

**PARK AVENUE
ARMORY**



MAJOR FLEX DANCE COMMISSION LAUNCHES PARK AVENUE ARMORY'S 2015 SEASON

A Collaboration of Dancer and Choreographer Reggie "Regg Roc" Gray and Director Peter Sellars,
FLEXN Brings Brooklyn-Born Street Dance to the Armory
March 25 - April 4, 2015

New York, NY - October 29, 2014 - Park Avenue Armory has commissioned dance pioneer Reggie "Regg Roc" Gray and visionary director Peter Sellars to create a performance piece that evolves the tradition of flex, the Brooklyn-born street dance. Characterized by sharp, rhythmic contortion, pausing, snapping, gliding, and animated showmanship, the flex form evolved from the Jamaican bruk-up style popular in the dance halls and reggae clubs of Brooklyn in the 1990s. Opening in March 2015, and marking the first presentation of the Armory's 2015 artistic season, *FLEXN* transforms the dance from its traditional, individual, combative style to create a collaborative work of social commentary and storytelling.

"*FLEXN* is such a wonderful embodiment of our mission here at the Armory to stretch the boundaries of artistic forms and always provide audiences with the unexpected and unpredictable," said Rebecca Robertson, President and Executive Producer of Park Avenue Armory. "It has been so exciting to watch Gray, Sellars, and the dancers elevate this powerful form of expression to new heights."

Co-directed by Gray and Sellars, the Armory commission brings together 18 dancers from the Brooklyn neighborhoods where the flex movement was born. Assembled specially for this engagement and performing together for the first time, they will animate a 70-foot-long runway-style stage within the muscular Wade Thompson Drill Hall, which will incorporate images by photographer Richard Ross, creator of the work *Juvenile In Justice*. The dancers will perform alternatively solo and as a group to choreography created by the ensemble itself, with music provided live by DJ Epic.

"Flex is a truly New York style of dance, yet also one that speaks on a visceral level to a much broader audience," said Alex Poots, Artistic Director of Park Avenue Armory. "These dancers' movements, almost super-human, allow them to tap into incredible depths of emotion as they challenge themselves to use the form as a vehicle for storytelling and explore themes of empowerment, confinement, and breaking free."

FLEXN has been in development at the Armory since the second half of 2014, with workshops and rehearsals taking place in the drill hall. Previous dance presentations at the Armory include the final performances of the Merce Dance Company, Trisha Brown Dance Company's iconic *Astral Converted*, the world premiere of Shen Wei Dance Arts' *Undivided Divided*, and Streb Extreme Action's *Kiss the Air!*

Park Avenue Armory's 2014 season of programming concludes in December with the institution's eighth visual art commission, a collaboration between artist Douglas Gordon and pianist Hélène Grimaud, *tears become...streams become...*. The Armory's annual gala will be held on October 30, 2014 and will honor *FLEXN* co-director Peter Sellars, whose acclaimed staging of *St. Matthew Passion* was presented at Park Avenue Armory this fall. The Armory's entire 2015 season will be announced in the coming weeks. More information may be found at armoryonpark.org.

FLEXN

Co-directed by Reggie “Regg Roc” Gray and Peter Sellars
Music by DJ Epic
Lighting Design by Ben Zamora

March 25-April 4, 2015
Tue-Sat at 8:00pm / Sun at 3pm

Tickets for *FLEXN* will go on sale later this fall. Visit armoryonpark.org for details.

Citi is the Armory’s 2015 season sponsor.

Support for Park Avenue Armory’s artistic season has been generously provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Booth Ferris Foundation, The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, The Shubert Foundation, the Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, and the Leon Levy Foundation.

This production is supported in part by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

About Reggie “Regg Roc” Gray

Choreographer and dancer Reggie “Regg Roc” Gray has been a pioneer of flex dance for more than a decade, performing around the globe with his award-winning crew HyperActive. Born in East New York Brooklyn, Gray began his journey in dance at the age of three, inspired by the legendary Michael Jackson. First introduced to the Bruk-up style of dance, flex’s precursor, at a block party as a teenager Gray later formed elite dance teams which competed on the television series *Flex N Brooklyn* and elsewhere in the borough. Gray and his teams would go on to evolve the flex form, win numerous competitions, and help spread the style’s popularity throughout New York and beyond.

In 2011, Gray founded the dance competition D.R.E.A.M (Dance Rules Everything Around Me), which has become an important launching pad for young flex dancers, or “flexors.” D.R.E.A.M. has broadened the genre while protecting the essence of flex culture, focusing on collaborative teamwork to build community amongst the dancers. Gray has made several appearances on American television and in commercials, and has been featured in music videos with Wayne Wonder, Sean Paul, Nicki Minaj, and others.

About Peter Sellars

Opera, theater, and festival director Peter Sellars has gained international renown for his groundbreaking and transformative interpretations of artistic masterpieces and collaborative projects with an extraordinary range of creative artists. Sellars has staged operas at the Glyndebourne Festival, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Netherlands Opera, Opéra National de Paris, Salzburg Festival, and San Francisco Opera, among others, and has established a reputation for bringing 20th-century and contemporary operas to the stage. Sellars has been a driving force in the creation of many new works with longtime collaborator composer John Adams, including *Nixon in China*, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, *El Niño*, and *Doctor Atomic*.

Sellars staged Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Saint Matthew Passion* with the Berlin Philharmonic at Park Avenue Armory in October 2014. Other recent projects have included a double bill of Tchaikovsky’s *Iolanta* and Stravinsky’s *Persephone* for Teatro Real in Madrid and critically acclaimed concert stagings of Bach’s *Saint Matthew Passion* and *Saint John Passion* with the Berlin Philharmonic. *The Indian Queen*, combining Purcell music, text, and dance, had its premiere at the Perm Opera and Ballet Theatre in 2013 and will be seen in London early in 2015. Theater projects have included a production of Euripides’ *The Children of Herakles*, focusing on contemporary immigration and refugee issues and experience; *Desdemona*, a collaboration with

the Nobel Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison and Malian composer and singer Rokia Traore, which was performed in major cities in Europe and the U.S. and presented in London as part of the Cultural Olympiad; and, most recently, a radical four person distillation and exploration of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Canada's Stratford Festival.

Sellers has led several major arts festivals, including the 1990 and 1993 Los Angeles Festivals and the 2002 Adelaide Arts Festival in Australia. In 2006 he was Artistic Director of New Crowned Hope, a month-long festival in Vienna for which he invited international artists from diverse cultural backgrounds to create new work in the fields of music, theater, dance, film, the visual arts, and architecture for the city's celebration of Mozart's 250th birth anniversary. Sellers is a professor in the Department of World Arts and Cultures at UCLA and Resident Curator of the Telluride Film Festival. He is the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, the Erasmus Prize, , and the Gish Prize, and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. This year was awarded the prestigious Polar Music Prize.

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 seven 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 massive digital sound and video environment by Ryoji Ikeda; 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 across three separate stages; the New York Philharmonic performing Karlheinz Stockhausen's sonic masterpiece *Gruppen* with three orchestras surrounding the audience; and *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; and an immersive *Macbeth* set in a Scottish heath and henge by Rob Ashford and Kenneth Branagh.

Concurrent with the development of its artistic program, the Armory has undertaken an ongoing \$200-million revitalization of its historic building, designed by architects Herzog & de Meuron.

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For more information or to request images, please contact:

Emily Viemeister
Resnicow Schroeder Associates
212-671-5177
eviemeister@resnicowschroeder.com

Isabel Sinistore
Resnicow Schroeder Associates
212-671-5175
isinistore@resnicowschroeder.com

Juliet Sorce
Resnicow Schroeder Associates
212-671-5158
jsorce@resnicowschroeder.com