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It's final curtains for the Gershwin Theater—for now

BY SHAVANA ABRUZZO

The fat lady has sung at the Gershwin Theater — but her sweet hum is far from over.

The fabled, 57-year-old entertainment venue at Brooklyn College saw its final performance on Sunday before the sound of hammers takes center stage to begin a multi-million-dollar makeover of the world-famous show hall, with promises of a better act to follow.

There were plenty of misty eyes at the packed theatre, named for famous Brooklyn-born composer George Gershwin, as the curtain fell on Brian Friel's Tony Award-winning play, "Dancing at Lughnasa," closing a heralded chapter of the Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts complex on Campus Road and Hillel Place, which will be resurrected in 2012 as the state-of-the-art Tow Center for the Performing Arts, complete with — among other features — a double-height theater, reception and rehearsal rooms, and a recording studio, according to spokesman Ernesto Mora.

The \$90 million future home of the Department of Theater and Conservatory of Music is

the first environmentally sustainable "green" building at Brooklyn College and is named in honor of alumni and benefactors Claire Tow, '52, and her husband, Leonard, who donated a generous grant to help defray the costs which will be met through a combination of public and private funds, said college President Karen Gould.

Designed by the architect of the Disney Hyperion Theater, the Los Angeles County Museum and the Sydney Opera House, the Tow Center will boast plenty of bang for its buck: There's a center for computer music slated, more than 30 music studios and practice rooms, and a large scene shop for set construction — capped by a grand lobby and exhibition space. The construction also gives the college a chance to redesign one of the most heavily used entrances to the campus: An illuminated, 30-foot-high portal from Hillel Place and Campus Road will align the entrance with the library's tower, offering a welcoming beacon for students and visitors, added Mora.

Bittersweet best described the mood surrounding the D-Day



Merry dancing accompanied the final show, courtesy of starry-eyed Cassidy Elms, Mary Ann Walsh, Shawna Vormier and Sarah Good (not in order).



A rendering shows the double-height theater with seating room for 200 people.

of the hallowed Gershwin Hall, which contains the Sam Levenson Recital Hall in addition to the Gershwin Theater, and which has enraptured stage fans with music concerts, recitals and film screenings for decades, many of them for free.

"All of us will miss the Gershwin Theater," said Theater Department Chairman Thomas Bullard. "Since its opening in 1953 it has served a significant showcase for developing major talents, and a beloved venue for both

musical and dramatic works."

Morgan Eisen, a stage management student, couldn't agree more.

"I feel sad, well, happy-sad," she said.