



Christine Jones, Steven Hoggett, and David Byrne Premiere
SOCIAL! the social distance dance club
In Park Avenue Armory's 55,000-Square-Foot Wade Thompson Drill Hall

Part of the Armory's New 'Social Distance Hall' Commissions Series,
SOCIAL! Safely Brings Audiences Together for Music, Movement,
and Connection

Performances run Friday, April 9 through Thursday, April 22

New York, NY –March 24, 2021 – Park Avenue Armory announced the dates for the world premiere of ***SOCIAL! the social distance dance club***, a new interactive and experiential movement piece commissioned by the Armory as part of its [Social Distance Hall](#), its recently announced series of commissions of dance, music, and theater created by artists during and in response to the pandemic. Conceived by **Christine Jones**, renowned set designer for *Spring Awakening*, *American Idiot*, and *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, **Steven Hoggett**, choreographer and movement director for *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, and multimedia artist and musician **David Byrne** (Talking Heads, *David Byrne's American Utopia* on stage and film and *Reasons to Be Cheerful*), *SOCIAL!* will begin **previews in the Drill Hall on April 9 and open April 13, running through April 22**. Show times during the week will be at 7pm and at 12pm, 4pm, and 8pm on Saturdays and Sundays. With a playlist curated by Byrne, Hoggett, and Jones and mixed by New York City DJ **Natasha Diggs**, *SOCIAL!* invites participants to the Armory's Wade Thompson Drill Hall to dance in their own socially distanced spotlights, all the while listening to a wonderfully singular instructional voice over by David Byrne with choreography by **Yasmine Lee**. Moving free-form or in sync with the spoken choreography (or not), audience members take part in a communal moment of cathartic release.

SOCIAL! is part of the Armory's **Social Distance Hall** commissioning initiative, which provides artists with the space and resources to create and present to in-person audiences new works devised for and reflective of a society grappling with COVID-19. 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.

Rigorous safety protocols for audiences that extend from arrival, entry, and seating to performance and departure have been developed, workshopped, and tested with invited audiences. Among these safety procedures are: masks worn properly at all times; a detailed and monitored system 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 limited to 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.

“The Armory’s commitment to supporting and partnering with artists in the creation of new works that are responsive to society is a foundational component of who we are as an organization. The commissioned work that is part of Social Distance Hall exists, not despite of, but because of the pandemic that we have all been living through over the last year,” said **Rebecca Robertson, Founding President and Executive Producer of Park Avenue Armory**. “With *SOCIAL!*, we are delighted to invite New Yorkers to come together through a communal, safe, and multisensory experience that draws on the building’s acoustics and grand architecture, and the Armory’s cross-disciplinary programming mission.”

SOCIAL! invites 100 participants – 10% of the Drill Hall’s normal capacity – to the Armory’s Drill Hall for a socially distanced dance club, where each member will have a six-foot diameter circle in which to dance and move, spaced out from surrounding circles to provide proper social distancing at all times. The distance between the circles north to south is twelve feet. Going east to west the distance between the circles alternates between fifteen feet and twelve feet. The curated playlist will include a taped overlay of spoken movement directions narrated by Byrne. Participants at all levels of experience can move freely or choose to follow David Byrne’s magical suggestions. A video of Byrne teaching choreography for a song on the playlist will be sent in advance to all participants, so the entire group can move in unison. Ultimately, *SOCIAL!* aims to provide a powerful healing moment that can be experienced individually and communally.

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.

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 *SOCIAL! the social distance dance club!* at armoryonpark.org. There will be no tickets available to purchase onsite. By purchasing a ticket to *SOCIAL!*, 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.

SOCIAL! the social distance dance club

By Steven Hoggett, Christine Jones, and David Byrne

Previews: April 9-12

Performances: April 13–April 22

Monday through Friday: 7:00 pm

Saturday & Sunday: 12:00pm, 4:00pm, 8:00 pm

Tickets: \$45

A Park Avenue Armory Production

Made by Kevin Adams, David Byrne, Natasha Diggs, Justin Ellington, Sarita Fellows, Steven Hoggett, Zoe Hurwitz, Mara Isaacs, Christine Jones, Yasmine Lee

Commissioned by Park Avenue Armory

Produced in association with Octopus Theatricals

SPONSORSHIP

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

The Social Distance Hall is supported in part by The Kaplen Brothers Fund.

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 Steven Hoggett

Recent credits as Movement Director/ Choreographer include: *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (Broadway, West End, International); *Angels in America* (Broadway); *The Crucible* (Broadway); *The Curious Incident of the Dog In The Night Time* (Royal National Theatre, West End, Broadway); *The Last Ship* (Broadway); *Let The Right One In* (National Theatre Scotland, St Anne's Warehouse); *Rocky: The Musical* (Broadway); *The Glass Menagerie* (A.R.T., Broadway, EIF); *Once* (A.R.T., Broadway, West End); *Peter & the Starcatcher* (Broadway); *American Idiot* (Broadway); *Ocean at The End of the Lane* and *The Light Princess* (National Theatre); *St Joan* (Public); and as Associate Director / Movement, *Black Watch* (National Theatre Scotland, St Anne's Warehouse). As Director, recent credits include: *Close to You: Bacharach Reimagined* (New York Theatre Workshop, West End). Hoggett was a director and 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 *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 forthcoming 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 Yasmine Lee

Yasmine Lee is a movement artist who has worked across film, television, theater, music videos, the concert dance stage, events and national commercials in over 30 countries. Select credits include: Broadway: *Harry Potter and The Cursed Child*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *The Crucible*, *Once* Musical, and *Rent*. Other: Katie Perry for *SNL*, The XXII Winter Olympic Games Opening Ceremonies, *PEARL The Show*, *Brown Butterfly*, *Across The Universe* (SONY Pictures), Margie Gillis' *Legacy Project*, The Dunham Technique Video (Library Of Congress), Joan Peter's Dance Co, *MOMIX*, *Amici Di Maria De Filippi* Season 9 (RAI TV), Issey Miyake product launch (Louvre Museum). Off Broadway: *Wild Goose Dreams*, *Tender Napalm*, *Knives in Hens*, and *Sweeney Todd*. Lee invites you to explore your deep groove, dance it out, and get free! Both the large expansive dance and the small intricate dance are full of infinite transformative potential.

About Natasha Diggs

Natasha Diggs is a world-renowned DJ, producer, record enthusiast and Resident of New York City's premiere dance party, Soul in The Horn. What started out as a deep love for music and collecting records in her teenage bedroom transformed into a life purpose of uplifting her community and liberating dance floors around the globe. Coined as the 45 Queen known for rockin' parties with her signature 7-inch vinyl sets, Diggs has collaborated and played with artists such as Erykah Badu, Mark Ronson, Lauryn Hill, Anderson .Paak, Q-Tip, Roy Ayers, Patti Labelle, and many more.

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 *antropodino*, 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 the 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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