



PARK AVENUE  
ARMORY



Park Avenue Armory and WQXR and WNYC Studios announce co-production  
**“HELGA: The Armory Conversations”**

New season of “HELGA” podcast features WQXR host and critically acclaimed performing artist HELGA DAVIS in conversation with voices from Park Avenue Armory’s bold *Interrogations of Form* series

Guests feature a rich pool of artists, social activists, creative thinkers, and change agents, including visual artist NICK CAVE, artist KAREN FINLEY, author JASON REYNOLDS, singer DAVÓNE TINES, among others

Podcast scored by Grammy Award-winning bassist, vocalist, and songwriter MESHELL NDEGEOCELLO and multidisciplinary artist and MacArthur “Genius” JASON MORAN

Debut episode available [here](#)

**New York, NY**—July 7, 2021—Today, Park Avenue Armory and WQXR/WNYC Studios announce a partnership to co-produce *HELGA: The Armory Conversations*, a new season of the podcast hosted by critically-acclaimed performing artist and WQXR host Helga Davis.

The new season debuts on July 14, 2021, and continues weekly through September 29, 2021. *HELGA: The Armory Conversations* is available on [wnycstudios.org/Helga](http://wnycstudios.org/Helga) and all other platforms where podcasts are available.

Davis draws on her long association with the Armory in this new season, collaborating closely with the Armory’s Public Programming team to engage its rich artistic network and bold [Interrogations of Form](#) series to identify artists, social activists, creative thinkers, and change agents for her signature revealing and intimate conversations. Speaking artist-to-artist, guests share stories of struggle and resilience, challenges and victories along their creative journeys, providing inspiration and hope to listeners. These thoughtful and thought-provoking conversations expand our world and our imaginations as we explore what we *think* we know about each other. Each episode ends with *The Coda*, a collaborative space at the end of each episode where Helga responds to, reflects upon, and creates with her guests to create something new.

This season’s debut episode features a conversation with visual artist Nick Cave, well known for his *Soundsuits*, which were featured in his 2018 commission *The Let Go* at the Armory. Cave speaks with Davis about the evolution of his sculptural work, his life as a community collaborator, and how to move from Black sorrow to Black excellence. “Black excellence – what does that mean? I don’t f---ing know. But what I do know is that it feels good in my bones, and I’m not gonna define it because I’m going to let it define me,” Cave said.

Additional guests include:

- Jason Reynolds, YA Author
- Karen Finley, Trailblazing Feminist Artist/Author/Performer
- Tina Campt, Professor, Modern Culture & Media, Brown University
- Davóne Tines, Operatic Bass-Baritone
- Liliana Maria Percy Ruíz, Executive Producer, *On Being* and Host, *This Movie Changed Me*

- Jad Abumrad, Host and Creator of WNYC Studios' *Radiolab*
- Marilee Talkington, Actor and Disability Justice and Arts Advocate

Music for this season was composed by Grammy Award-winning bassist, vocalist, and songwriter Meshell Ndegeocello, a frequent Armory Public Programming collaborator, and multidisciplinary artist and MacArthur “Genius” Jason Moran, who is Curator of the Armory’s Artists Studio Series. Imagery for the season is by photographer Renee Cox, with Davis’s wardrobe in the season image created by sculptor Nick Cave.

Helga Davis’ relationship with Park Avenue Armory began with her tenure as an Artist-in-Residence in 2012, during which she held a workshop of her piece *Cassandra* as part of the *Under Construction* Series. She has since been featured at the Armory in Ann Hamilton’s *the event of a thread* in December 2012 with music by David Lang and in Nick Cave’s *The Let Go* in June 2018, as well as contributing to *SOCIAL! the social distance dance club* conceived by Christine Jones, Steven Hoggett, and David Byrne as part of the Armory’s recent Social Distance Hall series in April 2021. Helga Davis has been a collaborator of Park Avenue Armory Arts Education for nearly 10 years, mentoring the Armory’s Youth Corps through legendary vocal and movement workshops, performing a commissioned work as part of a Student Summit in conjunction with Julian Resefeldt’s *Manifesto*, and playing a critical role in shaping the Armory’s vision and approach to arts education as a sounding board and confidant of the Board of Directors.

“We are excited to partner on this season of the *HELGA* podcast to amplify the voices of incredible artists and help bring the important work of our *Interrogations of Form* Conversations series into the homes of our audience,” says **Rebecca Robertson, Founding President of Park Avenue Armory**. “Helga Davis is such an extraordinary artist and a longtime friend of the Armory that this felt like a natural partnership.”

“I am thrilled to be back behind the mic sharing my curiosity for and love of conversation. In addition to broadening our collective landscape with an even larger pool of artists, creators, and thinkers, this season’s collaboration with Park Avenue Armory will provide us with unexpected, inspiring, deep, personal insights into the human condition,” said Davis. “Once again, *HELGA* conversations continue to offer up evidence of what life is like for people we revere, helping us to feel encouraged in our individual journeys.”

“WQXR and WNYC Studios are proud to partner with essential cultural institutions in New York, like the Park Avenue Armory,” said **Ed Yim, Chief Content Officer, WQXR**. “Helga is an extraordinary citizen of the artistic world and an extraordinary voice on the podcasting landscape. What better person to link our two organizations together through illuminating conversations?”

Since its debut in 2016, *HELGA* has featured guests including Solange, Peter Sellars, Krista Tippett, Elizabeth Alexander, Bethann Hardison, Esperanza Spalding, Judy Collins, Sarah Jones, and Hilton Als.

## **HELGA: THE ARMORY CONVERSATIONS PRODUCTION TEAM**

Krystal Hawes, Producer/WQXR

Sapir Rosenblatt, Technical Producer

Avery Willis Hoffman, Director of Public Programs/Park Avenue Armory

Darian Suggs, Associate Director of Public Programs/Park Avenue Armory

## **ABOUT HELGA DAVIS**

Helga Davis is a vocalist and performance artist with feet planted on the most prestigious international stages and with firm roots in the realities and concerns of her local community whose work draws out insights that illuminate how artistic leaps for an individual can offer connection among audiences. Davis was principal actor in the 25th-anniversary international revival of Robert Wilson and Philip Glass's seminal opera *Einstein on the Beach*.

She also starred in Wilson's *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, with libretto and score by Bernice Johnson Reagon. Among the collaborations and works written for her are *Oceanic Verses* by Paola Prestini, *You Us We All* by Shara Nova and Andrew Ondrejcek and *Yet Unheard*, a tribute to Sandra Bland by Courtney Bryan, based on the poem by Sharan Strange. She has conceived and performed *First Responder* and *Wanna* as responses to *Until* and *The Let Go* by multidisciplinary artist Nick Cave. In addition to hosting HELGA, she is artist in residence at National Sawdust and Joe's Pub, winner of the 2019 Greenfield Prize in composition, a 2019 Alpert Award finalist, and the 2018-21 visiting curator for the performing arts at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

## **ABOUT WQXR**

WQXR is New York City's only all-classical music station, immersing listeners in the city's rich musical life on-air at 105.9FM, online at WQXR.org, and in person through live events and performances. WQXR presents new and landmark classical recordings, as well as live concerts from New York City's concert halls and performance venues, and broadcasts essential destination programs including *Carnegie Hall Live*, *Metropolitan Opera Saturday Matinee Broadcasts*, *New York Philharmonic This Week*, *New York in Concert*, *This Week with Yannick*, and the *Young Artists Showcase*. WQXR also produces podcasts that reach new audiences for the artform: *The Open Ears Project*, and—in partnership with the Metropolitan Opera—the critically acclaimed opera podcast, *Aria Code*. As a public radio station, WQXR is supported through the generosity of its members, donors, and sponsors, making classical music relevant, accessible, and inspiring for all.

## **ABOUT WNYC STUDIOS**

WNYC Studios is the premier producer of on-demand and broadcast audio, and home to some of the industry's most critically acclaimed and popular podcasts, including *Radiolab*, *On the Media*, *The New Yorker Radio Hour*, *Death, Sex & Money*, *Dolly Parton's America*, and *The United States of Anxiety*. WNYC Studios is leading the new golden age in audio with podcasts and national radio programs that inform, inspire, and delight millions of intellectually curious and highly engaged listeners across digital, mobile, and broadcast platforms. Programs include personal narratives, deep journalism, revealing interviews, and smart entertainment as varied and intimate as the human voice itself. For more information, visit [wnycstudios.org](http://wnycstudios.org).

## **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 *Recitals 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, Michael 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)

#### **PARK AVENUE ARMORY SPONSORSHIP**

Citi and Bloomberg Philanthropies are the Armory's 2021 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 Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature. Additional support has been provided by the Armory's Artistic Council.

*Interrogations of Form* is supported in part by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

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