



**HABEAS CORPUS, a new work by Laurie Anderson
in collaboration with Mohammed el Gharani
Premieres in Park Avenue Armory's Drill Hall
October 2, 3, and 4**

**Featuring Installation and Performance, Work Fuses Elements of Narrative
and Cinematic Art with Experimental Music
to Explore Memory, Monuments, and Prohibited Space**

**with Performances by Omar Souleyman, Shahzad Ismaily,
Merrill Garbus, and Laurie Anderson**

New York, NY – September 17, 2015 – Park Avenue Armory premieres a penetrating new work this fall developed by Laurie Anderson in collaboration with Mohammed el Gharani, a former Guantanamo Bay detainee. HABEAS CORPUS, commissioned by the Armory, expands on Anderson's fusing of storytelling and technology, creating an installation and performance piece that examines lost identity, memory, and the resiliency of the human body and spirit. The work premieres for three days and nights, October 2-4, 2015.

"Laurie Anderson is continually pushing the art of storytelling forward in deeply moving ways both in the thought-provoking content of her work and by transcending traditional artistic practice," said Rebecca Robertson, President and Executive Producer of Park Avenue Armory. "HABEAS CORPUS harnesses the dramatic expanse of our drill hall and the intimacy of our period rooms to engulf audiences in a gripping story told through the interweaving of film, sculpture, music, and video."

"HABEAS CORPUS is Laurie Anderson at her most thought-provoking and soul searching," said Alex Poots, Artistic Director of Park Avenue Armory. "Her new art work, part multi-media, part storytelling, goes to the heart of the matter."

In this latest work, Anderson explores the widely reported story of el Gharani. One of the youngest detainees at Guantanamo, he was held at the prison camp for seven years. In 2009, U.S. District Court Judge Richard Leon ruled he'd been held without sufficient evidence and ordered his release. As all ex-detainees from Guantanamo Bay are currently barred from entering the United States, el Gharani appears as part of this installation live from West Africa, beamed into the Armory drill hall via advanced streaming techniques and three dimensional imaging. It will be the first real-time meeting between a former detainee and American audiences.

HABEAS CORPUS encourages visitors to use the drill hall as place to meditate on time, identity, surveillance, and freedom. The evocative environment within the drill hall includes an original, immersive soundscape. The work, designed by Lou Reed, unites guitars and amps in feedback mode to create colliding and cascading harmonies and will be mixed with sounds derived from audio surveillance and nature. The space will also be activated by improvised music performances throughout the day.

Historic period rooms adjacent to the drill hall will also be activated. A film in which el Gharani talks with humor and insight about his relationships with fellow inmates, interrogators, and guards at Guantanamo Bay will be featured in

the Mary Diver Room. Anderson's short film installation *From the Air*, which explores the impact of global events on daily life and resonates with many of the themes explored in el Gharani's story, will be presented in the Colonel's Room.

Each evening, the installation transforms into a culminating celebratory concert and dance party. Renowned Syrian singer Omar Souleyman headlines with performances of his own music. Anderson, Merrill Garbus of tUnE-yArDs, and multi-instrumentalist Shahzad Ismaily will perform a new work, along with Stewart Hurwood performing Lou Reed's guitar feedback works.

HABEAS CORPUS builds upon many of the themes and artistic techniques employed in Anderson's previous and upcoming works—including the 1998 installation at the Prada Foundation, *Dal Vivo*, in which an inmate's story was told via a kind of virtual escape. Her recent feature film, *Heart of a Dog*, reflects on themes of loss and language, and will be released nationally this fall.

The Armory's 2015 season encompasses site-specific installations, commissions, and cross-disciplinary collaborations across a range of art forms. Through September 21, the Armory is presenting the U.S. premiere of a major new contemporary dance *Tree of Codes*—collaboratively imagined by choreographer Wayne McGregor, visual artist Olafur Eliasson, and producer/composer Jamie xx. In December, the Armory will feature an immersive reinvention of the concert-going experience with *Goldberg*, J. S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations* performed by pianist Igor Levit and staged by performance artist Marina Abramović.

HABEAS CORPUS

October 2–4, 2015

Laurie Anderson

Commissioned by Park Avenue Armory

Installation Viewing Hours:

Friday–Sunday: 12:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.

Tickets: \$15, free for Armory members and ticket holders of that evening's performance.

Performances:

Laurie Anderson, Merrill Garbus, Shahzad Ismaily, and Omar Souleyman

Friday–Sunday at 8:00 p.m.

Tickets: \$45, includes access to the installation. Please note that this event is general admission, and audience members will be standing for the entire length of the show. The installation reopens to ticket holders at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets are available at armoryonpark.org or by calling 212-933-5812.

ABOUT LAURIE ANDERSON

Best known for her multimedia presentations and innovative use of technology, Laurie Anderson is one of America's most renowned—and daring—creative pioneers. A writer, director, visual artist, and vocalist, Anderson has created a groundbreaking body of work that spans the worlds of art, theater, and experimental music.

Her recording career, launched by “O Superman” in 1981, includes the soundtrack to her feature films *Home of the Brave* and *Life on a String* (2001). Anderson's live shows range from simple spoken-word to elaborate multi-media stage performances such as *Songs and Stories for Moby Dick* (1999). Anderson has published seven books and her visual work has been presented in major museums around the world.

In 2002, Anderson was appointed the first artist-in-residence of NASA, which culminated in her 2004 touring solo performance *The End of the Moon*. Recent projects include a series of audio-visual installations and a high-definition film, *Hidden Inside Mountains*, created for World Expo 2005 in Aichi, Japan. In 2007 she received the prestigious Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize for her outstanding contribution to the arts. In 2008 she completed a

two-year worldwide tour of her performance piece, *Homeland*, which was released as an album on Nonesuch Records in June 2010. Anderson's solo performance *Delusion* debuted at the Vancouver Cultural Olympiad in February 2010. In October 2010 a retrospective of her visual and installation work opened in São Paulo, Brazil, and later traveled to Rio de Janeiro. In 2011, her exhibition of new visual work titled *Forty-Nine Days In the Bardo* opened in Philadelphia, and *Boat*, her first exhibition of paintings, premiered at the Vito Schnabel Gallery in New York. She has recently been appointed as a three-year fellow at both EMPAC, the multi-media center at RPI in Troy, NY, and PAC at UCLA. Anderson lives in New York City. Her film *Heart of a Dog* has been chosen as an official selection of the 2015 Venice, Toronto, and New York Film Festivals. It will be released nationwide this fall and be shown on HBO in Spring 2016.

ABOUT MOHAMMED EL GHARANI

Mohammed el Gharani was born in Saudi Arabia and holds Chadian citizenship. He moved to Pakistan as a child and was arrested in 2001, labeled an enemy combatant by the United States, and taken to Guantanamo Bay where he was held for seven years. He was released from the prison camp in 2009, following an order from U.S. District Court Judge Richard Leon.

ABOUT MERRILL GARBUS

Merrill Garbus has performed as tUnE-yArDs since 2009. First gaining notice with the debut *BiRd-BrAiNs*, which *The New York Times* called "a confident do-it-yourselfer's opening salvo: a staticky, low-fi, abrasive attention-getter," Garbus forged a reputation as a formidable live presence through relentless touring. In 2011, tUnE-yArDs released its second album, *w h o k i l l*, a startling and sonically adventurous statement that led to a whirlwind period where Garbus and bassist Nate Brenner accrued accolades from critics (including the #1 spot on the *Village Voice's* 2011 Pazz and Jop poll) and performed in front of increasingly larger crowds around the world. Then, in 2014, tUnE-yArDs released *Nikki Nack*, a testament to how current technologies can combine with themes from the past—Saturday mornings spent watching *Pee-Wee's Playhouse*, puppet shows based on Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, hard days made less so by the refuge provided by top-40 radio—to create something utterly original.

ABOUT SHAHZAD ISMAILY

Shahzad Ismaily was born to Pakistani immigrant parents and grew up in a wholly bicultural household. While he holds a masters degree in biochemistry from Arizona State University, he is a largely self-taught composer and musician, having mastered the electric and double bass, guitar, banjo, accordion, flute, drums, various percussion instruments, and various analog synthesizers and drum machines. Ismaily has recorded or performed with an incredibly diverse assemblage of musicians, including Laurie Anderson and Lou Reed, Tom Waits, Jolie Holland, Laura Veirs, Bonnie Prince Billy, Faun Fables, Secret Chiefs 3, John Zorn, Elysian Fields, Shelley Hirsch, Niobe, Will Oldham, Nels Cline, Mike Doughty (of Soul Coughing), Graham Haynes, David Krakauer, Billy Martin (of Medeski Martin and Wood), Carla Kihlstedt's Two Foot Yard, the Tin Hat Trio, Raz Mesinai, and Burnt Sugar. He has also composed regularly for dance and theater, including for Min Tanaka, the Frankfurt Ballet, and the East River Commedia. Recently he composed the score for the critically acclaimed movie *Frozen River*, which won the Grand Jury Prize at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival. He was also an Artist in Residence at the Headlands Center for the Arts in San Francisco, CA in 2008. Currently based in New York, Ismaily has studied music extensively in Pakistan, India, Turkey, Mexico, Santiago, Japan, Indonesia, Morocco, and Iceland.

ABOUT OMAR SOULEYMAN

Perhaps Syria's most successful musical export, singer Omar Souleyman recently released his second studio effort—*Bahdeni Nami*. The album features a collaboration with Souleyman's favorite but not only poet, Ahmad Alsamir, who penned his pre-west hits "Kaset Hanzel," "Khattaba," and "Shift al Mani." Recorded closer to home, in Istanbul, with poet in residence and heard throughout with claps and wails of encouragement, it features saz fireworks and support from Khaled Youssef. Keyboards by Rizan Said improvise devotedly and with skill to every tune and turn of Souleyman's choice. His lyrics declare eternal love, console one's aching heart, decide to let her go, and ask her to sleep in his arms forever—in four fast dance numbers, an introduction mawal, and an elaborate araby

style ballad. After his first studio album—*Wenu Wenu*—produced by FourTet, Souleyman opens it up here to a number of hard-core musician fans, offering their own takes on his optimal sound.

Kieran Hebden returns to produce—Bahdeni Nami, Modeselktor appropriately luck out with two of the fastest dance numbers, Legowelt offers a remix for the title track, and Cole Alexander of the Black Lips treats one of the heart-wounding ballads.

Omar Souleyman continues tirelessly to bring his wild dance party to all corners of the world, everywhere from SXSW to the Nobel Peace Prize Concert to rock clubs in cities around the world. From Syria in the Hasake region, Omar earned his reputation singing and leading years of weddings, birthdays, Christenings, corporate parties, and the like, answering to invites from all peoples living in the region—be it Muslims, Christians, Kurds, Iraqis, Syrians, Assyrians. His voice and style stood out as he adopted his songs and lyrics to make everyone equally happy. Those parties yielded hundreds of cassette tapes at first offered as gifts and later distributed throughout the region and other Arab countries.

This production is supported in part by public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

Citi; Pershing Square Capital Management, LP; and Bloomberg Philanthropies are the Armory's 2015 season sponsors.

Support for Park Avenue Armory's artistic season has been generously provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Booth Ferris Foundation, The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, The Shubert Foundation, the Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, The Marc Haas Foundation, the Juliet Lea Hillman Simonds Foundation, The Leon Levy Foundation, the May and Samuel Rudin Family 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—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 array of exuberant period rooms, the Armory offers a new platform for creativity across all art forms.

Since its first production in September 2007—Aaron Young's *Greeting Card*, a 9,216-square-foot “action” painting created by the burned-out tire marks of ten choreographed motorcycles—the Armory has organized a series of immersive performances, installations, and works of art that have drawn critical and popular attention. Among the highlights of its first eight years are: Bernd Alois Zimmermann's harrowing *Die Soldaten*, in which the audience moved “through the music”; the unprecedented six-week residency of the Royal Shakespeare Company in their own theater rebuilt in the drill hall; a massive digital sound and video environment by Ryoji Ikeda; a sprawling gauzy, multi-sensory labyrinth created by Ernesto Neto; *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; the New York Philharmonic performing Karlheinz Stockhausen's sonic masterpiece *Gruppen* with three orchestras surrounding the audience; *WS* by Paul McCarthy, a monumental installation of fantasy, excess, and dystopia; a sonic environment that blurred the boundaries between artist and audience created by the xx; an immersive *Macbeth* set in a Scottish heath and henge by Rob Ashford and Kenneth Branagh; and *tears become...streams become...*, a major genre-defying collaboration between artist Douglas Gordon and pianist Hélène Grimaud, which flooded the Armory's drill hall with an installation of water, light, and music.

Concurrent with the development of its artistic program, the Armory has undertaken an ongoing \$210-million revitalization of its historic building, designed by architects Herzog & de Meuron. www.armoryonpark.org.

###

For more information or to request images, please contact:

Emily Viemeister
Resnicow + Associates
212-671-5177
eviemeister@resnicow.com

Juliet Sorce
Resnicow + Associates
212-671-5158
jsorce@resnicow.com

Isabel Sinistore
Resnicow + Associates
212-671-5175
isinistore@resnicow.com

Chelsea Bruck
Resnicow + Associates
212-671-5164
cbruck@resnicow.com