



EMBARGOED FOR ONLINE TUESDAY, AUGUST 20 AT 8AM

**KENNETH BRANAGH MAKES HIS NEW YORK STAGE DEBUT IN *MACBETH*
STAGED FOR PARK AVENUE ARMORY'S DRILL HALL IN JUNE 2014**

**Directed by Rob Ashford and Kenneth Branagh, Staging Will Take Advantage of
Wade Thompson Drill Hall's Vast Scale**

Commissioned by Park Avenue Armory and Manchester International Festival

New York, NY – August 20, 2013 – The U.S. premiere of Rob Ashford and Kenneth Branagh's staging of *Macbeth* will take over Park Avenue Armory's 55,000-square-foot Wade Thompson Drill Hall in June 2014. A co-commission of Park Avenue Armory and Manchester International Festival, the critically acclaimed production was originally mounted in Manchester in July 2013, and will be re-imagined for the Armory presentation.

Branagh, in his highly anticipated New York stage debut, will star as Macbeth alongside Alex Kingston as Lady Macbeth. Kingston's appearance will also mark the first time she has performed on a New York stage. Additional casting and performance dates will be announced in the coming months. Branagh is lauded as one of the world's leading Shakespearean interpreters on both stage and film and this production marked his return to Shakespeare after more than a decade.

"The Armory enables artists to realize site-specific works that demand presentation space beyond limitations found in traditional theaters or museums," said Rebecca Robertson, President and Executive Producer of Park Avenue Armory. "We are ecstatic to collaborate with Rob Ashford and Kenneth Branagh, combining their incredible vision with our unconventional space and military history to allow audiences to relive this timeless story in a remarkable new way."

"We are thrilled that Kenneth Branagh will be coming to the Armory to recreate this iconic role following his performance in Manchester this summer," said Alex Poots, Artistic Director of Park Avenue Armory and Manchester International Festival. "And I am particularly excited that this production will mark his New York stage debut."

"Restaging this monumental work for the Armory's soaring drill hall is an inspiring challenge and an incredible opportunity," noted director Rob Ashford. Director and actor Kenneth Branagh added, "Utilizing the possibilities of the vast open space is a truly exciting prospect. I am delighted that we have the chance to recreate *Macbeth* in this epic setting."

Macbeth will be featured in Park Avenue Armory's 2014 season, to be announced in its entirety in the coming months. Tickets will be available as part of a subscription this winter; Armory members receive advance access to tickets. More information on the production and Armory memberships may be found at www.armoryonpark.org.

Macbeth extends the rich history of Shakespeare at the Armory, following an unprecedented residency of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) in 2011, during which the Company constructed a full-scale replica of their Stratford-upon-Avon home and performed five fully staged productions over six weeks, alongside scaled-down stagings for New York City public school students taking part in the Armory's education programming. In October 2012, Park Avenue Armory and the RSC presented *King Lear* in the Armory's historic Board of Officers Room for more than 1,000 underserved New York City students.

Macbeth

By William Shakespeare

Directors: Rob Ashford and Kenneth Branagh

Cast: Kenneth Branagh, Alex Kingston

Set and Costume Designer: Christopher Oram

Composer: Patrick Doyle

Lighting Designer: Neil Austin

Sound Designer: Christopher Shutt

Casting Director: Anne McNulty, CDG

Associate Designer: Lee Newby

Commissioned by Park Avenue Armory and Manchester International Festival

About Kenneth Branagh

Branagh has long been lauded as one of the great Shakespearean interpreters. His skills as a writer, director, and actor have garnered international acclaim across the disciplines of stage, film, and television, and he has been nominated in five different categories for an Academy Award®. Branagh last performed Shakespeare when he played Richard III at the Sheffield Crucible in 2002. His stage performances as Edmund at the National Theatre and Ivanov for the Donmar played to great acclaim. In 2011, Branagh completed a sell-out run of the hit comedy *The Painkiller* at the Lyric Theatre in his native Belfast. In 2013 he received a Knighthood for his services to drama and to the community in N. Ireland.

About Rob Ashford

Rob Ashford has directed and choreographed productions on both sides of the Atlantic, from collaborations with the Donmar Warehouse and National Theatre to major Broadway productions. Ashford has a string of nominations and awards to his name which include: an Olivier Award for *Anna Christie*, with nominations for *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Parade* (Donmar Warehouse), and a Tony Award® for *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, with nominations for productions including *Evita* and *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. He also won an Emmy Award® for his choreography at the 81st Academy Awards.

About Alex Kingston

Kingston has won critical acclaim for her numerous television roles including Dr. Elizabeth Corday in *ER* and River Song in *Doctor Who*. A former member of the Royal Shakespeare Company, performing in *Much Ado About Nothing*, *King Lear*, and *Love's Labours Lost* amongst others, Kingston was recently seen on the London stage in the sold out *Luise Miller* at the Donmar Warehouse. In 2006 she played Nurse Ratched in the West End production of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, starring Christian Slater. Recent feature film credits include *Sweetland* opposite Alan Cummings and *Alpha Dog*, starring Justin Timberlake.

About Park Avenue Armory

Part palace, part industrial shed, Park Avenue Armory fills a critical void in the cultural ecology of New York city by enabling artists to create—and audiences to experience—unconventional work that cannot be mounted in traditional performance halls and museums. With its soaring 55,000-square-foot Wade Thompson Drill Hall and array of exuberant period rooms, the Armory offers a new platform for creativity across all art forms. Since its first production in September 2007—Aaron Young’s *Greeting Card*, a 9,216-square-foot “action” painting created by the burned-out tire marks of ten choreographed motorcycles—the Armory has organized a series of immersive performances, installations, and works of art that have drawn critical and popular attention working independently or with other cultural institutions. Among the highlights of its first five years are major installations by Ernesto Neto, Ryoji Ikeda, Christian Boltanski, Tom Sachs, and Ann Hamilton; dance performances by Shen Wei Dance Arts, Tricia Brown, and the final performances of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company across three separate stages; Bernd Zimmermann’s harrowing *Die Soldaten* and Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Gruppen* with the New York Philharmonic and performances of his electronic masterpiece *Oktophonie*; and a six-week residency of the Royal Shakespeare Company, in their Stratford-upon-Avon home rebuilt to scale in the drill hall.

The Armory’s 2013 season offers a series of commissions, co-commissions, and programs that blur the distinctions between genres and break new ground for artists and audiences alike using the unconventional platforms of the Armory’s soaring drill hall. The season includes the first play co-commissioned for the Wade Thompson Drill Hall, Matt Charman’s *The Machine* (September 4-18); *Massive Attack V Adam Curtis* (September 28-October 4), a new kind of imaginative experience conceived by Adam Curtis and Robert Del Naja, mixing music, film, and politics performed by Massive Attack and special guests; a recital series presented in the Armory’s exquisitely renovated Board of Officers Room, featuring baritone Christian Gerhaher, violinist Vilde Frang, and pianist Anton Batagov (September 29-October 27); and Robert Wilson’s powerful new staging of *The Life and Death of Marina Abramović* (December 12-21). The season was launched in March with *OKTOPHONIE*, Karlheinz Stockhausen’s epic electronic masterpiece, ritualized in a lunar environment created by visual artist Rirkrit Tiravanija, followed by *WS*, a monumental installation by Paul McCarthy.

More information may be found at www.armoryonpark.org.

About Manchester International Festival

Manchester International Festival is the world’s first festival of original, new work and special events and takes place biennially, in Manchester, UK. The Festival launched in 2007 as an artist-led, commissioning festival presenting new works from across the spectrum of performing arts, visual arts, and popular culture.

Highlights of the first four festivals include Damon Albarn, Jamie Hewlett, and Chen Shi-Zheng’s Chinese opera *Monkey. Journey to the West*; group art event *Il Tempo del Postino* featuring work by Matthew Barney, Tacita Dean, and Olafur Eliasson; Zaha Hadid Architects’ new space for the music of Bach; Björk’s ambitious three week Biophilia residency; director Robert Wilson’s startling new piece for the stage, *The Life and Death of Marina Abramović*, starring Abramović, Willem Dafoe and Antony; Punchdrunk’s Doctor Who adventure *The Crash of The Elysium*; Kenneth Branagh’s acclaimed *Macbeth*; Maxine Peake’s impassioned recitation of Shelley’s *The Masque of Anarchy*; thrilling live art from Tino Sehgal, and the iconoclastic film/gig hybrid *Massive Attack V Adam Curtis*.

The Festival works with co-commissioning partners around the world to present new productions,

including Park Avenue Armory, New York; Ruhrtriennale in Germany; Festival d'Automne in Paris; Spoleto Festival Italy; and more.

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