



Théâtre du Soleil's *A Room in India* (*Une chambre en Inde*)
Directed by Ariane Mnouchkine
Makes North American Premiere at Park Avenue Armory
December 5 - 20, 2017

Production features special performance of Terukkuttu, a traditional form of lively theater with song and dance practiced in Tamil Nadu (South India)

Performance on Friday, December 8 will be preceded by separately ticketed conversation with Ariane Mnouchkine, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Tony Kushner, and *The New Yorker* editor David Remnick



A Room in India (*Un chambre en Inde*) by Théâtre du Soleil, directed by Ariane Mnouchkine.
Photo by Michele Laurent.

New York, NY – June 21, 2017 (Updated November 7, 2017) – This December, **Théâtre du Soleil** and its founder, theater icon **Ariane Mnouchkine**, come to Park Avenue Armory with the North American Premiere of their new work *A Room in India* (*Une chambre en Inde*). The work follows the adventures of a touring French theater company stranded in India without a director while the world around them falls into disarray. Performed by 35 multinational actors of Théâtre du Soleil's company, the work touches on the meaning of theater in a time of tumult and explores pressing issues that societies are currently facing around the globe, ranging from terrorism, and religious extremism, to climate change, and gender equity. The production intersperses dream sequences with special performances of Terukkuttu—a traditional form of theater practiced in South India.

“We are delighted to welcome Théâtre du Soleil and Ariane Mnouchkine back to Park Avenue Armory in this new, dynamic work that is both a beautiful expression of theatrical styles from across the globe and a poignant exploration of how to comprehend the chaos in our world today,” said **Rebecca Robertson**, Executive Producer and President of Park Avenue Armory.

“Ariane and Théâtre du Soleil have been visionary icons of exploratory European theater for over 50 years,” said **Pierre Audi**, Artistic Director of Park Avenue Armory. “*A Room in India* is a personal meditation on the enduring power and relevance of theater set against the backdrop of our contemporary troubled world. Exemplary of their work, this epic production travels through many fascinating worlds with references from Shakespeare, Terukkuttu, Charlie Chaplin, and everything in between. Mnouchkine and her extraordinary company of actors from multiple nationalities explore some of the most universally human and thought-provoking questions of our time.”

In *A Room in India*, the director of a Parisian theater company on tour in India quits, feeling helpless and weak after a terror attack leaves them unable to travel home. His assistant, now alone to lead the company, must create a new commissioned work that is set to premiere within days. In her anxiety-ridden state, the new director has a series of dreams that attempt to make sense of the role of theater and art in the current world and her own fear of terrorism—including visits from Shakespeare, Chekhov, an Indian theater troupe, Ghandi, and members of the Taliban. Elements of Western and Eastern drama appear in her troubled dreams to make sense of modern life, including a Terukkuttu ensemble performing an ancient form of theater that originated in South India using elaborate costumes, props, and instruments. The end result is a manifesto of the power of theater to heal a community, as well as an exploration of how to talk about the chaos of a world that has become incomprehensible. The Théâtre du Soleil started work on *A Room in India* during a residency in Pondicherry, India, in 2016, shortly after the terrorist attacks of November 2015 in Paris.

As done at the Cartoucherie, the company’s Parisian home, Théâtre du Soleil will welcome audiences to the production with pre-show activities in the Armory’s Drill Hall and historic rooms. One hour prior to the performance, the audience is invited to partake in food; observe actors preparing for the performance with vocal warm-ups, costumes, and makeup; and visit a Théâtre du Soleil book store that provides history about the troupe and information about *A Room in India*.

As part of the Armory’s **Artist Talk Series**, the production on Friday, December 8 will be preceded by a separately ticketed conversation between **Ariane Mnouchkine**, Pulitzer prize-winning playwright **Tony Kushner**, and *The New Yorker* editor, **David Remnick**. The conversation series seeks to encourage active discussion on a range of themes and complex issues, and this talk will address the creative process behind the development of *A Room in India*.

A Room in India marks Théâtre du Soleil and Ariane Mnouchkine’s second engagement at Park Avenue Armory. In 2009, the company performed the United States premiere of their two-part work exploring the end of the world, *Les Éphémères*, as part of the Lincoln Center Festival.

A Room in India is part of Park Avenue Armory’s 2017 artistic season and follows such recent productions as 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; *FLEXN Evolution* featuring dance performance and a series of conversations co-directed by flex pioneer Reggie (Reg Rocc) Gray and Peter Sellars exploring critical issues of social justice; and *Hansel & Gretel*,

a new commission by Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, and Ai Weiwei that transformed and activated the Wade Thompson Drill Hall to explore the meaning of publicly shared space in the era of surveillance.

A Room in India (Une chambre en Inde)

December 5 - 20, 2017

A collective creation by the Théâtre du Soleil

Directed by Ariane Mnouchkine

Music by Jean-Jacques Lemêtre

Together with Hélène Cixous

With the exceptional participation of Kalaimamani Purisai Kannappa Sambandan Thambiran

Tuesday, December 5 at 7:00pm

Wednesday, December 6 at 7:00pm

Thursday, December 7 at 2:00pm

Friday, December 8 at 7:00pm

Saturday, December 9 at 7:00pm

Tuesday, December 12 at 7:00pm

Wednesday, December 13 at 7:00pm

Thursday, December 14 at 7:00pm

Friday, December 15 at 7:00pm

Saturday, December 16 at 7:00pm

Monday, December 18 at 7:00pm

Tuesday, December 19 at 7:00pm

Wednesday, December 20 at 7:00pm

A production of Théâtre du Soleil, adapted by Park Avenue Armory.

TICKETS

Tickets start at \$45 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

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS

***A Room in India*. Artist Talk**

Friday, December 8 at 6:00pm

Director Ariane Mnouchkine is joined by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Tony Kushner and editor of *The New Yorker* David Remnick to discuss the creative process behind the development of this epic new work.

Tickets: \$15

\$12 for Members at the Supporter (\$250) level and above

SPONSORSHIP

A Room in India (Une Chambre en Inde) is supported in part by the Howard Gilman Foundation.

Citi; Pershing Square Capital Management, LP; and Bloomberg Philanthropies are the Armory's 2017 season sponsors.

Support for Park Avenue Armory's artistic season has been generously provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Altman Foundation, The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, the Achelis and Bodman Foundation, the Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, The Emma and Georgina Bloomberg Foundation, the Marc Haas Foundation, The Kaplen Brothers Fund, the Juliet Lea Hillman Simonds Foundation, the Leon Levy Foundation, the May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation, and the Isak and Rose Weinman Foundation.

ABOUT ARIANE MNOUCHKINE AND THEATRE DU SOLEIL

Ariane Mnouchkine is the director of theatre company the Théâtre du Soleil, which she founded in 1964 with her fellows of the ATEP (The Theatre Association of the Students of Paris). In 1970, the Théâtre du Soleil created *1789* at the Piccolo Teatro in Milan, where Giorgio Strehler warmly welcomed the young company and gave them his support. The company then went on to choose its home at the Cartoucherie, a former bullet-making factory, in the Bois de Vincennes on the outskirts of Paris. The Cartoucherie enabled the troupe to expand on the notion of the theatre simply as architectural institution and allowed them to focus on the concept of the theatre being a place of haven rather than just complying with the traditional architectural notions of a theatre building, and all this at a time when urban change and development in France was transforming the place of man in the city and the place of theatre in the city. In the Cartoucherie, the Théâtre du Soleil found the necessary tool to create and present the type of popular yet high-quality theatre dreamed of by Jean Vilar. The troupe invented new ways of working and privileged collectively devised work, its aim being to establish a new relationship with its audience and distinguish itself from bourgeois theatre in order to create a high-quality theatre for the people.

From the 1970s onwards, the troupe became one of France's major theatre companies, both because of the number of artists working in it (more than 70 people a year) and because of its glowing international reputation. Attached to the notion of the theatre troupe as tribe or family, Ariane Mnouchkine established the ethics of the group on certain basic foundations: everyone working at all levels, everyone on the same wage, and on stage, the definitive casting only decided upon once many different actors have tried out many different roles. Today, the Théâtre du Soleil is one of the last theatre companies in Europe to continue to function in such a way.

The adventure of the Théâtre du Soleil has been continuing for more than 50 years, thanks to the faithfulness and affection of a large audience both in France and abroad. Its development is marked by a ceaseless questioning of the role it has to play, of the place of theatre in society and of its capacity to represent its own times. The Théâtre du Soleil's commitment in treating the great political and human questions from a universal angle goes hand in hand with its research on the great theatrical forms and the convergence of Asian and Western arts.

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 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.

Concurrent with its artistic program, the Armory has undertaken an ongoing \$210-million revitalization of its historic building, designed by architects Herzog & de Meuron. www.armoryonpark.org.

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Media Contacts

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