



**Park Avenue Armory Announces  
Casting and Creative Details for NYC Premiere of  
*Illinoise***

**with Music and Lyrics by Sufjan Stevens, Based on the Acclaimed Concept Album  
Features Original Story by Justin Peck and Jackie Sibblies Drury,  
Direction and Choreography by Peck**

**Performed in the Wade Thompson Drill Hall  
from March 2 - 23, 2024**

**New York, NY**—January 8, 2024—Today, Park Avenue Armory announced details for the highly anticipated New York City premiere of *Illinoise*, the theatrical adaption of Grammy- and Oscar-nominated **Sufjan Stevens'** concept album *Illinois*, which will be staged in the Armory's massive Wade Thompson Drill Hall. Stevens' beloved cult classic is brought to life with live music and vocals, impressionistic choreography, and narratives centering on self-exploration and community, crafted by Tony Award-winning director-choreographer **Justin Peck** (Steven Spielberg's *West Side Story*, *Carousel*) and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright **Jackie Sibblies Drury** (*Fairview*, *Marys Seacole*).

A full company of performers will bring an original story to life, set to the entirety of Stevens' album with new arrangements by composer, pianist, and frequent Stevens collaborator **Timo Andres**, ranging in style from DIY folk and indie rock to marching band and ambient electronics, performed live by an 11-member band and three vocalists. *Illinoise* will take over the soaring Drill Hall, eliminating a traditional proscenium and inviting audiences to gather in a clearing around the work's campfire setting with enveloping scenic elements.

"Justin Peck, Jackie Sibblies Drury, and Sufjan Stevens are each, in their own right, some of today's most brilliant artistic minds. *Illinoise* upends our expectations of their work and in turn, offers an authentic and deeply personal theatrical experience," said **Pierre Audi, the Armory's Marina Kellen French Artistic Director**. "Using the Drill Hall as their canvas, the company of *Illinoise* will boldly move across and beyond lines of genre while remaining grounded in our most ancient storytelling traditions."

"*Illinoise* is a moving piece that will resonate for New York audiences," added **Rebecca Robertson, the Adam R. Flatto Founding President and Executive Producer of Park Avenue Armory**. "In classic Armory fashion, we invite dance, music, and theater lovers to convene in the Drill Hall for this poignant, cross-disciplinary work that offers much-needed joy and togetherness."

"Sufjan Stevens' album *Illinois* has played a significant role in my personal and creative journey since I was a teenager. It's been a long road to bring it to the stage, and we're honored to be making our NYC debut at the legendary Park Avenue Armory," said ***Illinoise* Director and Choreographer Justin Peck**. "*Illinoise* centers its story on community. Jackie, our extraordinary cast and band, and I are looking forward to welcoming our community in New York City and beyond to the campfire this March."

Featured in the cast of *Illinoise* is **Gaby Diaz**, winner of *So You Think You Can Dance* Season 12, with film credits including *Maestro*, *West Side Story*, and *tick, tick... BOOM!*. Diaz starred Off-Broadway in *Only Gold* at MCC

Theater, for which she won the Chita Rivera Award. Also in the company is **Ben Cook**, who appeared in the film *West Side Story*, on Broadway in *West Side Story*, *Mean Girls*, and *Tuck Everlasting*, on film in *Happiness for Beginners* (Netflix), and in recent featured roles in TV shows *The First Lady* (Showtime) and *Pretty Little Liars* (HBO Max); **Robbie Fairchild**, the former New York City Ballet principal dancer who received a Tony-nomination for his performance in *An American in Paris*, starred in *Brigadoon* at New York City Center and in the film *Cats*; **Ahmad Simmons**, *Fosse/Verdon* (FX), *Hadestown*, *West Side Story*, *Carousel*, and *Cats* on Broadway; and **Ricky Ubeda**, winner of *So You Think You Can Dance* Season 11, who appeared in FX's *Fosse/Verdon*, the films *West Side Story* and *Maestro*, and on Broadway in *West Side Story*, *On The Town*, *Cats*, and *Carousel*.

The cast of *Illinoise* also includes **Kara Chan** (Twyla Tharp Dance, American Ballet Theatre), **Jeanette Delgado** (Miami City Ballet, *West Side Story* film), **Christine Flores** (Dance Heginbotham, Pam Tanowitz Dance), **Jada German** (Twyla Tharp Dance, Metropolitan Opera), **Zachary Gonder** (*Carmen* at Lyric Opera, Pam Tanowitz Dance), **Rachel Lockhart** (Juilliard's Choreographic Honors program, *Jacob's Pillow*), **Dario Natarelli** (New York City Center *Encores!*, *Maestro* film), **Tyrone Reese** (Juilliard School), **Craig Salstein** (American Ballet Theatre, associate choreographer for *West Side Story* and *Maestro* films, *Carousel* on Broadway), **Byron Tittle** (Dorrance Dance, *In the Heights* film), and **Alejandro Vargas** (Juilliard School). The band includes vocalists **Elijah Lyons**, **Shara Nova** (featured on the original *Illinois* album) and **Tasha Viets-VanLear**, and instrumentalists **Christina Courtin**, **Sean Peter Forte**, **Domenica Fossati**, **Daniel Freedman**, **Kathy Halvorson**, **Nathan Koci**, **Eleonore Oppenheim**, **Brett Parnell**, **Brandon Ridenour**, **Kyra Sims**, and **Jessica Tsang**.

*Illinoise* was originally commissioned, developed, produced, and premiered at the Fisher Center at Bard in the summer of 2023, and comes to the Armory following a run at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater from January 28-February 18, 2024.

With inclusion on several reviewer's "best of the decade" lists including those of *Paste*, NPR, and *Rolling Stone*, Sufjan Stevens' acclaimed 2005 concept album *Illinois* enjoys cult status for its lush orchestrations and wildly inventive portrayal of the state's people, landscapes, and history, complete with UFOs, zombies, and predatory wasps. This musically ambitious work, which weaves together cinematic orchestral anthems, jazz riffs, and other musical influences, leads audiences on a mighty journey through the American heartland, from campfire storytelling to the edges of the cosmos.

## CAST

**Kara Chan** Cast  
**Ben Cook** Cast  
**Jeanette Delgado** Cast  
**Gaby Diaz** Cast  
**Robbie Fairchild** Cast  
**Christine Flores** Cast  
**Jada German** Cast  
**Zachary Gonder** Cast  
**Rachel Lockhart** Cast  
**Dario Natarelli** Cast  
**Tyrone Reese** Cast  
**Craig Salstein** Cast  
**Ahmad Simmons** Cast  
**Byron Tittle** Cast  
**Ricky Ubeda** Cast  
**Alejandro Vargas** Cast

## BAND

**Elijah Lyons** Vocalist  
**Shara Nova** Vocalist  
**Tasha Viets-VanLear** Vocalist  
**Christina Courtin** Instrumentalist  
**Sean Peter Forte** Instrumentalist  
**Domenica Fossati** Instrumentalist  
**Daniel Freedman** Instrumentalist  
**Kathy Halvorson** Instrumentalist  
**Nathan Koci** Instrumentalist  
**Eleonore Oppenheim** Instrumentalist  
**Brett Parnell** Instrumentalist  
**Brandon Ridenour** Instrumentalist  
**Kyra Sims** Instrumentalist  
**Jessica Tsang** Instrumentalist

**New York City Premiere, A Park Avenue Armory Co-Commission**  
**ILLINOISE**

March 2 – 23, 2024

**PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE**

Previews: March 2 – 6, 2024

Monday – Wednesday at 7:30pm

Saturday at 8:00pm

Opening Night: March 7, 2024

Thursday at 7:00pm

Performances: March 8 – 23, 2024

Monday – Thursday at 7:30pm

Friday at 8:00pm

Saturday at 2:00pm and 8:00pm

Sufjan Stevens

Justin Peck

Jackie Sibblies Drury

**New York City Premiere**

Music and Lyrics **Sufjan Stevens** (based on the album *Illinois*)

Story **Justin Peck** and **Jackie Sibblies Drury**

Direction and Choreography **Justin Peck**

Music Direction and Supervision **Nathan Koci**

Music Arrangements and Orchestration **Timo Andres**

Scenic Design **Adam Rigg**

Lighting Design **Brandon Stirling Baker**

Sound Design **Garth MacAleavey**

Costume Design **Reid Bartelme** and **Harriet Jung**

Props Design **Andrew Diaz**

Masks **Julian Crouch**

Production Stage Manager **Rick Steiger**

**Co-commissioned by Park Avenue Armory, Fisher Center at Bard, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Perelman Performing Arts Center (PAC NYC), Southbank Center, and TO Live, and produced in association with ArKtype / Thomas O. Kriegsmann by special arrangement with the Perelman Performing Arts Center (PAC NYC)**

**Originally commissioned, developed, produced, and premiered at the Fisher Center at Bard**

**TICKETS**

Tickets start at \$35 (plus fees) for previews and \$45 (plus fees) for performances and can be purchased at [armoryonpark.org](http://armoryonpark.org) / (212) 933-5812.

**ARTIST TALK: ILLINOISE**

Thursday, March 14 at 9:30pm

Tickets: \$25 (plus fees)

**SPONSORSHIP**

Citi and Bloomberg Philanthropies are the Armory's 2024 Season Sponsor.

Support for Park Avenue Armory's artistic season has been provided by the Thompson Family Foundation, Charina Endowment Fund, the Donald A. Pels Charitable Trust, The Shubert Foundation, Wescustogo 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 Marc Haas Foundation, Mary W. Harriman Foundation, the Reed Foundation, the Leon Levy Foundation, the May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation, Gregory Annenberg Weingarten, GRoW @ Annenberg, The Emma and Georgina Bloomberg Foundation, the Richenthal Foundation, and the Isak and Rose Weinman Foundation. Additional support has been provided by the Armory's Artistic Council. Public support is provided by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature as well as the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council under the leadership of Speaker Adrienne Adams.

*Illinois* is generously supported, in part, by the Blavatnik Family Foundation, Slobodan Randjelović and Jon Stryker, Jody and John Arnhold, and the Harkness Foundation for Dance.

### **ABOUT JUSTIN PECK**

Justin Peck is a director, choreographer, filmmaker, and dancer based in New York City. He is the Resident Choreographer and Artistic Associate of the New York City Ballet, the second person in the institution's history to hold this title. He has developed and created over 50 dance and theater works that have been presented on stages around the world, including Lincoln Center, the Palais Garnier, Sydney Opera House, Brooklyn Academy of Music, and Broadway (most notably with his 2018 Tony Award-winning production of *Carousel*). His work has been performed by companies such as the Paris Opera Ballet, Australian Ballet, Dresden Semperoper Ballet, Hong Kong Ballet, Boston Ballet, Juilliard, National Ballet of Canada, Miami City Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, LA Dance Project, Dutch National Ballet, the School of American Ballet, Joffrey Ballet, and Houston Ballet among many others.

Peck works extensively as a filmmaker with credits including direction of music videos for The National, Chris Thile, and Dan Deacon; choreographing the 2021 film *West Side Story* in collaboration with director Steven Spielberg; and being commissioned by *The New York Times* to direct 10 films celebrating the best acting performances of the 2018 year, which included performances by Julia Roberts, Ethan Hawke, Lakeith Stanfield, Glenn Close, Emma Stone, and Toni Collette.

Peck celebrates the art of collaboration and is honored to have worked across mediums with a wide array of luminaries, including Sufjan Stevens, Raf Simons, Elizabeth Moss, Steven Spielberg, Caroline Shaw, Jeffrey Gibson, Renée Fleming, Shepard Fairey, Sofia Coppola, Stephen Sondheim, Shantell Martin, Humberto Leon, Bradley Cooper, Nico Muhly, John Baldessari, Dries Van Noten, Damien Chazelle, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Marcel Dzama, and Jody Lee Lipes. Peck danced with New York City Ballet from 2006-2019, eventually achieving the rank of soloist in 2013. He has performed a vast repertoire of works by George Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, Alexei Ratmansky, Lynne Taylor-Corbett, Christopher Wheeldon, and many others.

Peck's honors include the Tony Award for Best Choreography for the Broadway production of *Carousel* (2018), the National Arts Award (2018), the Golden Plate Honor from the Academy of Achievement (2019), the Bessie Award for Outstanding Production for *Rodeo: Four Dance Episodes* (2015), and the World Choreography Award for the film *West Side Story* (2022).

### **ABOUT JACKIE SIBBLIES DRURY**

Jackie Sibblies Drury's plays include *Marys Seacole* (OBIE Award), *Fairview* (Pulitzer Prize), *Really*, *Social Creatures*, and *We Are Proud to Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as Southwest Africa, From the German Südwestafrika, Between the Years 1884-1915*. The presenters of her plays include Donmar Warehouse, The

Young Vic, Lincoln Center Theater's LCT3, Soho Rep., Berkeley Rep, New York City Players & Abrons Arts Center, Victory Gardens, Trinity Rep, Woolly Mammoth, Undermain Theatre, InterAct Theatre, Actors Theater of Louisville, Company One, Bush Theatre, and T: The New York Times Style Magazine. Drury has developed her work at Sundance, Bellagio Center, Ground Floor at Berkeley Rep, Soho Rep. Writer/Director Lab, New York Theatre Workshop, Bushwick Starr, LARK, and MacDowell Colony, among others. She has received a PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theater Award, a Steinberg Playwright Award, a Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, a Jerome Fellowship at The LARK, a United States Artists Fellowship, a Helen Merrill Playwriting Award, and a Windham-Campbell Literary Prize in Drama.

### **ABOUT SUFJAN STEVENS**

Sufjan Stevens is a singer, songwriter, and composer living in New York. His preoccupation with epic concepts has motivated two state records (*Michigan* and *Illinois*), a collection of sacred and biblical songs (*Seven Swans*), an electronic album for the animals of the Chinese zodiac (*Enjoy Your Rabbit*), a full-length album partly inspired by the outsider artist Royal Robertson (*The Age of Adz*), a masterwork memorializing and investigating his relationship with his late mother (*Carrie & Lowell*), and two Christmas box sets (*Songs for Christmas, vol. 1–5* and *Silver & Gold, vol. 6–10*). BAM has commissioned two works from Stevens, a programmatic tone poem for the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (*The BQE*) and an instrumental accompaniment to slow-motion rodeo footage (*Round-Up*). He has collaborated extensively with the New York City Ballet choreographer Justin Peck (*Year of the Rabbit, Everywhere We Go, In the Countenance of Kings, Principia, The Decalogue, and Reflections*). Stevens' *Planetarium*, a collaborative album with Nico Muhly, Bryce Dessner, and James McAlister imbued with themes of the cosmos, was released in 2017 to widespread critical praise. Stevens also contributed three much-lauded songs to Luca Guadagnino's critically acclaimed film *Call Me By Your Name*, including the Oscar and Grammy-nominated song "Mystery of Love." In 2020, he shared *Aporia*, a collaborative new age album made with his stepfather Lowell Brams, and his eighth studio album, *The Ascension*, a reflection on the state of humanity in freefall and a call for a total transformation of consciousness. In early 2021, he released *Convocations*, a five-volume, two-and-a-half-hour requiem mass for present times. The most recent studio album by Stevens—*A Beginner's Mind*—features songs inspired in part by popular films. It was released in the fall of 2021 and is a collaboration with singer-songwriter Angelo De Augustine. In October 2023, Stevens' tenth solo studio album, *Javelin*, was released.

### **ABOUT PARK AVENUE ARMORY**

Part palace, part industrial shed, Park Avenue Armory supports 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—reminiscent of 19<sup>th</sup>-century European train stations—and an array of exuberant period rooms, the Armory provides a platform for artists to push the boundaries of their practice, collaborate across disciplines, and create new work in dialogue with the historic building. Across its grand and intimate spaces, 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.

The Armory both commissions and presents performances and installations in the grand Drill Hall and offers more intimate programming through its acclaimed *Recital Series*, which showcases musical talent from across the globe within the salon setting of the Board of Officers Room; its *Artists Studio* series curated by Jason Moran in the restored Veterans Room; *Making Space at the Armory*, a public programming series that brings together a discipline-spanning group of artists and cultural thought-leaders around the important issues of our time; and the *Malkin Lecture Series* that features presentations by scholars and writers on topics related to Park Avenue Armory and its history. In addition, the Armory also has a year-round Artists-in-Residence program, providing space and support for artists to create new work and expand their practices.

The Armory's creativity-based arts education programs provide access to the arts to thousands of students from underserved New York City public schools, engaging them with the institution's artistic programming and outside-the-box creative processes. Through its education initiatives, the Armory provides access to all Drill

Hall performances, workshops taught by Master Teaching Artists, and in-depth residencies that support the schools' curriculum. Youth Corps, the Armory's year-round paid internship program, begins in high school and continues into the critical post-high school years, providing interns with mentored employment, job training, and skill development, as well as a network of peers and mentors to support their individual college and career goals.

The Armory is undergoing a multi-phase renovation and restoration of its historic building led by architects Herzog & de Meuron, with Platt Byard Dovell White as Executive Architects.

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

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