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Event Manor: Posh Parties the New Way to Show a Home



This \$28.9 million Greenwich Village townhouse has hosted parties (inset) for Rolls-Royce and Krug Champagne.

When Michael Feinstein performs on Dec. 16, his sing-along sidekicks will likely be Liza Minnelli and Stephen Sondheim. But you can't buy tickets to the event, nor will it be easy to join the guest list. That's because the soiree is being held at Feinstein's 18-room townhouse at 143 E. 63rd St., which is currently on the market for \$17.9 million with Core brokers Tom Postilio and Mickey Conlon. The event — although clearly music-filled — will actually serve as much as a showcase of Feinstein's talent as his home, thanks to its audience of 50 brokers and qualified potential buyers.

"The event brings a lot of different factions together," says Postilio. "It shines a spotlight on the house, which is known for having fabulous events. We're able to listen to great music and raise money for the [nonprofit] Michael Feinstein Initiative for the Great American Songbook."

Of course, the brokers also hope to get an offer on the grand, 19th-century brownstone, which boasts eight woodburning fireplaces, a large sunken living room overlooking the backyard garden and a recording studio. And the house has Steinway pianos that, for the right price, can also be purchased.



Singer and pianist Michael Feinstein's six-bedroom townhouse (inset) is a frequent party pad and is on the market for \$17.9 million.

The Feinstein event is among the most glamorous examples of a burgeoning new trend — home-sellers and their agents rolling out the welcome mat to corporations, nonprofits and prestigious organizations in the hope of attracting the right kind of buyer.

In late summer, for instance, Rolls-Royce treated about 30 customers to fancy food and drink at 80 Washington Place, an 8,800-square-foot townhouse once owned by John Philip Sousa that's on the market for \$28.9 million.

With interiors by Clodagh Design, the five-bedroom townhouse features an elevator and glass staircase connecting seven levels, a roof deck and a spacious garden with a teak cabana.

“Guests were given tours of the entire home and it did spark interest, including an offer or two, but the house is still on the market,” says broker Robert Dvorin of Town Residential.

Which means that the parties keep coming at 80 Washington. In September, Krug Champagne hosted a series of events there centered around Fashion Week. Later that month, a high-profile, members-only club rented it for a fundraising casino night — the net worth of those guests coincided with the kind of buyer Town seeks. Soon, it will be the location of a wrap party for a major feature film. Upside? The house will be exposed to the potential buyers who form Hollywood's elite — and the guests enjoy an evening of fun.

“Reaping the benefits of an event must directly correlate with the quality and demographic of a buyer,” says Dvorin. “For our clientele, we only involve ourselves with events linked to foundations and charities.”

“I believe events work if they’re strategically planned and correctly timed,” says Corcoran Sunshine broker Beth Fisher. “When trying to sell an entire development, an event should not be just entertaining, but engaging.”



Feinstein (inset) will soon host a benefit-recital luring brokers, buyers and — most likely — stars such as Liza Minnelli and Stephen Sondheim.

Fisher applied that reasoning to her marketing of the Aldyn, a condo/rental on Riverside Boulevard. In 2010, eight units were designed by top fashion and interior designers like Diane von Furstenberg and Jonathan Adler and their unveiling coincided with Fashion Week. The event was organized by the Council of Fashion Designers of America to benefit HIV/AIDS organizations and breast-cancer research, but also marked day one of Aldyn sales. Two units were sold as a direct result.

“My events are not planned as an opportunity to sell apartments, but to bring in very targeted influencers,” says Fisher.

Then there’s the altogether different animal — the event space that is being marketed as a residential property. Take 632 Hudson St. — a popular party site and home to the cast of the 10th season of “The Real World” in 2001. Owner Karen Lashinsky was frequently asked by guests if the residence was for sale — and always answered with an emphatic “no.”

That is until last September, when the 8,000-square-foot building — which includes a 5,500-square-foot, three-bedroom triplex, plus 1,000 square feet of outdoor space — went on the market for \$22 million, along with a major caveat. Notes the Douglas Elliman listing: “Booked through January 2016. Building may be purchased earlier than 2016, but all bookings must be honored.”

Acquired in 1992, Lashinsky carved out a unique space that resembles a palazzo — with a dramatic 40-foot-high central atrium, Italian Renaissance murals, a 19th-century Chinese bed, and a 1920s-style speakeasy in the basement.

Lashinsky, who beds down on the home's off-limits second floor while the parties rage around her, decided to sell so she can create a similar space in Italy. Asked if she'd cancel events that were, say, 12 months out, if she was offered more than the \$22 million asking price, her answer was a hesitant yes — but only if she could find comparable space.



632 Hudson was home to the 10th season of "The Real World". Now booked for weddings and corporate events through 2016, the residence is currently on the market for \$22 million.

"Loyalty is a significant trait, so it's doubtful I'd be comfortable moving out sooner, even with the promise of honoring my future bookings," says Lashinsky. "Because it's not just the space that draws clients, but my customized sensibilities."

Of course, showcasing homes to elite crowds may build buzz, but it does not guarantee sales. At a recent event at the Robert A.M. Stern-designed One Museum Mile, at 1280 Fifth Ave., the building's developer, Brickman, sponsored a benefit for the Matthew Shepard Foundation. Hosted by resident Casey Nicholaw, the Tony Award-winning co-director of "The Book of Mormon," the gathering for 70 guests included Broadway stars. Postilio was there, conducting tours of available units, including a \$1.395 million one-bedroom. Sadly, Postilio got no bites. Nonetheless, as the upcoming Feinstein event (and hopefully sale) suggests, in Manhattan real estate, the show must always go on.