



**Making Space at the Armory partners with National Black Theatre to present
HIDDEN CONVERSATIONS, June 18**

**Panelists including Nona Hendryx, Steven Fullwood, Ebony Noelle Golden,
Frida Escobedo, Mahogany L. Browne, and more discuss the legacy of NBT Founder
Dr. Barbara Ann Teer and its impact on the artistic community**

**Event includes performances, exhibitions, and sneak peeks into works in progress
from Harlem Soapbox, Awoye Timpo, Mikhaal Sulaiman, and Justin Hicks, among others,
ending with Trans Liberation pageant designed by Qween Jean**

New York, NY – Wednesday, May 24, 2023 – Park Avenue Armory is proud to announce the latest program in its Making Space Public Programming Series, **Hidden Conversations**, presented in partnership with National Black Theatre (NBT), **Sunday, June 18, 2023** from **3pm to 8pm**. This performance and salon continues Making Space’s programming efforts to center and uplift unheard artistic voices and conversations, in this case the perspective of Black voices and Black artists on important questions in artistic discourse. Held on Dr. Barbara Ann Teer’s birthday, this program is geared toward uplifting the work, brilliance, and impact of Teer’s legacy as well as the ways she and many others serve as the hidden architects of culture, helping to empower society and drive innovation, community care, and social impact.

The day opens with a live concert by **Harlem Soapbox** led by artist and creator **Marija Abney** and pianist, composer, and bandleader **Sean Mason** in the Veterans Room. An organization of freelance musicians created during the COVID-19 pandemic, Harlem Soapbox leads audiences on a journey into the music of the 60’s and the Black Arts movement. These eclectic artists come together for a sonic mash-up of some of the songs that helped to power and inspire the social movements of that time.

Two panel discussions follow the opening performance, tackling ideas about the past, present, and future of Black theater in the United States. The first panel, moderated by archivist and filmmaker **Steven Fullwood** and titled “Letters to the Future,” features the queen of funk **Nona Hendryx** and NBT CEO **Sade Lythcott**, discussing the crafting of the AfroFuture and National Black Theatre’s contribution to the canon. Second, a panel titled “June Jordan’s City of the Future” explores poet, playwright and essayist June Jordan’s legacy and impact on architecture as it relates to the lives of Black families and communities in the city of the future; this conversation also places the redevelopment of NBT’s building to serve as a destination for Black culture through theater in this context. Discussing the topics of architecture, cultural and civic renewal through built space, and how a creative practice can help protect the future; this panel features Mexican architect **Frida Escobedo**, artist and cultural strategist **Ebony Noelle Golden** and others, and is moderated by **Camille Bacon**, writer and manager of McArthur Binion’s studio, with a creative offering to start the conversations by poet **Mahogany L. Brown**.

Activations running concurrently with the panels allow audiences a glimpse into new exhibitions and works in progress from National Black Theatre studio artists, including: experimental theater maker **nicHi Douglas**; dancer and writer **Jerron Herman**; director and producer **Awoye Timpo**, uplifting Black theater classics through her collective The Classix; with original compositions by numerous

artists such as sound designers/composers **Aaron Marcellus**, **Mikaal Sulaiman**, **Holland Andrews**, **JOJO ABOT**, and **Justin Hicks** shared in a botanical meditative space; and a live silent disco with **DJ Stormin' Norman**; rounded out with a selection of original films curated and commissioned by National Black Theatre. The day's events close with a Trans Liberation pageant led and created by **Qween Jean**, costume designer and founder of Black Trans Liberation.

“We are pleased to reunite with our lead commissioning partner from 2020’s *100 Years | 100 Women* initiative to celebrate their Founder’s Day at the Armory this June,” said **Tavia Nyong’o**, Curator of Public Programming at Park Avenue Armory. “This day will be a love letter to the future of Black performance. It will be a homecoming where we get to imagine a theater for all of us in our joyous diversity.”

This program is a part of NBT’s 55th Theatrical Season themed “Love, A Ritual Of Repair.” Speaking on how the day inspires audiences to look back and to imagine how to creatively move and build forward, NBT CEO and Teer’s daughter **Sade Lythcott** said: “June 18th marks what would have been my mom, Dr. Barbara Ann Teer’s 86th birthday. Founder of National Black Theatre and one of the foremothers of the Black Arts Movement, Teer’s impact is indelible and has created the framework for the liberatory exploration and social practices of many contemporary Black artists today. We are thrilled to celebrate her life, legacy, and fruits of her pedagogy with this day-long celebration as her work continues to push the Black theater form forward.”

Held in the Armory’s historic period rooms and spaces, Making Space is an insightful series of cutting-edge conversations, performances, and activations that provide a unique forum for bridging art and culture. Curated by Tavia Nyong’o, these gatherings foster the art of conversation and dialogue about Armory productions and urgent questions of our day, making space for new points of view and unique perspectives from a diverse array of artists, scholars, cultural leaders, and social trailblazers. The 2023 Season of Making Space previously featured: Symposium: Sound & Color – The Future of Race in Design, an interdisciplinary forum exploring how race matters in creative design for live performance hosted by lighting designer Jane Cox, playwright Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, set designer Mimi Lien, and sound designer and composer Mikaal Sulaiman and featuring collaborations with Design Action and Oregon Shakespeare Festival; Juke Joint, a two-day event spotlighting the history of the juke joint in Black American social history and its legacy in music and culture, including performances by Pamela Sneed and Stew; and Hapo Na Zamani, a 1960s-style happening curated by Carl Hancock Rux with music direction by Vernon Reid, and presented in collaboration with Harlem Stage. Future programs on the Making Space Public Programming series include *Corpus Delicti*, a convening of artists, activists, and intellectuals imagines and enacts transgender art and music as a vehicle for dialogue across differences presented in conjunction with Arca’s *Mutant;Destrudo*; and *Seasons of Dance*, a contemporary dance salon presented in conjunction with *The Rite of Spring / common ground[s]*.

TICKETING

Tickets at \$35 (plus fees) are available for purchase online at armoryonpark.org or through the Box Office by phone at (212) 933-5812, from 10am to 6pm, Monday through Friday. In person Box Office hours may vary.

SPONSORSHIP

Bloomberg Philanthropies is the Armory’s 2023 Season Sponsor.

Support for Park Avenue Armory's artistic season has been generously provided by The Thompson Family Foundation, the Charina Endowment Fund, the Donald A. Pels Charitable Trust, The Shubert Foundation, 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 Marc Haas Foundation, the Prospect Hill Foundation, the Reed Foundation, Wescustogo Foundation, the Leon Levy Foundation, the May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation, Gregory Annenberg Weingarten, GRoW @ Annenberg, The Emma and Georgina Bloomberg Foundation, the Richenthal Foundation, and the Isak and Rose Weinman Foundation. Additional support has been provided by the Armory's Artistic Council. Public support is provided by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature.

Making Space at the Armory is supported, in part, with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts.

ABOUT NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE

National Black Theatre (NBT) is a Tony Award-nominated institution founded in 1968 by the late visionary artist Dr. Barbara Ann Teer. The nation's first revenue-generating Black arts complex, NBT is the longest-running Black theater in New York City, one of the oldest theaters founded and consistently operated by a woman of color in the nation and has been included in the permanent collection of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC. NBT's core mission is to produce transformational theater that helps to shift the inaccuracies around African Americans' cultural identity by telling authentic stories of Black lives. As an alternative learning environment, NBT uses theater arts as a means to educate, enrich, entertain, empower, and inform the national conscience around current social issues impacting our communities. Under the leadership of Sade Lythcott, CEO, and Jonathan McCrory, Executive Artistic Director, NBT helps re-shape a more inclusive American theater field by providing an artistically rigorous and culturally sensitive space for artists of color to experiment, develop, and present new work. Working with trailblazing artists from Nona Hendryx to Jeremy O. Harris; helping to launch the careers, most recently, of artists such as **Dominique Morisseau, Radha Blank, Mfoniso Udofia, Saheem Ali, Lee Edward Colston II, and Ebony Noelle Golden**; and incubating Obie Award-winning companies like The Movement Theatre Company and Harlem9's 48Hours in Harlem, NBT's cultural production remains unparalleled. Located in the heart of Harlem, NBT is embarking on a historic major capital redevelopment project that will transform the current property into a 21st-century destination for Black culture through theater. NBT welcomes more than 90,000 visitors annually; has produced 300+ original works; won two Obie awards and 58 AUDELCO Awards; received a CEBA Award of Merit; and has been nominated for multiple Drama Desk awards. NBT is supported by grants from Booth Ferris Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Ford Foundation, New York Community Trust, Shubert Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, Jerome Foundation, Mellon Foundation, Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation, City Council of New York, City of New York Department of Cultural Affairs, New York State Council on the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, and private donations.

www.nationalblacktheatre.org

ABOUT PUBLIC PROGRAMMING AT THE ARMORY

Park Avenue Armory's Public Programming series brings diverse artists and cultural thought-leaders together for discussion and performance around the important issues of our time viewed through an artistic lens. Launched in 2017, the series encompasses a variety of programs including large-scale

community events; multi-day symposia; intimate salons featuring performances, panels, and discussions; Artist Talks in relation to the Armory's Drill Hall programming; and other creative interventions.

Highlights from the Public Programming series include: **Carrie Mae Weems'** 2017 event *The Shape of Things* and 2021 convening and concert series *Land of Broken Dreams*, whose participants included **Elizabeth Alexander, Theaster Gates, Elizabeth Diller, Nona Hendryx, Somi, and Spike Lee**, among others; a daylong Lenape Pow Wow and Standing Ground Symposium held in the Wade Thompson Drill Hall, the first congregation of Lenape Elders on Manhattan Island since the 1700s; "A New Vision for Justice in America" conversation series in collaboration with Common Justice, exploring new coalitions, insights, and ways of understanding question of justice and injustice in relation moderated by *FLEXN Evolution* creators **Reggie (Regg Roc) Gray** and director **Peter Sellars**; the 2019 *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; *100 Years | 100 Women*, a multi-organization commissioning project that invited 100 women artists and cultural creators to respond to women's suffrage; a Queer Hip Hop Cypher, delving into the queer origins and aesthetics of hip hop with Astraea award-winning duo **Krudxs Cubensi** and author and scholar **Dr. Shante Paradigm Smalls**; the Archer Aymes Retrospective, exploring the legacy of emancipation through an immersive art installation curated by **Carl Hancock Rux** and featuring a concert performance by mezzo soprano **Alicia Hall Moran** and pianist **Aaron Diehl**, presented as one component of a three-part series commemorating Juneteenth in collaboration with Harlem Stage and Lincoln Center as part of the Festival of New York; and legendary artist **Nao Bustamante's BLOOM**, a cross-disciplinary investigation centered around the design of the vaginal speculum and its use in the exploitative and patriarchal history of the pelvic examination.

Notable Public Programming salons include: the Literature Salon hosted by **Branden Jacobs-Jenkins**, whose participants included **Lynn Nottage, Suzan Lori-Parks, and Jeremy O. Harris**, a Spoken Word Salon co-hosted with the **Nuyorican Poets Cafe**; a Film Salon featuring the works of immersive artist and film director **Lynette Wallworth**; "Museum as Sanctuary" led by installation artist and Artist-in-Residence **Tania Bruguera**, curated by **Sonia Guiñansaca** and **CultureStrike**, and featuring undocu-artists **Julio Salgado** and **Emulsify**; a Dance Salon presented in partnership with **Dance Theater of Harlem**, including New York City Ballet's **Wendy Whelan** and choreographer **Francesca Harper**, among others; and **Captcha: Dancing, Data, Liberation**, a salon exploring Black visual complexity and spirit, led by visionary artist **Rashaad Newsome** and featuring **Saidiya V. Hartman, Kiyan Williams, Dazié Rustin Grego-Sykes, Ms.Boogie, Puma Camillê**, and others.

Artist Talks have featured esteemed artists, scholars, and thought leaders, such as: architects **Jacques Herzog** and **Pierre de Meuron** in conversation with **Ai Wei Wei**, moderated by Juilliard president **Damian Woetzel**; director **Ariane Mnouchkine** and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright **Tony Kushner** in conversation with *New Yorker* editor **David Remnick**; director **Ivo van Hove** in conversation with **James Nicola**, Artistic Director of New York Theater Workshop; artist **William Kentridge** and his collaborators **Philip Miller** and **Thuthuka Sibisi** in conversation with **Dr. Augustus Casely Hayford**, Director of the Smithsonian, National Museum of African Art; *Lehman Trilogy* director **Sam Mendez** and adapter **Ben Powers** in conversation with playwright **Lynn Nottage**; artist and composer **Heiner Goebbels** in conversation with composer, vocalist, and scholar **Gelsey Bell**; choreographer **Bill T. Jones** in conversation with architect **Elizabeth Diller** and designer **Peter Nigrini**, moderated by vocalist and performance artist **Helga Davis**; and composer,

librettist, and director **Michel van der Aa** in conversation with conceptual and performance artist **Marina Abramović**.

www.armoryonpark.org

#

Media Contacts

For further information or to request images, please contact:

Tom Trayer, tomtrayer@armoryonpark.org or (212) 922-5801

Allison Abbott, aabbott@armoryonpark.org or (212) 933-5834