



**Park Avenue Armory to Present Tyshawn Sorey's
*Monochromatic Light (Afterlife)***

**New Commission, Reimagined in a Staging for the Wade Thompson Drill Hall
by Peter Sellars with Immersive Scenic Works by Julie Mehretu and
Choreography by Reggie (Regg Roc) Gray, Builds on Morton Feldman's 1971
Tribute to Houston's Rothko Chapel**

September 27 – October 8, 2022

New York, NY – June 6, 2022 – This fall, Park Avenue Armory presents *Monochromatic Light (Afterlife)*, a new musical composition by genre-defying musician and composer **Tyshawn Sorey**, co-commissioned in Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Rothko Chapel. *Monochromatic Light (Afterlife)* is Sorey's homage to both the Chapel and composer Morton Feldman, whom Sorey cites as a major influence on his compositional style and whose 1971 masterpiece was written for the dedication of the Chapel. Visionary director **Peter Sellars** returns to the Armory to stage the work for the magnitude of the Wade Thompson Drill Hall, placing Sorey's composition in dialogue with new and preexisting works by visual artist **Julie Mehretu** and choreography by **Reggie (Regg Roc) Gray**, immersing audiences in sound, color, and movement. *Monochromatic Light (Afterlife)* will be performed at the Armory from **September 27 to October 8, 2022**.

"With the presentation of *Monochromatic Light (Afterlife)*, the Armory has provided the space for collaboration between three powerhouse figures to create a unique experience that both honors Feldman's original composition and expands upon it within the context of the Drill Hall to create a dynamic, genre-defying performance experience," said **Pierre Audi, the Armory's Marina Kellen French Artistic Director**. "Peter Sellars' reimagined staging of Sorey's masterpiece provides a serene, reflective environment in which audiences can consider the thematic richness and emotional power of the work."

"*Monochromatic Light (Afterlife)* reflects an institutional commitment to fostering artistic community and providing a platform for artists to elevate, expand, and collaborate in their practices," said **Rebecca Robertson, the Armory's Founding President and Executive Producer**. "We are thrilled to welcome back Tyshawn Sorey, Peter Sellars, and Reggie Gray to the Armory, and to bring Julie Mehretu's powerful, multi-layered work into the space."

Monochromatic Light (Afterlife) commemorates 50 years since the dedication of Rothko Chapel, a unique non-denominational chapel founded by John and Dominique de Menil that features 14 dark-hued canvases created for the space by the great 20th-century painter Mark Rothko. For the dedication, composer Morton Feldman presented a score he had written in honor of Rothko, who committed suicide before the Chapel's opening. Sorey's composition is deeply inspired by Feldman's work, sharing the instrumentation of his original score (percussion, viola, celesta, choir) with the addition of piano and swapping the soprano soloist for a bass-baritone, and provides the listener with the feeling of being enveloped in sound in much the same way that Rothko's paintings engage visitors in the Chapel, revealing ever changing shades of color and texture.

In the Drill Hall, *Monochromatic Light (Afterlife)* will feature a ritualized staging by Peter Sellars, who returns to the Armory following his direction of the celebrated productions of *St. Matthew Passion* in 2014, *FLEXN* in 2015, and *FLEXN Evolution* in 2017. Audiences will experience the work in a ceremonial chamber immersed in large-scale canvases by renowned artist Julie Mehretu. Flex pioneer Reggie (Regg Roc) Gray is choreographing the production, accenting Sorey's composition with the sharp, electrifying movement style that characterized the *FLEXN* performances, which he co-directed with Sellars. Sorey's score will be performed by violist Kim Kashkashian, Sarah Rothenberg on piano and celesta, percussionist Steven Schick, singer Davóne Tines, and The Choir of Trinity Wall Street. *Monochromatic Light (Afterlife)* represents a continuation of Sorey's relationship with the Armory; the MacArthur "Genius" performed in an Artists Studio program in the Armory's Veterans Room in 2016.

"It is an honor for me to have been asked to create a work commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Rothko Chapel, and to now give the work new life at the Park Avenue Armory," said **Tyshawn Sorey**. "The 14 black paintings in the Chapel are works of art that strongly resonate with me. When asked to write this piece, I made the conscious decision to not compose a single note of music until I experienced the visual and spiritual transformation of these paintings for myself inside the Chapel, where I've spent several hours during different times of each day I went. This piece reflects these experiences as well as the influence of both Rothko's artistic output and that of Morton Feldman, one of my biggest musical inspirations. As with all my works, my hope for this composition is for audiences to have an active, dynamic *experience* with it, not simply just to listen, which the nontraditional space of the Armory's Drill Hall helps to realize."

Added **Peter Sellars**, "Tyshawn Sorey has created a spare, intimate, enveloping world of sound calling forth the piercing memories, unfinished and unburied histories, yearning, and resolve that live inside every step forward and each moment of stillness; Julie Mehretu's paintings frame, focus, color, and intensify a thirst for justice and spiritual renewal that moves across layers of generations and geographies; Regg Roc Gray and the courageous movers of *FLEXN* wear the grief, the loss, the endurance, the grace, and the unbroken lifeforce itself in every bone and sinew as they bone break, glide, pause, and get low. It is a privilege for me to enter and share the charged, contemplative, cleansing space opened, activated, and sustained by these artists. For these evenings, the Park Avenue Armory will become a communal site of remembrance and deep introspection."

Monochromatic Light is part of Park Avenue Armory's full 2022 season. Additional upcoming Drill Hall programming includes the debut of an Armory-commissioned immersive film installation, *Euphoria* (November 29-January 8, 2023), by German video and film artist **Julian Rosefeldt** that takes aim at the destructive potential of capital, money, greed, and consumption, featuring original music performed on film by an ensemble of jazz drummers and singers from **the Brooklyn Youth Chorus**.

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

September 27–October 8, 2022

Tuesday, September 27 at 7:30pm

Thursday, September 29 at 7:30pm

Friday, September 30 at 8:00pm

Saturday, October 1 at 8:00pm

Tuesday, October 4 at 7:30pm

Wednesday, October 5 at 7:30pm

Thursday, October 6 at 7:30pm

Friday, October 7 at 8:00pm

Saturday, October 8 at 8:00pm

TICKETS

Tickets start at \$40 plus fees and can be purchased at armoryonpark.org or by phone through the Armory Box Office at (212) 933-5812, Monday through Friday from 10am to 6pm.

SPONSORSHIP

Citi and Bloomberg Philanthropies are the Armory's 2022 Season Sponsors.

Support for Park Avenue Armory's artistic season has been generously provided by the Charina Endowment Fund, the Donald A. Pels Charitable Trust, 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 Leon Levy Foundation, the May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation, Gregory Annenberg Weingarten, GRoW @ Annenberg, the Richenthal Foundation, and the Isak and Rose Weinman Foundation. Additional support has been provided by the Armory's Artistic Council.

ABOUT TYSHAWN SOREY

Newark-born composer and multi-instrumentalist Tyshawn Sorey has performed nationally and internationally with his own ensembles, as well as artists such as John Zorn, Vijay Iyer, Roscoe Mitchell, Muhal Richard Abrams, Wadada Leo Smith, Marilyn Crispell, George Lewis, Claire Chase, Steve Lehman, Jason Moran, Evan Parker, Anthony Braxton, and Myra Melford, among many others. In a recent article published by *The New York Times*, Sorey was profiled as "an artist who is at the nexus of the music industry's artistic and social concerns." *The Wall Street Journal* wrote that Sorey is "a composer of radical and seemingly boundless ideas." *The New Yorker* recently noted that Sorey is "among the most formidable denizens of the in-between zone... An extraordinary talent who can see across the entire musical landscape."

Sorey has composed works for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the International Contemporary Ensemble, soprano Julia Bullock, PRISM Quartet, JACK Quartet, TAK Ensemble, the McGill-McHale Trio, flutist Claire Chase, bass-baritone Davóne Tines, Alarm Will Sound, Seattle Symphony Orchestra, Opera Philadelphia, Ensemble Intercontemporain, The Crossing, Soundbox Percussion, and violinist Johnny Gandelsman, among many other ensembles and collaborative performers. Sorey has received support for his creative projects from The Jerome Foundation, The Shifting Foundation, Van Lier Fellowship, and was named a 2017 MacArthur Fellow and a 2018 United States Artists Fellow.

Sorey has released fifteen critically acclaimed recordings that feature his work as a composer, co-composer, improviser, multi-instrumentalist, and conceptualist. He has taught and lectured on composition and improvisation at Columbia University, The New England Conservatory, The Banff Centre, University of Michigan, International Realtime Music Symposium, Harvard University, Hochschule für Musik Köln, Berklee College of Music, University of Chicago, The Danish Rhythmic Conservatory, and Wesleyan University. Sorey joined the composition faculty of the University of Pennsylvania in the fall of 2020.

ABOUT PETER SELLARS

Opera, theater, and festival director Peter Sellars has gained international renown for his groundbreaking and transformative interpretations of artistic masterpieces and collaborative projects with an extraordinary range of creative artists. Sellars has staged operas at the Glyndebourne Festival, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Netherlands Opera, Opéra national de Paris, Salzburg Festival, and San Francisco Opera, among others, and has established a reputation for bringing 20th-century and contemporary operas to the stage. Sellars has been a driving force in the creation of many new works with longtime collaborator composer John Adams, including *Nixon in China*, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, *El Niño*, and *Doctor Atomic*.

Sellars staged Johann Sebastian Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the Berliner Philharmoniker at Park Avenue Armory in October 2014, *FLEXN* in 2015, and *FLEXN Evolution* in 2017. Other projects have included a double bill of Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta* and Stravinsky's *Perséphone* for Teatro Real in Madrid; critically acclaimed concert stagings of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and *St. John Passion* with the Berlin Philharmoniker; and *The Indian Queen*, combining Purcell's music, text, and dance at the Perm Opera and Ballet Theatre. Theater projects have included a production of Euripides' *The Children of Herakles*, focusing on contemporary immigration and refugee issues and experience; *Desdemona*, a collaboration with the Nobel Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison and Malian composer and singer Rokia Traoré, which was performed in major cities in Europe and the U.S. and presented in London as part of the Cultural Olympiad; and a radical four-person distillation and exploration of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Canada's Stratford Festival.

Sellars has led several major arts festivals, including the 1990 and 1993 Los Angeles Festivals and the 2002 Adelaide Arts Festival in Australia. In 2006 he was Artistic Director of New Crowned Hope, a month-long festival in Vienna for which he invited international artists from diverse cultural backgrounds to create new work in the fields of music, theater, dance, film, the visual arts, and architecture for the city's celebration of Mozart's 250th birth anniversary. He also served as the Music Director of the 2016 Ojai Music Festival. Sellars is a professor in the Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance at UCLA and Resident Curator of the Telluride Film Festival. He is the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, the Erasmus Prize, the Gish Prize, and the Polar Music Prize, and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

ABOUT JULIE MEHRETU

In exploring palimpsests of history, from geological time to a modern-day phenomenology of the social, Julie Mehretu's paintings, drawings, and prints engage us in a dynamic visual articulation of contemporary experience, a depiction of social behavior and the psychogeography of space. Mehretu's work is informed by a multitude of sources including politics, literature, and music. Her most recent paintings have incorporated images from broadcast media which depict conflict, injustice, and social unrest. These graphic images act as intellectual and compositional points of departure; ultimately occluded on the canvas, they remain as a phantom presence in the highly abstracted gestural completed works. Mehretu's practice in painting, drawing, and printmaking equally assert the role of art to provoke thought and reflection, and express the contemporary condition of the individual and society.

Born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1970, she lives and works in New York City and Berlin. She received a Master of Fine Arts with honors from The Rhode Island School of Design in 1997, a bachelor's from Kalamazoo College in 1992, and studied at University Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, Senegal. Mehretu is a recipient of many awards, including the The MacArthur Award (2005), the Berlin Prize: Guna S. Mundheim Fellowship at The American Academy in Berlin, Germany (2007), and in 2015 she was awarded the U.S. Department of State Medal of Arts Award. An important mid-career survey of Mehretu's work opened in 2019 at Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, California, touring to the High Museum of Art, Georgia (2020), The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2021) and Walker Art Center, Minnesota (2021-22). Mehretu is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the American Academy of Design. Her global representative is Marian Goodman Gallery.

ABOUT REGGIE (REGG ROC) GRAY

The American dancer and choreographer Reggie (Regg Roc) Gray was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. Gray is the pioneer of the Flexn dance genre, and recently choreographed his largest productions *FLEXN* (2015) and *FLEXN EVOLUTION* (2017) at the Park Avenue Armory, which went on tour to the Brisbane Festival, the Festival de Marseille, the Napoli Teatro Festival, colleges like Princeton University and Dartmouth University; as well as the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival.

At the age of three, he became fascinated by Michael Jackson, and as a teenager, he turned to the hyper-expressive styles of dance that originated in the Jamaican street culture of Brooklyn, such as bruk up and dancehall. He was one of the innovators of a new hybrid dance form, Flexn: a combination of various styles from the local scene, such as bone breaking, gliding, get-low, connecting, hat tricks, punchlines, and pauzin, an animated and cinematic flex style he revolutionized. The style was named after the regional TV program Flex N Brooklyn, where local dance groups showcased their latest moves.

Gray has won several top dance titles, danced for television shows, and reality competitions—he flaunted his innovative moves on the third season of *America's Best Dance Crew*—and in music videos for Wayne Wonder, Sean Paul, Nicki Minaj, and other artists. He has travelled all over the world with his award-winning dance crew RingMasters, and in 2011 he founded a new dance company, named The D.R.E.A.M. RING (Dance Rules Everything Around Me) that strives to ignite social change. In 2015, together with his crew, he provided a choreographic contribution to *Public Works; The Odyssey* at New York's Public Theater and serves as an artist in residence at National Sawdust where he has orchestrated a series of performances that include the Flexn dance styles and FDM (Flex Dance Music) with live instrumentation.

At the start of the pandemic, Gray was touring nationally with his latest work *Flex Ave.* commissioned by CAMI music and The Dream Ring Inc. Gray spends his time choreographing productions that speak to social justice topics (such as police brutality and mass incarceration), organizing showcase battles and performances for the street dance community, and developing his upcoming dance production and documentary "Infinite." Gray looks forward to preserving the integrity of this street dance style, culture, and community as it gains popularity around the world and hopes for Flexn to gain respect and its own identity within dance communities.

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 19th-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 provides 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

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