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Desmond Tutu Center's Grand Opening Event

The Desmond Tutu Center hosted more than 400 people at its Grand Opening event on Tuesday, Dec. 4, 2007. The spectacular event featured a fashion show by Andres Aquino Production and included a cocktail reception, live entertainment by Shayna Steele and DJ Chris Santos and tours of the venue.

As a preview of the Couture Fashion Week to come in February 2008, the event featured an upscale fashion show with models sporting collections by such high-end designers as Romanitza from Romania, Tatyana Parfionova from Russia and Henrieta Duffner from Germany. Designer and producer Andres Aquino displayed his new "Nocturne" designs, accessorized with exquisite diamond jewelry by Susan Winston. Acclaimed stylist Federico Calce and his talented team did the hair styling for the models.

An assortment of live entertainment performed during the fashion show, including members of the New Tang Dynasty Television Lion Group dance company, a Congolese dance troupe led by Prisca Ouya and award-winning cellist Gjilberta Gelaj, who was accompanied by pianist Gulnara Mirzakhodjayeva. In addition, DJ Chris Santos spun during the cocktail hour, and the Shayna Steele Jazz Quartet entertained the audience during the reception following the fashion show.

The Desmond Tutu Center, managed by ARAMARK Harrison Lodging, is located on the campus of The General Theological Seminary in the historic Chelsea neighborhood of New York City. The event took place in the Center's 19th Century Refectory Grand Ball Room, which features a vaulted, oak-wainscoted dining room that has been called one of New York's most beautiful interior spaces. To demonstrate the Desmond Tutu Center's many meeting capabilities during the fashion show, the conference rooms were arranged in different configurations to showcase the variety of corporate and event functions that can be held at the center. For example, room Tutu B was set up as a tradeshow area, where sponsors were able to exhibit their products and services.

A unique hotel and conference center, the Desmond Tutu Center features 60 beautifully restored historic guest rooms with custom designed furniture and state-of-the-art facilities. With the recent addition of renewable energy, the noisy hum of room air conditioners has been eliminated, further enhancing the beauty of the Center's location in New York's famous Chelsea Square. The tastefully decorated guest rooms and the environment-friendly amenities provide a comfortable and relaxing setting for both business and leisure travelers.

"Hosting the Grand Opening in conjunction with the fashion show gave us a chance to show the flexibilities and capabilities of one of the most versatile and beautiful event Centers in the city," said Marcel Kromhout, director of sales and marketing, ARAMARK Harrison Lodging, Desmond Tutu Center. "With the sophistication of 21st Century technology and the historic charm of 19th Century gothic architecture, the Center is an ideal location for any type of event, from corporate meetings to weddings to entertaining events such as this."

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