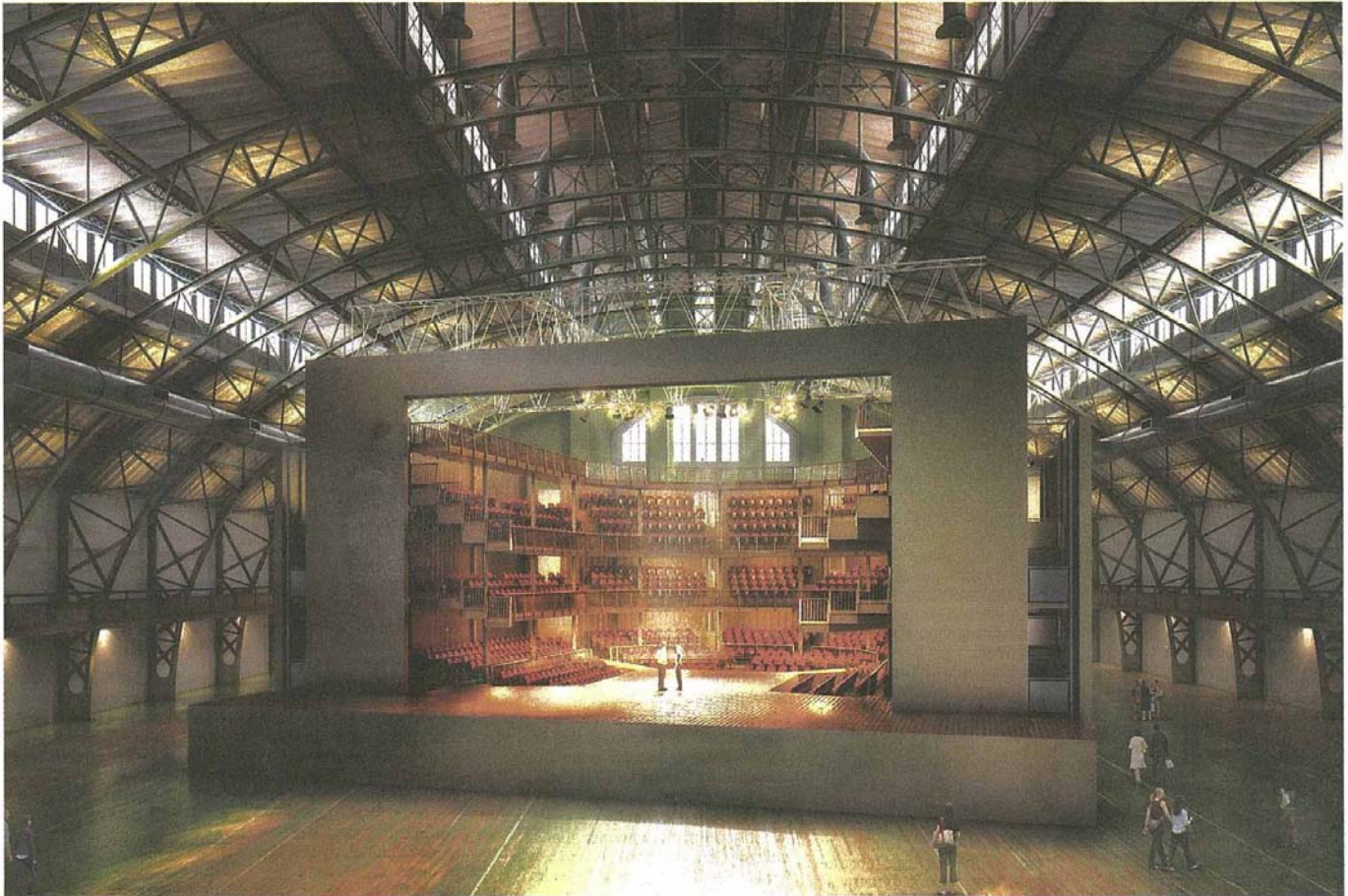


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DBOX INC.

A computer rendering of the reproduction of the Royal Shakespeare Theater that the Royal Shakespeare Company will use at the Park Avenue Armory.

Shakespeare's New Home: Park Avenue

By PATRICK HEALY

Shakespeare enthusiasts, get thee to the Armory: the Royal Shakespeare Company will hold court in Manhattan in the summer of 2011 for an unprecedented six-week, five-play residency. The troupe will occupy a newly constructed theater inside the Park Avenue Armory as part of the Lincoln Center Festival, officials from the three organizations announced on Monday.

One of the most famous classical theater companies in the world, the Royal Shakespeare Company will bring 44 actors, 23 musicians and about 30 other artists to New York from its Stratford-upon-Avon home for 45 performances of Shakespearean works in repertory from

Royal troupe will have a six-week run at the Lincoln Center Festival in 2011.

July 6 to Aug. 14, 2011. The five plays will be chosen from the company's current lineup: "Antony and Cleopatra," "As You Like It," "Julius Caesar," "King Lear," "Romeo and Juliet" and "The Winter's Tale."

Michael Boyd, the artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, said that several hundred thou-

sand dollars would be spent to construct an exact copy of the company's Royal Shakespeare Theater, which is being built in Stratford. The reproduction will be shipped in pieces to New York and assembled in the Armory's monumental Drill Hall, which has 55,000 square feet of uncolumned space.

"This is a bigger undertaking than we've done in a very long time, so we're feeling a mixture of excitement and some nervousness," Mr. Boyd said in an interview before Monday's announcement, which came at a news conference at Alice Tully Hall. "The R.S.C. has been coming to the States for the last 15 years, but we've

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Shakespeare Acquires A Home on Park Avenue

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tended to bring one-off productions with actors who are very well known. This will be quite different."

The Armory residency has been several years in the making, initiated when the Royal Shakespeare Company proposed the idea to Lincoln Center Festival officials as a culmination of the theater company's new three-year ensemble program in which the same core of actors rotates among roles and collaborates in Stratford. Those actors will be among the cast members in the Armory productions.

The Royal Shakespeare Company was originally eyeing the Vivian Beaumont Theater at Lincoln Center for a residency in 2008, but the timing did not work out. Festival and theater company officials then decided to aim for 2011, but with the Beaumont most likely unavailable ("South Pacific" is now running there), they began assessing the Drill Hall at the Armory, which housed the festival's productions of Ariane Mnouchkine's "Ephémères" and Declan Donnellan's "Boris Godunov" last summer.

"Part of what excited us was having a repertory company,

Looking forward to having British actors singing 'New York, New York.'

which is unique at the moment and captures the way theater used to be done," Nigel Redden, director of the Lincoln Center Festival, said in an interview. "I've been to Stratford and seen four plays in three days, and it's always fascinating to see the same actor doing radically different things in Shakespeare's varied works."

"As an audience member, it expands one's involvement with the action onstage," he continued. "We see these five plays as a rolling series of stories, told in this case by the same storytellers — both the actors and Shakespeare."

The Drill Hall almost immediately struck the Royal Shakespeare Company officials as the ideal space in which to configure a thrust-stage auditorium that could accommodate the same sets and lighting designs used in the Stratford productions, Mr. Boyd said.

After confirming that its plans would meet city building codes, the theater company committed to building a theater interior that would be modeled precisely on

the new Royal Shakespeare Theater, which is scheduled to have its official opening in spring 2011. That reproduction in the Drill Hall will include a 930-seat steel-framed auditorium on three levels; the farthest seat will be 49 feet away from the edge of the stage, festival officials said.

Rebecca Robertson, the president of the Park Avenue Armory, which is a co-presenter of the Royal Shakespeare Company residency, said in an interview that the vast Drill Hall "allowed the theater company and production designers to create their own imaginative work here."

"Our whole mission," Ms. Robertson added, "was to rescue this strangely dilapidated Armory building and create a large-scale cultural venue that would be a wonderful fit for a variety of visions from artists like those from the R.S.C."

The six-week residency is dependent partly on a seven-figure financial contribution from Ohio State University and two of its leading donors, Les and Abigail Wexner. The Royal Shakespeare Company and Ohio State are collaborating on a training program for teachers to enhance instruction of Shakespeare; the theater company previously had a close relationship with the University of Michigan. (In New York the company's most recent productions were "King Lear" and "The Seagull," starring Ian McKellen, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2007.)

At the news conference on Monday morning, the leaders of the three arts institutions showed a video of the design for the theater bound for the Armory. Mr. Boyd said that support and collaboration with artists and patrons in America was increasingly important for the Royal Shakespeare Company, disclosing that 40 percent of its annual fund-raising revenue comes from the United States.

"We'll have Shakespearean actors singing 'New York, New York' in just over a year's time," Mr. Boyd said at the news conference. "It's a great honor to be given center stage in this city and this festival."

Mr. Redden said that the annual summertime Lincoln Center festival would include other offerings as well, but noted that the Royal Shakespeare Company's residency would be "one of the largest artistic and financial undertakings we've ever done." The festival, which began in 1996, has cost approximately \$8 million to \$12 million in past years, he said; no precise budget figure was available for the residency endeavor.

"We don't break out the budget numbers, but what I know is that it will be a very big year," Mr. Redden said.