



**Park Avenue Armory Announces ‘Social Distance Hall’ Season
Featuring Three New Commissions Created During the Pandemic by Bill T.
Jones; Steven Hoggett, Christine Jones, and David Byrne; and Laurie
Anderson and Jason Moran**

The First Production, *Afterwardsness* by Bill T. Jones, Opens on March 24

**Season of New Works Continues Armory’s Dedicated Support of Artists and
Allows Performers, Crew, and Audiences to Return to Live Performance in
Tested Safe and Socially Distanced Ways**

New York, NY – March 9, 2021 – Park Avenue Armory announced today the launch of **Social Distance Hall**, with a season of new commissions of dance, music, and theater created by artists during and in response to the pandemic. Health conditions and governmental regulations permitting, the season will premiere on March 24 with a new event conceived by **Bill T. Jones** and will also feature additional new commissions developed over the past eight months by **Steven Hoggett, Christine Jones, and David Byrne**; and **Laurie Anderson and Jason Moran**. Park Avenue Armory, like other open, flat-floored flexible venues, offers the possibility of welcoming live audiences back in a completely socially distanced and extremely safe environment that is not achievable in traditional performance venues that have fixed seating and tight corridors and lobbies.

The Armory, with its immense, 55,000-square-foot Wade Thompson Drill Hall and multiple airy rooms and entrances—featuring an air volume comparable to being outdoors—can provide an early pathway and model for the re-opening of the performing arts in New York and beyond. The Armory and its consultant team have designed seating plans for *Afterwardsness* for audiences at 10% of the Drill Hall’s normal capacity, in which audience members are placed 9 feet – 12 feet apart in every direction.

Rigorous safety protocols for audiences that extend from arrival, entry, and seating to performance and departure have been developed, workshoped, and tested with invited audiences. Among these safety procedures are: masks worn properly at all times; a detailed and monitored choreography of audience flow to ensure artists, patrons, and staff are socially distanced at all times throughout their visit; contactless temperature-checks and ticket scanning outside at the door; no points of gathering in the building or on the sidewalk; no retail concessions, food and beverages, or ticket sales; restroom use one person at a time, with cleaning between each use; and refreshing of the Drill Hall air three times pre-show and post show. Rapid Testing will be conducted on-site at the Armory.

If health conditions and governmental regulations do not permit the re-opening of the Armory on the dates noted below, the performances will be canceled, all tickets will be immediately refunded, and if possible, the performances will be rescheduled.

Reflecting the organization’s commitment to support creative endeavors and the entire artistic community, beginning in May 2020 the Armory turned to artists close to the institution to create new works that would offer employment and a glimmer of hope to a devastated cultural sector. The resulting Social Distance Hall season includes:

- ***Afterwardsness*** (March 24-31), an original composition created by dancer, director, and choreographer **Bill T. Jones**. Performed by nine dancers of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company, *Afterwardsness* addresses imposed isolation and the trauma of the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and the ongoing violence against Black bodies. The work is accompanied by a musical landscape featuring works by Holland Andrews, Pauline Kim—with an original violin homage to George Floyd entitled “8:46”—and the Company, as well as excerpts from Olivier Messiaen’s wartime composition *Quartet for the End of Time*. *Afterwardsness*, which was filmed in the Drill Hall in fall 2020 for future broadcasts, makes its premiere for ticketed audiences this year.
- ***SOCIAL! the social distance dance club*** (Dates TBA), an interactive music and movement-based experience conceived by choreographer **Steven Hoggett**, Tony Award-winning set designer **Christine Jones**—both of whom are currently Armory Artists-in-Residence—and musician **David Byrne**. The audience is invited to dance in their own socially distanced spotlights to a specially curated playlist, all the while listening to a wonderfully idiosyncratic instructional voice over by David Byrne. Moving free-form or in sync with the spoken choreography, audience members take part in a communal moment of cathartic release in an anxiety-ridden time.
- ***Party in the Bardo*** (Dates TBA), a collaboration between jazz pianist, Oscar-nominated composer, and MacArthur “Genius” **Jason Moran**, who curates the Armory’s Artists Studio Series, and multi-Grammy Award-winning performance artist **Laurie Anderson**. Anderson and Moran will perform each night, underpinned by the soundscape of LOU REED: DRONES, a sonic installation utilizing guitars from Reed’s collection and curated by his former guitar technician Stewart Hurwood. Over a series of days devoted to sonic meditations for the city of New York, Anderson and Moran will invite multiple musicians each day to create their own layer of sound over the Drones.

“Safety is our paramount concern, and after carefully choreographing every aspect of rehearsals, workshops, and a cast-audience filming of *Afterwardsness*, and following a review of our processes and protocols by the Department of Health, we are confident that these programs will be safe and powerful experiences for audiences hungry for the kind of connection and community that only live arts can provide. We will cancel the productions if health conditions do not permit the opening,” said **Rebecca Robertson, Founding President and Executive Producer of Park Avenue Armory**. “Over the past months, it has been invigorating to offer employment to the artists and workforce of the cultural sector when such offers are so scarce. And it has been an honor to work with artists who have reflected this time in such varied, revelatory, and nuanced ways and with such artistry. They have pushed their practices in new directions, which will provide audiences with rare and unconventional experiences.”

“As a nonprofit cultural institution, we are delighted to work in collaboration with Governor Cuomo and our fellow flexible spaces towards the reawakening and reopening of the arts in New York,” continued Robertson. “We thank the Governor for his leadership in this initiative.”

“The pandemic has been such a challenge for everyone, but especially performing artists who have seen their livelihoods come to an abrupt halt. The Armory is committed to supporting artists and fostering a community of creativity, so giving artists a chance to not only work but create in a way that is responsive to the situation we all find ourselves in was extremely important,” said the Armory’s **Marina Kellen French Artistic Director, Pierre Audi**. “The difficult circumstances and isolation did not hinder this brilliant group of artists’ creativity; rather, it provided a canvas for them to create work of astounding beauty and depth, utilizing the Drill Hall’s unconventional, wide open space as a vast canvas. The result is a set of special experiences that don’t merely function despite the limitations imposed by COVID-19 but because of them—innovation sparked by challenges.”

“Creating new, body-based work at a time when physical proximity is discouraged is no small feat. However, as is often the case when artists are forced to push through limitations, this is when things get really good,” said **Bill T. Jones**. “Having the Drill Hall, this grand and glorious space to create and dance in, was quite liberating. The Armory is a space like no other in New York City—and if it’s like no other in New York City, then it’s pretty unique in the world.”

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Park Avenue Armory has developed very strict [health and safety protocols](#) that include wearing masks at all times; and rigorously enforced point-to-point choreography that ensures that no individuals are ever less than a six-foot distance from each other. The plan meets or exceeds applicable governmental standards. The protocols satisfy or exceed the recommendations of Federal, State, and City agencies overseeing the response to the health crisis. **However as noted above, the Armory will only open and present programming if health conditions and governmental regulations permit.**

TICKETING

All tickets will be electronic/mobile-only and are available for purchase for *Afterwardsness* at armoryonpark.org. There will be no tickets available to purchase onsite. By purchasing a ticket to *Afterwardsness*, ticket buyers consent to being Rapid Tested for COVID-19 on site at Park Avenue Armory. For entry to the Armory, all audience members will be required to fill out a COVID questionnaire and provide contact tracing information. No exceptions will be made.

Tickets for *SOCIAL! the social distance dance club* and *Party in the Bardo* will go on sale at a later date, with additional details to be announced.

SPONSORSHIP

Citi and Bloomberg Philanthropies are the Armory’s 2021 Season Sponsors.

NewYork-Presbyterian is the Armory’s Official Healthcare Sponsor.

The Social Distance Hall is supported in part by The Kaplen Brothers Fund. *Afterwardsness* is supported in part by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the city council.

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.

ABOUT BILL T. JONES

Bill T. Jones (Artistic Director/Co-Founder/Choreographer: Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company; Artistic Director: New York Live Arts) is the Associate Artist of the 2020 Holland Festival and recipient of the 2014 Doris Duke Performing Artist Award; the 2013 National Medal of Arts; the 2010 Kennedy Center Honors; a 2010 Tony Award for Best Choreography of the critically acclaimed *FELLA!*; a 2007 Tony Award, 2007 Obie Award, and 2006 Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation CALLAWAY Award for his choreography for *Spring Awakening*; the 2010 Jacob’s Pillow Dance Award; the 2007 USA Eileen Harris Norton Fellowship; the 2006 Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Choreography for *The Seven*; the 2005 Wexner Prize; the 2005 Samuel H. Scripps American Dance Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement; the 2005 Harlem Renaissance Award; the 2003 Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize; and the 1994 MacArthur “Genius” Award. In 2010, Jones was recognized as Officier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government, and in 2000, The

Dance Heritage Coalition named Jones “An Irreplaceable Dance Treasure.” Jones choreographed and performed worldwide with his late partner, Arnie Zane, before forming the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company in 1982. He has created more than 140 works for his company. Jones is the Artistic Director of New York Live Arts, an organization that strives to create a robust framework in support of the nation’s dance and movement-based artists through new approaches to producing, presenting, and educating.

ABOUT STEVEN HOGGETT

Steven Hoggett’s recent credits as Movement Director include: *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (Broadway, West End, International); *Angels in America* (Broadway); *The Crucible* (Broadway); *The Glass Menagerie* (A.R.T., Broadway, EIF); *The Last Ship* (Broadway); *Once* (A.R.T., Broadway, West End); *Green Day’s American Idiot* (Broadway); *Rocky: The Musical* (Broadway); *Ocean at The End of the Lane*, *Pinocchio*, and *The Light Princess* (National Theatre); *The Twits* and *The End of History* (Royal Court); *St Joan* (Public). As Director, recent credits include *Close to You: Bacharach Reimagined* (West End). Music video credits include Biffy Clyro, Imogen Heap, Bright Light Bright Light, Goldfrapp, Calvin Harris, and Franz Ferdinand. Film credits include *How To Train Your Dragon 2* (Dreamworks) and *Freak Show* (Maven Pictures). Hoggett was a founding member of Frantic Assembly Theatre Company, and with Scott Graham co-wrote *The Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre* (Routledge).

ABOUT CHRISTINE JONES

Christine Jones is a collaborative artist working in theater, opera, public art, and the digital realm. She is the Creator and Artistic Director of the critically acclaimed THEATRE FOR ONE, which has recently moved online with its own platform. She is a Director of one-of-a-kind experiences for companies like Rag & Bone, and productions such as *Queen of the Night* (Drama Desk Award for Best Unique Experience). She is a Tony Award-winning Set Designer for *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child Pts I & II*, as well as *Green Day’s American Idiot*. Other credits include: *The Cher Show*, *Spring Awakening* (Tony Nomination), and *Let the Right One In* (St. Ann’s Warehouse and West End). Opera designs include: *La Traviata* and *Rigoletto* (Met Opera). Currently, she is developing a digital experience with Radiohead. She has an Obie for Sustained Excellence in Design and teaches at NYU Tisch and Princeton University.

ABOUT DAVID BYRNE

David Byrne is a musician, composer, and producer. Recent works include the Broadway debut of *David Byrne’s American Utopia* as well as the Spike Lee-directed film version, the launch of his *Reasons to be Cheerful* online magazine, and the solo album *American Utopia*. Byrne co-founded the band Talking Heads, for which he was the guitarist and lead singer, and established the record labels Luaka Bop and Todo Mundo. Other artistic achievements include the theatrical piece *Joan of Arc: Into the Fire*; a series of interactive environments questioning human perception and bias, *The Institute Presents: NEUROSOCIETY*; the theatrical production *Here Lies Love*; and the book *How Music Works*. Among his many laurels are Academy, Grammy, and Golden Globe awards.

ABOUT LAURIE ANDERSON

Laurie Anderson is one of America’s most renowned and daring creative pioneers. Best known for her multimedia presentations, innovative use of technology, and first-person style, she is a writer, director, visual artist, and vocalist who has created groundbreaking works that span the worlds of art, theater, and experimental music. Her recording career, launched by *O Superman* in 1981, includes many records released by Warner Records. Those releases include *Big Science* (1982), *Homeland* (2008) and *Landfall* (2018) released on Nonesuch which won a Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance. In 2002, Anderson was appointed the first artist-in-residence of NASA which culminated in her 2004 solo performance *The End of the Moon*. Anderson has published eight books. Her most recent release—*All The Things I Lost In The Flood* (Rizzoli)—is a series of essays about pictures, language, and codes. Anderson is also an acclaimed filmmaker who has made many films including the Arte-commissioned *Heart of a Dog* (2015), which was chosen as an official selection of the 2015 Venice and Toronto Film Festivals. In 2017 Anderson joined four other artists in MASS MoCA’s Building 6 inaugurating a fifteen-year rotating exhibition of work.

ABOUT JASON MORAN

Called “the most provocative thinker in current jazz” by *Rolling Stone*, pianist, composer, and artist Jason Moran was named a MacArthur Fellow and *Downbeat Magazine’s* “Jazz Artist of the Year” in 2010. He is the longtime curator for Park Avenue Armory’s *Artists Studio*, as well as Artistic Director for Jazz at The Kennedy Center. Moran currently teaches at the New England Conservatory.

Jason Moran’s activity stretches beyond his 15 critically acclaimed solo recordings and performances with masters of the form including Charles Lloyd, Cassandra Wilson, and the late Sam Rivers. His 21-year relationship with his trio, The Bandwagon—with Nasheet Waits and Tarus Mateen—has resulted in a profound discography for Blue Note Records and Yes Records, a label he co-owns with his wife, singer and composer Alicia Hall Moran.

Moran keeps a close relationship with music and activism, culminating in his scoring work with film director Ava DuVernay on *Selma* and *13th*. He also created and played the score of the Apollo Theater’s staged version and HBO’s adaptation of Ta-Nehisi Coates’ Award-winning book *Between the World and Me*. Within jazz, his multimedia tributes to Thelonious Monk, Fats Waller, and James Reese Europe have shifted the jazz paradigm combining striking visuals, music, and history into evening-length works. Moran has also collaborated with such artists as Adrian Piper, Joan Jonas, Glenn Ligon, Stan Douglas, Adam Pendleton, Lorna Simpson, and Kara Walker. Commissioning institutions of Moran’s work include the Walker Art Center, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Dia Art Foundation, Whitney Museum of American Art, Harlem Stage, and Jazz at Lincoln Center. In 2018, Moran had his first solo museum exhibition at the Walker Art Center, which traveled to the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA; Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

ABOUT PARK AVENUE ARMORY

Part palace, part industrial shed, Park Avenue Armory fills a critical void in the cultural ecology of New York, supporting unconventional works in the performing and visual arts that cannot be fully realized in a traditional proscenium theater, concert hall, or white wall gallery. With its soaring 55,000-square-foot Wade Thompson Drill Hall and an array of exuberant period rooms, the Armory enables a diverse range of artists to create, students to explore, and audiences to experience epic, adventurous, relevant work that cannot be done elsewhere in New York.

In its historic period rooms, the Armory presents more intimate 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; the *Artists Studio* series curated by Jason Moran in the newly restored Veterans Room, which features a diverse array of innovative artists and artistic pairings that reflect the imaginative improvisation of the young designers and artists who originally conceived the space; and *Interrogations of Form*, a public talks program that brings diverse artists and thought-leaders together for discussion and performance around the important issues of our time. The Armory also offers creativity-based arts education programs at no cost to thousands of underserved New York City public school students, engaging them with the institution’s artistic programming and outside-the-box creative processes.

Programmatic highlights from the Wade Thompson Drill Hall include Ernesto Neto’s *anthropodino*, a large-scale, interactive sculpture and labyrinth extended across the Drill Hall; 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 on three separate stages; an immersive *Macbeth* set in a Scottish heath with Kenneth Branagh; *WS* by Paul McCarthy, a monumental installation of fantasy, excess, and dystopia; a radically inclusive staging of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* staged by Peter Sellars and performed by Sir Simon Rattle and the Berliner Philharmoniker; *The Let Go*, a site-specific immersive dance celebration by Nick Cave; eight-time Drama Desk-nominated play *The Hairy Ape*, directed by Richard Jones and starring Bobby Cannavale; *Hansel & Gretel*, a new commission by Ai Weiwei, Jacques Herzog, and Pierre de Meuron that explored the meaning of publicly shared space in the era of surveillance; *FLEXN* and *FLEXN Evolution*, two Armory-commissioned presentations of the Brooklyn-born dance activists group

D.R.E.A.M. Ring, created by Reggie “Regg Roc” Gray and Director Peter Sellars; Simon Stone’s heralded production of *Yerma* starring Billie Piper in her North American debut; Satoshi Miyagi’s stunning production of *Antigone* set in a lake; Sam Mendes’ critically acclaimed production of *The Lehman Trilogy*; and the *Black Artists Retreat* hosted by Theaster Gates, which included public talks and performances, private sessions for the 300 attending artists, and a roller skating rink.

Among the performers who have appeared in the *Recitals Series* and the *Artists Studio* in the Armory’s restored Veterans Room or the Board of Officers Rooms are: Christian Gerhaher; Ian Bostridge; Jason Moran; Lawrence Brownlee; Barbara Hannigan; Lisette Oropesa; Roscoe Mitchell; Conrad Tao and Tyshawn Sorey; Rashaad Newsome; and Krecy Garcia (“El Prodigio”).

Highlights from the public programs that generally occupy the historic rooms on both the first and the second floors include: symposiums such as Carrie Mae Weems’ day-long event called *The Shape of Things* whose participants included Elizabeth Alexander, Theaster Gates, Elizabeth Diller, and Nona Hendryx; a day-long Lenape Pow Wow and Standing Ground Symposium held in the Wade Thompson Drill Hall, the first congregation of Lenape Leaders on Manhattan Island since the 1700s; salons such as the Literature Salon hosted by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins whose participants included Lynn Nottage, Suzan Lori-Parks, and Jeremy O. Harris, and a Spoken Word Salon co-hosted with the Nuyorican Poets Cafe; and most recently, *100 Years | 100 Women*, a multi-organization commissioning project that invited 100 women artists and cultural creators to respond to women’s suffrage.

Current Artists-in-Residence at the Armory include two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Lynn Nottage; Obie winner and Pulitzer short-listed playwright Branden Jacobs-Jenkins and Carmelita Tropicana; Reggie “Regg Roc” Gray and the D.R.E.A.M. Ring; singer and composer Sara Serpa; Tony Award-winning set designer and director Christine Jones and choreographer Steven Hoggett; and Mimi Lien, the first set designer to receive a MacArthur Fellowship. The Armory also supports artists through an active commissioning program including Nick Cave, Bill T. Jones, Lynn Nottage, Carrie Mae Weems, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, and others.

The Armory has undertaken an ongoing \$215-million renovation and restoration of its historic building designed by architects Herzog & de Meuron, with Platt Byard Dovell and White as Executive Architects.

www.armoryonpark.org

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