



***The Head & The Load* by William Kentridge with music created and conceived by Philip Miller, Makes North American Debut at Park Avenue Armory This December**

Melding Music, Movement, and Shadow Play, New Armory Commission is Multi-Layered Testament to the Millions of Africans Who Served in WWI



The Head & The Load by William Kentridge. Photo by Stella Olivier.

New York, NY – August 9, 2018 – Combining the political with the poetic, William Kentridge will animate Park Avenue Armory’s Wade Thompson Drill Hall with a grand, multidisciplinary work commemorating the millions of Africans who served in World War I. Co-commissioned by Park Avenue Armory, 14-18 NOW Centenary Commissions, MASS MoCA, and the Ruhrtriennale, with additional support from the Holland Festival, *The Head & The Load* combines music and movement, sculpture and shadow play to critically examine colonialism and how somber remnants of history continue to color our experiences today. Performed from December 4 to December 15, 2018,

The Head & The Load features music by Kentridge’s long-time collaborator Philip Miller and co-composer Thuthuka Sibisi and choreography by Gregory Maqoma, performed by an international ensemble cast of singers, dancers, and performers, including the Brooklyn-based orchestra collective The Knights. Kentridge weaves these elements together to conjure a “historical drawing in performance” of immense proportion and imagination.

“Through *The Head & The Load*, Kentridge has created a multimedia collage of images and ideas that addresses head on the fragmented realities and omitted records of world history, in particular those from the first world war,” said **Rebecca Robertson**, President and Executive Director of Park Avenue Armory. “Mounted at an unprecedented scale in our Drill Hall, Kentridge’s lyrical and poignant creation sheds light on the invisible heroism of others, the hidden scale of human disaster, and the incomprehensible courage of those who fought for freedoms we take for granted today.”

As a white South-African native, Kentridge’s complex relationship to the aftermath of apartheid and colonialism is deeply embedded in his psychology and work. Kentridge’s newest work, the title of which is taken from the Ghanaian proverb, “the head and the load are the troubles of the neck,” tells the overlooked story of the nearly two million African porters and carriers used by the British, French, and Germans who bore the brunt of the casualties during the First World War in Africa. Conceived

by Kentridge and his visionary team of designers, actors, vocalists, musicians, dancers, and performers, this processional musical journey synthesizes elements of Kentridges practice and weaves together a range of influences, including Dadaism, to pay homage to those who died for a cause that was not their own. Carrying through the idea of history as collage, the libretto is largely constructed from texts, phrases, and dialects from a range of writers and sources, cut up, interwoven, and expanded: Frantz Fanon translated into siSwati; Tristan Tzara in isiZulu; Wilfred Owen in French and dog-barking; the conference of Berlin, which divided up Africa, rendered as sections from Kurt Schwitters's *Ursonate*; phrases from a handbook of military drills; Setswana proverbs from Sol Plaatje's 1920 collection; and lines from Aimé Césaire.

Similarly, the original music includes transformed traditional African songs as well as quotations from European composers from the time of the war like Maurice Ravel, Erik Satie, Paul Hindemith and Arnold Schoenberg. Again using collage as a tool, the sonic world of *The Head & The Load* moves from a cabaret song by Schoenberg intercut with percussive slaps on hymn books, to a Viennese waltz by Fritz Kreisler. Amidst this tension and instability, Africa talks back to Europe through rhythmic war songs and chants, deliberately resisting the raucous musical soundscapes of the European avant-garde.

“Kentridge is a versatile artist whose creative impulses, political and social responsibilities, and commitment to human life manifests through his multi-faceted practice,” said **Pierre Audi**, Artistic Director of Park Avenue Armory. “His preoccupations and process help others explore their own relationship to the world. *The Head & The Load* speaks to the specifics of war, colonialism, and totalitarianism, and through a raw and haunting performance exposes the sacrifice of soldiers and the aspirations and failures of revolutionary politics, leaving us with a heavier history demanding revision today. We could not be more thrilled to have this multi-dimensional commission round out our 2018 season.”

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

The Head & The Load

A new commission by Park Avenue Armory

December 4 – December 15, 2018

Tuesday – Friday: 8:00 p.m.

Saturday: 2:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m.

Sunday: 2:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.

Tickets start at \$40 and may be purchased at armoryonpark.org or by calling (212)933-5812.

Thompson Arts Center at Park Avenue Armory

643 Park Avenue at 67th Street, New York, NY

ARTIST TALK

Thursday, December 6 at 6:30 p.m.

Tickets: \$15

William Kentridge and his fellow collaborators discuss the political context of *The Head & The Load* and the process behind mounting it in unconventional spaces, from the Tate Modern's vast Turbine Hall to the Armory's cavernous Drill Hall.

ABOUT WILLIAM KENTRIDGE

William Kentridge (born Johannesburg, South Africa, 1955) is internationally acclaimed for his drawings, films, theater, and opera productions. His practice is born out of a cross-fertilization between mediums and genres. His work responds to the legacies of colonialism and apartheid, within the context of South Africa's socio-political landscape. His aesthetics are drawn from the medium of film's own history, from stop-motion animation to early special effects. Kentridge's drawing, specifically the dynamism of an erased and redrawn mark, is an integral part of his expanded animation and filmmaking practice, where the meanings of his films are developed during the process of their making. Kentridge's practice also incorporates his theatre training.

Kentridge's work has been seen in museums and galleries around the world since the 1990s, including Documenta in Kassel, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Albertina Museum in Vienna, Musée du Louvre in Paris, Whitechapel Gallery in London, and Louisiana Museum in Copenhagen.

Opera productions include Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Shostakovich's *The Nose*, and Alban Berg's *Lulu*, and have been seen at opera houses including the Metropolitan Opera in New York, La Scala in Milan, English National Opera in London, Opera de Lyon, Dutch National Opera, and others. This summer he directs Berg's *Wozzeck* for the Salzburg Festival.

The 5-channel video and sound installation *The Refusal of Time* was made for Documenta (13) in 2012; since then it has been seen in cities around the world. *More Sweetly Play the Dance*, an eight-channel video projection first seen in Amsterdam in April 2015, and *Notes Toward a Model Opera*, a three-screen projection looking at the Chinese Cultural Revolution, made for an exhibition in Beijing in 2015; have been presented in many other cities since. Kentridge's public art project for Rome, *Triumphs & Laments* (a 500m frieze of figures power-washed from pollution and bacterial growth on the walls of the Tiber River) opened in April 2016 with a performance of live music composed by Philip Miller and a procession of shadow figures.

Kentridge is the recipient of honorary doctorates from several universities including Yale and the University of London, and in 2012 he presented the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard University. In 2010, he received the Kyoto Prize. In 2015 he was appointed an Honorary Academician of the Royal Academy in London. In October 2017, he received the Princesa de Asturias Award for the arts.

PERFORMANCE CREDITS

Commissioned by Park Avenue Armory, 14—18 NOW: WW1 Centenary Commissions, Ruhrtriennale, and MASS MoCA, with additional commissioning funds provided by the Holland Festival.

Produced by THE OFFICE performing arts + film.

The Head & The Load acknowledges the kind assistance of Marian Goodman Gallery, Goodman Gallery, and Lia Rumma Gallery in this project.

Concept and Director: William Kentridge

Composer: Philip Miller

Co-composer/Music Director: Thuthuka Sibisi
Projection Design: Catherine Meyburgh
Choreography: Gregory Maqoma
Costume Design: Greta Goiris
Set Design: Sabine Theunissen
Lighting Design: Urs Schönebaum
Sound Design: Mark Grey
Video Editing and Compositing: Janus Fouché / Žana Marović / Catherine Meyburgh

Associate Director: Luc De Wit

Studio Technical Director: Chris Waldo de Wet

Video Orchestrator: Kim Gunning

Cinematography: Duško Marović

Orchestration: Michael Atkinson, Philip Miller

Actors: Mncedisi Shabangu, Hamilton Dlamini, Nhlanhla Mahlangu, Luc De Wit

Featured Vocalists & Performers: Joanna Dudley, Nhlanhla Mahlangu, Ann Masina, Bham Ntabeni, Siphosiso Seroto, N'Faly Kouyate (kora), Tlale Makhene (percussion) and Vincenzo Pasquariello (piano)

Dancers: Gregory Maqoma, Julia Zenzie Burnham, Thulani Chauke, Xolani Dlamini, Nhlanhla Mahlangu

Ensemble Vocalists: Mhlaba Buthelezi, Ayanda Eleki, Grace Magubane, Ncokwane Lydia Manyama, Caroline Modiba, Tshegofatso Moeng, Mapule Moloï, Lindokuhle Thabede

The Knights: Michael P. Atkinson (French horn), Sam Budish (percussion), Shawn Conley (bass), Christina Courtin (violin), Mario Gotoh (viola), Richard Harris (trombone), Colin Jacobson (violin), Eric Jacobson (cello), Nathan Koci (accordion), Jean Laurenz (trumpet), Andrew Madej (tuba), David Nelson (trombone), Alex Sopp (flute), Caitlin Sullivan (cello)

SPONSORSHIP

The Head & The Load is supported in part by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Daniel Clay Houghton, Art Dealers Association of America, and the Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trusts. The production is also supported in part by public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Citi and Bloomberg Philanthropies are the Armory's 2018 season sponsors.

Support for Park Avenue Armory's artistic programming has been generously provided by the Charina Endowment Fund, the Altman 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 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, the Richenthal Foundation, and the Isak and Rose Weinman Foundation.

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; 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; and Simon Stone’s heralded production of *Yerma* starring Billie Piper in her North American debut.

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.

###

Media Contacts

Delaney Smith, dsmith@resnicow.com

Stephanie Yeo, syeo@resnicow.com

Juliet Sorce, jsorce@resnicow.com