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GREENWICH VILLAGE TO LOSE YET ANOTHER HISTORIC SPOT: THE LANDMARK CORNELIA STREET CAFÉ TO RETIRE AFTER A 41-YEAR-RUN CLOSING ITS DOORS PERMANENTLY AT THE START OF THE NEW YEAR

The familiar red awning at [29 Cornelia Street](#) will be rolled up and the red doors closed on January 2

New York, New York – December 10, 2018...It has been a long and sometimes challenging run for the 41-year-old Cornelia Street Café. The Café, located at [29 Cornelia Street](#) in the heart of Greenwich Village, has announced it will close its red doors permanently on January 2nd, 2019.



The cafe was opened by three "starving artists" in 1977... Charles McKenna, an Irish-American actor; Raphaela Pivetta, an Italian-Argentinian-Canadian visual artist, and the Anglo-German-Jewish-English writer/actor/director Robin Hirsch. For most of the last four decades, the face and name most often affiliated with the café has

been that of Robin, a former Oxford, Fulbright and English Speaking Union Scholar, who arrived in New York in the late 60s to write about avant-garde American theatre. He is fondly known to loyalists of the Café as the Minister of Culture, Wine Czar and Dean of Faculty. Robin is a published author whose memoir, **Last Dance at the Hotel Kempinski**, received a host of positive reviews for its brilliant depiction of "Jewish dislocation and exile" (*New York Times*) during Hitler's reign of terror.

Filled with emotion, Robin, a true champion of the arts, has begun to make the news known to regulars, to performers and to business colleagues. "I am sad to say that I am losing my oldest child," he recently wrote. "Cornelia has brought me both joy and pain, and it is with a broken heart that I must bid her adieu."

The Café has earned its place alongside La Mama, and the legendary Caffe Cino, which once inhabited the space next door, at [31 Cornelia Street](#). Like those artist hot spots, Cornelia became a magnet for creatives at a time when Greenwich Village was known as



an artist community. From its launch as a one room Café with a toaster oven and a cappuccino machine, it became a beehive of artist activity – it was a place where in the seventies songwriters congregated, and by their own rules performed only new songs written that week. Out of that over 5,000 songs were born and led to an album appropriately titled, **Cornelia Street: The Songwriters Exchange**, which was also the first and only non-jazz album put out by the now defunct jazz label, Stash Records. Rod Mac Donald, David Massengill, Martha Hogan, Cliff Eberhardt, Michael Fracasso, Elliot Simon & Lucy Kaplanski were some of the artists who contributed early works to this historic album. In 1980 Stereo Review named it Best Album of the Month.



The Café has been the site of many firsts – it is the place where Philippe Petit ("Man on Wire") strung a wire from the tree outside the cafe and danced across it juggling, where The Roches, a vocal group comprised of three Irish-American sisters started out; where Suzanne Vega sang her first songs, where Eve Ensler launched The Vagina Monologues. Here a young John Oliver, Amy Schumer, and Hannibal Buress tested material. In

the early [80's](#) Cornelia Street went **Clean for Gene**, clearing the downstairs for Senator Eugene McCarthy (the good Senator McCarthy!) to read his poetry, and for the famous neurologist Oliver Sacks to read his prose.

That performance space which only recently became known as [Cornelia Street Underground](#), has hosted over 700 events annually for more than 25 years and will continue right up until the doors are shuttered on January 2nd.

Just recently, one of the Café's regular performers, the multi-talented, multi-instrumentalist, jazz pioneer and one of America's musical treasures, David Amram said, "This special place cannot be allowed to close, it's too important. What a shame and what a loss it would be." Nobel Laureate Roald Hoffmann, who has curated a Science program at the cafe for almost 20 years, calls it "the bohemian café of your dreams."

Many performers who have had a long and intimate relationship with the Café have expressed their shock and dismay at the thought that come the New Year, Cornelia Street Café will be no more. Poets, literary ambassadors, comics, musicians of all genres who have made this their home away from home will no longer have this space or this stage. Foodies who have long known the Café as a place for a tasty meal at affordable



prices will need to find another spot after the first of the year. And New York will begin the New Year mourning the loss of this unique and historic piece of its cultural history.

On its tenth anniversary (more than 31 years ago!) Mayor Ed Koch named the café "**a culinary as well as a cultural landmark.**"

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