

Metro Theater's Revival

**By Liza Cooper, President,
NEW Friends of Metro Theater**

When NEW Friends of Metro Theater (NFoMT) -- a group of impassioned community members with a *raison d'être* -- came together four and a half years ago, we never imagined what a roller coaster ride it would be to reopen our beloved neighborhood theater.

Finally, twenty years since Metro was last shuttered, hope is alive and plans are in place.

Last summer, NFoMT endorsed the visionary group Upper West Side Cinema Center (UWSCC), co-founded and led by film producer Ira Deutchman, who had developed a comprehensive and detailed plan to transform the old theater into a five-screen independent cinema with an education center, senior docent program, and cafe.

Following the endorsement, a media blitz ensued. UWSCC began the hard work to raise the \$6.9 million to purchase the theater from the estate of Albert Bialek. State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal (whom Three Parks has endorsed for Borough President this year) made \$500,000 available. New York State Assembly Member Micah Lasher facilitated \$3.5 million from Governor Kathy Hochul's budget. Major contributions from Kate Capshaw and Steven Spielberg's Hearthland Foundation, The Klingenstein-Martell Foundation, The Barndt-Jackson

Foundation and hundreds of community donations comprised \$2.9 million. With all of the funds in hand, UWSCC completed the purchase. This enormous achievement has brought our entire community so much closer to realizing our collective Metro dream.

On April 6, a press conference was held in front of Metro Theater announcing the purchase and featuring talks from Congressman Jerry Nadler, Assembly Member Lasher, Sen. Hoylman-Sigal, Council Members Sean Abreu and Gail Brewer, and UWSCC co-founder Ira Deutchman. What an epic event for our neighborhood and a demonstration of what can happen when a community and its leaders come together!

So what's next?

Currently, UWSCC is putting together the architect/construction team, while working toward raising approximately \$20 million to preserve the landmarked façade and build out the gutted theater. The timeline for construction will depend heavily on the success of fundraising. “Every donation helps, both large and small,” notes UWSCC president Ira Deutchman. “The outpouring of community support for the initial phase of this project—the purchase of the former Metro property—was critical to our ability to garner state and foundation funds and will continue to prove essential as we move forward during our capital campaign.”

Deutchman notes that UWSCC is a 501(c)(3), which makes all donations 100% tax-deductible. Community members are encouraged to sign up for the UWSCC

monthly eblast at uwscinema.org/contact, to get the latest news.

In the meantime, UWSCC has launched a pop-up film series titled *For the Love of Cinema*, showing ten classic films at partner venues on the Upper West Side, Harlem, and the Upper East Side. Coming up this month is “Variety” on June 5 at the Maysles Documentary Center; “Last Film Show” on June 17 at JCC Manhattan; and “The Muppet Movie” on June 21 at the Leonard Nimoy Thalia. The series also includes a free outdoor screening of “Singing in the Rain” on W. 110th St. & Amsterdam Avenue, in coordination with the Columbus Avenue BID and the 111th St. Block Association. Tickets and details are at uwscinema.org/screenings.

I am delighted to say that there is light at the end of the Metro tunnel, and soon enough that light will be coming from the comforting flicker of the movie screen.

For more information, visit UWSCinema.org and follow them and NEW Friends of Metro Theater on Facebook and other social media platforms.