



**Unique Reimagining of Greek Classic *Antigone*, Directed by Satoshi Miyagi, Makes
North American Premiere in Park Avenue Armory's Wade Thompson Drill Hall
September 25 – October 6, 2019**

**Combining Japanese Noh, Indonesian Shadow Play, and Buddhist Philosophy,
Mr. Miyagi's Adaptation Unfolds within an 18,000-Gallon Pool of Water, Amidst Shadows
Projected on the Walls of the 55,000 Square Foot Drill Hall**



Antigone directed by Satoshi Miyagi at Festival d'Avignon.
Photo: © Christophe Raynaud de Lage

New York, NY – June 25, 2019 – This September, renowned Japanese theater director **Satoshi Miyagi** brings his intercultural adaptation of *Antigone* to Park Avenue Armory for its North American premiere in the Wade Thompson Drill Hall. Mixing the foundational principles of Greek tragedy, Japanese Noh theater, Indonesian shadow play, and Buddhist philosophy, this *Antigone* negotiates the boundaries of ritual and morality while creating a new theatrical universe of globalized proportions. For the second time in the Armory's history, the Drill Hall will be flooded with water, this time for a version of Sophocles' tragedy, an integral scenic element that Mr. Miyagi incorporates as part of his production. The director and a cast of 29 reinvigorate this Greek classic, presenting a play about loss and memorialization in a way that is both timeless and timely. The acclaimed production makes its North American debut following its premiere by the Shizuoka Performing Arts Center company at the Cour d'honneur du Palais des Papes in 2017.

“Satoshi Miyagi’s *Antigone*—with its cross-pollination of cultures, techniques, and aesthetic artistry—is the epitome of programming we support at the Armory. At the Armory, we strive to work with artists who incorporate the space in new and unique ways, and setting this timeless theatrical work within a river in the Drill Hall is exciting and beautiful,” said **Rebecca Robertson, Founding**

President and Executive Producer at Park Avenue Armory and Pierre Audi, the Marina Kellen French Artistic Director at Park Avenue Armory. “We are overjoyed to welcome him and his team to the Armory for what is sure to be a moving and poignant rendition of this classic.”

Sophocles has infused his characters with psychological depth and complexity in this universal play that is as resonant now as when it was written nearly 2,500 years ago. The Greek tragedy hinges on a young girl disobeying the king by giving her brother the same funeral rites that he had been denied after a fratricidal combat, challenging the injustice of men to obey the laws of the gods and following her heart by putting his soul to rest. What follows is an intense exploration of humanity, morality, law, and justice that left few unharmed.

Mr. Miyagi creates a new version of this fabled myth that looks at the ancient play through the prism of Japanese culture and Buddhist philosophy, told through the tradition of Japanese Noh theater. He turns the stage into a flowing river of water, known in many spiritual belief systems to separate the world of the living from that of the dead. Large stones scattered throughout the body of water punctuate the setting for the cast of characters who are embroiled in a bitter war of honor. Drawing on tenets of Noh, the actors move throughout the space with slow, deliberate, and stylized choreography and are dressed in white, skeletal, kimono-style costumes.

“The message of *Antigone* is a message that was needed in the current moment,” said director **Satoshi Miyagi**, “I want to convey to the audience a point of view that doesn’t bifurcate things in this world, and polarize everything into being ‘of god’ or ‘of the devil.’ I’m trying to make those kinds of borders less abrupt—more ambiguous.”

Shadow play is also incorporated as a significant production element, with silhouettes projected on the walls of the cavernous, 55,000 square foot Drill Hall. Miyagi uses this device to enlarge the action of the stage, without magnifying the faces of the actors themselves, so that facial expressions are rendered insignificant. As part of the Noh tradition, Miyagi has decoupled movement and language so that the main actors create the visual landscape through gesture, on stage and in shadow, while the chorus provides the aural experience with spoken word and accompanying music.

In conjunction with the production, the Armory will host an Artist Talk on **Friday, October 4 at 6:30 pm**, featuring Director **Satoshi Miyagi** and his collaborators discussing the infusion of Japanese Noh theater and other global traditions in the retelling of a classic Greek tragedy. The Armory will host a student performance, and there will be additional community programming in partnership with the Japan Foundation, to be announced at a later date.

Antigone is part of Park Avenue Armory’s 2019 season that continues with: **Theaster Gates’** renowned **Black Artists Retreat**, a multi-day convening of black artists, which will include public events such as a celebration in the Wade Thompson Drill Hall with roller skating, DJs, and performers, along with keynote conversations as part of the weekend’s event; and the world premiere of a new adaptation by Obie Award-winning Pulitzer Prize finalist **Christopher Shinn** of the gripping moral parable ***Judgment Day***, in a new production commissioned by the Armory and staged by award-winning director **Richard Jones**.

Previous theatrical productions at the Armory include Sam Mendes’ hit production of ***The Lehman Trilogy***, adapted by Ben Power and starring Adam Godley, Ben Miles, and Simon Russell Beale; Ivo van Hove’s chilling staging of ***The Damned***; Simon Stone’s critically acclaimed, Obie Award-winning,

and four-time Drama Desk-nominated production *Yerma*, starring Billie Piper and performed within glass walls; Obie Award-winning and eight-time Drama Desk-nominated play *The Hairy Ape*, directed by Richard Jones and starring Bobby Cannavale in a production where the audience was surrounded by a massive revolving stage; Obie Award-winning *A Room in India* (*Une chambre en Inde*) with Le Théâtre du Soleil under the direction of Ariane Mnouchkine; *Macbeth*, directed by Rob Ashford and Kenneth Branagh, and starring Branagh and Alex Kingston for which the Wade Thompson Drill Hall was transformed into a bloody, rainy Scottish heath; and the unprecedented residency of the Royal Shakespeare Company of five productions in repertory over six weeks in association with Lincoln Center Festival.

Antigone is also part of *Japan 2019*, a series of events highlighting Japanese arts and culture in the United States throughout 2019.

Antigone

Performances: September 25 – October 6

Wednesday, September 25: 7:30pm

Thursday, September 26: 7:30pm

Friday, September 27: 8:00pm

Saturday, September 28: 8:00pm

Sunday, September 29: 2:00pm

Monday September 30: 7:30pm

Thursday, October 3: 7:30pm

Friday, October 4: 8:00pm

Saturday, October 5: 8:00pm

Sunday, October 6: 2:00pm and 8:00pm

Tickets start at \$35

North American Premiere

by Sophocles

Translation by Shigetake Yaginuma

Satoshi Miyagi, Director

Shizuoka Performing Arts Center

Hiroko Tanakawa, Composer

Junpei Kiz, Space Designer

Kayo Takahashi, Costume Designer

Koji Osako, Lighting Designer

Kyoko Kajita, Hair and Makeup

A Production of Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC), adapted by Park Avenue Armory and presented in collaboration with The Japan Foundation

TICKETS

Tickets start at \$35 for performances and can be purchased at armoryonpark.org / (212) 933-5812

Thompson Arts Center at Park Avenue Armory
643 Park Avenue at 67th Street, New York, NY

SPONSORSHIP

Citi and Bloomberg Philanthropies are the Armory's season sponsors.

Antigone is supported in part by The Japan Foundation. *Antigone* is also supported by a generous gift from Edward Jay Wohlgenuth.

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 SATOSHI MIYAGI

Satoshi Miyagi (b. 1959, Tokyo) is a Japanese theater director whose work often fuses contemporary textual interpretations with physical techniques and patterns of Asian theater. As the General Artistic Director of Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC) since 2007, Miyagi has staged many of his own works—including *Medea*, the Hindu epic *Mahabharata*, and *Peer Gynt*—and has invited artists and directors from abroad to present pieces casting a keen eye on the modern world. His Buddhist interpretation of the ancient Greek mythological tragedy *Antigone* opened the Festival d'Avignon in 2017, marking the first time an Asian play had ever been selected to launch the festival.

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, students to explore, 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 an array of exuberant period rooms, the Armory offers a platform for creativity across all art forms. Together, these and other spaces within the historic building utilized for arts programming comprise the Thompson Arts Center, named in recognition of the Thompson family's ongoing support of the institution.

Since its first production in September 2007, the Armory has organized and commissioned immersive performances, installations, and cross-disciplinary collaborations in its vast Drill Hall that defy traditional categorization and challenge artists to push the boundaries of their practice. In its historic period rooms, the Armory presents small-scale 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; and the new Artists Studio series in the newly restored Veterans Room, which features innovative artists and artistic pairings that harken back to the imaginative collaboration and improvisation of the original group of designers who conceived the space. The Armory also offers robust arts education programs at no cost to underserved New York City public

school students, engaging them with the institution's artistic programming and the building's history and architecture.

Programmatic highlights from the Armory's first 10 years include 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 across three separate stages; *WS* by Paul McCarthy, a monumental installation of fantasy, excess, and dystopia; an immersive *Macbeth* set in a Scottish heath and henge by Rob Ashford and Kenneth Branagh; a profound and radically inclusive staging of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* staged by Peter Sellars and performed by Sir Simon Rattle and the Berliner Philharmoniker; Louis Andriessen's *De Materie* in a highly imaginative staging by director Heiner Goebbels that included floating zeppelins and a flock of 100 sheep; *Circle Map*, two evenings of immersive spatial works by internationally acclaimed composer Kaija Saariaho performed by the New York Philharmonic with *mise-en-espace* by Armory Artistic Director Pierre Audi; and Taryn Simon's *An Occupation of Loss*, a monumental work with 30 professional mourners from around the world that blended sculpture, sound, architecture, and performance in an exploration of the boundaries of grief between living and dead, past and present, performer and viewer; Julian Rosefeldt's *Manifesto*, a multi-channel cinematic installation featuring Cate Blanchett; eight-time Drama Desk-nominated play *The Hairy Ape*, directed by Richard Jones and starring Bobby Cannavale; *Hansel & Gretel*, a new commission by Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, and Ai Weiwei that transformed and activated the Drill Hall to explore the meaning of publicly shared space in the era of surveillance; Simon Stone's heralded production of *Yerma* starring Billie Piper in her North American debut; and Sam Mendes' critically acclaimed production of *The Lehman Trilogy*, starring Adam Godley, Ben Miles, and Simon Russell Beale.

Concurrent with its artistic program, the Armory has undertaken an ongoing \$215-million revitalization of its historic building, designed by architects Herzog & de Meuron. www.armoryonpark.org

ABOUT SHIZUOKA PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC) was founded in 1995 by the Shizuoka prefectural government and commenced its full-fledged activities in 1997 under the direction of Tadashi Suzuki, its first General Artistic Director. As a pioneer of publicly funded performing arts organizations in Japan, SPAC retains its own staff of actors, technical and production staff, who are based at its own venues and facilities. The mission of SPAC is not only to create original productions, but also to invite progressive artistic companies and creators to Shizuoka and to develop human resources seeking expression through the performing arts. Since April 2007, when he was appointed as the General Artistic Director, Satoshi Miyagi has led SPAC in a buoyant new phase of development and expansion. <https://spac.or.jp/en/>

ABOUT THE JAPAN FOUNDATION

The Japan Foundation, established in 1972, is Japan's only institution dedicated to carrying out comprehensive international cultural exchange programs throughout the world. The mission of the Japan Foundation is to promote international cultural exchange and mutual understanding between Japan and other countries in the areas of arts & culture, Japanese-language education as well as Japanese Studies and intellectual exchange. The Foundation maintains its headquarters in Tokyo and operates through a network of 25 overseas offices in 24 countries worldwide. The Foundation is represented by two offices in the United States—one in New York and the other in Los Angeles. www.jpf.go.jp and www.jfny.org

ABOUT JAPAN 2019

Following on the successful festival of *Japonismes 2018* in France, *Japan 2019* aims to broaden understanding of and interest in Japanese culture in the United States. We invite you to explore the world of Japanese arts and culture through two programs: the *Japan 2019* Official Program, featuring a series of events co-organized or supported by The Japan Foundation, mainly in New York and Washington, DC, and the *Japan 2019* Associated Program, featuring affiliated events organized by public and private entities. The festival events, taking place between March and December 2019, will introduce Japanese culture and promote exchange between Japan and the U.S. www.jpf.go.jp/e/about/area/japan2019/

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