

**PARK AVENUE
ARMORY**



**North American Premiere of Monteverdi's Spatial Masterpiece *Maria Vespers*
Fills Park Avenue Armory's 55,000-Square-Foot Drill Hall with a 360-Degree
Immersive Aural Experience**

**Production Features Berlinde De Bruyckere's celebrated Sculpture
Kreupelhout-Cripplewood, 2012-2013 as its Centerpiece**

March 21 – March 29, 2020

**Pierre Audi Brings Monteverdi's Masterpiece to Life with
Raphaël Pichon Conducting the World-Renowned Chamber Chorus Ensemble Pygmalion
in its U.S. Debut**

New York, NY – January 13, 2020 – This March, Park Avenue Armory will kick off its 2020 performing arts season with the North American premiere of **Claudio Monteverdi's** magnum opus *Maria Vespers*, a dynamic staging of the composer's sacred meditation to the Virgin Mary. Through the visualization of this spatial masterpiece, Armory's **Marina Kellen French Artistic Director Pierre Audi** examines the multidimensional complexities of theological symbolism and mythology, creating a fully immersive scenescape in the Wade Thompson Drill Hall that accentuates the work's aural elegance, bringing to life the shifts from its intimate passages to its larger, sweeping melodies. **Raphaël Pichon** will conduct the renowned, Paris-based **Ensemble Pygmalion** in this unconventional, 360-degree sonic kaleidoscope where the audience will be surrounded by a traveling chorus, changing the sonic dimensions of their experience. Directed by Audi and developed in collaboration with **Berlinde De Bruyckere**—whose monumental and visceral multimedia sculpture installation *Kreupelhout-Cripplewood, 2012-2013*, stands at the center of the production—the fresh visual interpretation runs **March 21, 2020 through March 29, 2020**.

“The Armory has always been committed to supporting experimental and boundary-pushing productions that cannot be realized anywhere else in the city,” said **Rebecca Robertson, Founding President and Executive Producer of Park Avenue Armory**. “With *Maria Vespers*, we are delighted to work with Pierre Audi for this sonic tour de force that will offer a rare opportunity for New York audiences to experience Monteverdi's magnum opus in a multisensory way that draws on the building's acoustics and grand architecture, and the Armory's cross-disciplinary programming mission by uniting historical music and Berlinde De Bruyckere's moving sculpture.”

This production utilizes the entirety of the Wade Thompson Drill Hall, placing the audience in front of the orchestra with chorus members moving around it to provide a fully immersive experience, with *Kreupelhout-Cripplewood, 2012-2013* acting as a visual centerpiece. In the *mise-en-scène* of this spatial masterpiece, the Wade Thompson Drill Hall, is the acoustic driver of the ritualistic experience. As



audiences enter, they will traverse the stage and then become immersed in sound. The grand scale of the space lends itself to the sensorial nature of the production, which was originally conceived to be performed in the San Marco Cathedral in Venice—the acoustics and ambiance of which the Drill Hall will mirror. Pichon uses the space to create a trance-like, contemplative experience and reinvents the Vespers as music in space.

The *Marian Vespers* are one of Claudio Monteverdi's greatest musical achievements. The piece was the first large-scale work to be conceived as a 360-degree aural experience—one that involves the listener the entire way through. It has been used as a model for modern composers who have drawn inspiration from the work in creating secular immersive instrumental compositions, as well as choral musical experiences. Monteverdi, the first composer to develop opera to its full dramatic and musical potential, breathed new life into the religious music of his day, combining traditional composition style with a modern free way of setting words to music that led to the creation of musical theater. In its time, the composition was unprecedented in scale and scope; it was composed for seven voices and a large orchestra. This monumental work was written in 1610, and Audi's ambitious production was first presented by the Dutch National Opera at the Holland Festival in 2017.

“The Drill Hall gives us a special opportunity to create a powerful, dynamic connection between the audience and the performers. Only the Armory can allow us to create such a specific space without rules,” said **Director Pierre Audi**. “The secular architecture of the Drill Hall and De Bruyckere's sculpture come together to cradle a theater of sound, one that each listener can receive and interpret in their own way. Through this immersive experience, we invite audiences to partake in a visceral experience of Monteverdi's music, bringing their own experiences and reflections to contextualize this meditation in space.”

Conductor Raphaël Pichon leads the world-renowned orchestra and choral ensemble, Pygmalion in its United States debut as it performs this ambitious and inspiring tour de force. Pichon has taken the traditions and roots of the music to create a work that can speak to a modern audience while using period instruments to create a sonic kaleidoscopic performance in a spellbinding, ritualistic gathering. Ensemble Pygmalion has been described as “ingenious, brilliant, virtuoso,” and last year recorded Mozart's *Requiem*, which is known as the “most important modern recording of any of Mozart's operas.”

Belgian artist Berlinde De Bruyckere's massive, haunting *Kreupelbout-Cripplewood, 2012-2013* sculpture is the central visual element of the production. The sculpture was first presented at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013. De Bruyckere, representing Belgium, created the piece drawing on historical connections to Venice. Nobel Prize-winning writer J.M. Coetzee remarked that her sculptures “explore life and death—death in life, life in death, life before life, death before death—in the most intimate and most disturbing way. They bring illumination, but the illumination is as dark as it is profound.”

In conjunction with *Maria Vespers*, the Armory will host an Artist Talk on **Monday, March 23 at 6:00 p.m.**, featuring Director **Pierre Audi** and his collaborators discussing the process of adapting Monteverdi's work for the Drill Hall.



Maria Vespers kicks off Park Avenue Armory's 2020 season. Upcoming 2020 programming at the Armory includes: the world premiere of Armory commission *Deep Blue Sea* by **Bill T. Jones**, with design by **Diller, Scofidio + Renfro** exploring the interplay of single and group identity in pursuit of the elusive "we"; **Robert Icke's** acclaimed stagings of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* starring Alex Lawther and Aeschylus' *Oresteia* starring Lia Williams in repertory, accentuating themes of surveillance, justice, and retribution; *The Second Violinist*, a North American premiere composed by **Donnacha Dennehy** and directed and written by Tony Award winner **Enda Walsh**; the premiere of *Doppelganger*, a theatrical staging of Schubert's cycle *Schwanengesang*; and a new commission by visual artist **Rachel Rose** of a large-scale film about a grifter and his followers during the period of the Enclosure Acts of 1699 in England.

Previous theatrical productions at the Armory include Ödön von Horváth's *Judgment Day*, adapted by Christopher Shinn and directed by Richard Jones; Sam Mendes' hit production of *The Lehman Trilogy*, adapted by Ben Power and starring Adam Godley, Ben Miles, and Simon Russell Beale; *Macbeth*, directed by Rob Ashford and Kenneth Branagh, and starring Branagh and Alex Kingston for which the Wade Thompson Drill Hall was transformed into a bloody, rainy Scottish heath; Ivo van Hove's chilling staging of *The Damned*; Louis Andriessen's *De Materie* directed by Heiner Goebbels; Pierre Boulez's critically acclaimed masterpiece *Répons* for which Pierre Audi created the mise-en-scene; and the New York premiere of *Circle Map*, a new work for orchestra and electronics that builds out from six stanzas by the 13th-century Persian poet Rumi.

Maria Vespers

Performances: March 21–March 29
Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday: 7:30 p.m.
Friday & Saturday: 8:00 p.m.
Sunday: 3:00 p.m.

Tickets start at \$45

North American Premiere

By **Claudio Monteverdi**

Conductor **Raphaël Pichon**

Featuring **Ensemble Pygmalion**

Staging **Pierre Audi**

Kreupelbout-Crippenwood, 2012-2013 sculpture **Berlinde De Bruyckere**

Design **Roel van Berckelaer**

Lighting Design **Urs Schönebaum**

Sound Design **Jan Panis**



Sponsorship

Citi and Bloomberg Philanthropies are the Armory's season sponsors.

Support for Park Avenue Armory's artistic season has been generously provided by the Charina Endowment Fund, The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, the Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, the Howard Gilman Foundation, the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, The Emma and Georgina Bloomberg Foundation, the Marc Haas Foundation, the Juliet Lea Hillman Simonds Foundation, the Leon Levy Foundation, the May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation, the Richenthal Foundation, and the Isak and Rose Weinman Foundation. The artistic season is also made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature. Additional support has been provided by the Armory's Artistic Council.

Kreupelbout-Cripplewood, 2012-2013 is on loan from the collection of Brook and Pam Smith.

About Raphaël Pichon

Raphaël Pichon trained at the two Paris Conservatoires before singing under the direction of Jordi Savall, Gustav Leonhardt, Ton Koopman, and Geoffroy Jourdain. In 2006 he founded Ensemble Pygmalion, which combines a choir and an orchestra playing on period instruments. His artistic choices with this ensemble are notable for their coherence and singularity. Among the most significant projects of recent years have been the rediscovery of Luigi Rossi's *Orfeo* (2016), the spatialization of Monteverdi's *Vespers* in several international venues (2017), *Miranda* at the Opéra Comique after stage works by Purcell (2017), the revival of Simon McBurney's production of *Die Zauberflöte* at Aix-en-Provence (2018), the Berlioz version of Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice* at the Opéra Comique (2018) and Mozart's *Requiem* staged by Romeo Castellucci at Aix-en-Provence (2019). While regularly returning to Bach and Mozart, Raphaël Pichon's repertoire is following a process of filiation and opening up to German Romanticism and works of the early 20th century.

About Ensemble Pygmalion

Pygmalion, the combined choir and period-instrument orchestra founded by Raphaël Pichon in 2006, explores the filiations that link Bach to Mendelssohn, Schütz to Brahms, and Rameau to Gluck and Berlioz. Alongside the great repertory works of which it offers a reinterpretation (Bach's *Passions*, Rameau's *tragedies lyriques*, Mozart's Mass in C minor, Mendelssohn's *Elias*, the Monteverdi *Vespers*), Pygmalion endeavors to construct original programs that shed light on the multiple correspondences between works while restoring the spirit of their creation: these include *Mozart and the Weber Sisters*; *Miranda* with music by Purcell; *Stravaganza d'Amore!*, which evokes the birth of opera at the Medici court; *Enfers* with Stéphane Degout; and the cycle *Bach en sept paroles* at the Philharmonie de Paris.

For the operatic works it performs, Pygmalion collaborates with such directors as Katie Mitchell, Romeo Castellucci, Aurélien Bory, Simon McBurney, Jetske Mijnsen, Pierre Audi, and Michel Fau. In residence at the Opéra National de Bordeaux, Pygmalion regularly performs in the leading musical centers in France.



About Pierre Audi

A critically acclaimed director and artistic director, Pierre Audi's career trajectory has been characterized by both reinventing the classics and supporting groundbreaking new work. As founder of the Almeida Theatre, Audi's direction established an international reputation for producing and directing provocative new plays and musical commissions. During his 30-year tenure as the Artistic Director of the Dutch National Opera, Audi transformed the company into one of the most cutting-edge and successful in Europe, with a commitment to commissioning new work and building new audiences. He served 10 years as Artistic Director of the Holland Festival, presenting works in music, dance, theater, and visual art by such artists as William Kentridge and John Baldessari; directors Peter Sellars and Sam Mendes; choreographers Mark Morris and William Forsythe; and contemporary composers John Adams and Louis Andriessen. Audi has also worked as guest director at a number of opera and theater companies, including the Metropolitan Opera in New York, the Paris Opera, the Ruhrtriennale, the Salzburg festival, and the Vienna State Opera.

Audi has been the recipient of many awards, including the 2018 Gold Medal of Arts and Sciences in the House of Orange Nassau. Additional awards for Audi's work include the Leslie Boosey Award, the Prize of Holland's Theater Critics, the Netherlands State prize for the arts, and the Johannes Vermeer Award. Audi was knighted in the Order of the Dutch Lion in 2000 and was made Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur in 2006 in France. Many of his productions introduced at the Dutch National Opera have gone on to win acclaim on other stages as they did in Amsterdam, including his cycle of all four Monteverdi operas.

Audi has been instrumental across the international arts scene, leading and transforming a robust roster of pre-eminent performing arts institutions, including the Almeida Theatre (Founder), Dutch National Opera (Artistic Director), Holland Festival (Artistic Director), and Festival d'Aix-en-Provence (General Director).

In June 2015, Audi was appointed the Marina Kellen French Artistic Director of the Park Avenue Armory in New York and has directed *Répons* and *Circle Map* in its Wade Thompson Drill Hall.

About Berlinde De Bruyckere

Born in Ghent, Belgium in 1964, where she currently lives and works, De Bruyckere is profoundly influenced by traditions of the Flemish Renaissance. Drawing from the legacies of the European Old Masters and Christian iconography, as well as mythology and cultural lore, De Bruyckere layers existing histories with new narratives suggested by current events to create a psychological terrain of pathos, tenderness, and unease. The dualities of love and suffering, danger and protection, life and death, and the human need for understanding are the universal themes De Bruyckere has been dealing with since the beginning of her career. "I want to show how helpless a body can be," De Bruyckere has said. "Which is nothing you have to be afraid of—it can be something beautiful."

In 2013 De Bruyckere was selected to represent Belgium at the 55th Venice Biennale where she unveiled her monumental work *Kreupelbout-Cripplewood, 2012-2013*, a collaboration with Nobel Prize novelist J.M. Coetzee.



Kreupelhout-Cripplewood, 2012-2013 is on loan from the collection of Brook and Pam Smith. Inspired by the sculpture's message of rebirth and transformation, the Smiths—who also founded the Appalachian Impact Fund—are working with the people of Eastern Kentucky to launch the SomeWhere Appalachia Initiative to support arts incubation, education, economic development, and land conservancy in the region. *Kreupelhout-Cripplewood, 2012-2013* will be the centerpiece of SomeWhere Appalachia Initiative's future home in Eastern Kentucky.

About Park Avenue Armory

Part palace, part industrial shed, Park Avenue Armory fills a critical void in the cultural ecology of New York by enabling artists to create, students to explore, 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—reminiscent of 19th-century European train stations—and an array of exuberant period rooms, the Armory offers a platform for creativity across all art forms. Together, these and other spaces within the historic building utilized for arts programming comprise the Thompson Arts Center, named in recognition of the Thompson family's ongoing support of the institution.

Since its first production in September 2007, the Armory has organized and commissioned immersive performances, installations, and cross-disciplinary collaborations in its vast Drill Hall that defy traditional categorization and challenge artists to push the boundaries of their practice. In its historic period rooms, the Armory presents small-scale performances and programs, including its acclaimed Recital Series, which showcases musical talent from across the globe within the intimate salon setting of the Board of Officers Room; and the new Artists Studio series in the newly restored Veterans Room, which features innovative artists and artistic pairings that harken back to the imaginative collaboration and improvisation of the original group of designers who conceived the space. The Armory also offers robust arts education programs at no cost to underserved New York City public school students, engaging them with the institution's artistic programming and the building's history and architecture.

Programmatic highlights from the Armory include *The Let Go*, a site-specific immersive dance celebration by Nick Cave; a Lenape Pow Wow and Standing Ground Symposium, the first congregation of Lenape Leaders on Manhattan Island since the 1700s; an immersive *Macbeth* set in a Scottish heath and henge by Rob Ashford and Kenneth Branagh; Ernesto Neto's *anthropodino*, a large-scale, interactive sculpture and labyrinth comprising a 120 by 180-foot canopy extended across the Drill Hall and 60-foot aromatic fabric stalactites; Bernd Alois Zimmermann's harrowing *Die Soldaten*, in which the audience moved "through the music"; *the event of a thread*, a site-specific installation by Ann Hamilton; the final performances of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company across three separate stages; *WS* by Paul McCarthy, a monumental installation of fantasy, excess, and dystopia; a profound and radically inclusive staging of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* staged by Peter Sellars and performed by Sir Simon Rattle and the Berliner Philharmoniker; *FLEXN*, an Armory-commissioned presentation of the Brooklyn-born street dance Flex, created by Reggie "Regg Roc" Gray and Director Peter Sellars; Louis Andriessen's *De Materie* in a highly imaginative staging by director Heiner Goebbels that included floating zeppelins and a flock of 100 sheep; *Circle Map*, two evenings of immersive spatial works by internationally acclaimed composer Kaija Saariaho performed by the New York

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Philharmonic with *mise-en-espace* by Armory Artistic Director Pierre Audi; Taryn Simon's *An Occupation of Loss*, a monumental work with 30 professional mourners from around the world that blended sculpture, sound, architecture, and performance in an exploration of the boundaries of grief between living and dead, past and present, performer and viewer; Julian Rosefeldt's *Manifesto*, a multi-channel cinematic installation featuring Cate Blanchett; eight-time Drama Desk-nominated play *The Hairy Ape*, directed by Richard Jones and starring Bobby Cannavale; *Hansel & Gretel*, a new commission by Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, and Ai Weiwei that transformed and activated the Drill Hall to explore the meaning of publicly shared space in the era of surveillance; Simon Stone's heralded production of *Yerma* starring Billie Piper in her North American debut; and Sam Mendes' critically acclaimed production of *The Lehman Trilogy*, starring Adam Godley, Ben Miles, and Simon Russell Beale.

Concurrent with its artistic program, the Armory has undertaken an ongoing \$215-million revitalization of its historic building, designed by architects Herzog & de Meuron.

www.armoryonpark.org

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