



**Michel van der Aa's Critically Acclaimed Opera *Upload*  
Makes North American Premiere at Park Avenue Armory**

**Co-Commission Combines Film with  
Live Performances by Julia Bullock and Roderick Williams in  
Near-Future Parable About Technology and Immortality**

**March 22 – 30, 2022**

**New York, NY** – February 2, 2022 – This spring, Park Avenue Armory will present the North American premiere of Dutch composer, film and stage director, and librettist **Michel van der Aa's** groundbreaking new opera *Upload*, following its acclaimed run at the Dutch National Opera in fall 2021. Featuring music, theater, film, and state-of-the-art motion capture technology, *Upload's* live performances will be adapted for the Armory's cavernous Wade Thompson Drill Hall. Performed by the incomparable soprano **Julia Bullock** and acclaimed baritone **Roderick Williams**, *Upload* tells the story of a daughter and her father who, when confronted by his inevitable death, has his thoughts and memories "uploaded" to achieve an eternal digital consciousness. The deeply emotional work poses age-old philosophical questions—about fate, identity, the cost of immortality, and the ethics of technological advancement—that take on new significance against a backdrop of present-day and near-future technologies.

"We are delighted to welcome Michel van der Aa's extraordinary talent and prescient vision back to the Drill Hall in our 2022 season," said **Rebecca Robertson, Founding President and Executive Producer** of Park Avenue Armory. "*Upload* creates a daring new vision of what our future selves might become in the digital age, with live performance by the finest operatic voices presented through the prism of technology to get at the heart of what makes us human."

"Michel van der Aa's prowess as an opera composer and director has consistently pushed the boundaries of the medium, and *Upload* exemplifies his standing as one of opera's leading innovators," added **Pierre Audi, Marina Kellen French Artistic Director** of the Armory. "In this new work, the exceptional talent of Julia Bullock and Roderick Williams works in tandem with inventive digital imaging and sound mixing to create a wholly original musical and theatrical experience."

"Park Avenue Armory is one of my favorite performance spaces in the world. When it presented my opera *Blank Out* in 2017, I was inspired by the response from the Armory's open-minded and diverse audiences. *Upload* was developed with the Armory in mind, and I'm deeply grateful for Pierre and the Armory's support in creating this new work," said **Michel van der Aa**.

*Upload* is set across two timelines: in flashbacks, a pre-recorded film projected onstage documents the origins and practicalities of the “uploading” procedure, and stars **Katja Herbers** (*Westworld*, *The Americans*) as a psychiatrist and **Ashley Zukerman** (*Succession*, *Fear Street*) as the facility’s CEO. In the present day, live motion-captured projections represent the father’s (Williams) digital avatar, which interacts with the daughter (Bullock) in real-time as she copes with her loss and is forced to make difficult decisions about her father’s future existence. Featuring an original score with acoustic and electronic instrumentation by **Ensemble Musikfabrik**, a renowned ensemble for contemporary music led by music director **Otto Tausk**, *Upload* is a continuous interplay between live and pre-recorded elements that blur the lines between earthly and virtual realities.

In conjunction with *Upload*, the Armory will host an artist talk with Michel van der Aa and **Marina Abramović** about the creative development of the work on Tuesday, March 22.

### ***Upload***

Performances: March 22 – 30

Monday – Wednesday at 7:30pm

Friday – Saturday at 8:00pm

Tickets start at \$45.

A Park Avenue Armory commission.

Commissioned by and in Co-Production with Park Avenue Armory, Dutch National Opera, Oper Köln, Bregenzer Festspiele, Ensemble Musikfabrik, doubleA Foundation.

Composition, Director, Libretto, **Michel van der Aa**

Daughter, **Julia Bullock**

Father, **Roderick Williams**

Psychiatrist, **Katja Herbers** (film)

CEO, **Ashley Zukerman** (film)

Music Director, **Otto Tausk**

Orchestra, **Ensemble Musikfabrik**

Set & Lighting Design, **Theun Mosk**

Dramaturgy, **Madelon Kooijman, Niels Nuijten**

Director of Photography, **Joost Rietdijk**

Motion Capture and Real-Time Graphics, **Darien Brito**

VFX Supervisor & Fractal Artist, **Julius Horsthuis**

### **Artist Talk: *Upload***

A conversation with Michel van der Aa and Marina Abramović

Tuesday, March 22 at 6:00pm

Tickets: \$15

## HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

The health and safety of the public is of paramount concern to the Armory. All ticket-holders must be **fully vaccinated**. “Fully vaccinated” means that you received your final dose at least 14 days before your performance date. At check-in, ticket-holders will be required to show **proof of full vaccination** (the [New York State Excelsior Pass](#) or a hard copy or photo of your vaccination card) and a government-issued photo ID. Masks must be properly worn inside at all times. Park Avenue Armory surpasses CDC and New York Standards for ventilation, observes strict cleaning and disinfecting protocols, and provides disinfecting stations throughout the public areas.

## SPONSORSHIP

Citi and Bloomberg Philanthropies are the Armory’s 2022 Season Sponsors.

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 the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature. Additional support has been provided by the Armory’s Artistic Council.

## ABOUT MICHEL VAN DER AA

Michel van der Aa, winner of the 2015 Johannes Vermeer Award and 2013 Grawemeyer Award, is one of today’s most sought-after composers and stage directors. A pioneer in the realms of new music and technology, his staged works—incorporating film and sampled soundtrack—are a seamless hybrid of musical theater and multimedia.

Van der Aa’s imaginative music theater works *Eight* (2018-19), *Blank Out* (2015–16), *Sunken Garden* (2011–12), *The Book of Disquiet* (2008), *After Life* (2005–06), and *One* (2002) have received critical and public acclaim internationally. His repertoire also includes concert works and chamber music for small ensemble, soloists, and soundtrack. He collaborated with Sol Gabetta on the cross-media cello concerto *Up-close* (2010), which has been performed in 15 countries. His 3D film opera, *Sunken Garden* (2013), an “occult-mystery film-opera,” was created in partnership with the English novelist David Mitchell, the author of *Cloud Atlas*.

A winner of numerous awards for his innovative work, Van der Aa is a regular guest of the world’s most prestigious festivals and concert halls including the Barbican Centre, Opéra de Lyon, Berliner Festspiele, Venice Biennale, Donaueschinger Musiktage, Festival d’Automne à Paris, LA Philharmonic New Music Series, Lincoln Center Festival, Holland Festival, and Tokyo Suntory Summer Music Festival. In August 2017, Van der Aa was composer-in-residence at the Lucerne Festival, which presented a selection of his works, including *Blank Out* and *The Book of Disquiet*.

## **ABOUT JULIA BULLOCK**

Julia Bullock is an American classical singer who has headlined productions and concerts at preeminent arts institutions around the world. An innovative curator in high demand from a diverse group of arts presenters, museums, and schools, her notable positions have included collaborative partner of Esa-Pekka Salonen at the San Francisco Symphony, 2020–22 Artist-in-Residence of London’s Guildhall School, 2019–20 Artist-in-Residence of the San Francisco Symphony, and 2018–19 Artist-in-Residence at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Bullock has made key operatic debuts at San Francisco Opera in the world premiere of *Girls of the Golden West*; Santa Fe Opera in *Doctor Atomic*; The Royal Opera in *Theodora*; Festival d’Aix-en-Provence and Dutch National Opera in *The Rake’s Progress*; and the English National Opera, Spain’s Teatro Real, and Russia’s Bolshoi Theatre in the title role of *The Indian Queen*. In concert, she has collaborated with Berlin’s Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester and Roderick Cox, London’s Philharmonia Orchestra and Salonen, the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Gustavo Dudamel, the San Francisco Symphony and both Salonen and Michael Tilson Thomas, and the New York Philharmonic and Alan Gilbert, among others. Her recital highlights include appearances at New York’s Carnegie Hall; the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society; Washington, D.C.’s Kennedy Center; and the Mostly Mozart and Ojai Music festivals, where she joined Roomful of Teeth and the International Contemporary Ensemble for the world premiere of *Josephine Baker: A Portrait*. This was the original prototype for *Perle Noire: Meditations for Joséphine*, a work conceived by Bullock in collaboration with Peter Sellars, and written for her by Tyshawn Sorey and Claudia Rankine. Bullock’s growing discography includes *Doctor Atomic*, recorded with the composer conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and *West Side Story*, captured live with Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony, both of which were nominated for Grammy Awards.

## **ABOUT RODERICK WILLIAMS**

Baritone Roderick Williams encompasses a wide repertoire, from baroque to contemporary music, in the opera house, on the concert platform, and in recital. He enjoys relationships with all the major UK opera houses and has sung world premieres of operas by, among others, David Sawer, Sally Beamish, Michel van der Aa, Robert Saxton, and Alexander Knaifel.

Williams has sung concert repertoire with all BBC orchestras and many other ensembles, including the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Philharmonia, London Sinfonietta, and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Abroad, he has worked with the Berlin Philharmonic, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Russian National Orchestra, and Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, among others. His many festival appearances include the BBC Proms (including the Last Night in 2014), Edinburgh, Cheltenham, Aldeburgh, and Melbourne.

Past opera engagements include Van der Aa’s *Blank Out* at Park Avenue Armory; the title roles of *Eugene Onegin* for Garsington Opera and *Billy Budd* for Opera North; *Oronte* in Charpentier’s *Medée*; *Toby Kramer* in Van der Aa’s *Sunken Garden* in the Netherlands, Lyon, and London; Van der Aa’s *After Life* at Melbourne State Theatre; and Sharpless in *Madam Butterfly* for the Nederlandse Reisopera. Recent and future concert engagements include concerts with the Tonkünstler Orchester at the Musikverein, Cincinnati Symphony, Music of the Baroque Chicago, and Virginia Arts Festival.

He is also an accomplished recital artist who can be heard at venues and festivals including Wigmore Hall; Kings Place; LSO St Luke's; the Perth Concert Hall; Oxford Lieder Festival; London Song Festival; the Musikverein, Vienna; and on Radio 3, where he has participated on Iain Burnside's *Voices* program. Williams made his North American recital debut at Park Avenue Armory as part of their Recital Series in the Board of Officers Room.

Williams was Artist-in-Residence with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra for the 2020-21 season and serves as "singer-in-residence" for Music in the Round. He was awarded an OBE for services to music in June 2017.

### **ABOUT OTTO TAUSK**

Otto Tausk is a Dutch conductor who currently serves as Music Director of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Artistic Advisor of the VSO School of Music, and Chief Conductor Phion of the Orkest van Gelderland en Overijssel. He was previously Chief Conductor of the Holland Symfonia (Netherlands) and the Theater und Orchester Sankt Gallen (Switzerland), where he conducted numerous operas including the world premiere of *Annas Maske* by Swiss composer David Philip Hefti, the Swiss premiere of George Benjamin's *Written on Skin*, and Korngold's *Die Tote Stadt*, among other titles. He has guest conducted with orchestras including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi, Los Angeles Philharmonic (opening the Green Umbrella series), and the Orchestra of the Mariinsky Theatre.

### **ABOUT ENSEMBLE MUSIKFABRIK**

Since its formation in 1990, Cologne-based Ensemble Musikfabrik has been considered one of the leading ensembles for contemporary music with a particular dedication to artistic innovation, new commissions, and interdisciplinary projects. The ensemble performs around 80 concerts each year both in Germany and abroad at international festivals, within their own series "Musikfabrik in WDR" and in recordings.

### **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.

Programmatic highlights from the Wade Thompson Drill Hall include Ernesto Neto's *anthropodino*, a magical 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; 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 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; *The Let Go*, a site-specific immersive dance celebration by Nick Cave; 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.

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 MacArthur “Genius” and jazz phenom 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.

Among the performers who have appeared in the *Recital 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 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 such artists as Bill T. Jones, Lynn Nottage, Carrie Mae Weems, Michel van der Aa, Tyshawn Sorey, Raashad Newsome, Julian Rosefeldt, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, and others.

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.

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 White as Executive Architects.

[www.armoryonpark.org](http://www.armoryonpark.org)

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### **Media Contacts**

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