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French Institute Alliance Francaise to Unveil Gould Hall Renovation

By **Felicia R. Lee** September 6, 2012 12:26 pm

The French Institute Alliance Française, a New York French cultural center, will officially unveil its major renovation of Florence Gould Hall on Sept. 14 with a concert featuring the jazz musician Bill Frisell along with his groups, the 858 Quartet and the Beautiful Dreamers.

The institute's second annual open house on Sept. 12 is a chance to preview the \$500,000 renovation of the 361-seat hall, the institute's performing arts venue at 55 E. 59th Street, between Park and Madison. The transformation, overseen by the engineering and architectural firm Dominick R. Pilla Associates, PC, began in June of this year and brings new carpeting, a refurbished green room for artists, improved sound and lighting, as well as digital camera capabilities.

The open house, which is free and open to the public, will feature screenings of "Green Porno" Isabella Rossellini's short film series about insect sex lives.

The renovation comes amid a year of significant expansion for the institute. This September it will open two new satellite branches in Brooklyn and Manhattan's East Village, offering classes for adults, children and toddlers.

The Sept. 14 concert marks beginning of the institute's fall arts festival, "Crossing the Line," which runs through Oct. 14. Florence Gould Hall, named for a now-deceased patron of the arts in France and this country, opened on April 6, 1988 with the U.S. premiere of Jean Cocteau's comic ballet "Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel." It has featured such artists as Marcel Marceau, Elie Wiesel, Paul Auster, Jeanne Moreau, Esperanza Spalding and Meryl Streep.

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