



**Tony Award-Winning Director Ivo van Hove's Adaptation of  
Luchino Visconti's Oscar-Nominated Screenplay for *The Damned*  
Makes North American Premiere in  
Park Avenue Armory's Wade Thompson Drill Hall**

**Production Stars Centuries-Old Troupe Comédie-Française  
In Their First New York Appearance in Over a Decade**

**July 17 – 28, 2018**



*The Damned.* Photo by Jan Versweyeld.

**New York, NY** – June 4, 2018 – This July, Park Avenue Armory presents the North American premiere of two-time Tony- and Olivier Award-winning stage director **Ivo van Hove's** *The Damned*. Starring the venerated French troupe **Comédie-Française**—founded in 1680, it's the oldest national theater company in the world—in their first New York appearance in over a decade, the production will permeate the Armory's historic Wade Thompson Drill Hall with a tale of moral corruption, militaristic machinations, and a satirical celebration of evil. Emblematic of van Hove's artistic aesthetic, *The Damned* is a theatrical staging of **Luchino Visconti's** eponymous 1969 screenplay.

A chilling and topical rumination on political depravity, *The Damned* portrays the manipulations of the von Essenbeck family during the rise of Nazi Germany. The Armory's vast industrial space will provide a powerful backdrop, and context, for this unsettling story that personifies the perils of alluring ideology and

wanton greed during a time of political upheaval. **Performances at the Armory will begin July 17, 2018, and run through July 28.**

“We are excited to welcome Ivo van Hove to the Armory with the production he created with Comédie-Française and to help realize this production, grandiose in both its physical and emotional scale,” said **Rebecca Robertson, Park Avenue Armory’s President and Executive Producer.** “As we approach the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the film’s premiere, it’s sobering how relevant these themes are today.”

“One can’t help but have admiration for the way that Ivo van Hove and his work has redefined conventional theater,” said **Pierre Audi, Artistic Director at the Armory.** “Blending the modern and the technological with the foundational principles of Shakespeare and the Greeks tragedies, van Hove’s every choice has impeccable intentionality. For instance, the incredible use of videography and projections play with scale, juxtaposing vast space with intimacy, an element that will play particularly well in the spacious Drill Hall.”

Set in 1933, *The Damned* follows the vacillating fate of the von Essenbecks, a wealthy society family with ties to the lucrative steel dynasty. When the family’s patriarch, Baron Joachim von Essenbeck, is murdered, the steel-and-munitions works is seized by the relative next in line: the corrupt SA officer, Konstantin von Essenbeck. As the reins of power are sought by all within reach, the steel empire ultimately falls into the hands of the Nazi government, designating a direct path to war. What emerges is a multifaceted dramatization of debauchery that depicts the inevitable sociopolitical complexities of dictatorial regimes.

Comédie-Française originally produced and conceived *The Damned*, which went on to premiere at the Avignon Festival in 2016, followed by a four-month run at its storied Paris theater. For the production, Jan Versweyveld—van Hove’s longtime collaborator—developed a scenic design that borders on installation art, creating a sparse space where all objects have a precise and ritualistic function. The Armory’s historic walls of the Drill Hall will serve as a significant part of the scenic design. The primary playing space is a central floor with an LED screen backdrop that displays live projections from the show, recorded videos, as well as historical and archival images. As part of the *mise en scène*, Versweyveld exposes dressing rooms, costume racks, and bleachers for inactive performers on the stage periphery, amplifying the raw, naked, and instrumental ethos of both the subject matter and production elements.

As part of the Armory’s **Artist Talk Series**, the production on **Thursday, July 19** will be preceded by a separately ticketed conversation between Ivo van Hove and visual artist and vocalist Laurie Anderson. The conversation series seeks to encourage active discussion on the creative process and development of this landmark work.

*The Damned* is part of Park Avenue Armory’s 2018 season that continues with North American premiere of ***The Six Brandenburg Concertos***, the North American premiere of a dance work by choreographer **Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker** (Oct. 1–7), and **William Kentridge’s *The Head and the Load*** (Dec. 4–15), an Armory commission that will activate the full expanse of the Wade Thompson Drill Hall with processional musical theater performance that sheds light on the story of the more than two million Africans that served in the First World War.

Previous theatrical presentations at the Armory include Simon Stone’s critically acclaimed ***Yerma***, starring Billie Piper in her North American debut; eight-time Drama Desk-nominated play ***The Hairy Ape***, directed by Richard Jones and starring Bobby Cannavale; ***A Room in India*** (*Une chambre en Inde*) and ***Les Éphémères*** with Le Théâtre du Soleil under the direction of Arian Mnouchkine; the Chekhov International Theatre Festival’s staging of ***Boris Godunov***, the unprecedented residency of the Royal Shakespeare Company in performances of five productions in repertory over six weeks; and the Armory’s production of ***Macbeth***, directed by Rob Ashford and Kenneth Branagh in a staging that transformed the Drill Hall into a Scottish heath and henge and drew audiences into the blood, sweat, and elements of nature as action unfurled across a traverse stage.

## ***The Damned***

July 17 – 28, 2018

North American Premiere

Based on Luchino Visconti, Nicola Badalucco and Enrico Medioli's Work

Ivo van Hove, Director

Jan Versweyveld, Scenography and Lighting Designer

An D'Huys, Costume Designer

Tal Yarden, Video Designer

Eric Sleichim, Original Sound Designer and Sound Concept

Bart Van den Eynde, Dramaturgy

A Comédie-Française Production in collaboration with Park Avenue Armory

With Sylvia Bergé, Eric Génovèse, Denis Podalydès, Alexandre Pavloff, Guillaume Gallienne, Elsa Lepoivre, Loïc Corbery, Adeline d'Hermy, Clément Hervieu-Léger, Jennifer Decker, Didier Sandre, Christophe Montenez, Sébastien Baulain, Basile Alaïmalais, Tristan Cottin, Thomas Gendronneau, Pierre Ostoya Magnin, Axel Mandron, Tom Wozniczka, Madison Cluzel, Gioia Benenati, and Lucy-Lou Marino.

Performances: Monday – Thursday: 7:30pm Friday – Saturday: 8:00pm

### **TICKETS**

Tickets start at \$35 and can be purchased at [armoryonpark.org](http://armoryonpark.org) / (212) 933-5812.

Thompson Arts Center at Park Avenue Armory

643 Park Avenue at 67<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY

### **ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS**

As part of its *Interrogations of Form: Conversation Series*, the Armory will host a program in its historic period rooms focused on *The Damned*. These conversations feature artists and scholars exploring the realization of Armory productions and their resonances today, encouraging active discussion on a range of themes and complex issues.

#### **Artist Talk: *The Damned***

Thursday, July 19 at 6:00pm

Director Ivo van Hove and other members of the creative team discuss the creative process and development of this landmark work with visual artist and vocalist Laurie Anderson.

### **ARMORY AFTER HOURS**

Audiences also have the opportunity stay at the Armory following evening performances for libations with fellow attendees—and often the evening's artists—at a special bar in one of the historic period rooms.

### **SPONSORSHIP**

*The Damned* is supported in part by the Cultural Services of the French Embassy.

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

Support for Park Avenue Armory's artistic season 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 IVO VAN HOVE**

Ivo van Hove (Belgium, 1958) began his career as a theatre director in 1981 with his own productions (*Germes*, *Rumours*). He then went on to be the artistic leader of AKT, Akt-Vertikaal and De Tijd. From 1990 to 2000, he was director of Het Zuidelijk Toneel, and from 1998 to 2004, Van Hove managed the Holland Festival where he annually presented his selection of international theatre, music, opera and dance. Since 1984, he has been one of the artistic leaders of the Dramatic Arts department of the University College Antwerp. In 2001, Van Hove became director of Toneelgroep Amsterdam.

Van Hove is the recipient of two Olivier Awards and two Tony Awards for *A View from the Bridge*; two Obie Awards for *More Stately Mansions* and *Hedda Gabler*; the Archangel Award at the Edinburgh Festival; the Critic's Circle Award in the Netherlands; and the Dutch oeuvre award, together with Jan Versweyveld. He received an honorary doctorate for general merit from the University of Antwerp, and the Flemish Culture Prize for Overall Cultural Merit from the Flemish Government. He is Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in France and King Filip of Belgium awarded him Commander of the Order of the Crown.

Theatrical productions by Ivo van Hove have been performed across the globe. Recent international productions include *A View from the Bridge* at Young Vic/West End/Broadway, *The Crucible* on Broadway, *Lazarus* in New York and London, *The Damned* (Visconti) at the Comédie-Française, and *Hedda Gabler* at National Theater London. At Toneelgroep Amsterdam, van Hove directed, among other productions, *Angels in America*, *Roman Tragedies*, *Kings of War*, *Opening Night*, *Obsession*, *Antonioni*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Scenes from a Marriage*, *After the Rehearsal / Persona*, *The Human Voice*, *Othello*, *Children of the Sun*, *The Miser*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, and *The Fountainhead*.

His musical credits include *Rent* and *Lazarus* by David Bowie and Enda Walsh.

His opera credits include *Lulu* (Alban Berg) and the entire *Ring des Nibelungen*. At the Dutch National Opera in Amsterdam: Janacek's *The Makropulos Affair* and Strauss' *Salome*. In 2014 he directed the world premiere of the opera *Brokeback Mountain* in Madrid.

### **ABOUT COMÉDIE-FRANÇAISE**

“The Comédie-Française carries within it this magnificent utopia that consists of reading the present in the light of the past, of being able to move between these time scales, reduce and compare them so as to learn lessons or empathy.

“Our House resists all definition, its missions being too vast and the curiosity of its artisans too insatiable to be reduced to one meaning rather than another. Even if it means losing itself or “losing consciousness,” its strength lies in its ability to adapt to all kinds of theatre. The common catalyst remains its troupe and all its departments, working tirelessly to lead you on these fanciful paths,” says Éric Ruf, general administrator of the Comédie-Française.

Also commonly known as the *Maison de Molière* (House of Molière), the Comédie-Française was founded in 1680 and since then, has been perpetuating the work and heritage of Molière, playwright, actor, and troupe leader. With a repertoire of more than 3,000 plays, “Le Français” presents a mixture of classic, modern, and contemporary works by French and foreign playwrights. It presents approximately 800 performances per year on its three stages: the Salle Richelieu, the Vieux Colombier, and the Studio Theatre, and attracts an audience of more than 350,000 people annually. The Comédie-Française has toured extensively in Europe, USA, Korea, Japan, Australia, South America, and most recently visited London, New York, and Moscow. The very first international trip was to London in 1867.

For more than three centuries, the Comédie-Française has constantly surprised and stood out as an exceptional, thriving and creative “theatre factory.” To deserve this definition, it carefully founds its exceptional status, its durability, and its vitality on pillars that are as solid as they are immutable: the Troupe, the Repertoire, and the demanding principle of alternating productions.

More information on [www.comedie-francaise.fr/en](http://www.comedie-francaise.fr/en)

## **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 19<sup>th</sup>-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; 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](http://www.armoryonpark.org).

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