to-be-discovered off-site venue.

While designers such as Proenza Schouler, Thakoon, Vera Wang and Sophie Theallet are still ironing out their plans for where to show in September, IMG is no doubt pleased to have Prabal Gurung, one of the industry’s rising stars, on board for Lincoln Center’s in-

screens that played video footage of fashion shows, the new site’s Theatre has an upstage video wall to show off the increasingly important multimedia elements. A larger main lobby, bar-coded show tickets, digital signs and an updated registration and credentialing system that allows guests to check into multiple shows at once should help streamline foot traffic, said executive producer Christina Neault.

“This facility has been created specifically to handle fashion shows. From the moment you walk in, they will be ready for you,” she said.

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— Peter Arnold,
Cynthia Rowley

The shows stretch from Sept. 9 to 16, but Lincoln Center will get a jump on the season on Sept. 7 by hosting a large public fashion show with 200 models parading in front of 1,500 ticket-holding guests. The event is meant to beat the drum about Fashion’s Night Out, a citywide shopping extravaganza that will be held Sept. 10. Among other things, Fashion Week’s move to the Upper West Side is expected to attract a more sophisticated crowd than the cell-phone-camera-shooting onlookers known to clog the steps at Bryant Park near the main entrance.

But not everyone has been wooed by the new neighborhood. De la Renta will once again set up his runway at 583 Park Avenue, the Delano & Aldrich-designed



A rendering of the new layout at Lincoln Center for Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week.

For many, hoofing it to the shows will no longer be an option, given the distance, but some, like Kors, are willing to sacrifice convenience for a fresh start. “For us, we have been a little spoiled being across from Bryant Park, but Lincoln Center itself is logical. When you look around New York, you need transportation, restaurants and several venues,” he said.

In a business that is all about what’s next, it is no surprise that several designers are eager to see the new setup in September. Carolina Herrera said, “I am always excited to go to Lincoln Center. I love the opera, the ballet and the concerts; this September, I will feel the same thrill during fashion week.”

Having recently spent a good amount of time at Lincoln Center dressing dancers in the New York City Ballet, Gilles Mendel is more enthusiastic than most. “It’s been my second home, as I’ve been working on the ballet for the last three months,” he said. “I’m looking forward to showing my collection in the exciting new epicenter of New York fashion.”

The move to Lincoln Center doesn’t seem to have made any dent in the third season of the MAC & Milk initiative at Milk Studios. John Demsey, group president of the Estée Lauder Cos. Inc., said that for the September shows, “We are at our maximum capacity and the lineup this season is proving to be even more exciting and eventful than the previous two. We also look forward to being backstage at Lincoln Center, supporting the de-

signers as we always have in the past.”

augural season. Gurung said, “It is the new beginning of what is surely going to be a great tradition. While Bryant Park served as a terrific location for so many years, it is always nice to see change, giving fashion week a fresh appeal.”

Jenny Packham will make her New York show debut at Lincoln Center. For the first time in three years, Cynthia Rowley is returning to the fold to show at Lincoln Center, after several seasons of showing off-site. President Peter Arnold said, “This is the first season [of many, we expect] that the focus will be on Lincoln Center, New York Fashion Week’s new home. The fashion industry has rallied around the location, and we want to be a part of that support.”

The ancillary support offered uptown sealed the deal. “We’ve been impressed by the updated venues and overall package provided by IMG/Lincoln Center. As always, the tents provide a comprehensive and highly efficient stable of services, which is attractive to us,” he said.

There are four options at Lincoln Center — The Theatre, which seats 969; The Stage, which seats 740; The Studio, which seats 396, and The Box Presentation Space, which has a capacity for 125 people. The fourth venue is geared for live or still-life presentations, as well as industry activities. The cost ranges from \$15,000 to \$50,000, depending on the venue. That price also covers an assortment of other support services, such as staging, lighting, sound and security. Unlike in Bryant Park, where live feeds were pretty much limited to lobby

manse he has used in recent seasons. And Catherine Malandrino will be returning to the Chelsea Art Museum. Ohne Titel will be back at Exit Art, a space that allows easy arrival and departures for guests, as well as a more individualistic experience.

Mario Cornejo, the designer behind Zero + Maria Cornejo, is leaning toward returning to the downtown art gallery she has shown at for the past few seasons. Her business partner, Marysia Woroniecka, said, “We like to be consistent, and it’s a very cool space.” Lincoln Center was “never a consideration,” she said, adding, “Our nature is to always be not on the beaten path. Both of our stores are off of main streets. We like to be a little outside the herd.”

That said, Woroniecka said she is excited to see what the new setup is like and how it evolves. “It’s exciting to have a new place. It’s good for everybody and it gives a shot of new energy. All of that is very positive,” she said.

Carmen Marc Valvo will show at NASDAQ’s Times Square location. NASDAQ is a sponsor, the space is given for a nominal cost and there are no restrictions in terms of the types of sponsors that can be brought in.

Costello Tagliapietra will be back at Milk Studios. Robert Tagliapietra, who designs the collection with Jeffrey Costello, said, “They have been so supportive of us. It’s really just about loyalty,” although the gallerylike feel of the space was another selling point.

“It feels like home,” Costello added.