



Guests at the party for Casita Maria included, clockwise from top left, Vanessa Bronfman and Jaqueline Weld Drake; Noreen Buckfire and Daisy Soros; Audrey Gruss; and Calliope Carella and Anrica Arengi.



Will Ragozzino/BFA NYC (4)

Fiesta or Gala? The Jury's in Doubt

The first "Fiesta!" of the New York social season took place on Friday at the Mandarin Oriental for the nonprofit Casita Maria, a center of arts and education for underprivileged youth in the Bronx. The event honored the designer Roberto Cavalli, who accepted via video message.

What made this a Fiesta!? (The exclamation point, by the way, is theirs.) "We're a zip-pier group than usual," said the writer and philanthropist Jamee Gregory. "It's a little more cha-cha-cha!"

When the dancer and choreographer Mikhail Baryshnikov heard he was not just at a party but a "fiesta!" he responded, "Oh, am I?" He wasn't entirely sure what distinguished a "fiesta!" from a

fete, but he said he would think the former has "more Latinos," and the latter, perhaps, "more Frenchmen."

To spice up the evening, the fashion stylist Robert Verdi emceed. Mr. Verdi said intoxication was more acceptable at a party with an exclamation point in its title. A gala, he said, is "decidedly stiff."

On the dance floor, Blackstone Group co-founder Stephen Schwarzman went for a "cha-cha-cha" with his wife, Christine, who wore a gown by Mr. Cavalli. The music was Latin jazz. "I'm not the social arbiter of these things," said Mr. Schwarzman, when asked about the "Fiesta!" description. "But it seems pretty much like a gala."

—Mike Vilensky