



**THOMPSON FAMILY FOUNDATION GIVES \$65 MILLION  
TO CREATE ENDOWMENT FOR PARK AVENUE ARMORY'S  
ARTISTIC AND EDUCATION PROGRAMMING**

**Gift Launches Next Phase of Trailblazing Institution's Growth and  
Brings Total Amount Donated by Thompson Family to Nearly \$129 Million**

**New York, NY**– July 9, 2015 – Park Avenue Armory announced today that the Thompson Family Foundation has given \$65 million to kick-start a programming endowment that will allow the Armory to expand the range and number of groundbreaking works in the performing and visual arts it presents, as well as the scale and reach of its arts education initiatives for underserved public school students. The gift brings the total amount donated by the family to the Armory to nearly \$129 million, including seminal support beginning more than two decades ago to save the once-neglected building and revitalize it as a trailblazing nonprofit arts organization. In recognition of Wade Thompson and his family's extraordinary vision, tenacity, and generosity, the spaces within the Armory building dedicated to the institution's arts programming will be named the Thompson Arts Center at Park Avenue Armory. At the family's request, the Thompson Arts Center name will last for a period of 50 years.

"Wade is the reason that the Armory building was saved. He was a tireless champion of preservation with a purpose and, when he saw the Armory falling apart, he set himself the task of saving it. From the beginning, he and his family believed in the potential of the Armory to become a major international cultural enterprise unlike any that had come before—and their gifts at critical moments of the Armory's growth reflect that shared passion," said Park Avenue Armory President and Executive Producer Rebecca Robertson. "This support comes as we continue to expand the Armory as an ambitious, artist-centric institution presenting unconventional programming across genres. With this new gift, the Foundation has generously started an endowment fund which will allow the Armory to expand our work with artists in realizing their greatest visions, serve ever-broader audiences, and launch new arts and arts education initiatives. I would like to thank Wade, his wife Angela, his children Amanda and Charles, and the Thompson Foundation for their visionary leadership."

"Wade passionately believed that the Armory should be rescued as one of the country's most important landmarks and that with world class programming in its beautiful and dramatic spaces, it could become a cultural institution of global stature. Working with Elihu [Rose], Rebecca, and others, he fearlessly led the charge. He would be so pleased to see that the bold reinvigoration he set in motion is succeeding beyond his wildest dreams," said Angela Thompson. "That is why the Foundation and the family are proud to establish an endowment that helps the Armory continue to move confidently forward on its groundbreaking path. We hope this gift will motivate others to support the institution as it grows and continues to add new dimensions to the cultural dynamism of the City."

"Wade donated an incredible amount of time, energy, and intelligence to the creation of an organization that would restore the Armory and give it new, meaningful purpose as a contemporary arts institution. This was his passion, and it was one that I and my fellow trustees shared with him and continue to have to this day. What a good time we had fighting for our Armory! The Thompson Family Foundation's new gift enables the Armory to continue to grow and thrive for future generations," said Elihu Rose, chairman of Park Avenue Armory.

Wade Thompson, who lived across the street from the Armory, became interested in saving it when he first observed its deterioration. Originally constructed between 1877 and 1881 by the elite Seventh Regiment of the National Guard, the Armory houses one of the most important collections of 19<sup>th</sup>-century interiors in the United States—with 18 rooms designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany, Stanford White, the Herter Brothers, and Pottier & Strym, among other prominent designers from the era—as well as a soaring 55,000-square-foot drill hall, an

engineering feat of its time and one of the largest unobstructed indoor spaces in the City. By the 1990s, the building was suffering such severe damage from poor maintenance and water infiltration that it was named among the world's most endangered landmarks by the World Monuments Fund in 2000.

Wade Thompson and the Thompson Family have made vital contributions at every stage of the Armory's development as a new cultural model. Between 1994 and 2006, Thompson spearheaded the campaign to be granted responsibility for overseeing the Armory from the State of New York so it could be rescued from near-irreparable decline. He donated \$4 million of "seed" money to secure a 99-year lease from the State of New York in December 2006, and to create and staff a new nonprofit organization to take over management and planning of the Armory, with Elihu Rose, Rebecca Robertson, and others. This new organization immediately began work on a renovation and restoration plan, designed and overseen by Herzog & de Meuron with Platt Byard Dovell White. The new nonprofit also conceptualized an artistic program that would capitalize on the Armory's unparalleled spaces and fill a critical gap in the cultural ecology of New York. It presented its first artistic production, *Greeting Card* by Aaron Young, in its drill hall in September 2007.

In 2008, Wade Thompson donated \$31 million to restore the drill hall and put in place the infrastructure needed to enable the Armory to present major artistic productions in the massive 55,000-square-foot, 80-foot high space. This included essential mechanical upgrades and a flexible stage-house, all installed in a way that does not intrude upon the dramatic, soaring space. In 2011, the Thompson Family Foundation donated \$15 million to restore and revitalize the Armory's Board of Officers Room and create an intimate performance space to complement the drill hall. The room, designed originally by Herter Brothers, is today a recital hall for chamber music and spoken-word performances, acclaimed for both its acoustics and beauty. In 2014, to further expand renovated performance and exhibition space at the Armory, the Foundation jump-started the campaign to restore the famed Veterans Room with a gift of \$13.715 million towards an \$18 million campaign. The room is one of the few surviving interiors by Louis C. Tiffany and Associated Artists, and considered one of the most important interiors in the country. The restoration and renovation will be complete by the end of the year, with programming to be inaugurated within the space in early 2016.

Park Avenue Armory is in the midst of a \$210 million renovation and upgrade of the entire building and the spaces it uses for its programming, for which it is still raising funds. The gift from the Thompson Family Foundation is specifically dedicated to the creation of an endowment to support programming and education on an ongoing basis.

### **About Wade F.B. Thompson and the Thompson Family Foundation**

The founding president of Park Avenue Armory, Wade F.B. Thompson was the co-founder and CEO of Thor Industries, Inc., which he built into the largest recreation vehicle company in the world. The Thompson Family Foundation, created by Thompson, is dedicated to pursuing his and the Thompson family's interests and includes the preservation and conservation of public places, the arts, education, and cancer research.

Thompson's efforts to save the Armory reflected his strong belief that landmarks contribute to a city's character and quality of life. In 2007, he was a recipient of the Municipal Art Society of New York's Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Medal for his work on the Armory project, and in 2008 he received the Restore America Hero Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation for his dedication to landmark conservation. In recognition of their lifelong commitment to Central Park, Wade and Angela Thompson received the Frederick Law Olmsted award from the Central Park Conservancy in June 2009, before his untimely passing in December 2009.

A champion of cancer screening and early detection, Thompson founded the Drive Against Prostate Cancer in 2000, consisting of two Thor mobile medical vehicles that travel from coast to coast offering free prostate cancer screenings, targeting in particular the underserved and armed forces veterans. He received the Cancer Research Institute's Oliver R. Grace award for distinguished service in advance cancer research in 2007.

## 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—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 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. Among the highlights of its first eight years are: Bernd Alois Zimmermann’s harrowing *Die Soldaten*, in which the audience moved “through the music;” the unprecedented six-week residency of the Royal Shakespeare Company in their own theater rebuilt in the drill hall; a sprawling gauzy, multisensory labyrinth created by Ernesto Neto; *the event of a thread*, a site-specific installation by Ann Hamilton; the final performances of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company simultaneously across three separate stages; the New York Philharmonic performing Karlheinz Stockhausen’s sonic masterpiece *Gruppen* with three orchestras surrounding the audience; *WS* by Paul McCarthy, a monumental installation of fantasy, excess, and dystopia; a sonic environment that blurred the boundaries between artist and audience created by the xx; an immersive *Macbeth* set in a Scottish heath and henge by Rob Ashford and Kenneth Branagh; and *tears become...streams become...*, a major genre-defying collaboration between artist Douglas Gordon and pianist Hélène Grimaud, which flooded the Armory’s drill hall.

**For more information or to request images, please contact Resnicow + Associates:**

Juliet Sorce, [jsorce@resnicow.com](mailto:jsorce@resnicow.com) or (212) 671-5158  
Isabel Sinistore, [isinistore@resnicow.com](mailto:isinistore@resnicow.com) or (212) 671-5175  
Chelsea Bruck, [cbruck@resnicow.com](mailto:cbruck@resnicow.com) or (212) 671-5164  
Emily Viemeister, [eviemeister@resnicow.com](mailto:eviemeister@resnicow.com) or (212) 671-5177