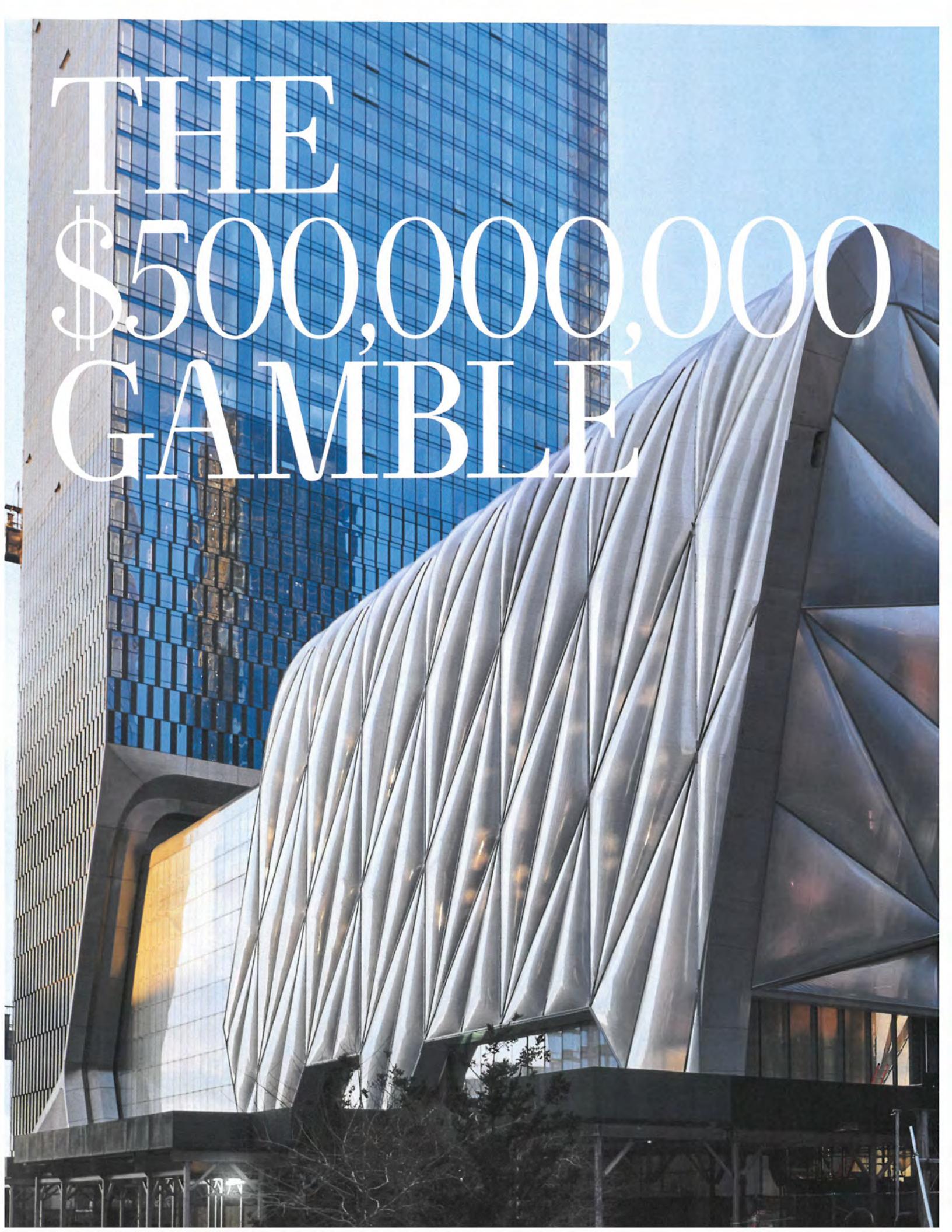


THE \$500,000,000 GAMBLE

A photograph of a modern building featuring a glass facade with a grid pattern and a large, curved, metallic, pleated facade in the foreground. The building's design is architectural and contemporary.

THE SHED could be the defining arts institution of a new New York City, but building the project from the ground up required blind faith, big risks, and nerves of steel.

By Chloe Malle

Photographs by Jason Schmidt

Sparks fly inside the Shed. Specifically, in the McCourt, the performance hall whose retractable shell is the signature flourish of the 200,000-square-foot structure's flexible design. The building, recently named in honor of former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg, is encased in Teflon-based polymer "pillows" cross-hatched with steel; the pillows are only partially inflated during construction, and the material puckers as men in the baskets of cranes graze its corners. It's a Friday afternoon, and the sun is creeping behind the Hudson River as Alex Poots, founding artistic director and CEO of the Shed, the multidisciplinary arts center set to open here April 5, stands on the building's eighth level looking down on construction workers milling about like helmeted ants.

The 4,000-ton chassis retracts telescopically on six-foot-tall wheels to transform the space into an open plaza. The design, by Diller Scofidio + Renfro and the Rockwell Group, has been described as "gadget architecture," but Poots says the plan's malleability was what first appealed to him. "You had a chance for there to be no poor relation in any art form," he says, noting that the design affords the possibility of commissioning works across disciplines and presenting them with parity. When it opens, the space will host some of New York's most daring cultural programming, from Steve McQueen's celebration of the history of African-American music to a new work by Björk. "Our mission is one of the simplest ever," says Poots, a dark-eyed Scot with close-cropped salt-and-pepper hair who previously worked as the artistic director of the Park Avenue Armory and the Manchester International Festival. "We commission new work across all art forms for all audiences. That's it."

While the mission may be simple, the erection of the building, a hulking, dimpled rhombus that hovers over the north end of the High Line, was not. In a city with 1,200 existing cultural institutions, and with a budget that ballooned from \$350 million to \$475 million, it has taken enormous capital—political, social, and financial—to get a project of this scale and ambition off the ground.

Looking through the hull of the McCourt, the neighboring Hudson Yards development rises like SimCity built of glass Legos. ➤



MEET THE BOARD

These are the people steering New York's cultural destiny.

BENJAMIN F.
NEEDELL

DANIEL L.
DOCTOROFF

ANDRES SANTO
DOMINGO

STEPHEN M.
ROSS

CHRISTINA
MILLER

DIANE VON
FURSTENBERG

MARIGAY
MCKEE

DEBORAH
WINSEL

GALE
BREWER



STATUS SYMBOLS

Hudson Yards, which stretches from 30th to 34th streets and from 10th Avenue to the West Side Highway, is the most expensive development in U.S. history. Plans for a stadium on the 28-acre tract were put forth in the early 2000s by then-mayor Bloomberg and Dan Doctoroff, his deputy for economic development, as a way to win the 2012 Summer Olympics for New York. When that hope was quashed, the site was reconceived as a new neighborhood, which Bloomberg would sign off on only if it included a cultural nonprofit on city-owned land.

"I don't know if there are patron saints in the Jewish faith, but he is one of those," Poots says of Bloomberg, who, in addition to allocating \$75 million of city funds to the Shed while in office, has donated \$75 million through his Bloomberg Philanthropies. "And the other one is Doctoroff, as our chairman."

Sitting in his office at 10 Hudson Yards, with its bird's-eye view of the Bloomberg Building, Doctoroff says, "Mike always would say that capital follows culture in New York." So they picked what they believed to be the best site in the mixed-use development and reserved it for a cultural institution. "We are obsessed about New York's competitive position in the world," Doctoroff says, toggling through his iPad to find a photo of the McCourt at sunset. "The idea was, 'Let's create the world's most flexible cultural institution, both programmatically and physically,'" he tells me, likening the venue to a German kunsthalle. Finding the photo, he says, with a paternal gleam in his eye, "It actually looks better than the renderings."

The Shed's board of directors is as imposing as the building itself, and largely the result of relationships Doctoroff has fostered over a 40-year career in business and politics. "He's the reason I'm there," says Diane von Furstenberg, one of a group of powerful New Yorkers who make up the board, including Jon Tisch, Andrés Santo Domingo, and Dasha Zhukova. It also includes representatives of the businesses that plan to make the Hudson Yards area their home, such as Related Companies CEO Stephen Ross and real estate developer Frank McCourt Jr., owner of a lot across 10th Avenue and namesake of the performance hall.

In the fundraising rat race of New York City nonprofits, a \$550 million inaugural campaign has the potential to raise people's hackles. It can be argued that every board member the Shed gains is one another arts organization loses. But Doctoroff insists this is something he went out of his way to avoid. "Most of the

people involved were not traditional funders of cultural institutions," he says. The board members at competing institutions don't think it's so simple. One, who asked not to be named, says, "The people aren't interested in funding other projects now," and some say that involvement with the Shed has led its board members to decline engagement elsewhere. A board member of two other New York arts organizations asks who is on the Shed's board, and when I've listed just five names interrupts me: "We're done! There's your \$500 million. What is this, rocket science?"

Doctoroff describes Shed donors as "people who see themselves as kind of disruptive," like the institution's programming, and refers to the nonprofit as "the first 21st-century cultural startup." That view is what attracted board vice chair Jon Tisch, chairman and CEO of Loews Hotels. When Doctoroff pitched the idea to his friend in 2012, Tisch went home and told his wife Lizzie, "This is a project we need to be a part of." They made their initial commitment within 24 hours. "The Shed, to us, represents the future of New York," says Jon Tisch.

A recent arrival in New York, Dasha Zhukova was approached by von Furstenberg and Bloomberg about the Shed several years ago, but, she says, "the vision really solidified for me when Alex Poots came on board." Zhukova, who founded the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow, had her pick of the city's cultural centers (a board member of one competing institution says her board "would have killed" to have Zhukova), but she was attracted to the Shed because of its multidisciplinary focus.

"The program is experiential," she explains, "which is something that people are craving these days." Underscoring the Shed's appeal, Zhukova notes the difference between working with the Shed and with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where she's also a board member. "Just as the building of the Shed is very nimble, the experience on the board feels a bit more nimble as well," she says. "The Met has a huge board; it's an encyclopedic museum, so it's just a completely different process."

Still, some wonder whether billionaire-backed cultural institutions like the Shed, or Barry Diller's \$250 million man-made island, Pier 55 (set to open in 2020), or Ronald Perelman's anticipated performing arts center at the new World Trade Center, are needed in a city with so many already. A curator from one New York museum says he's not alone in wondering why the city has put so much money into the Shed when there are so many



institutions struggling to survive.

Others wonder whether there's enough attention to go around. When Renée Fleming, who will co-star in the Shed-commissioned *Norma Jeane Baker of Troy*, a dramatic musical work exploring the lives of both Helen of Troy and Marilyn Monroe, is asked about cannibalism in fundraising, she says, "I worry more about cannibalizing audiences... The new, bright shiny thing is always attractive." But Rebecca Robertson, founding president and executive producer of the Park Avenue Armory, dismisses such fears. "When we started we got the same criticisms," she says, but she has never heard a complaint from another institution. "There's talent, money, and audience to go around."

Poots is sensitive to these concerns; he says that when he joined the Shed he met with most of New York's cultural leaders. While many were, in his words, "rightly suspicious because there was no mission," Poots found that lack of direction liberating. In fact, when he came on in 2015, construction had been underway for three years, but he made significant, expensive changes, nixing a planned restaurant to make room for a rehearsal space and studios for local artists. "I wanted the Shed to be part of the solution to the problem of gentrification," he says, describing literary and dance programs for young people and a commissioning program for New York City artists that have not yet received major institutional support.

Despite this kind of outreach, cynics gripe that the Shed is nothing more than an amenity for Hudson Yards. Indeed, when Related Companies took over the development, it was decided that the Shed would be built into 15 Hudson Yards, an 88-story high-rise with apartments listed for up to \$32 million. Because the Shed would have to nest into the building, Doctoroff persuaded Diller Scofidio + Renfro to design the tower, a coup for Related, as the architects had not done residential developments in the past.

Reached by e-mail, Related's Stephen Ross sticks to the script, maintaining that "we have always believed in the significance and value that culture, design, and art bring to a city and a neighborhood." Of course, it's not ideal for the Shed that the other two cultural landmarks at Hudson Yards are the Snark Park, an Instagram-bait exhibition space notable for its pit of plastic balls, and Thomas Heatherwick's 150-foot-tall "Vessel," a honeycomb staircase to nowhere nicknamed "The Social Climber" by Ross. But Doctoroff insists, "We never, ever, viewed the Shed as a way to help ensure that Hudson Yards would be successful. It was rethinking

an entirely new part of the city." Poots is more realistic. "They won't like me saying this," he says, "but I imagine that the developers of Hudson Yards view the Shed as something they need to help make Hudson Yards more appetizing."

Still, you won't go to the Shed for Hudson Yards. You'll go for the building and the programming. Only the first half of the inaugural season has been announced, but it features a robust roster of cultural leaders interacting with one another in unprecedented ways. The opening program will be *Soundtrack of America*, a musical series conceived and directed by Steve McQueen, with Quincy Jones as chief music adviser, and such works as *Dragon Spring, Phoenix Rise*, a kung-fu musical with remixed songs by Sia, and *Reich Richter Pärt*, a pairing of pieces by composers Steve Reich and Arvo

Pärt with artwork by Gerhard Richter. All of the Shed's programming will be commissioned, with space reserved for private events (Danny Meyer will provide catering), such as New York Fashion Week.

WHAT'S HAPPENING INSIDE THE SHED

When the Shed opens on **APRIL 5**, the inaugural event will be the first leg of *Soundtrack of America*, a five-night concert event programmed by a group including **Quincy Jones** and **Steve McQueen** that celebrates the influence of African-American music.

On **APRIL 6**, a series of commissions, including the performance piece *Norma Jeane Baker of Troy*, starring Renée Fleming, and a solo exhibition by artist **Trisha Donnelly**, will open.

On **MAY 6**, *Björk's Cornucopia*, an eight-night concert

directed by filmmaker Lucrecia Martel, premieres.

On **JUNE 22**, *Dragon Spring, Phoenix Rise*, a kung-fu musical designed specifically for the Shed's space, with songs by **Sia** and choreography by **Akram Khan**, opens. TICKETS TO ALL ARE AVAILABLE AT THESHED.ORG.

And don't worry about pre-theater dining. The nearby Hudson Yards complex will feature restaurants co-curated by **Thomas Keller** ranging from **Sweetgreen** to José Andrés's **Mercado Little Spain** and a new outpost of **Milos**.



On our way down, Poots peeks through every doorway, even the ones he knows he's not yet allowed through. In the theater he sees a newly painted ceiling—not the most thrilling aspect of the Shed's construction—and earnestly says, "My god, look at that. So exciting!"

Another level down, a trio of construction workers are loading wood into a dumpster. He greets them eagerly, like a mathlete wanting to be friends with the football team: "Hey guys! How's it going?" His zeal is contagious and confirms the belief of many that in an undertaking once deemed "perhaps the most soulless large project in New York's history"

by art critic Jerry Saltz, it is Poots who gives it soul.

A few days after my tour, Hans Ulrich Obrist, the co-director of London's Serpentine Galleries and the Shed's senior program adviser, has come directly from the airport to the Shed's temporary office, luggage in tow. Sitting in Poots's office, the two men recall their collaborations over the past decade.

"We were always saying how amazing it would be if there were an institution where we could do that every day," Obrist says. "It's not only that it didn't exist in New York, it didn't exist in the world." With the opening of the Shed, that will change. "I think it's complementary in a city where you have all these different art museums, opera houses, and theater venues," Obrist says, flashing his hands like a magician. "And then all of a sudden you have one institution that mixes these things. And it's great that it starts here." «

VOGUE

JAN

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BARRIERS AND
LANDING
THE MAN OF
HER DREAMS

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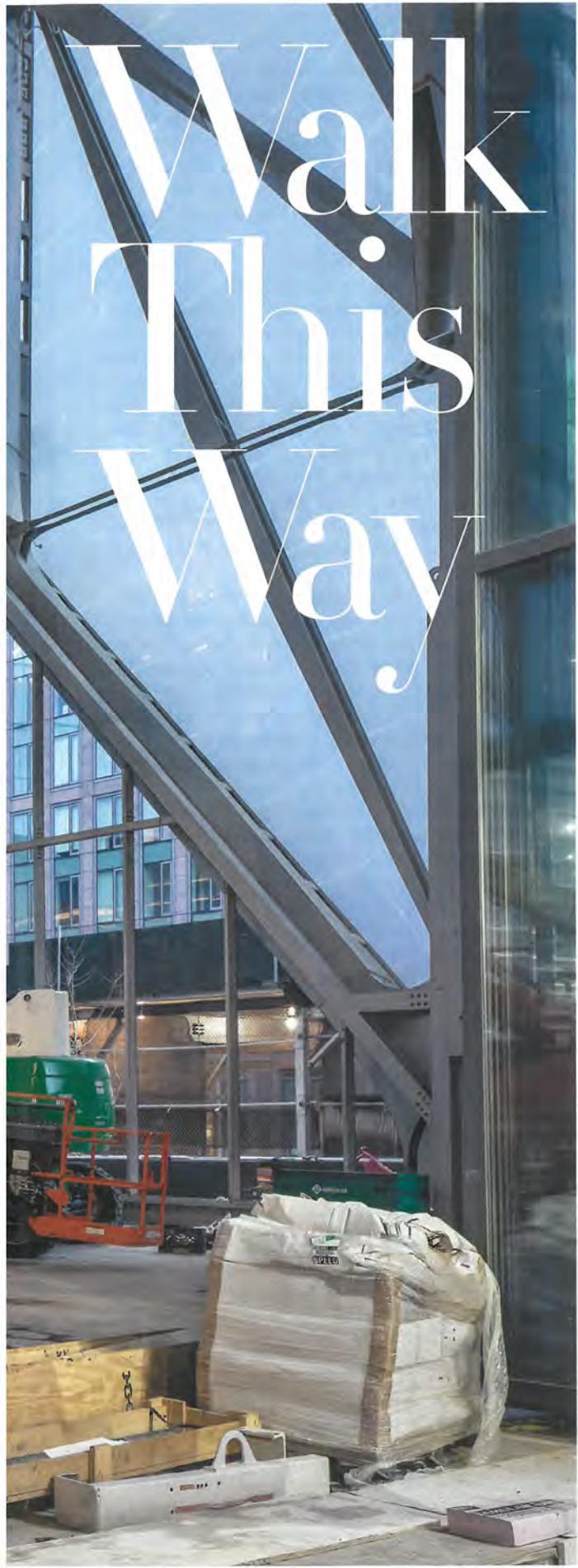
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New York transplants Alex Poots, founding artistic director of The Shed, and his wife, Islamic scholar Kathryn Spellman, are lighting up the town with their energy and cultural dynamism.

By Dodie Kazanjian.
Photographed by Stefan Ruiz.

On a sweltering afternoon in mid-July, I'm on West Thirtieth Street in Manhattan, looking for the entrance to The Shed. Scheduled to open this spring but still under construction, The Shed is New York's keenly anticipated new year-round, all-purpose cultural emporium for

music, dance, theater, and visual arts. There are no signs, though—this is Hudson Yards, where one of the biggest urban-renewal projects in New York City is in full swing, and the landmark I'd been given, a pizza parlor, refuses to reveal itself. But then, *hooray*, halfway down the block I see a blonde woman waving both arms, and I breathe a sigh of relief. It's Kathryn Spellman, a sociologist and visiting professor for Islamic Studies at Columbia University and the wife of Alex Poots, The Shed's founding artistic director and CEO.

"Alex is inside with the graphics team, talking about signage and 'way finding,'" Spellman says, laughing. She's a vivid, effervescent beauty in a colorful sleeveless Missoni shift and sneakers without laces. We go in a side door, put on hard hats, and walk up to the second level—a vast, 12,500-square-foot, column-free gallery—moving gingerly to avoid electrical cables and other obstacles. At the far end, Poots is in conference with the "way finders." The 17,000-square-foot adjoining hall (it's called "The McCourt") is usually exposed to the skies when its outer layer is nested into the fixed building, but at the moment, it's covered by The Shed's most distinguishing feature: a telescoping shell made of steel and a clear, lightweight polymer that moves out (and back) on gigantic rail tracks, turning it from an outside plaza to a large-scale performance space for 3,000-plus people.

A compact, boyishly intense 51-year-old in a white dress shirt and neat ink-blue jeans, Poots joins us. "He used to always wear black," Spellman says. "But then he noticed that artistic directors all wore black, so he decided he'd only wear blue." Poots may not look like the most commanding impresario of our time, but nobody else comes close to matching what he's already done in commissioning and producing new, cutting-edge, mixed-media works for London's Tate Modern, the Manchester International Festival, and the Park Avenue Armory in New York. Matthew Barney, Tino Sehgal, Jessye Norman, Björk, Steve McQueen, Abida

POWER MOVES

Poots and Spellman (in Sies Marjan and Manolo Blahnik shoes) at New York's new cultural center, The Shed. Hair, Frédéric Boudet; makeup, Maud Laceppe. Details, see *In This Issue*.
Fashion Editor: Michael Philouze.

and five of her six siblings, she became a sociologist and received her doctorate from the University of London in 2000. Poots was working for the English National Opera back then, developing ideas for new productions. One was an opera about Muammar al-Qaddafi, the Libyan dictator, and Poots needed advice. Spellman, who had been to Libya and met Qaddafi several times, heard about the opera from colleagues. A meeting was arranged at the 2 Brydges Club in London, where she waited 20 minutes before going up to a pair of men and asking one of them if he knew Alex Poots. The stranger gestured to his friend and said, "That's Poots!" He'd been there all along but had assumed that she was much too young and beautiful to be a professor. A year later, Poots enlisted her help on *Queen and Country*, a project about British soldiers killed in the Iraq War that Poots was working on with McQueen for the Manchester International Festival, which he had recently founded. McQueen told both Spellman and Poots, separately, that they belonged together. The pair reconnected at the Edinburgh Festival. "At that point, I'm in overdrive," Poots recalls. "There was no stopping me."

They were married in 2007, in the Scottish capital, and spent their honeymoon at his parents' country house, a picturesque old mill two and a half hours away. Poots's mother insisted on driving them there from the city. "How else are you going to know where everything is?" she asked Spellman. "To be fair, she did leave," Poots adds. Their first night, they went for a walk and found a baby lamb stuck in deep mud. Poots managed to pull it out, and then, concerned that there was no sign of its mother, he stayed with it while Spellman went home to take a bath. "It got dark, and I started to worry," she remembers. On his way back, he had come across a full-grown, pregnant ewe with its legs kicking in the air, struggling to turn over, and of course he'd felt obliged to help. "And this was our wedding night!" Spellman says, laughing.

Poots's background is in music. His father was an Irish dentist, and his mother taught French literature at the university level. (She was also a gifted pianist.) Poots spent summers with his French grandmother, in her ancestral house in a forest near Bordeaux, where she had hidden Jews and American paratroopers during World War II. "She was a rebel and a real inspiration," he says. Poots started playing his father's cornet when he was five and went on to become a serious student. He graduated from City, University of London with a degree in music history and supported himself for several years as a trumpeter. He was passionate about all kinds of music. "There was no hierarchy for me," he says. "You can't say a Schumann song is better than a Nina Simone song." After a few years, he gravitated toward concert management and got jobs at the Barbican Centre and Tate Modern. This led to his breakthrough appointment in 2005 as founding artistic director and CEO of the Manchester International Festival, where he plugged into the Zeitgeist by bringing music, dance, theater, visual arts, opera, and pop culture together in a prolific mix. Poots "seemed to have his finger on a new pulse," said Sir Nicholas Serota, the former director of the Tate.

"Because we're commissioning all new works, we're trying to do a few things really well. We're making work for the future, rather than vessels for collections"

During dinner at the restaurant, we talk about what Poots has planned for The Shed's opening. In addition to Soundtrack of America, there's *Dragon Spring Phoenix Rise*, a futuristic kung-fu musical about a Chinese sect in Queens that has the power to prolong human life. It's directed by Chen Shi-Zheng—his *Monkey: Journey to the West* was a big hit at Poots's first Manchester Festival. The words are by Jonathan Aibel and Glenn Berger, screenwriters of the wildly popular *Kung Fu Panda* animated films, with songs by Sia, the Australian singer-songwriter, and costumes by Tim Yip, of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. This one will play in The McCourt. *Norma Jeane Baker of Troy*, by the poet Anne Carson, will be in the 500-seat theater on the sixth level. Based on Euripides' *Helen*, it stars Ben Whishaw and Renée Fleming. An exhibition in one gallery, *Reich Richter Pärt*, explores resonances between paintings (Gerhard Richter) and music (Steve Reich and Arvo Pärt), while new work by the artist Trisha Donnelly (who hasn't had a solo show in New York in eleven years) will be shown in another. Poots knows a lot less about the visual arts than about music, and so he formed a close relationship with Hans-Ulrich Obrist, the curator, art historian, and all-round art-world insider. (He's currently artistic director of the Serpentine Galleries in London.)

It's a full docket, but these are by no means the only things that will be going on there. Other Shed programs taking place inside and outside the building include the Lab, studio space for ten to fifteen artists, and Open Call, which Poots describes as "a multi-million-dollar investment in young, early-career artists." Nearly a thousand people from New York's five boroughs applied for Open Call. Each of the 52 lucky winners gets a one-year stipend (between \$8,000 and \$15,000) to develop work that will be shown at The Shed. "We produce, curate, and install the work," Poots says, "and the audience gets to see it for free."

Two other programs run by The Shed are brewing throughout the city. FlexNYC, which builds on Flexn, the home-grown African American dance form whose participants use their bodies to improvise personal stories, is already being taught in 20 public schools and community centers. DIS OBEY involves workshops for high school students to help them explore creative action and protest about civil issues (gun control, sexual harassment, et cetera) through poetry, rap lyrics, and spoken word. The program came out of an ongoing conversation between Poots and Spellman regarding the worldwide drift toward tribalism and objectification of "the other." "Is The Shed going to be silent about this, or are we going to do something?" CONTINUED ON PAGE 98

was important to know that I can handle this, I can still be a great athlete," she says. It had been a shock. "You think you're the healthiest and the strongest, and you don't think something like this can hit you," she says. "It doesn't discriminate. It doesn't matter whether you're young, old, healthy, or not." Still, she is young, healthy, and strong. She is determined to look forward, and think positively.

And so is he. There is so much to look forward to, after all—after basketball, after tennis, when the spotlight is off, when the only people watching them are each other. "Whether that's fifteen minutes from now, or fifteen years from now, whatever she decides—all I've told her is, 'I'm supporting you,'" Lee says. "It's just a matter of doing it on your terms." □

WALK THIS WAY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 75

Poets asked her one night. "Kathryn told me a poignant story about Saadi, a thirteenth-century Persian poet who wrote Sufi poems of defiance

against oppressors. These poems are unearthed by Henry David Thoreau 500 years later and inspire him to write *Civil Disobedience*, which massively influences Gandhi, Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., and the civil rights movement. So a thirteenth-century Persian poet changes American politics in the 1960s. It shows these kids the power of art to affect the future."

The ratio between hits and misses in this wide diversity of programming is impossible to predict—there are no out-of-town test runs, and New York is a much tougher venue than Manchester. But Poets has an amazingly good track record, and one of his great strengths is that he is never afraid of failure. "I'm a risk-taker," he says. "Each year we're going to fail. This thing is not going to happen in one year. But each year we're going to bust our gut trying to do better."

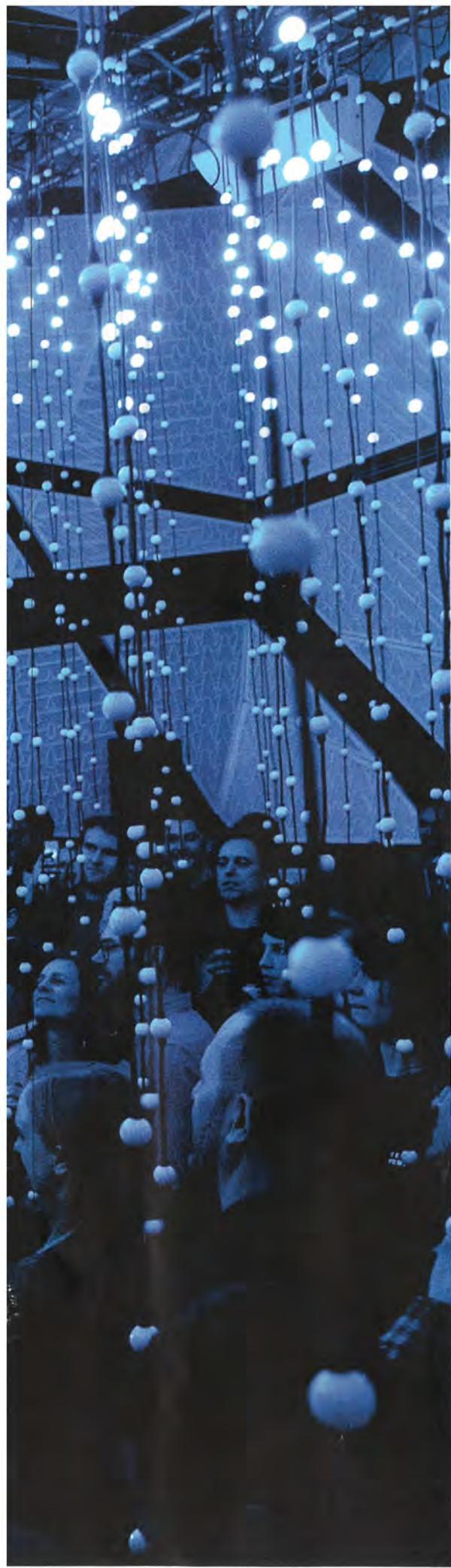
The Shed is also dedicated to bringing audiences together in new ways. "Instead of people having their earphones in all the time, experiencing music in isolation, Alex wants it to be a communal experience," Spellman says. The Shed can be seen as

an antidote to the boundless loneliness of the internet and the inertia of on-demand streaming. "This is what I worry about," Spellman adds. "People are withdrawing, becoming increasingly more introverted within their small bubbles. We have to pop those bubbles. It's so important for us to meet each other, talk with each other, feel each other. That's what really breaks down barriers." It costs nothing to enter The Shed's spacious and welcoming lobby, Poets points out: "We're encouraging people to come in and hang out."

We've finished dinner at Taboon, and Poets has just realized they're late for the Radiohead concert at Madison Square Garden. "I only found out this morning that we're going," Spellman says. She calls the children again. "They're alive and they're home," she reports. Poets gets on the phone and says, "Good night, gorgeous kids." Out on Tenth Avenue, they look excited and radiant. "When Alex and I met," Spellman says, "it was the first time in my life I was with someone who walked at the same speed I do—quite fast. He felt it, too. It makes life easier." □



The electronic music artist Four Tet's performance at Brooklyn's National Sawdust last year.



THE FOMO EFFECT

IT'S MUSIC! NO, IT'S DANCE! NO, IT'S... SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY. IN NEW YORK CITY, THE RULES OF PERFORMANCE ARE BEING DRAMATICALLY REWRITTEN—AND YOU JUST HAD TO BE THERE.

BY JUSTIN DAVIDSON
PORTRAITS BY NICHOLAS CALCOTT

AROUND THE TIME a flock of sheep ambled out into the Park Avenue Armory's great vaulted Drill Hall in the middle of what might loosely be called an opera—or maybe it was when a quartet of zeppelins hovered over the stage—I realized that the performing arts in New York had taken a startling turn. That 2016 production of Louis Andriessen's hectic and periodically mystifying opera (if that's the word) *De Materie* made it clear that the mainstream and the margins had merged. Performances that would once have been grouped under the catchall rubric *experimental*—borrowing from (and exploding) various genres in service of a can't-miss moment—have become a new standard in today's "experience economy," infiltrating major arts organizations and leading to the creation of new ones. I've lost track of the cross-genre, multimedia fusions of music, art, video, and theater I've attended in recent years, many of them huge, technically sophisticated, and moving.

The new emblem of New York's performance rethink is the Shed, an outpost of deliberate unpredictability in the colossal new corporate neighborhood Hudson Yards. The building itself, designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro with the Rockwell Group, performs a kind of slow-motion public dance. At rest, the inner structure sits beneath a quilt of a translucent plastic like a mantle of bubble wrap mounted on a steel frame. Beneath that is a glass box full of art spaces, a rearrangeable Rubik's Cube of galleries, dance studios, theaters, and concert halls. At the touch of a button, the outer shell trundles out on gargantuan wheels to enclose a section of plaza large enough for a festival stage. The artistic

director of this cultural Rube Goldberg device is Alex Poots, who is determined to make the building a giant playground for artists, both established and new.

"I wouldn't want the Shed to be typecast as some kind of trendy interdisciplinary place," Poots says. "We bring parity across art forms. If a painter wants to paint, that's great. But because here none of the forms is a poor relation—because we're not a performing arts center with a little gallery, or a museum with a concert series—we can follow what artists want to do in a way that's not possible in other places."

Poots comes from a cohort of arts administrators as restlessly creative as the artists and audiences they serve. For years, presenters of traditional dance, classical music, drama, and opera have been fretting over the ebbing of their audience base. Die-hard (but die-eventually) subscribers are being replaced by a generation unused to loyalty and often untrained in the fine points of each genre. As the old subscriber model breaks down, performing arts institutions are competing for fickle and choosy cultural consumers who call the babysitter first and buy tickets later. Seducing those audiences is difficult and expensive, especially when they can immerse themselves in unorthodox, ambitious programming just by firing up their tablets and watching *Game of Thrones* or, if time is tight, the music video for Childish Gambino's "This Is America." More importantly, artists, who come from all over the world and have wildly disparate cultural backgrounds, are often even more impatient with outdated pressures and constraints.

Poots recounts that some years ago he wondered aloud to a fellow arts guru whether the German painter Gerhard Richter was attuned to the contemporary composers Steve Reich, an American minimalist, and Arvo Pärt, an Estonian composer of

slow-moving mystical meditations. "Richter said, 'Sometimes I paint to music!' It turned out that next to his CD player were albums by both Reich and Pärt." That intuition, that a collection of disparate creators might share a similar sensibility, led to the Shed's inaugural art-and-music commission, "Reich Richter Pärt," which weaves together new works by all three.

Before launching the Shed, Poots was briefly artistic director of the Armory, the youthful organization headquartered in a decommissioned military building. Erected in 1881 by New York's aristocratic Seventh Regiment, the Armory is a masterpiece of martial opulence. Lavishly decorated rooms, perfect for small recitals, contrast with the 55,000-square-foot Drill Hall, the kind of space where you could comfortably stage a tank battle.

Given such a vast canvas, artists of many different disciplines have let the space guide their imaginations. Last fall, the South African artist and director William Kentridge staged *The Head and the Load*, a tragic and fiercely surreal spectacle about the tragic and fiercely surreal experiences of African porters during World War I. Kentridge (and an enormous cast) told the story in a collage of African and European languages, Dada gibberish, new and old music, shadow puppets, monologues, dance, and charcoal drawings that formed, dissolved, and marched across an extra-long screen. It was hard to imagine seeing it anywhere else.

It's not easy to win an audience's trust and keep challenging it at the same time; consistency and surprise tend to work in opposition. But even as New York's major institutions roam into new territory, the city has proven able to absorb ever more hours of live performance in ever more audacious forms. It turns out that new organizations don't cannibalize one another's audiences or donor base, so long as they offer something genuinely new.

The Shed and the Armory could confine themselves to importing prepackaged extravaganzas from countries where governments fund theater, opera, and dance. But both institutions have concluded that in order to maximize their impact they need to commission and produce new work. Asking artists to range as widely in practice as they do in their minds requires contacts, money, judgment, and real estate. Poots and his counterpart at the Armory, Rebecca Robertson, control enough choice square footage to remove obstacles and smooth the way. You want to replicate the seating in Berlin's philharmonic hall? Consider it done (at the Shed). A pianist wants to perform on pianos that float on rising waters? The Armory can do that. Dancers need to levitate three stories above the audience? No problem (for the Shed's *Dragon Spring Phoenix Rise*, coming this summer).

That deluxe flexibility and scale allow these venues to lure marquee names. The Shed's first round of spectacles includes a monthlong run of *Cornucopia*, an elaborately theatrical concert by Björk, who slips back and forth between the pop and avant-garde music worlds with practiced nonchalance. And





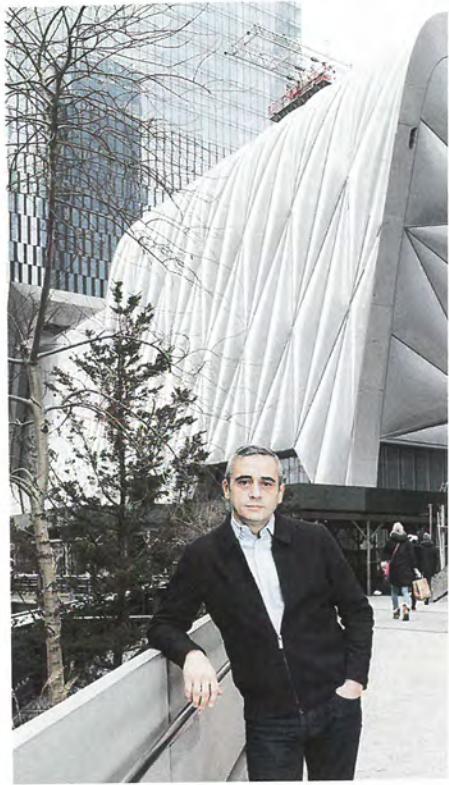
the Armory landed the limited U.S. run of *The Lehman Trilogy*, Stefano Massini's three-hour, much-lauded parable about capitalism's excesses, directed by Sam Mendes. That is unambiguously a play, but three generations of the same family's plot unfold within a revolving glass box, the kind of set that works magic in the middle of a vast, dark space.

THE ARTS IN NEW YORK have long been segmented by genre, audience, and real estate. Symphony orchestras play symphonies in symphony halls, museums keep their galleries quiet and the paintings still, and theater takes place pretty much exclusively in theaters. But an undercurrent of rebellion runs through the city's cultural history too. Starting in the 1970s, artists of indeterminate genre converged on the Kitchen, a nonprofit space in then-scruffy, now ultrachic Chelsea. Around that time, the Brooklyn Academy of Music was gathering its own stable of innovators, including the director Robert Wilson and the composer Philip Glass, whose 1976 collaboration *Einstein on the Beach* remains the apotheosis of What-do-you-call-that? performances.

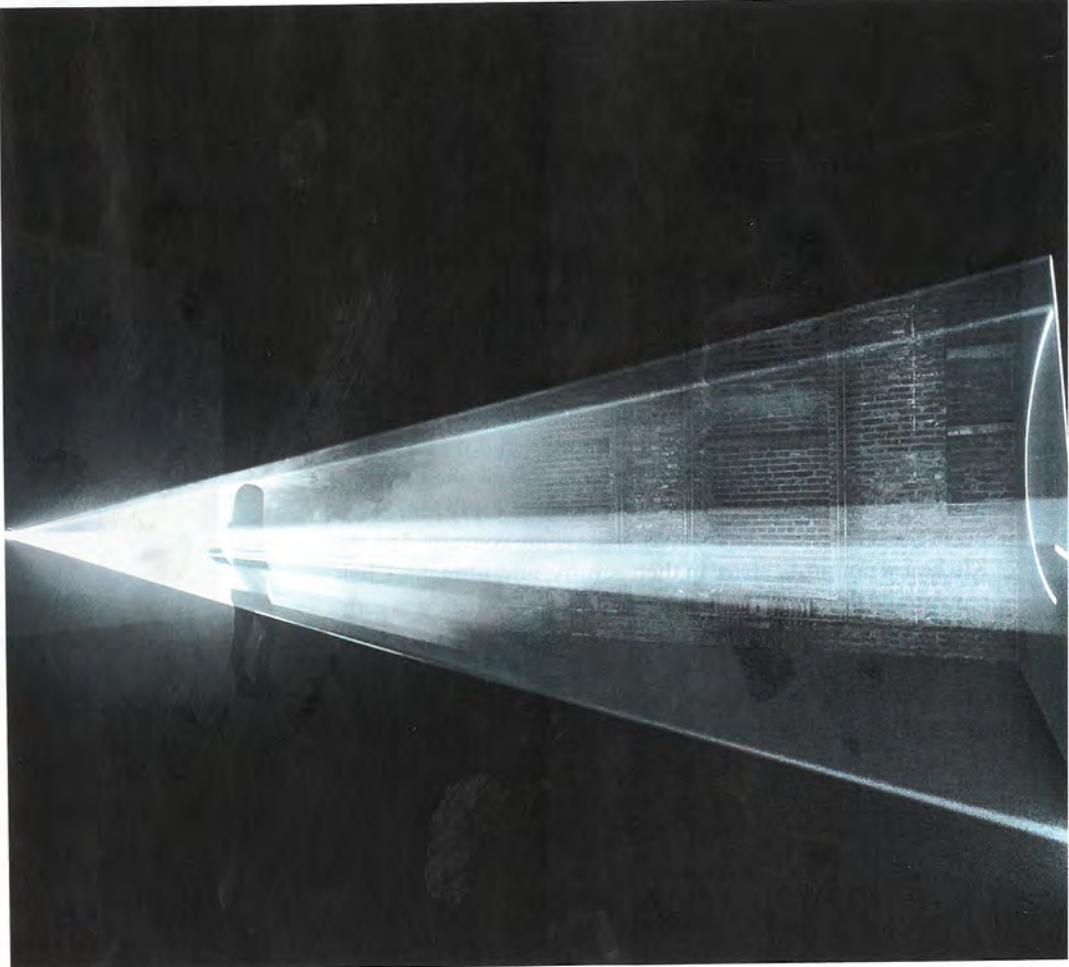
Four decades later, the antiestablishment spirit remains robust at venues like Brooklyn's Roulette, which stages the Mixology Festival, an assault on category and convention—even conventions it helped create. One vintage moment came in February, with Jon Satrom's multimedia work *Prepared Desktop*, in which everything that has ever gone kablooey on your laptop—spinning wheels, mysterious error messages, eternal downloads,



From top: *The Let Go*, a performance at the Park Avenue Armory conceived by multidisciplinary artist Nick Cave; *The Damned*, director Ivo Van Hove's staged adaptation of Luchino Visconti's 1969 film, also at the Armory. Opposite: The composer Paola Prestini, artistic director of National Sawdust.



Above: R&B singer Abra performs in a temporary structure in last year's "A Prelude to the Shed." Right: "Solid Light Works," at Pioneer Works in Brooklyn. Below: Gabriel Florenz, artistic director of Pioneer Works.





The Shed's artistic director, Alex Poots. The institution's distinctive structure features a translucent shell that can be rolled out to reveal a uniquely variable arrangement of stages.

and runaway windows—exploded on a screen to a soundtrack of scratches, glitches, and hums.

New York's broad, well-funded cultural apparatus doesn't push back or ignore the fringes anymore but goes snuffing around for ideas there instead. Last summer, Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival, led by the voraciously curious Jane Moss, ventured far from both Lincoln Center and Mozart to stage Ashley Fure's 2017 immersive composition *The Force of Things: An Opera for Objects* in Brooklyn. Audience members stood in a room hung with paper curtains, and subwoofers murmured below the audible range, transmitting vibrations to the sheets. The paper quivered like leaves in the breeze, as if the whispering woods had come indoors. A few months later, the New York Philharmonic, under vigorous new management, welcomed its new music director Jaap van Zweden with the world premiere of *Filament*, another all-around work by Fure. A choir that was scattered through the balconies whispered into specially designed megaphones that looked like high-tech conch shells.

While some presenting organizations go hunting for special spaces, museums have started to smuggle one-shot performances into galleries, atria, and period rooms where silence usually reigns. The stone vaults of the Cloisters' 12th-century Romanesque chapel make the perfect resonating chamber for meditative, otherworldly music from just about any period. One startling name on last winter's schedule was the leather-clad goth male soprano M. Lamar, who gave a single performance of his poly-stylistic song cycle *Lordship and Bondage: The Birth of the Negro Superman*. In 2017, the Guggenheim Museum, which has a long tradition of hosting workshops and performances in a variety of genres, installed the pop star Solange Knowles in the rotunda at the base of its famous spiral ramp for a one-time-only nondenominational ritual called *An Ode To*.

Since "whatchamacallit" is not a viable marketing category, *opera* has become an umbrella term for any kind of musical spectacle that doesn't fit in a labeled box. Sometimes the venue is the city itself. Last fall, the architect Elizabeth Diller and composer David Lang produced *The Mile-Long Opera*, in which audience members strolled on the High Line as hundreds of performers, spread out along the length of the elevated park, whispered, declaimed, and sang vignettes drawn from city life.

What all these experiences have in common is the feeling that context shapes content. At Pioneer Works, a vast Brooklyn nonprofit art space established in 2012 by the artist Dustin Yellin, art and music often engage in an unexpected relationship. Early last year, the venue's artistic director Gabriel Florenz mounted an exhibition of Anthony McCall's immense luminescent cones called "Solid Light Works." Then Pioneer Works organized four performances of "Four Simultaneous Soloists," in which musicians who had never worked together—a turntable DJ, an electric guitarist, a vibraphonist, and on one occasion a singer—huddled with audience members inside the cones of light and performed intimate improvisations.

"We like to think about the difference between doing a performance on a stage and doing it inside an exhibition," Florenz says. "That's when it makes sense, when it's not just one thing, when you can get people participating. We're a museum of process."

It's great for certified geniuses like Kentridge, Björk, Richter, Mendes, and McCall when venues adapt to them instead of demanding the reverse, but New York's culture of openness also helps younger artists develop their valuable idiosyncrasies. Nearly 1,000 early-career artists in a variety of genres responded to the Shed's first open call; 52 will have their work paid for, produced, and presented—not in some black-box theater tucked beneath the roof, but in the venue's primary spaces. National Sawdust, a tiny, faceted modern jewel casket of a concert hall inserted in the shell of a former sawdust factory in Brooklyn, puts on roughly 250 concerts a year by a bewildering roster of musicians in a quickly evolving set of hybrid genres. It is also a full-service organization for bringing music into the world—"from incubation to dissemination," as its artistic director, the composer Paola Prestini, puts it. It's a start-up serving those who are starting out.

Although it's run by and for young people, National Sawdust has a powerful group of elders watching over it, including Philip Glass. When the director R. B. Schlather staged Glass's 1979 *Madrigal Opera* (that term again!), he placed a Webcam on the roof to stream the blood-orange sunset, projecting it live on the auditorium's white walls. As the chorus, embedded among the audience, sang Glass's glinting, antique harmonies, the light in the room faded to black, a silent echo of the city itself seeping into the hall. ☽



THE LEADERSHIP
When Alex Poots was weighing whether to take the job as artistic director of The Shed, he was ultimately convinced by the board's openness to creating a commissioning institution, rather than a more standard performing arts center. "I wanted a sense of risk and adventure, and to share the thrill of those emotions with the public," says Poots. Board chairman Dan Doctoroff has been attached to the project for 13 years: "To just sit there and see it as it's ready to open is one of the most gratifying things I can imagine," he says. From left: CEO and artistic director Alex Poots, chairman of the board Dan Doctoroff, COO Maryann Jordan, vice chairman of the board Jonathan Tisch, associate director Laurie Beckelman, chief civic program officer Tamara McCaw, chief marketing and communications officer Jeff Levine, chief development officer Margaret Pomeroy Hunt, CFO Peter Gee and CTO Ezra Wiesner at The Shed's Bloomberg Building.

SHEDDING A LIGHT

The Shed, a dynamic cultural center, opens in New York's Hudson Yards development on April 5. Its objective is to commission innovative works by risk-taking artists of all genres, including the talents in this portfolio, who will headline the inaugural year.

BY NATALIA RACHLIN PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEREMY LIEBMAN

LONG BEFORE THE SHED had a name, before its mission had been fully articulated or its physical structure defined, it was just a red dot on a map of New York City's Hudson Yards. Circa 2006, the point marked one of the most valuable plots on this once-sleepy swatch of Manhattan's West Side, and the vague but ambitious plan for it, as set forth by the administration of then-mayor Michael Bloomberg, was to build a cultural institution unlike any other in the city. On April 5, after more than a decade of work and planning, The Shed finally opens, and it's as ambitious as ever. The 200,000-square-foot structure—already known for its movable shell, which rolls out to cover the adjacent plaza—is set to offer equally attention-grabbing programming, striving to be a new model for how culture is created and consumed in the 21st century.

"The Shed is, quite simply, a commissioning center for all arts and all audiences," says CEO and artistic director Alex Poots, who signed on in 2014 after serving as founding director of the Manchester International Festival and artistic director of the Park Avenue Armory. "We facilitate the making of original work across performing arts, visual arts and pop culture. We put all these different forms of human expression on an equal plane."

New Yorkers got an early taste of The Shed's multifarious interests in May 2018, thanks to a pre-opening pop-up festival of dance, concerts and talks.

The year-one program builds on that momentum with new work by internationally recognized artists, musicians, dancers, composers and writers, from Gerhard Richter to Trisha Donnelly to Arvo Pärt. Sharing the limelight will be a crop of emerging names, including a group of artists and collectives participating in the Open Call program.

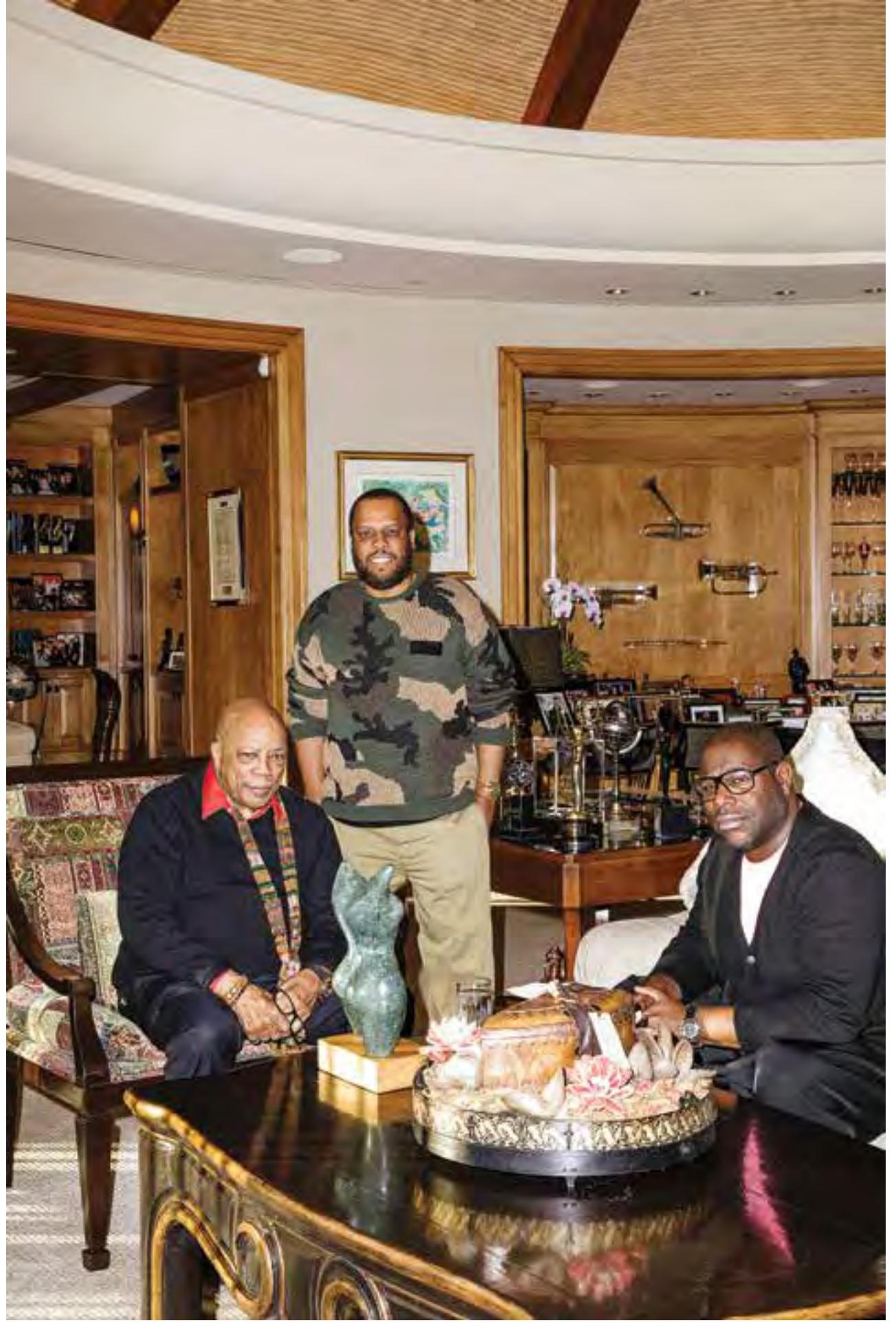
What all the far-reaching commissions have in common, aside from being world premieres, is a theme of collaboration, whether among several artists, among a long list of co-creators or simply between maker and space. As part of the inaugural events, poet Anne Carson will debut a theater piece, *Norma Jeane Baker of Troy*, directed by Katie Mitchell and starring the actor Ben Whishaw and the opera singer Renée Fleming, while musician Björk will collaborate with director Lucrècia Martel on *Cornucopia*, a show running May 6 to June 1.

"We want to be a platform for the creation of art, one where artists are unconstrained by the physical environment or the institutional program," says Dan Doctoroff, chairman of The Shed's board of directors. Doctoroff, who was deputy mayor for economic development and rebuilding under Bloomberg, has been attached to the project since its infancy. A point both Doctoroff and Poots underscore is The Shed's mission of inclusivity, which will manifest through a series of outreach initiatives. "[It was] important that this not be a temple of culture that you have to ascend into. This [is meant] to be a home for everybody," says Doctoroff.

The Shed's physical space—named the Bloomberg Building, thanks to a \$75 million donation from the former mayor's foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies—has made flexibility its guiding principle. Designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro in collaboration with Rockwell Group, the building houses a 500-seat theater, 25,000 square feet of gallery space, a rehearsal room and an artist lab. The much-discussed shell, which sits on six-foot-tall wheels, nests over the building when not in use, but it can be deployed in a matter of minutes to create the McCourt: an enclosed 17,000-square-foot hall complete with light, sound and temperature control.

Elizabeth Diller, a founding partner at DS+R—the firm that was also behind the resurrection of the nearby High Line—refers to the architectural approach as a "space on-demand" strategy. "Rather than thinking of the building as an object, we thought about it as infrastructure," says Diller. "It's a big machine for making art in—it's not intimidating; you can kick it around."

So far, The Shed has raised about \$488 million of its \$550 million goal, including a recent \$27.5 million gift from Jonathan and Lizzie Tisch. The project has come a long way from its days as a hypothetical speck on a redevelopment map. "We commission, take risks and offer artists the chance to create unrealized projects," says Poots. "We let them explore ideas that even they don't know where [the ideas] will go—and there is never enough of that opportunity in any city."



SOUNDTRACK OF AMERICA

"This show is about the now, about the future," says artist and director Steve McQueen of *Soundtrack of America*, which will inaugurate The Shed's performance program on April 5. The five-night concert series, which McQueen developed in partnership with producers Quincy Jones and Dion "No I.D." Wilson, NYU music professor Maureen Mahon and others, will capture the impact of African-American music on contemporary culture. Each evening will feature different emerging artists, from Moses Sumney to Kelsey Lu to Smino, all representing the next generation of torchbearers for blues, jazz, gospel, R&B, rock 'n' roll, house and hip-hop. "You'll experience the new, fresh talents of today, but also how they carry on a tradition from the past," McQueen says. *From left: Quincy Jones, Dion "No I.D." Wilson and Steve McQueen at Jones's Los Angeles home.*



"WE NEED TO ALLOW ARTISTS TO BE CREATIVE, TO STAY CREATIVE, TO NEVER STOP, AS CREATIVITY IS OUR HOPE IN A TROUBLED WORLD."

—AGNES DENES

**AGNES DENES:
ABSOLUTES AND INTERMEDIATES**
Hungarian-born, New York-based conceptual artist Agnes Denes made a name for herself in the 1960s and '70s with a multidisciplinary practice that addresses environmental and ecological issues. In the fall, The Shed will host the largest New York City survey of her oeuvre to date, including *A Forest for New York*, which was conceived of in 2013 and features 100,000 trees meant to clean the air and groundwater. "The Shed offers artists the space to be creative, to make new work on their own terms," says Denes. "We need to allow artists to be creative, to stay creative, to never stop, as creativity is our hope in a troubled world." *Left: Agnes Denes in front of her 1984 work Teardrop—Monument to Being Earthbound at her New York studio.*



A QUIET EVENING OF DANCE
American dancer and choreographer William Forsythe is considered one of the preeminent dance makers of his generation, and his work has been performed by leading ballet companies the world over. In collaboration with London's dance-specialized Sadler's Wells Theatre, The Shed will bring one of Forsythe's latest productions—*A Quiet Evening of Dance*, which premiered in London last fall—to New York this year. The performance features several of Forsythe's closest collaborators in two new works and select repertory pieces, with only the dancers' own breathing for accompaniment. *Below: William Forsythe at the Samuel B. & David Rose Building at Lincoln Center.*



IN FRONT OF ITSELF
The Shed's first visual-arts commission was formalized in the planning phase, when Alex Poots and senior program adviser Hans Ulrich Obrist—the curator and critic who directs London's Serpentine Galleries—asked artist Lawrence Weiner to create a permanent installation. The result is *In Front of Itself*, a 20,000-square-foot text-based work embedded into the ground out front. "This building, by its own nature, is in front of itself," says Weiner. "One of the nice things about being able to use language to make sculpture is that it says what you mean." Obrist will continue to help shape the institution's visual-arts programming. "It has a lot to do with bringing things and people together," says Obrist, "gathering, uniting and creating new alliances for the 21st century." Above: Lawrence Weiner (left) and Hans Ulrich Obrist at Weiner's New York studio.

JOAN JONAS AND HÉLÈNE GRIMAUD
Slated to debut in the fall is a newly announced, as-yet-unnamed collaboration between pioneering American performance and video artist Joan Jonas and French classical pianist Hélène Grimaud. A trailblazer in the genre of video art, Jonas will combine projected video imagery with a live performance by Grimaud. "The Shed connected us, and it was an interesting choice to put the two of us together. But it's been very nice. We met and really hit it off. I like her work, and she appreciates mine," says Jonas. "I think this matchmaking thing they've got going works very well." Right: Joan Jonas at her New York studio.



"YOU JUST NEVER KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO CREATE WHEN YOU GATHER ALL THESE PEOPLE. THAT'S WHEN THE MAGIC HAPPENS."
—REGGIE REGG ROC GRAY



MAZE
Co-directed by the street-dance pioneer Reggie Regg Roc Gray and theater artist Kaneza Schaal, *Maze* will be a politically charged dance performance combined with innovative set and lighting design. "The 21st century has demanded and provided new models for how humans can successfully coexist, and *Maze* will entertain the whirlpools, complexities and impasses that lie there within," says Schaal. The performances, running July 23 to August 17, will feature dancers and teaching artists from FlexNYC, Gray's citywide dance-activism program, which has been in partnership with The Shed for the past three years. "I think basically The Shed is leading by example: They're saying, OK, let's not be afraid, let's move forward, let's bolster diversity," says Gray. "You just never know what you're going to create when you gather all these people. That's when the magic happens." From left: Kaneza Schaal, student Ebony Sexius, Reggie Regg Roc Gray and student Michael Charlot at the Samuel B. & David Rose Building at Lincoln Center.



POWERPLAY
Running May 18 and 19, *Powerplay* will mix hip-hop, spoken word, dance and moving image into a woman-centered show, organized under the direction of rising multimedia artist Latasha Alcindor. “The performance is really about how we can transform radical joy into power,” says Alcindor. Participants will include student artists from The Shed’s Dis Obey program for high schoolers, who explore protest and creative action through writing, storytelling and visual art workshops. “Our performance is the [same week as] Björk’s,” notes Alcindor. “To be able to say I’m on the same stage as someone that iconic, it’s just insane—and it says everything you need to know about The Shed’s point of view.” *From left:* Student Nathaniel Swanson, Latasha Alcindor and student Lela Harper at the Urban Assembly School for Collaborative Healthcare in Brooklyn.



THE ARCHITECTURE
From the start, The Shed’s home—now officially the Bloomberg Building—has stood as a physical symbol of the institution’s ambitions toward innovation. “We wanted it to be flexible without being indecipherable, a memory machine of a space that offers a whole range of experiences,” says David Rockwell, whose firm, Rockwell Group, collaborated with the project’s lead architects, Diller Scofidio + Renfro. Elizabeth Diller, founding partner of DS+R, recalls feeling a sense of urgency when the firm responded to The Shed’s request for proposals at the height of the financial crisis in 2008. “It was precisely because of the downturn that it became more important than ever to think about how culture needs to be protected, because it’s always the first thing to go when budgets get cut,” she says. *Above:* Elizabeth Diller (left) and David Rockwell at the Bloomberg Building.

REQUIEM
Jonas Mekas, the pioneer of experimental cinema, was working on a commission for The Shed at the time of his death in January at age 96. Mekas’s new work will premiere this fall, accompanying Greek-Russian conductor Teodor Currentzis and his orchestra and chorus, MusicAeterna, which will perform Giuseppe Verdi’s *Messa da Requiem* as part of the group’s North American debut. “Poignantly, *Requiem* was [Jonas’s] final work,” says Poots. “He and his Anthology Film Archives [in New York] will continue to enrich our world.” *Right:* Jonas Mekas at his Brooklyn home.



“WE WANTED IT TO BE FLEXIBLE WITHOUT BEING INDECIPHERABLE, A MEMORY MACHINE OF A SPACE THAT OFFERS A WHOLE RANGE OF EXPERIENCES.”

—DAVID ROCKWELL

DRAGON SPRING PHOENIX RISE
Combining aerial choreography, martial arts and dance, the so-called kung fu musical *Dragon Spring Phoenix Rise* will burst onto the stage June 22 to July 27. The over-the-top, genre-defying production was co-conceived by Chinese-born, New York-based theater, opera and film director Chen Shi-Zheng—best known for his multidisciplinary approach to commissions for the likes of London's Royal Opera House—and the screenwriters Jonathan Aibel and Glenn Berger, of *Kung Fu Panda 1–3* acclaim. The show will also feature remixed versions of songs by the Australian pop sensation Sia and production and costume design by Tim Yip, who worked on *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Below: Chen Shi-Zheng at scenic designer Meredith Ries's Brooklyn studio, with an early model from *Dragon Spring Phoenix Rise*.



MANUAL OVERRIDE
As The Shed's first guest curator, the writer and critic Nora N. Khan is the driving force behind *Manual Override*, a group exhibition opening in the fall that highlights the work of artist and filmmaker Lynn Hershman Leeson. The show will debut the final installment of Hershman Leeson's *The Complete Electronic Diaries* (1984–2018)—a series that foreshadowed the interplay of personal history and digital identity—and showcase research from her collaborations with scientists and engineers. "I like to work out on the edge, with projects and interfaces that have yet to be developed," says Hershman Leeson. "In a way, working with The Shed was a bit like that." Taking inspiration from Hershman Leeson's cross-disciplinary approach, the exhibition will also feature other artists who have been paired with programmers, artificial-intelligence experts and geneticists to create new work. Right, from left: The Shed's senior curator, Emma Enderby, Lynn Hershman Leeson and Nora N. Khan at New York's Bridget Donahue gallery.



"I LIKE TO WORK OUT ON THE EDGE, WITH PROJECTS AND INTERFACES THAT HAVE YET TO BE DEVELOPED."
—LYNN HERSHMAN LEESON

REICH RICHTER PÄRT
The American minimalist composer Steve Reich has collaborated with German artist Gerhard Richter in one of two immersive performances running April 6 through June 2. Reich's original score will be played by a live ensemble in one of The Shed's gallery spaces displaying works by Richter, including a film the artist made with director Corinna Belz. "When you work on something like this it forces you to think of new ways of composing," says Reich. "I'm not a movie-music composer. I haven't done this kind of thing before. But then again, working with Richter is not your usual kind of movie, either." The other half of the series pairs Richter's work with the music of the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. Right: Steve Reich at The Shed's offices, in front of wallpaper he created in collaboration with Gerhard Richter.



Trump Favors Pizza Magnate For Fed Board

Partisan Ally Who Ran for President in 2012

This article is by Alan Rappeport, Neil Irwin and Maggie Haberman.

WASHINGTON — President Trump said on Thursday that he planned to nominate Herman Cain, who abandoned his 2012 presidential bid in the face of escalating accusations of sexual misconduct, for a seat on the Federal Reserve Board.

Mr. Trump, speaking from the Oval Office, called Mr. Cain, the former chief executive of Godfather's Pizza, "truly outstanding individual" and said, "I've told my folks that's the man."

The decision to consider Mr. Cain is the second time in weeks that the president has floated candidates with deeply held political views and past ethical issues to fill a seat on the Fed, signaling his intent to put allies on a traditionally independent body. It comes as Mr. Trump has continued to attack the Fed and his handpicked chairman, Jerome H. Powell, for raising interest rates in 2018, saying those moves slowed economic growth.

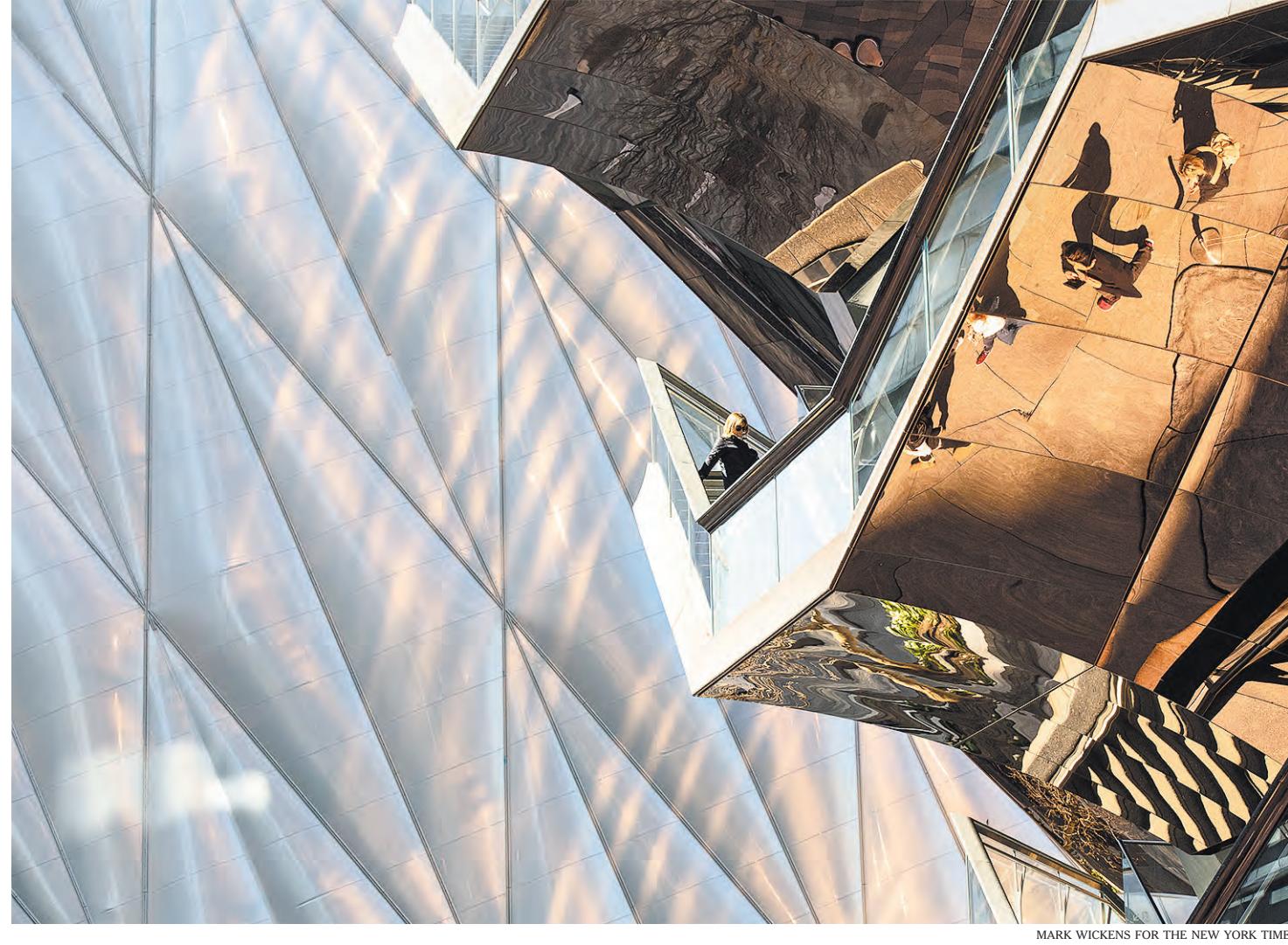
Last month, Mr. Trump said he planned to nominate Stephen Moore, a conservative economist who advised his presidential campaign and has become a vocal critic of the central bank's recent rate increases, as a Fed governor.

Mr. Trump has staked his presidency on a booming economy and his re-election could hinge on whether it continues to surge. The Fed, which has the ability to stimulate the economy by lowering interest rates and using other tools at its disposal, will play a crucial role in the economy's trajectory.

While presidents have long stocked regulatory agencies with partisan appointees in pursuit of ideological goals, the Fed's seven-member board of governors has largely been an exception given the role it plays in the United States economy. The Fed's primary job is to guide the economy, typically by adjusting interest rates. It aims for sustainable growth, maximum employment and stable prices. It also regulates banks and oversees the plumbing of the financial system.

Most developed nations have granted their central banks con-

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MARK WICKENS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A Guide to Navigating the Shed

The \$475 million arts center in Hudson Yards in Manhattan is open. We have a breakdown of what you'll find there. Page C23.

Extremes of Right and Left Share Ancient Bias

By PATRICK KINGSLEY

BERLIN — Swastikas daubed on a Jewish cemetery in France. An anti-Semitic political campaign by Hungary's far-right government. Labour lawmakers in Britain quitting their party and citing ingrained anti-Semitism. A Belgian carnival float caricaturing Orthodox Jews sitting on bags of money.

And that was just the past few months.

The accumulated incidents in Europe and the United States have highlighted how an ancient prejudice is surging in the 21st century in both familiar and mutant ways, fusing ideologies that otherwise would have little overlap.

The spike is taking place in a context of rising global economic uncertainty, an emphasis on race

Surge of Anti-Semitism in Europe and U.S. as Economies Cool

and national identity, and a deepening polarization between the political left and right in Europe and the United States over the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

"There's an ideological pattern that is common," said Günther Jikeli, an expert on European anti-Semitism at Indiana University. "The world is seen as in a bad shape, and what hinders it becoming a better place are the Jews."

Anti-Semitism has become a section of today's political Venn diagram where the far right can intersect with parts of the far left,

Europe's radical Islamist fringe, and even politicians from America's two main parties.

That confluence is new, experts say, as is the emergence of an Israeli government that has sided up to far-right allies who praise Israel even as they peddle anti-Semitic prejudice at home.

"It creates a landscape that is very confusing and where things are more blurry than in the past," said Samuel Ghiles-Meihac, an expert on Jewish history at the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent, a government-funded research group in France.

Polling suggests that anti-Semitic attitudes may be no more widespread than in the past, particularly in Western Europe, where Holocaust remembrance has become a ritual for most governments.

Despite this, bigots have seem-

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President Jabs, Finding Biden In Familiar Fix

By ANNIE KARNI
and SYDNEY EMBER

WASHINGTON — President Trump, ignoring his own troubled history with women and bragging about sexual misconduct, went after Joseph R. Biden Jr. via Twitter on Thursday, posting a video that mocked the former vice president for his handsy approach to politicking.

The 15-second clip tweeted Thursday by Mr. Trump — accompanied by the text, "WELCOME BACK JOE!" — doctored a homemade video that Mr. Biden had released the day before, in which the former vice president addressed his history of physical contact with women, some of whom have come forward in recent weeks to say his intimate behavior made them uncomfortable.

As Mr. Biden speaks to the camera, a pair of hands appears on his shoulders, and then a cartoonish image of Mr. Biden's head pops up from behind a couch and intimately nuzzles the back of the former vice president's head.

For a week, Mr. Trump's advisers have been watching the spectacle surrounding the accusations that Mr. Biden has touched women

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PILOTS FOLLOWED BOEING CHECKLIST BEFORE CRASHING

AN INQUIRY IN ETHIOPIA

Preliminary Report Stirs
New Concerns About
Flight Safeguards

This article is by Natalie Kitroeff, David Gelles, James Glanz and Hannah Beech.

Boeing dismissed concerns about a powerful new anti-stall system on the 737 Max for months, insisting that pilots could deal with any problems by following a checklist of emergency procedures.

Now, the preliminary findings from the crash of Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 have cast doubt on whether those instructions were sufficient, adding to the scrutiny over Boeing's and federal regulators' response to two deadly crashes involving the same jet model.

The findings, released Thursday in Ethiopia, suggest that the pilots on the Ethiopian Airlines flight initially followed the prescribed procedures after the anti-stall system malfunctioned. They shut off the electricity that allows the automated software to push the plane's nose down and took manual control of the jet. They



ABHIRUP ROY/REUTERS
The cockpit of a new Boeing 737 Max in India last year.

then tried to right the plane, with the captain telling his co-pilot three times to "pull up."

But they could not regain control. About four minutes after the system initially activated, the plane hit the ground at colossal speed, killing all 157 people on board.

"The captain was not able to recover the aircraft with the procedures he was trained on and told by Boeing," said Dennis Tajer, a spokesman for the American Airlines pilots union and a 737 pilot, who read the report.

The findings laid out a timeline of the March 10 flight based on analysis from 18 Ethiopian and international investigators and information from the jet's flight data recorder and cockpit voice record-

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'Easy to Get to You': Rap Stars' Hometown Loyalty Can Be Costly

By JOE COSCARIELLI

Though far from a struggling musician, Nipsey Hussle, the Los Angeles rapper who was shot and killed on Sunday, was not living the luxury fantasy of hip-hop superstardom.

He often traveled without security. He did not anchor his image to brick-size piles of money and fleets of foreign cars, opting rather for a few thick gold chains with a flannel or a hoodie.

Instead of multi-million-dollar brand deals, high fashion collaborations and appearances on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show," Hussle partnered with a developer to buy a local strip mall and helped with the opening of a co-working space and a Fatburger.

"Nipsey's there kissing babies, taking selfies," recalled Mark Webster, who worked with Hussle on branding for the burger joint.

Most casual listeners are familiar with hip-hop's 1 percent — Jay-Z, Drake, Cardi B. But Hussle represented a less visible, less glamorous, but increasingly ascendant hip-hop archetype: the regional legend, a member of rap's middle class who can do well for themselves without ever reaching mainstream mega-fame.

With the rise of streaming and the 24/7 personalized reality show of social media, it's a boom time



ALEX WELSH FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A vigil in front of Nipsey Hussle's Marathon Clothing store, where he was fatally shot on Tuesday.

for this in-between tier of artists. Even outside hip-hop strongholds like New York, Atlanta, Chicago and Los Angeles, rappers from cities like Charlotte, N.C.; Baton Rouge, La.; and Pompano Beach, Fla., have been able to develop and sustain national fan bases.

Many like Hussle earn a healthy living, if not ultra-wealth, without

broad radio play or platinum plaques. And in the tradition of the pre-internet hometown heroes that came before them, many stay close to home for a combination of financial and personal reasons.

But that same accessibility and dedication to their communities can also make them reachable targets, a harsh reality that has res-

onated in the hip-hop world this week. The police said Hussle, 33, was killed in front of his South Los Angeles clothing store by someone he knew, likely because of a neighborhood dispute. On Thursday, prosecutors charged Eric R. Holder Jr., 29, with Hussle's murder.

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The change signals an attempt

Mormon Church Rescinds Policy That Stung Same-Sex Families

By ELIZABETH DIAS

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints said on Thursday that it would allow children of same-sex couples to be baptized, a remarkable reversal of church policy from one of the religious groups that had long sought to be a bulwark against gay rights.

The decision rolled back a 2015 rule that had ripped congregations apart by declaring that church members in same-sex marriages were apostates and subject to excommunication, and that children of same-sex couples were banned from rituals like baptisms and baby-naming ceremonies.

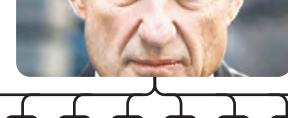
The change signals an attempt

to heal the rift and represents a broader effort by the church's newest president to bring the church closer to the American mainstream.

The decision, delivered by President Dallin H. Oaks, stops short of ending the church's teaching that acting on same-sex attraction is sinful. It comes as the church, which has long been known as the Mormon Church, prepares for its general conference for all members this coming weekend.

"While we cannot change the Lord's doctrine, we want our members and our policies to be

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The Course of an Inquiry

A road map of the events, beginning in April 2016, that led to the Mueller investigation.

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Mortar for a 'Blue Wall'

Wisconsin is essential to Democrats' Midwest strategy for 2020, but its political identity is in flux.

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U.S. Hints at China Trade Deal

The final steps to reach an "epic" agreement may take four weeks or longer, President Trump said, as haggling continues.

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Militia Advancing on Tripoli

As Gen. Khalifa Haftar, who controls eastern Libya, moves on the capital, rival militias vow to stop him, renewing the prospect of civil war.

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In NATO, Signs of Divisions

One diplomat compared the celebration of the alliance turning 70 to showing up at a birthday party and discovering you were attending a wake.

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Ethics Issues at Cancer Center

An outside review found that officials at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center repeatedly violated policies on financial conflicts of interest.

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Making Deals, Raising Money

A lawyer who helped two landlords win a lucrative deal with the city raised money for Mayor Bill de Blasio.

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The Brink of First-Name Fame

If Notre Dame repeats as women's N.C.A.A. champion, Ariake Ogunbowale could be a household name.

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Fading Party at U.S. Factories

Manufacturers have added jobs for almost 20 straight months. But there are signs the growth is slowing.

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Are Carbon Taxes Working?

Many countries that have put a price on carbon emissions have struggled with political opposition.

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A Powerful 'King Lear'

In Sam Gold's production of Shakespeare's tragedy, Glenda Jackson shows her intelligence as an actress.

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Flight of a Sunny Superhero

A boy and his mighty alter ego have some fun in the movie "Shazam!"

Manohla Dargis has the review.

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David Brooks

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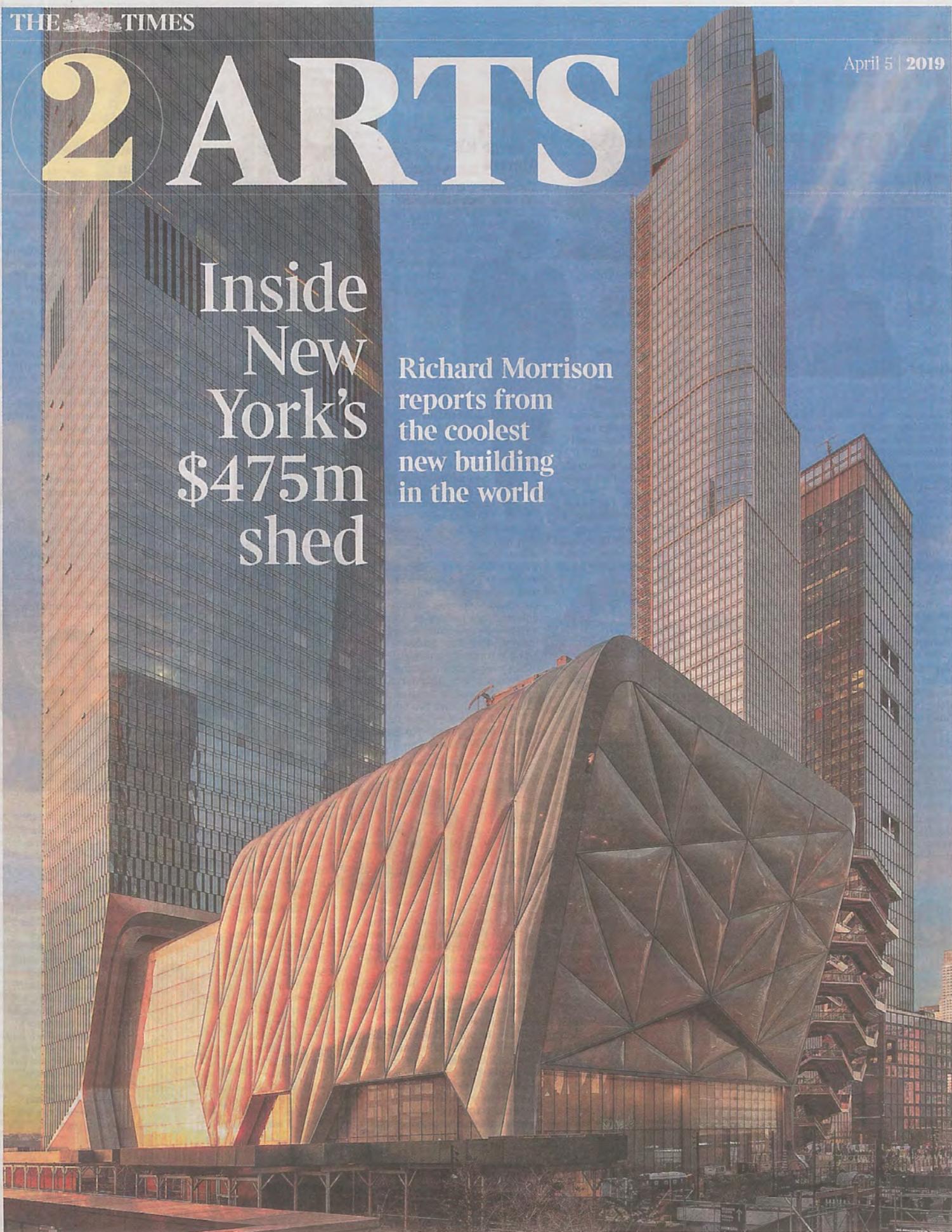
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2ARTS

April 5 | 2019

Inside
New
York's
\$475m
shed

Richard Morrison
reports from
the coolest
new building
in the world



cover story



Why a shedload of talent (and cash) is going to shake up Manhattan

New York's new \$475 million arts centre retracts to half its size, is run by a Brit and created by the brains behind London's Centre for Music. **Richard Morrison** gets a first look inside the **Shed**

The Big Apple just got juicier — at least if you're a fan of cutting-edge art staged in what looks like a giant grey duvet on wheels. New York's newest and weirdest-looking cultural venue opens today. It cost \$475 million to build, will house nothing except new work and is so flexibly conceived that, in only five minutes, half the building can telescope backwards over the other half, providing a towering performance arena in winter or an outdoor plaza in summer.

No wonder that its architect, Liz Diller (who has also designed the proposed Centre for Music in London), calls her creation, hunched beside the High Line elevated walkway that she also helped to create, an "anti-institutional institution". Its actual name, however, is the **Shed**. Why? "Because a shed is an open-ended structure with tools inside," says Daniel Doctoroff, the visionary billionaire who has driven the project since its conception 14 years ago. "The tools are the spaces and the state-of-the-art technology. Now it's up to the artists to use them any way they want."

Those spaces are huge. As well as the main arena, under that superlight polymer shell that moves by gliding along rails on 6ft-high wheels, there's a 500-seat theatre that can be subdivided into three separate spaces, a big art gallery and, at the top of the building, a rehearsal and talks space with views over the Hudson River.

"When we first talked about it, Michael Bloomberg [the mayor of New York at the time] said just two things," Doctoroff recalls. "First, 'Make it different from the other 1,200 cultural venues in the city.' And second, 'Make it something that

keeps New York on top of the cultural world.'

Oddly, though, an arts centre wasn't Doctoroff's first plan for the site. In the early 2000s he was one of the leaders of the bid to bring the 2012 Olympics to New York. The main stadium would be built on the far west side of mid-Manhattan, which was a run-down area of disused warehouses and railway sidings. After the Olympics the stadium would become the new home for the New York Jets, the American football team.

It didn't happen. London got the Olympics, but the idea of transforming

In only five minutes, half the building can telescope

that dilapidated area lingered. And how! A continuing \$20 billion regeneration scheme is turning the place, now called Hudson Yards, into one of the city's most exclusive neighbourhoods, with sleek starchitect-designed apartment blocks mingled with luxury shopping arcades.

Perhaps, though, Bloomberg's City Hall had a fit of social conscience because public land was put aside for an arts venue in the centre of this development. Not only that, but Bloomberg also steered through a \$75 million grant from the city towards the venue's construction costs, then matched that with \$75 million from his foundation. Those gifts kick-

started a rush of philanthropy on a scale that, on this side of the Atlantic, we can only gawp at. The property developer Frank McCourt popped in \$45 million, the hotelier Jonathan Tisch and his wife, Lizzie, \$275 million and the hedge-fund supremo Ken Griffin \$25 million — admittedly small change for a man who this week bought a penthouse overlooking Central Park for \$238 million. And so on down the line until, at the last count, more than \$500 million has been donated or pledged to build the **Shed** and finance its first three years of operation.

Every dollar of that will be needed because, although the **Shed** cost "only" \$475 million to build, Doctoroff has hired as its chief executive a man whose programming ideas are, to put it mildly, expansive and expensive.

He is Alex Poots, the Scotsman who made his name as the founding director of the Manchester International Festival. And he has made it clear that his agenda in Manchester — programming nothing except new work, setting up radical alliances between people from different art forms and treating highbrow and populist arts exactly the same — will be applied at the **Shed**. The big difference, of course, is that the **Shed** must operate every week of every year, not just for a fortnight every other year.

To say that this mission has shaken New York's arts community is an understatement. And shock turned to incredulity

when it was revealed that, when Poots arrived, he demanded enhanced soundproofing and other design adjustments that added \$7 million to the **Shed**'s construction costs. Poots justifies that by saying that if the **Shed** wasn't soundproofed well enough to take thunderous rock gigs, "you would be excluding half the people of Queens and the Bronx from ever setting foot in here".

Even so, scepticism about his plans in some quarters of the New York media is matched only by the rank hostility displayed towards the work of another Brit in the city. That's Thomas Heatherwick, whose enormous public sculpture *Vessel*, an Escher-like beehive of interlinking copper-coloured staircases rising eight storeys high, sits right beside the **Shed**.

Poots doesn't deny the risks involved, nor the costs. "When I was approached to do the job, four and a half years ago, I invited Dan Doctoroff to come and see Kenneth Branagh in the Manchester production of *Macbeth*, which was touring in New York," he says. "Afterwards I said to him, 'That show cost \$4 million to put together and if we sold out every performance we would still take only \$3.1 million at the box office. So would you regard the \$900,000 gap as a loss, or an investment in culture and society?'"

What did Doctoroff reply? "He said, 'I've been warned about you,' but after I'd attended three meetings with his constellation of billionaires they gave me the job."

And, reputedly, a \$50 million budget to underwrite his first three seasons — but what happens after that? "You can't expect them to commit for ever and ever," Poots replies, "but at least I have three years to make New Yorkers fall in love with the place." He has certainly set out his stall with his opening programme, and also



Chen Shi-Zheng and Damon Albarn's *Monkey: Journey to the West* (2007), which was commissioned by Alex Poots for the Manchester International Festival

cover story



The McCourt performance space.
Right: Thomas Heatherwick's Vessel

banged the drum for British talent. Ben Whishaw, for instance, is starring alongside the American soprano Renée Fleming in a new duologue — part spoken, part sung — called *Norma Jean Baker of Troy* by the poet Anne Carson, which is directed by another Brit, Katie Mitchell. And the British artist and director Steve McQueen, of *12 Years a Slave* fame, has devised the opening show in the main hall. That's a five-night concert series called *Soundtrack of America* that showcases 25 "emerging" rock and soul artists, under the seasoned supervision of Quincy Jones, to tell the 400-year story of African-American music.

Less rumbustious, but no less eye-catching, is the opening show in the gallery space. In Manchester four years ago Poots persuaded the German artist Gerhard Richter to collaborate with the Estonian composer Arvo Part. An infinitely repeated choral piece by Part was sung while the audience wandered round sombre black-and-white paintings by Richter. For the Shed the formula is



reprised, but embellished for a city sated on spectacle. Now Richter's contribution is to supply huge, explosively colourful tapestries and paintings that pierce the white walls like stained glass in a cathedral. And as well as Part's choral music there's a synthesizer-stacked ensemble playing a new work by Steve Reich, written in response to Richter's art.

Entrusting this opening event to three creative giants with a combined age of 252 is brave enough, but Poots has also scheduled no fewer than 200



Watch the Shed open and close
thetimes.co.uk and digital editions

Now, where are we with London's new venue, the Centre for Music?

Among the luminaries attending the VIP preview of the Shed was Nicholas Kenyon, the chief executive of the Barbican Centre in London. He must have felt mixed emotions. On the one hand, pride at the success of a star protégé (Alex Poots cut his teeth as a Barbican producer). On the other, envy that in New York it seems easy to raise \$500 million for an arts venue, while in London finding £288 million to build the Barbican's new Centre for Music, right, is proving very tough.

As with the Shed, London's hall has had land and seed money provided by the local authority (the Corporation of London), but there the similarities stop. The land (around what's at present a roundabout at the Barbican's southwest corner) is occupied by the Museum of London, and the four-

year task of demolishing and rebuilding can't start until the museum moves out. That can't happen until its new home inside part of Smithfield Market is built and that project can't start until the poultry traders occupying those premises have been relocated.

Not all the money for the new hall need come from philanthropists. Liz Diller's designs, unveiled in January, show four large floors of offices sandwiched between the hall and the smaller performing space at the building's pinnacle.

However, commercial clients for those spaces won't be easy to find with so many other huge towers going up in London.

The Shed took 14 years from conception to completion. Expect at least that for the delivery of London's hall — discussed for six years already.

Richard Morrison



What's on at the Shed

Soundtrack of America
Today-April 14
Trisha Donnelly
April 6-May 30
Norma Jean Baker of Troy
April 6-May 19
Björk's Cornucopia
May 6-June 1
Art and Disobedience: Boots Riley
May 10

concert hall wrapped in glass foyers — seems so conventional by comparison. Is that such a surprise, though? In New York she was given a shedload of money and carte blanche to be as flexible as possible to cater for artistic cross-fertilisations that might not even have been invented yet. In London, by contrast, she has three quarters of the budget (always assuming the money can be found) and a tightly prescribed brief — a venue for one very specific art form: orchestral music.

I'm not saying that's wrong, when London's existing concert halls have such second-rate acoustics. Yet I do think that the Shed makes all those inflexible, brutalist arts centres built in the mid-20th century — the Barbican and Southbank in London, the Pompidou Centre in Paris and the Lincoln Center in New York, to name just a few — look very outdated.

They catered for an era in which it was assumed that each art form needed its separate, segregated space. The thinking was that audiences, on the whole, didn't spill over from one to another. Today, however, the evidence is that younger people couldn't care less about whether a show is classified as dance, theatre, opera, art exhibition, film or a mixture of them all, as long as it grips their attention. It will be adaptable venues such as the Shed that cater best for this new eclecticism.

Whether the Shed itself prospers is another matter. Poots's "constellation of billionaires" may be enthused now, but in three years they may have found new toys to play with. And the people running those 1,200 other arts venues in New York aren't going to sit passively and let Poots pinch their audiences and sponsors.

Right now, however, Poots is riding the crest of a wave of idealism. "Let artists explore, let them even fail," he proclaims. Let's hope his commissions don't fail too often in a city so fixated on success.

theshed.org

INSIDE LOOK

HIGH ART IN REACH

New music-and-arts venue The Shed prioritizes the people who were there first in the midst of a Manhattan development, Hudson Yards, that's keyed to the 1 Percent

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

Hudson Yards, a controversial \$25 billion real estate development along the Hudson River in New York, is already home to new tenants like Wells Fargo and CNN. The clutch of giant glass buildings is visible from New Jersey. But the one building you won't see until you get closer is The Shed, a small, futuristic structure with a movable outer shell that can extend to double its footprint.

The live-music and arts space, which will open April 5 and commission work "across all forms, for all audiences," according to The Shed artistic director/CEO **Alex Poots**, is one of the few major creative centers to be built in Manhattan since the 1960s. Some of what The Shed presents can be likened to a 21st-century version of

The Shed under construction in February. The venue opens April 5.



uptown's Lincoln Center with its big-box, big-ticket aesthetic. In the first few months, The Shed will present a new show from **Björk** called *Cornucopia*; a collaboration between composers **Steve Reich** and **Arvo Pärt** and visual artist **Gerhard Richter**; and a five-night concert series celebrating the impact of African-American musicians on contemporary culture titled "Soundtrack of America." To help fill its entertainment calendar, The Shed sent out an open call last March to early-career artists in the performing arts, visual arts and popular music — and

received over 900 applications.

Outside of live events, chief civic programs officer **Tamara McCaw** says The Shed is working with residents and tenant leaders at the nearby Fulton and Chelsea-Elliot housing projects to offer well-rounded and affordable programming. Its first effort is already underway: the free dance activism program FlexNYC, which launched in 2016 and pairs professionally trained dancers with over 400 students from all five of the city's boroughs. Now, they'll have a space to practice in The Shed's rehearsal studios.

On par with what the venue offers is how it functions: as a not-for-profit that lies on city land, while everything else in Hudson Yards is privatized. "We're a part of the city," says Poots. And as such, The Shed's mission is to serve the existing communities of the city rather than the 1 percent catered to by the shops and co-ops of Hudson Yards. Which is why up to 10 percent of all performance tickets will be priced at \$10, including front-row seats. Says McCaw: "We don't want [The Shed] to be yet one more thing that's not for the communities in the area." ●



Reba McEntire always felt she had to hit certain milestones in her career: star in a hit TV show, perform on Broadway, record a duets album with pop stars like **Kelly Clarkson** and **Justin Timberlake** (which hit No. 1). But for her upcoming 29th studio album, the country superstar had only one objective. "I wanted to record music that made me happy," says McEntire, 63, "without worrying where it would or wouldn't get played." After all, with 16 hits on the Billboard Hot 100, 24 Billboard 200-charting

albums (two of them reached the top) and three Grammy Awards, she no longer has anything to prove.

Stronger Than the Truth, McEntire's sixth project for Big Machine Records that will arrive April 5, marks a return to the Oklahoma native's roots. "It's true to who I am and how I grew up," says McEntire of the traditional country project, which is a departure from her 2017 Christian collection *Sing It Now: Songs of Faith & Hope*. (There's even a tune called "No U in Oklahoma.") The

12-track album that she co-produced includes the boot-stomping "Storm in a Shot Glass" and heart-wrenching ballads like "Tammy Wynette Kind of Pain," which details a troubled relationship, and standout "Cactus in a Coffee Can," about an orphan who meets her drug-addicted birth mother too late in life.

McEntire says Big Machine, which signed her in 2008, has never resisted embracing the new ways artists can promote music, including social media. Earlier in March, McEntire tweeted a video to her

2.3 million followers in which she impersonated **Cardi B**'s "Okurrr" catchphrase to tease new music. "Technology has changed everything," says McEntire. "Everything is faster, and in many ways, easier than it was when I was starting out. But on the other hand, because it's so much faster, artists don't get as much time to develop. If I was starting out now, I don't know if I would make it." Her advice for anyone trying to have a career like hers? "Be different, stand out, and work your butt off." —ANNIE REUTER

REBA'S ROOTS



ARCHITECTURE
JUSTIN DAVIDSON

What's in the Shed?

We'll know once the artists mess with it.

ON THE EVENING of the Shed's launch party, a chill wind barreled down West 30th Street and a flock of plastic bags dive-bombed the invitees. I thought I could hear the ghost of Joan Littlewood cackling at nature's assault on the VIPs. This opening was, in an exquisitely ironic sense, the realization of her proletarian dream.

In 1961, Littlewood, a combative and twinkly-eyed British theater director, decided that working-class people were entitled to a theater—not the kind with a proscenium arch and red velvet curtains but a less formal, more anarchic kind. She teamed up with the architect Cedric Price to design Fun Palace, a great Erector Set contraption of trusses, catwalks, screens, ramps, and stairs intended for a grungy riverbank site in East London. There, children and adults, performers and audience members, posh and working classes could clamber over the apparatus and make art—or watch it being made—on the fly. Spaces for singing, dancing, tinkering, and drinking could all be shuffled or combined. "Try starting a riot or beginning a

THE SHED
545 WEST 30TH
STREET. DILLER
SCOFIDIO + RENFRO
WITH ROCKWELL
GROUP. ARCHITECTS.

PHOTOGRAPH: WAN BAAN

painting—or just lie back and stare at the sky," the proposal exhorted.

Fun Palace ran headlong into un-fun planning officials, who nixed the construction permit. But six decades later, that seed has borne a kind of mutant fruit in the Shed. Instead of a scaffolding that could be quickly bolted together, the architects Diller Scofidio + Renfro, along with Rockwell Group, designed a half-billion-dollar arts center in a hyperfancy real-estate development. In a city of specialized buildings, each doing its narrow job of making, moving, or storing money, the Shed is open-ended and hopeful. It's an arts center with no collection, no resident company or genre focus, no acknowledged division between high and pop. Its mission keeps evolving—and that's indeterminacy worth rooting for.

The most visible moving part is the puffy shell, a very Price-ian truss that rolls out along tracks to enclose a big patch of public plaza and stows away when it's not needed. Beneath that carapace, softened by inflatable bubbles of ETFE plastic, is a static glass box full of gizmos. A glass wall folds away, turning an upstairs gallery into a balcony for the big show. Flexible lighting grids, automated blackout shades, seating and stages that can be broken down and reconfigured overnight, temporary walls that can turn a warren of intimate drawing galleries into a vast sculpture hall—each nifty feature challenges artists to use space in new ways.

I wish the building had opened with some of the joyous pandemonium that Littlewood and Price envisioned, instead of a chocolate-box selection of respectable shows. In one second-floor gallery, lined with wall hangings by Gerhard Richter, singers who mingled in the crowd quietly began to sing a 90-second snippet by Arvo Pärt, then repeated it again and again. When they were done, the audience filed into another gallery where an ensemble performed a new work by Steve Reich that accompanied a mesmerizing Richter film. Abstracted lobsters, vines, mandalas, amoeboid shapes, and other kinds of complicated symmetry beguiled the eye while Reich's sonic patterns enveloped the ear. The production values were slick, the air climate-controlled, but other than that, we could have been milling around a Soho loft circa 1971.

Two days later, on the official opening night, Jon Batiste, dressed in World War I Army fatigues, led an expeditionary force of his own—the Howard University Showtime Marching Band, Brooklyn United drum line, and the 369th Experience ensemble—through the audience and onto the stage, blaring the century-old music of

W.C. Handy. You couldn't have asked for a more festive moment: brassy, joyous, and full of righteous memories. But as the evening wore on, it devolved into a tribute concert with young performers delivering reverent covers of songs by Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder, Sarah Vaughan, and Whitney Houston and a dozen other classics.

The opening round of shows isn't enough to gauge the success of a new institution—or let's hope not, anyway. All could easily have been scattered around other venues, from BAM to the Armory to Columbia's Wallach Gallery, without a glitch. What will make the Shed matter is not its degree of success at nabbing a bigger share of philanthropic dollars or public attention but whether it incubates something new. Without that, the institution may turn out to be the whitest of elephants. I saw the leaders of other performing-arts institutions roaming the premises, looking wide-eyed and anxious. They proclaimed the Shed so different from other venues that it could only add to the city's cultural richness. Maybe so. For the Shed to live up to its ambitions, it will have to act as a form of resistance to the marbled world of Hudson Yards.

The idea of a building that could be dismantled, rearranged, and reassembled has not generally fared well in the world of building codes and trade unions. The Fire Department does not take kindly to the idea that a staircase that's there today may vanish by tomorrow. Impresarios may not care to pin down a work with a label like "theater," but the stagehands union wants to know whether a show falls under its jurisdiction. And so architects have invoked the Fun Palace aesthetic but compromised on the dream of infinite flexibility. The Shed tries to reconcile all these contrary forces—flexibility and permanence, radicalism and practicality, openness and cost—and you can feel the architects' struggle to get the balance right.

Institutions usually approach architects with problems, the more detailed the better: requests for more space, better lighting, bigger elevators, smoother coat-checking. Buildings provide solutions. The Shed, on the other hand, asks questions. Can experienced artists dream up new genres now that they have the technical means? Will audiences for different art forms mix and meld? Can a high-tech building incubate the next generation of creators in a city where affordable workspace is even harder to come by than a rent-controlled apartment? The Shed's architects have followed Price's lead and tried to design a building that allows for anything and dictates nothing, which is a good strategy for the long term. Trusting the imagination of artists is always a solid bet. ■

A rich, deep vein of self-taught artists shining forth.

BY WILL HEINRICH



The pioneering dealer Edith Gregor Halpert's world.

BY ROBERTA SMITH

Fine Arts | Listings

WeekendArts II

The New York Times

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2019 C15

HOLLAND COTTER | ART REVIEW



AGENCESENSE AND LEON TOMICHEK/ARTWORKS • PHOTOS BY JOHN HOCHHEIMER

For Agnes Denes, a Time to Reap



Top, Agnes Denes, standing amid her 1982 public work "Wheatfield — A Confrontation," in Lower Manhattan. Above from left, "Model for Teardrop — Monument to Being Earthbound" and "Probability Pyramid — Study for Crystal Pyramid."

She set out to change humanity. Now, at 88, this visionary artist is finally getting the retrospective she deserves.

WE'LL BE LUCKY this art season if we get another exhibition as utterly beautiful as "Agnes Denes: Absolutes and Intermediates," which the artist has been working to put together why the artist, who was born in Budapest 88 years ago and has lived in New York City for more than 60 years, is only now having a retrospective here.

Must neglect the art world's palpable brilliant and often glibly marketing categories, that baffles conventional critical thinking, that manages to be, paradoxically, mortality-haunted and hopeful? Too often the answer is "yes," particularly if the art is by a woman.

I learned of Ms. Denes late, in 1982, by which time she already had a significant career. I was living in Lower Manhattan, two blocks from the Hudson River and an empty grass-stubbled hillside that had been formed by rubble excavated from the World Trade Center building site. (Battery Park City sits there now.)

OPPOSITE Agnes Denes: "Absolutes and Intermediates" and "The Shed"

One spring day I noticed a truck dumping fresh earth at the site, then people digging long furrows and sowing seeds. In early summer green shoots came up, grew tall, turned tawny yellow. By mid-August, two acres' worth of waist-high wheat was ripe for cutting.

Kansas had landed in Manhattan! If you stood in the middle of the field — and anyone could — you had views of the city in town, elevated, and the Hudson River to the south. The scent there that hot summer was pure country (as were the bugs). Then one day a thresher showed up and harvested the crop. I wasn't around for that, but when I dropped by the landfill later I remembered feeling shocked and dismayed to find the field bare, the wheat gone.

CONTINUED ON PAGE C20

Jason Reynolds Is on a Mission

The writer wants black teenagers and children to know that he sees them.

By CONCEPCIÓN DE LEÓN

When the writer Jason Reynolds speaks to young people, he rarely starts by talking about books.

"I've been hearing that all day, all year," he said. Instead he talks about rappers, Jordan IIs, the rapper DaBaby, "whatever it takes to get them engaged."

Earlier this month, when Reynolds's "Long Way Down" was selected as this year's "One Book Baltimore" pick, he came to the city to field questions about the book and sign copies for hundreds of middle school students. They listened to him as he compared hip-hop to poetry. "There's a direct connection between Tupac and Langston Hughes" — and said that early

rappers should have been considered "teenage geniuses."

These days — he's done about 50 this year — are a driving part of his work as a writer: to make black children and teenagers feel seen in real life as well as on the page. "I can talk directly to them in a way that they know they're going to relate to because I am them," Reynolds said, "and I still feel like them."

If his book sales and literary accolades are any indication, his approach is working.

Reynolds, 35, is a finalist for the National Book Award in Young People's Literature for "Look Both Ways," which came out this month. It is his second time as a finalist, having made the list in 2016 for his book "Ghost." "Look Both Ways" is his 13th book, with a 14th, an adaptation of Ibram X. Kendi's "Stamped From the Beginning,"

CONTINUED ON PAGE C21



Jason Reynolds speaking to 400 Baltimore students about his book "Long Way Down," which was selected as the city's "One Book Baltimore" pick.

REUTERS/SCOTT ELMQUIST FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

For Agnes Denes, a Time to Reap

CONTINUED FROM PAGE C1

The plan for the work of environmental art conceived and produced by Ms. Denes, with the help of a small crew, on a commission from the Public Art Fund. The title she gave the project — “Wheatfield — A Confrontation” — nailed its political intent, though the undercurrents were more prompting the sight of two acres of bread as a natural bounty, accessible to all, sprouting beneath the skies of capitalist greed that were the twin towers. (The wheat ended up traveling to 28 cities across the globe in an exhibition titled “International Art Show for the End of World Hunger.”)

You can still sense the power of that image from documentary photographs and a 1982 video of the artist interviewed by the *NYT*. She discusses her first solo show on the Sheet’s seventh floor, where the superbly installed survey of nearly 150 works, spanning Ms. Denes’s career, begins.

Her focus on ecology, on the fear of present decay and the hope for future survival, is evident in her early political drawings of 1968 solo performance, “Rice/Tree/Burial,” done in upscale New York, in which she planted grains of rice, bound trees with chains and buried time-capsule capsules. Her personal philosophy of her work, early and late, is the form of her unusually exalted diagrammatic drawings based on scientific and philosophical subjects: the workings of the brain, the complexities of language, the possibilities of post-industrial utopias — in short, the fundamentals of what she is not afraid to refer to as “human existence.”

In certain word-intensive pieces, like “Manifesto” (1969), which appears large on a wall in the second show, a tendency to abstract loquacity is checked by plain-spoke language, with results that read like concrete poetry. Other, more purely graphic drawings have the flawless crispness of digital prints. (Ms. Denes was a pioneer in applying computer technology to art, and in 1970 was already forecasting the fate of knowledge-as-truth in a coming age of information overload.)

Religion and ethics enter the picture in a work in low-key, titled “The Moral Message” (1970-1972). Made from bits of white plastic anchored to a dark plexiglass ground, it translates biblical passages in which God lays down the law for mankind into a tongue — supposedly universal — of dashes and dots.

And there’s humor. An avowed feminist and one of the founders, in 1972, of the all-women A.R.T. Gallery (then in SoHo, now in Dumbo, Brooklyn), Ms. Denes takes satirical jabs at the workings of gender in an elaborate drawing titled “Sex Machine.” It reduces the grand opera of sexual coupling to a user-unfriendly instructional chart.



CLIVE COX FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

All of this probably qualifies in some sense as Conceptual Art, which would make Ms. Denes a rare participant in a mostly male category. Yet her work has a speculative breadth and, most important, an attention to visual presence that much classic Conceptual Art lacks. She has ingeniously carved out an independent, label-free niche for herself and has been occupying and expanding it for over 50 years.

Visionary is one label that does apply, though it might not be the best choice, when it comes to what she has done. Over the years, as she has taken on increasingly elaborate ecological projects, her drawings, which she calls a form of “visual philosophy,” seem to become more complex. They include detailed world maps, in which the geopolitical relations we’re familiar with are unfixed. There are designs for cities that are also space stations, vehicles for exploration but also for escape.

Many of the designs are based on the ancient, tree-mimicking form of the pyramid, but the pyramid is now relieved of weight and nonfunctional ornament. Ordinarily rigid and vertically directed, the pyramid, in Ms. Denes’s drawings, stretches and twists, sometimes like an egg, or like a flower, or like a tree. Even in the world, as this article sees it, it is fluid, subject to growth and decay, a dynamic that is dramatically embodied in her public projects.

Only a few of the many she has proposed in drawings have been realized. “Wheatfield — A Confrontation” is the best-known, and was, of course, meant to be ephemeral. Another, still-inact public work, “Tree Mountain — A Living Time Capsule — 11,000 Trees, 11,000 People, 400 Years,” has a longer projected time span, though still a finite one.

Agnes Denes: Absolutes and Interventions

Through March 22 at the Shed, 545 West 30th Street, Manhattan; 646-455-3404, theshed.org.

Born in 1931, in Finland, from 1962 to 1996, it consists of a handmade hill covered with trees arranged in a mathematically determined spiral pattern. Each tree has been planted by a volunteer who has been contractually granted ownership of it, valid for 100 years, and may never cut it down personally. The larger idea behind the arrangement is straightforward: Conservation is both an individual and collective responsibility, extending far into the future.

Plans for other similar “trees” are in the offing, as are plans for other projects that still exist only on paper or as models. One is for a system of artificial dunes to protect the storm-ravaged Rockaways in Queens, N.Y. Another is for a “Forest of the Virgin” to be planted on landfall along the coast.

The qualities that distinguish such a work from 1960s and ’70s Land Art, with which Ms. Denes has sometimes been associated, are the same qualities that mark her drawings: a recognition of local reality and a creative imagination of global art. And she separates her work from object-fixated, dollar-value art of the 21st century in its insistence on impermanence. (That the retrospective is happening in the cash-busting body of the Shed is a coincidence.)

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Posed almost in the center of the fourth-floor galleries is a 1969 installation called “Human Dust.” It has two main components. One is a poster-size wall telling the story of an unnamed man’s life, from birth to death, over a period of 2/3 of his expected life span. We get statistics: the number of his close relationships, the number of places he lived. We learn details of his appetite (“During his lifetime he consumed 4500 lbs. of bread, 146 gallons of

wine”), and of his character (“He was unhappy and lonely more often than not.”) The account, basically an obituary, concludes: “34 people remembered him or spoke of him after his death and his remains shown here represent 1/83 of his entire body.”

The remains are indeed on display: a clear glass bowl filled with fragmented bones.

As if in response to this somewhat ungracious memorial, the galleries immediately above, where the show continues, have a dark, chunky shaped-sugar mass. Many of the most extravagantly imagined land drawings here are, as is a model of the Queens forest, financed by the Shed, and two sculptures, also commissioned by the Shed for the fourth floor.

One, “Pyramid — Study for Crystal Pyramid,” is a 17-foot-tall pyramid with inward curving walls. Made from thousands of 3-D printed white blocks and lightened from within, it has the presence of a traditional monument but looks like a giant

insect. It was conceived in 1976 to be even taller — 30 feet, a height that could, with the addition of more blocks, be reached in a future setting.

The other, a smaller piece, “Model for Teardrop — Monument to Being Earthbound,” comes with complications. Physically it consists of a flat rectangular base, a glowing cyan teardrop, or a flame — floating above it, and it really is floating, held in midair by the force of electromagnets embedded in both the base and the teardrop.

This piece, too, as seen in the show, is smaller than the artist originally envisioned. Could it, too, be scaled up? Apparently there are no magnets strong enough to permit that, making this piece a monumental one that can’t be scaled up. What’s more?

To the paradoxical dynamic that drives this artist’s finest work: rising, falling, and rising. Living, dying, and living. Can a tear and a flame coexist? Even they can.

Clockwise from right: Agnes Denes’s “Model for Teardrop — Monument to Being Earthbound,” at the Shed; her elaborate 1970 drawing “Liberated Sex Machine”; Ms. Denes during a rehearsal of “Rice/Tree/Burial” (1977-79) in Lewiston, N.Y.; “Morse Code Message” (1969-1973), which turns abstract concepts into a language of dashes and dots; and videos and a model of “Tree Mountain — A Living Time Capsule — 11,000 Trees, 11,000 People, 400 Years,” 1992-2006, a still-inact public work in Yojärvi, Finland.



CLIVE COX FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO, ART RESOURCE

TEARDROP (2011) AND 3-D TEAR (2012)



AGNES DENES AND HER TEARDROP ARTWORKS / PHOTOS



MEGHAN DHALIWAL FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Family members mourned Christina Langford Johnson in La Mora, Mexico, after she and eight others were killed on Monday.

The Message Behind a Trail of Smoke and Blood

By AZAM AHMED

LA MORA, Mexico — Andre Miller saw the column of black smoke rising from at least a mile away. Moments later, he said, the boom erupted.

He charged up the road to find a sport utility vehicle engulfed in flames — the same one his sister-in-law, Rhonita Miller, had been driving with her four children on Monday morning. He watched in horror, unable to approach. The heat was too intense.

"I couldn't get any closer than 30 feet," said Andre, 18. "I couldn't tell if they were inside the car or not."

Past the flames, he spotted three armed men racing away. It was 10:20 a.m.

It was the first harrowing evi-

A Massacre in Mexico Shows Nobody's Safe From the Cartels

eled for decades.

One of the women was on her way to start a new life in North Dakota with her husband. Another planned to meet her spouse to celebrate their anniversary. A third was getting ready to attend a wedding.

But gunmen, staged along the ridgeline, were lying in wait for the passing vehicles.

In two separate ambushes separated by miles of rugged dirt road, they fired hundreds of rounds of ammunition, from hundreds of yards away, sweeping in from the knuckled hills.

Spent shell casings at the first ambush site showed the path of the assassins as they closed in with assault rifles, firing as they descended the scrub-covered hill

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EMILE DUCKE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Russia's Nobel Factory Is Now Kremlin's Target

By ANDREW HIGGINS

MOSCOW — The Lebedev Physics Institute in Moscow helped the Soviet Union detonate its first nuclear bomb, figured out how to build a hydrogen bomb and has stood for decades in the vanguard of Russian scientific achievement. Seven of its scientists have won Nobel Prizes.

So it came as a shock last week when, shortly before celebrations

Alarm Over a Raid by Masked Officers

to mark the 85th anniversary of the illustrious institute's founding, its halls were suddenly swarming with security officers wearing masks and armed with automatic weapons.

They searched the office of the institute's director, Nikolai N. Ko-

lachevsky, and questioned him for six hours about a supposed plot to export military-use glass windows. He later denounced the raid as a "masked show," a phrase Russians use to describe increasingly over-the-top interventions by law enforcement agencies.

The operation set off another round of what in recent months has become a favorite, if depressing, parlor game for Russia's intelligentsia: trying to figure out why

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Cautionary Tale in Kentucky

Matt Bevin's difficulties in the governor's race served notice that unpopular candidates from a dominant party can struggle to survive.

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Moving Past the Broken Nose

One night. One moment. One punch, 15 years ago. His victim forgave him. Now, Wisconsin has, too.

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He's Improving. He's the M.V.P.

Eight games into his N.B.A. season, Giannis Antetokounmpo is averaging career bests in key categories.

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East Germans, bio-Germans, passport Germans: A divided history leaves many feeling like strangers.

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Conflicting Tales From Taliban

Dozens of detained fighters tell stories about switching sides and loyalties in a remote corner of Afghanistan.

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Diplomat Says U.S. Did Little To Stop Turkey

Memo Airs Objections Over Policy on Syria

By ERIC SCHMITT

WASHINGTON — The top American diplomat on the ground in northern Syria has criticized the Trump administration for not trying harder to prevent Turkey's military offensive there last month — and said Turkish-backed militia fighters committed "war crimes and ethnic cleansing."

In a searing internal memo, the diplomat, William V. Roebuck, raised the question of whether tougher American diplomacy, blunter threats of economic sanctions and increased military patrols could have deterred Turkey from attacking. Similar measures had dissuaded Turkish military action before.

"It's a tough call, and the answer is probably not," Mr. Roebuck wrote in the 3,200-word memo. "But we won't know because we didn't try." He did note several reasons the Turks might not have been deterred: the small American military presence at two border outposts, Turkey's decades-long standing as a NATO ally and its formidable army massing at the Syrian frontier.

In an unusually blunt critique, Mr. Roebuck said the political and military turmoil that upended the administration's policy in northern Syria — and left Syrian Kurdish allies abandoned and opened the door for a possible Islamic State resurgence — was a "sideshow" to the bloody, yearslong upheaval in Syria overall.

But, he said, "it is a catastrophic sideshow and it is to a significant degree of our making."

Mr. Roebuck, a respected 27-year diplomat and former United States ambassador to Bahrain, sent the unclassified memo on Oct. 31 to his boss, James F. Jeffrey, the State Department's special envoy on Syria policy, and to about four dozen State Department, White House and Pentagon officials who work on Syria issues. Mr. Roebuck is Mr. Jeffrey's deputy.

The New York Times obtained a copy of the memo from someone who said it was important to make Mr. Roebuck's assessment public. Mr. Jeffrey and Mr. Roebuck declined to comment on Thursday.

Morgan Ortagus, the State Department spokeswoman, also declined to comment on Mr. Roebuck's memo. "That said, we have made clear that we strongly disagree with President Erdogan's decision to enter Syria and that we did everything short of a military confrontation to prevent it," Ms. Ortagus said in a statement on Thursday.

"No one can deny that the situation in Syria is very complicated

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TARIFFS WILL EASE IF DEAL IS STRUCK, U.S. AND CHINA SAY

SIGN OF TRADE PROGRESS

Possible Relief for Buyers and Businesses, but a Risk for Trump

This article is by Ana Swanson, Keith Bradsher and Alan Rappeport.

WASHINGTON — The United States and China have agreed that an initial trade deal between the two countries would roll back a portion of the tariffs placed on each other's products, a significant step toward defusing tensions between the world's largest economies.

The agreement has not yet been completed, and a deal could fail to materialize as it has in previous rounds of negotiations. But if a pact is reached, the Trump administration has committed to cutting some tariffs, according to a United States official and other people with knowledge of the negotiations.

This is the first time the admin-



A port in Shanghai. Stocks soared after Thursday's news.

istration has agreed to remove any of the tariffs it has placed on \$360 billion worth of Chinese goods. While President Trump canceled a planned tariff increase in October, he has routinely dangled the prospect of additional taxes if Beijing does not accede to America's trade demands.

A deal that includes reversing even some tariffs creates a political dilemma for Mr. Trump, a self-avowed "tariff man" who has used levies to punish China for trade practices that have helped hollow out American manufacturing and to press Beijing to change its economic practices. But stock markets, which Mr. Trump sees as an economic barometer of his presidency, do not share his affinity for tariffs, and have been steadily rising with hope for a deal. Many businesses and farmers, which are struggling under the weight of the president's trade war, are also eager for a deal.

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Trump's Misuse of Charity Costs Him \$2 Million

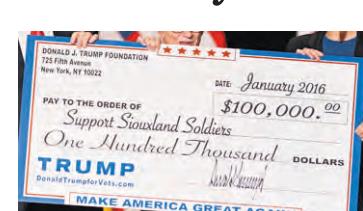
By ALAN FEUER

A state judge ordered President Trump to pay \$2 million in damages to nonprofit groups on Thursday after the president admitted misusing money raised by the Donald J. Trump Foundation to promote his presidential bid, pay off business debts and purchase a portrait of himself for one of his hotels.

The damage award brought an end to a protracted legal battle over the foundation, whose giving patterns and management became a flash point during Mr. Trump's run for office in 2016.

New York's attorney general had filed suit last year accusing Mr. Trump and his family of using the foundation as an extension of his businesses and his presidential campaign.

The settlement, which was fi-



LUKE SHARRETT/BLOOMBERG

The president admitted that a fund-raiser in Iowa in 2016 was actually a campaign event.

nalized last month and announced on Thursday in the judge's order, included a detailed admission of misconduct that is rare for the president, who has long employed a scorched-earth approach toward fighting lawsuits.

Among Mr. Trump's admissions in court papers: The charity gave his campaign complete control over disbursing the \$2.8 million

that the foundation had raised at a fund-raiser for veterans in Iowa in January 2016, only days before the state's presidential nominating caucuses. The fund-raiser, he acknowledged, was in fact a campaign event.

The president also admitted to using the foundation to settle the legal obligations of companies he owned, including Mar-a-Lago, his private club in Florida, and the Trump National Golf Club in Westchester County, N.Y.

And he acknowledged that the foundation purchased the \$10,000 portrait of Mr. Trump, which was ultimately displayed at one of his

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HOLLOW 'WARNING' An anonymous book shows not only Trump's lapses in judgment, but its author's too, our critic writes. PAGE A17

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A Police Blacklist in Brooklyn

The district attorney released the names of seven police officers whose credibility is so suspect that they cannot be used as witnesses in criminal trials.

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27 Charged in 911 Fraud Ring

Six current and former police employees are among those tied to an insurance scheme that sent car accident victims to clinics, doctors and lawyers in exchange for kickbacks.

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Dozens of detained fighters tell stories about switching sides and loyalties in a remote corner of Afghanistan.

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Boeing Partner Feels Heat

Collins Aerospace, which provided software blamed in the crashes of two 737 Max jets, is scrutinized.

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A move to change antitrust laws faces stiff resistance from conservatives defending the status quo.

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WEEKEND ARTS C1-24

A Visionary's Journey

A new show explores the art of Agnes Denes. Above, the public work "Wheatfield — A Confrontation."

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Wheatfield — A Confrontation

A new show explores the art of Agnes Denes. Above, the public work "Wheatfield — A Confrontation."

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ARTFORUM

OCTOBER 2019

INTERNATIONAL

LEIDY CHURCHMAN
DOUGLAS CRIMP
THE MODERN WOMAN
AGNES DENES



The New York Times

With ‘Shadow Stalker,’ Lynn Hershman Leeson Tackles Internet Surveillance

She pioneered interactive video and artificial intelligence in art. Now this new-media path-breaker scrutinizes technology’s abuses at the Shed.



Lynn Hershman Leeson, the artist, at left, and Javid Soriano making the film “Shadow Stalker” in Ms. Hershman Leeson’s apartment in San Francisco. The new commission for the Shed will be on view Nov. 13. Credit...Talia Herman for The New York Times

By Tess Thackara Nov. 8, 2019

This article is part of our continuing Fast Forward series, which examines technological, economic, social and cultural shifts that happen as businesses evolve.

SAN FRANCISCO — “I found my voice through technology,” the artist and filmmaker Lynn Hershman Leeson is saying, sitting in an old-world bar here, wearing a long jacket with quotes from French philosophers embroidered on it.

She has lived in the Bay Area since the 1960s, spending formative years in Berkeley and participating in the free speech movement. Through technology, she said, she “found amplification, microphones — and it was an era when women were silenced.”

Ms. Hershman Leeson planted a stake in cyberspace decades ago with what is considered to be the first interactive video art disc; an early AI bot; and a film (starring her longtime collaborator Tilda Swinton) that explores the legacy of Ada Lovelace, a 19th-century mathematician whose writings were foundational to computer science. At 78, Ms. Hershman Leeson is one of the more experienced citizens of the internet, but her work largely went under the radar for decades.

One of the pieces that set her free, “The Electronic Diaries, 1984-2019,” is an acclaimed video work created over 30 years in which she shares her personal experiences and reflections with a camera, appearing with evolving hairstyles and body language. The work, which she calls the archive of her life, is set to go on view in expanded, complete form for the first time at the Shed Nov. 13 through Jan. 12. (An earlier version of the “Diaries” is also on view in MoMA’s newly-rehung opening installation). It is part of a group exhibition called “Manual Override,” which Ms. Hershman Leeson anchors with three works — including her more recent forays into the field of genetic science — alongside a younger generation of new media artists, Martine Syms, Simon Fujiwara, Morehshin Allahyari and Sondra Perry.

Ms. Hershman Leeson is still making work vigorously in her studios in San Francisco and New York, and on a Sunday in August she was shooting the final component of a new commission, “Shadow Stalker,” that will also appear at the Shed. An interactive installation and film, the piece tackles the rise of data-driven surveillance on the internet. It is based on the algorithm that powers Predpol, the controversial predictive policing system that is deployed in law enforcement departments across the United States. The algorithm uses statistical data to predict where future crimes might occur, throwing up red squares overlaid on maps that direct officers to potential trouble areas. Racial biases and inaccuracies in the data can lead to problematic predictions and perpetuate flaws in the criminal justice system. (A proliferation of red squares inevitably tend to hover over low-income neighborhoods.)

“It’s such a perverse, pervasive, invisible system that people don’t understand,” said Ms. Hershman Leeson, cutting a commanding figure in all-black and tinted glasses. She was sitting across from the actor Tessa Thompson (of HBO’s “Westworld”), who narrates the film component, guiding viewers through some of the internet’s more pernicious manifestations.

"It's very easy to forget that we're being watched on the internet," Ms. Thompson said. "We're living in a time where there needs to be real literacy in terms of data and technology and our relationship to it."

Ms. Hershman Leeson hopes to give visitors to the Shed a chilling sense of their own vulnerability to this kind of data-mining. When they enter the installation they'll be asked to enter an email address, setting a simulation of the Predpol algorithm into motion, fetching biographical data — names of friends, loved ones, old addresses — that ultimately spits out a data shadow that appears behind them.

"The starkness and flatness" of the way the code profiles individuals is what Ms. Hershman Leeson wants people to feel, said Nora Khan, the exhibition's curator. "This very limited set of data is being used to determine who you are as a human being," she said, noting that, given the Shed's footprint within Hudson Yards, and the limits of its demographic reach, the technology "would be less effective if it were just about Predpol and low-income communities, as opposed to those who have done insider crimes, insider trading, white-collar crimes." A monitor in the installation will give predictive percentages for white-collar crime according to ZIP code.

Ms. Hershman Leeson, who is at once warm and enigmatic in person, has from her earliest days held a sharp critical light to technological and scientific developments, exploring the possibilities of their abuse by the powerful as much as for their more utopian promise — and always grappling with their relationship to our identities, often from a very personal point of view.

Her best-known work centers on a character named Roberta Breitmore, an alter ego she created in 1972. A shy, neurotic blonde, Roberta conformed to the era's archetypal feminine ideal. Ms. Hershman Leeson created charts that determined her makeup and hair, and took to various public places dressed as the character. She hired a photographer to snap paparazzi-style shots of her, developed her credit history, and had her attend therapy sessions. (The artist initially played Roberta herself, but later hired actors to share the role.) Like a digital avatar that roamed the real world, existing only by way of ephemera and documentation, Roberta foreshadowed our selfconscious, voyeuristic relationship to social media.



The artist is always grappling with technology's relationship to our identities, often from a very personal point of view. "Roberta's External Transformations, 1976," chromogenic print from the Roberta Series, created an alter ego.Credit...Lynn Hershman Leeson, Bridget Donahue and Anglim Gilbert Gallery



Announcement created for “Roberta Look Alike Contest”, 1978.Credit...Lynn Hershman Leeson, Bridget Donahue and Anglim Gilbert Gallery

Roberta was an extension of a habit the artist had developed as a child, of inventing characters to escape a difficult home life. But she also embodied an incisive critique, pointing to the ways that social conventions and state apparatuses encode and prescribe identities. “I needed to build her so that she would exist in history and be more relevant and credible than I was,” the artist said. “And she was! She got credit cards, and I couldn’t. She got a bank account, she got a driver’s license. Everybody thought I was crazy. Anyone I told thought I was schizophrenic, or bipolar.”

Peter Weibel, the curator who gave Ms. Hershman Leeson her first and only retrospective, at ZKM in Germany in 2014, believes the artist “was the first to show us identity as a cultural artifact.” In 1974, she rented a room in a boardinghouse for Roberta, where visitors could explore her clothes, wigs, and other external identifiers — a puzzle through which to piece together the hazy outline of a person.

Beginning in 1984, the artist turned the camera on the real Lynn Hershman Leeson, and began recording what would become the hourlong edit of her life, the “Electronic Diaries.”

“It was like this omnipotent presence, this Cycloptic eye that was watching and listening and not saying anything, but letting me say anything I wanted,” she remembers of her early relationship with the camera.

Indeed, her real-life therapist was later taken aback to discover the artist had given up certain revelations to the camera that she hadn’t brought to their sessions. And the events of her life, as she recounts in the “Diaries,” shot over the course of more than 30

years, were traumatic. She experienced extreme violence in her family as a child, suffered heart failure during pregnancy that left her in a hospital for four months and later battled a brain tumor.

The camera helped her “come to consciousness,” to evolve, to externalize herself and to survive. It also provided a venue to reflect on the watershed events in the world, like the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the meteoric pace of scientific and technological advancements. “We’ve become a society of screens, of different layers,” she says in an early installment of the “Diaries.” “The truth is almost unbearable.” “A cyborgian future, that’s what I see,” she reflects later on in the piece.

Ms. Hershman Leeson advanced the art world into our cyborgian present with works like “Lorna” (1983), an interactive video work in which viewers explore the contents of an avatar’s apartment and make choices for her. “It took 25 years to show her, because no one knew what it was,” the artist says. “At that point, it looked like an antique.” She began working with programmers on “Agent Ruby,” an AI bot now in SFMOMA’s collection, in 1995. “Agent Ruby doesn’t fail,” the artist said with a note of pride.

The human genome has been a thread through Ms. Hershman Leeson’s work since the ’90s, and in 2018 she had the “Diaries” translated into a strip of synthetic DNA. (“Think of it as expanded cinema,” she said, though part of the appeal was in the value of this medium as a storage method, first developed by the Harvard geneticist George Church — the DNA molecules, she says, can store the frames for a million years.)

The DNA strip will be on view in the exhibition, alongside two personalized antibodies she created in collaboration with Thomas Huber, a genetic scientist at the pharmaceutical company Novartis. The antibodies are based on variations on the letters of her name (LYNNHERSHMAN), and that of her 1970s alter ego Roberta (ERTA).

The artist comes from a family of scientists, and her daughter and only child, Dawn Hershman, leads breast cancer research at Columbia University. Ms. Hershman Leeson has long worked with people of different disciplines, and science is fruitful territory for her artistic imagination. “Antibodies look for toxins and attempt to use the immune system to cure those toxins,” she said. “In a sense, that’s what art does. It goes into the cultural body and looks for things that are poisonous and toxic and does things to either bring light to them or to heal them in some way.”

She is tentatively optimistic about our technological future, and she has other works in process that bring to light more positive recent developments in the worlds of art and science.

One project is inspired by the dozens of underground biohacker labs that she has seen firsthand in and around Berkeley.

“These are people under 20, most of them don’t have degrees. And they’re working with organics to do things like solve the water problem in Michigan,” Ms. Hershman Leeson said. “I really have faith in young people, because they’re digital natives who were born into this era. I feel that young people have this passion to save the planet, and to save humanity.”

###

Theater

Fight or Flight? Here You Get Both

A kung fu musical takes the stage, as well as much of the space above it.

Photographs by Devin Yalkin for The New York Times



Abdiel Jacobsen performing in the musical "Dragon Spring Phoenix Rise" at the McCourt Theater at the Shed in Manhattan.

By REGGIE UGWU

Half a dozen warriors gathered at the base of a striated plateau, cracking jokes and letting off steam before the moment of truth. "You ready?" said Abdiel Jacobsen, tall and muscular, turning to Xavier Townsend, whose slight frame bloomed into a mop of dreadlocks.

"I'm ready," Xavier said.

He raised both fists high and stepped toward the spotlight, where he was surrounded by technicians in black shirts and headsets. One was holding a rope that shot up to the ceiling, or more than 10 stories.

The plateau wasn't God's handiwork, but

that of the Shed — the \$500 million arts complex at Hudson Yards on the Far West Side of Manhattan. It was part of the custom-built, multilevel stage for a new multimillion-dollar "kung fu musical" called "Dragon Spring Phoenix Rise," which began previews this weekend.

The show, the unlikely fruit of an even less likely collaboration — involving Chen Shi-Zheng, the Chinese-American opera impresario; the "Kung Fu Panda" screenwriters Jonathan Albel and Glenn Berger; the musician Sia; and the choreographer Akram Khan — took three years to make and crisscrossed as many continents.

And cast members, consisting almost en-

tirely of contemporary dancers who were given a crash curriculum (martial arts training, aerial choreography and singing lessons) to transform them into futuristic warriors, faced an even steeper challenge.

"Remember: If you want to come down, just say 'Down,'" an aerial coordinator said to Xavier. It was June 12, a little more than a week before audiences would be watching, and for the first time the dancer-turned-warrior was strapped into a nylon harness that would raise him 80 feet into the air.

"You better pray!" Abdiel howled from the base of the stage, drawing laughs from the crowd that had gathered there. "X is about to go to the mother planet!"

43 DAYS BEFORE PREVIEWS

The Ghost of Bruce Lee

A month before Abdiel and Xavier arrived, Alex Poots, the chief executive and artistic director of the Shed, was sitting in the same spot, clicking at his laptop. Another custom stage, this one built for Björk, occupied the space where the plateau is now, at the center of this highly flexible 1,200-seat theater, the McCourt. Before joining the Shed, Mr. Poots, one of the contemporary art world's most exuberant and prolific matchmakers, served as the artistic director of the Park Avenue Armory and the founder of the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Theater

Fight or Flight? Here You Get Both

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Manchester International Festival in England. In those roles, he commissioned an opera that paired the artist Marina Abramovic with Willem Dafoe, and a ballet, adapted from a Jonathan Safran Foer book, that featured a score by the electronic music producer Jamie xx and choreography by Wayne McGregor.

"Dragon Spring Phoenix Rise" is his most ambitious undertaking yet. It was developed as a kind of proof of concept for the new building, engineered to dazzle audiences with name-brand artists, staggering physical scale and blockbuster pyrotechnics not found anywhere else in a city well steeped in audacious spectacle.

But achieving liftoff won't be easy. The last such high-profile, high-flying attempt was the Broadway musical "Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark," a notoriously unwieldy enterprise that left a cautionary legacy of comic one-liners, broken hearts and sunk capital when it closed in 2014.

Getting to the rehearsal stage for "Dragon Spring," which The New York Times observed on six occasions over four weeks, took years of meticulous planning, and a high tolerance for risk.

On his laptop in the McCourt, Mr. Poots found the video that started it all, and pressed play. It was a black-and-white clip of a young Bruce Lee in 1964, wearing a trim black suit and tie to audition for the television series "The Green Hornet." In the audition, Lee demonstrates an array of kung fu moves with astonishing velocity and force, introducing each with the workaday nonchalance of a flight attendant giving safety instructions.

He came to New York in 1987 to pursue an M.E.A. in experimental drama at New York University. In 1999, he earned international acclaim for his three-day, 20-hour production of "The Peony Pavilion" at the Lincoln Center Festival, and went on to direct other idiosyncratic work, including "Monkey" (which had mixed reviews but toured the world) and a Chinese adaptation of "High School Musical."

Though wrapped in pop packaging, the core themes of "Dragon Spring Phoenix Rise" — geographical and spiritual dislocation, hybridized identity and the weight of heritage — are deeply personal.

"I wanted to create a modern myth about immigrants in America and how they survive," Mr. Chen said. "When I came to this country in the late '80s, it was cool to be different. But lately I've been feeling so much hostility, and that kind of subconsciously went into the plot."

He spent more than a year on casting, searching for performers who could match the show's multidisciplinary ambitions. But the musical theater actors he saw didn't make believable fighters, and the martial artists couldn't pull off the requisite acting and dancing.

He decided to narrow his focus to the dance world — largely hip-hop, modern, and classical — figuring he would get an actor's stage presence and a martial artist's core strength and agility in the bargain.

Right and below, rehearsals for "Dragon Spring Phoenix Rise," which began previews this weekend.



The video had arrived in Mr. Poots's inbox in 2015, with a note from Mr. Chen expressing his desire to bring Lee's physical dynamism to the stage.

"It was an entry point into something that was artistic, that had real rigor, but was at a juncture of art, sport and spirituality, which I thought was such a potent proposition," said Mr. Poots, who had previously worked with Mr. Chen on the acrobatic opera "Monkey: Journey to the West," a collaboration with the band Gorillaz.

Mr. Poots, who had been dreaming up ideas for what was then to be called the Culture Shed, asked Mr. Chen how he could help develop the show. The director said that his wife had been a big admirer of the "Kung Fu Panda" movies. Mr. Poots opened his Rolodex.

30 DAYS BEFORE PREVIEWS

Actors Into Martial Artists

The ensemble members, each carrying a seven-foot bamboo staff to practice the show's climactic fight scene, stood single file in a rehearsal space on 42nd Street. Cued by the score, a thunderous refrain composed by Bobby Krlic, who records as the Haxan Cloak, they snaked across the floor in a skewed figure eight before coming to rest in a semicircle that spanned the room.

The musical, which takes place in Chinatown in Flushing, Queens, in the near future, tells the story of an exiled sect of warriors who guard an underground spring infused with the power of eternal life. The fugitive daughter of the sect's grand master, who eloped with a mysterious outsider, gives birth to twins who are separated at birth, only to reunite 18 years later to save the sect, and the world, from an enemy.

Mr. Chen, 58, with boyish black hair and a gentle manner, looked on during the rehearsal from chair on the sidelines, his chin buried deep in his palm.

The ensemble pounded the floor in unison with their staves, creating a resounding pulse. The grand master, played by David Patrick Kelly ("Twin Peaks" on TV, "Once" on Broadway), entered the center of the semicircle with PeiJu Chien-Pott, a principal in the Martha Graham Dance Company who portrays his daughter, and two of the show's villains. Then the fighting began — a brutal ballet complete with swords and a bullwhip.

After a few run-throughs of the scene, Mr. Chen halted the action and approached Ms. Chien-Pott. Her kicks hadn't been landing as they should.

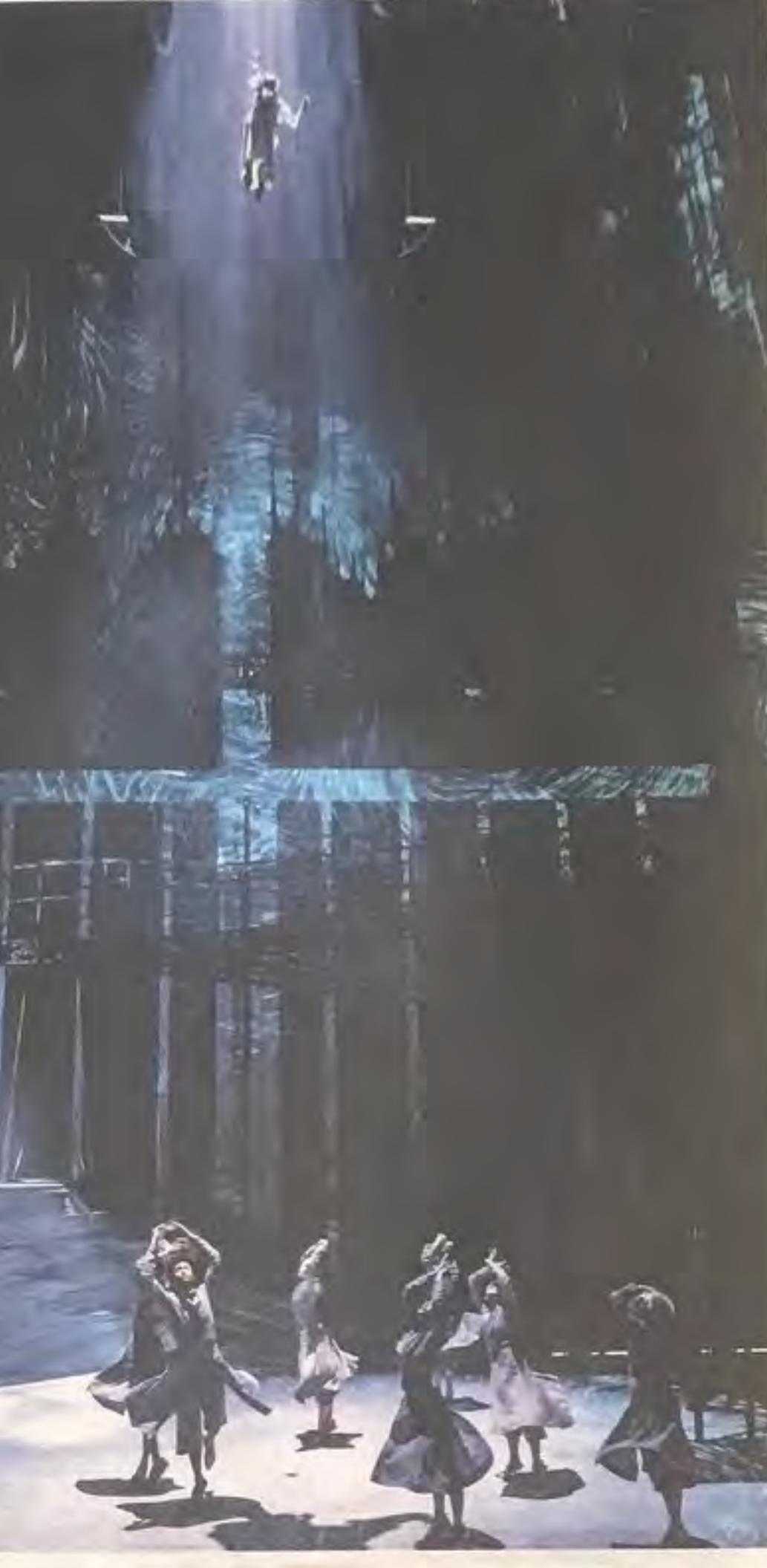
"It doesn't read," he said, showing the actress how to properly position herself. "You're hitting his shoulder, but you want to hit his face."

Mr. Chen was born in Changsha, China, and trained as a youth in baguazhang, an early form of kung fu that intoxicated him. "I've always found martial arts to be one of the most beautiful kinds of movements — the precision and the energy and the line of the body," he said. "I'm always shocked that it's not used more on the stage."



But mastering the fight choreography, even for a cast with extraordinary physical discipline, took longer than expected. That meant less time to practice other aspects of their performances. And more to worry about.

"We were trying to find people who could do the martial arts and the acting and the



singing, but we failed, in a way," Mr. Chen acknowledged. "I'm hoping the physicality and the energy will carry us through."

10 DAYS BEFORE PREVIEWS

Taking Flight

On the plateau in the Shed's McCourt Theater, just over a week before "Dragon Spring" was scheduled to open, a technician gave Xavier final instructions.

"X marks the spot — stand right...here."

It was the first, and only, week of full rehearsals for the show's three aerial sequences, which, for logistical reasons, hadn't been possible outside of the Shed. For Xavier and the rest of the ensemble, learning to fly in the harnesses was the last — and riskiest — piece of the puzzle.

Directly above him was a ring-shaped platform suspended 80 feet in the air, from which he and six other performers were to dive in a dramatic rescue scene. Below him were live fire pits capable of shooting flames, and water spouts that could flood and drain the plateau on demand.

Mr. Poots estimated that the stage had cost around \$650,000 to construct, money

that, along with the rest of a budget that he said was in the low millions, had been offset by fund-raising, and which he hoped to recoup with ticket sales and rentals to other theaters and presenting organizations. (Unlike "Spider-Man," the show is being presented by a nonprofit.)

"We thought very carefully about designing the show so that it could have a life after the Shed," he said, adding that producers from London, Paris, Beijing and Berlin were among those expected to attend its four-week run.

On the plateau, the technician, who wore a controller around his neck the size of a 12-pack, flipped a switch and hoisted Xavier aloft: 15 feet, 30 feet, 50 feet.

"Waaat!" Xavier shouted, weightless and grinning with delight, as the rope pulled him high above the stage, above his castmates, above everything.

Whether the show would ultimately live up to its lofty ambitions remained to be seen. But, for this moment at least, none of that mattered — he could fly.

"Yeah, Xavier!" shouted the coordinator from below, craning her neck and smiling. "You look beautiful!"

Above, actors suspended during rehearsals. Above that, the character Little Lotus, portrayed by PeiJu Chien-Pott.

"Yeah, Xavier!" shouted the coordinator from below, craning her neck and smiling. "You look beautiful!"



APRIL 3 – 9, 2019

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



When the new arts space the Shed opens, on April 5, it'll be heralded by "**Soundtrack of America**." The five-day concert series highlights a broad spectrum of black music, calling on such acts as the soulful folk band Victory, the punk musician Tamar-kali, the vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Braxton Cook, the R. & B. and jazz-fusion outfit Phony Ppl, and the Afrofuturist duo Oshun (all pictured above). Lovingly curated with an eye toward innovation, this progressive bill is filled with artists as galvanizing as they are virtuosic.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW TAMMARO

The New York Times

The Shed Opens: What Our Critics Think

By Joshua Barone, Jon Pareles, Zachary Wolfe and Jason Farago

The New York Times

April 7, 2019

Soundtrack of America, “Reich Richter Pärt” and work by Trisha Donnelly were on offer during the arts center’s inaugural weekend.



The Howard University “Showtime” Marching Band parading through the audience on Friday during the opening night of Soundtrack of America, the first public performance at the Shed. Nina Westervelt for The New York Times

When people use the word “fanfare” to describe celebrations, they usually mean it metaphorically. But there were literal brass instruments, bells up and held high, at the official opening of the Shed on Friday night.

The first public performance — inside the cavernous McCourt space at the new arts center, one of the most ambitious and high-profile additions to New York City’s cultural landscape in years — began with a marching band exuberantly parading through the audience.

It was the start of Soundtrack of America, a five-concert series paying homage to the history of African-American music, conceived by the filmmaker and artist Steve McQueen. He and Quincy Jones watched from the sidelines as the instrumentalists made their joyous entrance.

Nearby was Alex Poots, the Shed's artistic director and chief executive, pacing on the periphery. He was witnessing not only the inauguration of an institution more than a decade (and \$475 million) in the making, but also of the programming he has been developing since he joined in 2014.

[Read more about the Shed's development.]

For the Shed's first weekend, he had commissioned "Soundtrack for America," as well as the interdisciplinary "Reich Richter Pärt," new work by the artist Trisha Donnelly and the play "Norma Jeane Baker of Troy," starring Ben Whishaw and Renée Fleming.

On Wednesday evening, the Shed had opened its doors to mostly donors and industry insiders for a preview party. Mr. Poots and Elizabeth Diller — the architect whose firm, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, designed the building in collaboration with the Rockwell Group — were tapped on the shoulders by a near-constant stream of luminaries offering congratulations. It was a long day for Ms. Diller, who arrived at the building around 8 a.m. and stayed at the party until 10:30 p.m. (To unwind, she said, she and her husband, Ricardo Scofidio, went out for ramen. She was back at her office by 9 a.m.)

There was a preview of "Reich Richter Pärt"; afterward, Steve Reich said in an interview that he was happy to finally hear his score with a large crowd, and not in the acoustics of an empty room. He was there again for the piece's first public performances on Saturday.

[Our guide to navigating the Shed and Hudson Yards.]

By the weekend, the building was operational, though not fully finished. One crucial escalator wasn't completely installed; another was in and out of service. A bartender for Cedric's, the Shed's not-yet-open restaurant by Danny Meyer's Union Square Hospitality Group, apologetically handed out free bottles of water and said that it would probably be up and running by late April.



Part of the Trisha Donnelly exhibition was treated as an observation gallery. Nina Westervelt for The New York Times

But that didn't stop thousands of visitors from passing through. "Reich Richter Pärt" drew a solemnly attentive audience. "Norma Jeane Baker of Troy" had a full house for its premiere. (A review of that is coming this week.) Part of Trisha Donnelly's show was treated as an observation gallery; one man asked a Shed employee where the exhibition was, not knowing he was standing in the middle of it.

What did our critics think of the opening weekend? Here are their reviews. JOSHUA BARONE



Jon Batiste, center, during the Soundtrack of America concert. Nina Westervelt for The New York Times

CRITIC'S PICK

Soundtrack of America

Through April 14 in the McCourt.

Thundering syncopation and a parade through the audience opened the first part of Soundtrack of America, a five-concert survey of African-American music. The McCourt was configured as a club, with a plywood stage, a dance floor, a D.J. and a seated aerie.

Jon Batiste was leading the Howard University “Showtime” Marching Band, the Brooklyn United drumline and his own 369th Experience brass band. Their set commemorated James Reese Europe, a pioneer in bringing African-American music to concert halls — including Carnegie Hall in 1912 — and recordings. During World War I, he served in the segregated 369th Infantry Regiment, known as the Harlem Hellfighters, and directed its regimental band, which introduced ragtime across Europe. Mr. Batiste’s 369th Experience musicians wore military khakis.

The roar of massed drums turned into W.C. Handy’s “Memphis Blues,” a Hellfighters favorite. Mr. Batiste paired ragtime tunes with his own “Golden Crown,” rooted in the Mardi Gras Indian music of his hometown, New Orleans. He declared, “We summoning the ancestors tonight!”

That’s the mission of Soundtrack of America, conceived by Steve McQueen as a joyful history lesson and advised by Quincy Jones and others. Dedicated to continuity and cultural memory, each concert features five musicians performing songs that inspired them, alongside their own music.

Friday’s lineup included performers and songwriters (PJ Morton, Victory, Rapsody and Sheléa) backed by the keyboardist Greg Phillinganes leading a supremely adaptable band. They chose more recent, more familiar musical ancestors — less history, more hits — and were willing to risk having their songs compared with the pantheon.

Mr. Morton, a keyboardist in Maroon 5, invoked both the two-fisted New Orleans piano tradition and Stevie Wonder, putting gospel flourishes into the Fats Domino hit “Blueberry Hill” and barreling through Mr. Wonder’s “Higher Ground” on the way to his own ballad, “First Began,” full of Wonder-like chord changes and vocal turns.



Victory looked back at the music of Nina Simone for her Soundtrack of America set. Nina Westervelt for The New York Times

With her burnished, supple alto, Victory started “Feeling Good,” a Nina Simone showpiece, as a bluesy reflection, then shifted it toward the Caribbean lilt of her own songs calling for self-acceptance. Rapsody, a rapper from North Carolina, emphasized women’s power and self-determination. She declaimed her rhymes with decisive, leaping inflections, linking her material to Nina Simone, Queen Latifah, Lauryn Hill, Roberta Flack and (joined by Victory singing “Strange Fruit”) Billie Holiday.

Sheléa juxtaposed her elegantly retro jazz ballad “Love Fell on Me” with crowd-pleasing homages to Sarah Vaughan, Whitney Houston and Aretha Franklin. Mr. Phillinganes and the band added their renditions of songs by Ray Charles, James Brown and Thelonious Monk.

On the way out, concertgoers received a poster-size family tree tracing 400 years of interconnected African-American music. For all the major figures that its opening night touched on, Soundtrack of America has plenty of pantheon left. JON PARELES



Audience members watch a wall-size video by Gerhard Richter in “Reich Richter Pärt.”

‘Reich Richter Pärt’

Through June 2 in the Level 2 Gallery.

A few minutes after the audience has entered the first of two gallery spaces that make up “Reich Richter Pärt,” chanting begins. It turns out the singers, dressed in street clothes, have been embedded among us — a tired trick of contemporary performance.

Members of the Choir of Trinity Wall Street sing, and repeat three times, “Drei Hirtenkinder aus Fátima,” a spirited piece in Arvo Pärt’s neo-Medieval style. When this collaboration between Pärt and the artist Gerhard Richter was new, in England in 2015, “Drei Hirtenkinder” was heard among Richter’s somber “Double Gray” diptychs and “Birkenau,” a series of abstractions concealing photographs of concentration-camp prisoners.

Perhaps a little heavy for the Shed’s opening festivities?

Now, amid the cheerful commerce of Hudson Yards, the only history being reflected upon is that of the artists’ collaboration itself. “The History of ‘Reich Richter Pärt,’” the program screams in inch-high capital letters, endowing with epochal import a 50-minute interplay among three octogenarian cultural celebrities.

No more concentration camps. The art, lit with reverential spots, is tall columns of wallpaper and a few rectangles of tapestry. The space is perhaps meant to evoke a cathedral: A text claims these Richters “emulate stained glass.”



Members of the Choir of Trinity Wall Street sang around visitors to the gallery of “Reich Richter Pärt.” Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

The adjacent room is wrapped in more wallpaper: panoramic pieces printed with the final stage of Richter’s “Patterns,” a 2012 book project that halved and mirrored an earlier abstract painting, over and over, into ever-thinner strips that eventually resolve into long, horizontal bands of color.

A film, by Mr. Richter and Corinna Belz, depicts the “Patterns” process, then its reversal, to the live accompaniment of a new score by Steve Reich, played on Saturday by Ensemble Signal, that also undergoes a symmetrical process-based transformation. (The International Contemporary Ensemble will fill in for some performances in the eight-week, four-times-daily run; the Brooklyn Youth Chorus similarly shares the workload for the Pärt.) A two-note motif builds to complex, rhythmically agile brightness, then gradually recedes back into blur as we watch Richter’s bands seem to rush by at light speed, fervently oscillating, at the finale.

The music has tender energy, and an undercurrent of melancholy. Its droning tones sometimes seem to be pulling apart — like taffy, or like Richter’s stretching spaghetti stripes of color. The film, by contrast, feels merely self-fascinated. But two masters have been brought together, furthering the reputation of each; in the collaboration-consumed, eminence-obsessed ethos of high-end art-making these days, that’s all that matters. ZACHARY WOOLFE



An installation view of Ms. Donnelly's exhibition. Nina Westervelt for The New York Times

Trisha Donnelly

Through May 30 in the Level 4 Gallery.

In choosing the American artist Trisha Donnelly for the Shed's first solo exhibition, the curators here opted for a tactician and a troublemaker — one whose terse, enigmatic maneuvers stand far from the sparkle and retail of Hudson Yards.

Ms. Donnelly's page in the Shed's brochure for its first season is blank. Her show, alone among the inaugural offerings, is not signposted beside the half-finished escalators. And she has bridled against the building's architecture, forcing spectators through the side entrance of the new gallery into a half-lit space that some will confuse for the back of house.

You wanted an artist who'd push the boundaries of the new institution? Be careful what you ask for.

Inscrutability, provisionality, self-effacement: These are the contrivances of Ms. Donnelly, whose untitled exhibition is the only project here that puts the Shed itself in question. In the dim gallery you will see segments of two massive tree trunks, a redwood and a pine, lying like cadavers on simple dollies. Water puddles beneath them (these trees, though blasted, are still alive), and their amputated branches have been dressed with white plastic foam bundles that appear like tourniquets. Dozens of smaller branches, many also bandaged, balance in a corner. A sound system positioned on a dolly as its own sculpture roars a single aria on loop: the Habanera from "Carmen," sung by Leontyne Price and rattling the speakers.

The blaring Bizet, extolling love as "the child of the bohemian," and the bandaged trees, recalling mutilated soldiers, suggest joys and pains that have no place in Hudson Yards. Yet how these elements

inform one another, as easy opposites of nature and culture or of life and death, is less important than whether they together can conjure an atmosphere of whispers, diversions, mistakes, vanishings.



Ms. Donnelly's exhibition includes a narrow gap in the wall between the gallery and panoramic views of Hudson Yards. Nina Westervelt for The New York Times

When the art world was smaller, Ms. Donnelly's evanescent, undocumented interventions — most famously, a 2002 performance in which she rode into a gallery on horseback, proclaimed a military surrender, then galloped back out — had the thrill of a runaway rumor. Today, when every exhibition is Instagrammed and hashtagged, that effect has become almost impossible to realize, which Ms. Donnelly has surely acknowledged by leaving a narrow gap in the wall built to block the windows. At the hour I visited, the light passing through it cast a faint camera-obscura gleam of the soon-to-open Equinox Hotel.

This artist's resistance to marketing, and her scrupulous refusal to kludge up her art with paratext, come as salutary aberrations amid all the Hudson Yards hype. But Ms. Donnelly seems to have already accepted that the cultural world we have built over the train tracks may not have space for art like hers. JASON FARAGO

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/07/arts/the-shed-soundtrack-of-america-reich-richter-part-trisha-donnelly.html>

Bloomberg

The Shed's First Play Is Not for Most People. And That's Fine

By James Tarmy

Bloomberg

April 10, 2019

On Saturday night, Hudson Yards' new arts center opened with Norma Jeane Baker of Troy, a partially sung avant-garde play by the poet Anne Carson and starring Renée Fleming and Ben Whishaw.

After a week of opening parties for the Shed, its first original play, Norma Jeane Baker of Troy, premiered on Saturday night.

As a line snaked around the hall of the \$475 million building's sixth floor, Alex Poots, the organization's artistic director could be overheard telling a companion that this was the first time they'd ever tried to get 500 people into the black-box Griffin Theater.

"We're obviously still working things out," he said, gesturing to the line of people shuffling uncertainly as they tried to find their seats.

The show itself, in contrast, was a confident statement about the Shed's artistic priorities.

Written by Anne Carson, who's possibly the only classicist writer in the world who could convincingly be described as famous, Norma Jeane Baker of Troy stars the actor Ben Whishaw and the soprano Renée Fleming. Partly spoken, partly sung, and augmented by piped-in recordings of the actors' voices, the play/poem is a riff on Euripides' 5th century B.C. play Helen, in which Helen of Troy never actually makes it to Troy, landing in Egypt instead. It's a play that considers the events of The Iliad from Helen's perspective—this is a woman who was plucked from her home, separated from her daughter, and brought to a foreign land against her will.

Carson uses Euripides' plot as a springboard, tying Helen's fate to that of another doomed beauty, Marilyn Monroe, whose birth name was Norma Jeane. ("Rape/ is the story of Helen,/ Persephone,/ Norma Jeane,/ Troy./ War is the context/ and God is a boy.")



Ben Whishaw and the soprano Renée Fleming in the new play *Norma Jeane Baker of Troy*.

Photographer: Stephanie Berger, courtesy of The Shed

Set on New Year's Eve, the play is directed by the veteran Katie Mitchell with a set by Alex Eales that's meant to evoke a 1960s, Mad Men-style typing pool, a choice that's as satisfying visually as it is confusing thematically.

Whishaw dominates the majority of the dialogue during the play's first half. (There's no intermission.) Eventually, Fleming begins to weigh in, mostly in song, the music for which was scored by Paul Clark. As the evening wears on, Whishaw slowly slips out of his suit and into a facsimile of Marilyn Monroe's famous white dress.

This is a play that could conservatively be called experimental. Judging from the audience's tepid reaction on its first night of previews, it was a type of experimentation that was definitely not for everyone.



The work is a roughly 90-minute play/poem/song combination.

Photographer: Stephanie Berger, courtesy of The Shed

It's a show that uses a classical paradigm to address issues of misogyny that are both age-old and depressingly current. "It's a disaster to be a girl," sings Fleming. The fact that Whishaw, a man, is often the messenger of the burdens of womanhood is, Carson says in the show's press notes, a natural choice. "I don't think of Ben Whishaw as primarily a male actor," she says. "He is iridescent. The needle jumps." And indeed, there are a few moments of clarity where Whishaw manages to deliver the message forcefully. In other instances, though, his transition from a suit to a dress feels more arbitrary.

Given that the Shed has decided to carve out a niche in New York's cultural firmament by commissioning new works in a variety of mediums, the relative complexity of Norma Jeane Baker of Troy should, to some degree at least, be expected. With its first play, the Shed has already achieved what it set out to do: It's created something utterly new and backed it up with enough star power to draw an audience.

More on the Way

There's more on the way. Bjork will premiere a "staged concert" with a chorus and cast of musicians in the building's colossal McCourt Theater (May 6-June 1, though the Shed's website says it's already sold out), and a new "futuristic kung fu musical" called Dragon Spring Phoenix Rise, set to songs by the pop star Sia, will debut on June 22 and run through July 27.



The play runs through May 19 at the Shed in New York.
Photographer: Stephanie Berger, courtesy of The Shed

On the more esoteric side, there's currently a musical/artistic collaboration by the composers Arvo Pärt and Steve Reich with the artist Gerhard Richter that runs through June 2, while a documentary about the Colombian artist Beatriz Gonzalez's installation of 8,597 tombstones in a cemetery in Bogota premieres on June 19.

The Shed isn't the only arts organization in New York that's paying for new things, of course. The Metropolitan Opera spends millions every year on new productions; American Ballet Theater has an in-house choreographer who stages new pieces. Performa, a performance-art biennial, always commissions new work, and, depending on how you look at it, the entirety of the Broadway Theater District (revivals aside) is based on a commission structure.

But the Shed is an experiment in new art commissions that's larger in scope, scale, and, arguably, ambition than any of its cultural peers. By definition, it's engaged in a process of patronage that's going to be huge and swing widely. Even if its experiments occasionally miss the mark, they're worthy of attention.

As New York continues to debate the merits of Hudson Yards, with these new commissions the Shed is making a forceful case for its own legitimacy. A play like Norma Jeane Baker of Troy will never be Hamilton, but it's not intended to be. New York, after all, already has Hamilton; Norma Jeane Baker is something entirely new.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-04-10/norma-jeane-baker-of-troy-review-the-shed-nyc-s-first-play>

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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LIFE & ARTS | THE SHED OPENS

ART & MUSIC REVIEW

A Most Colorful Collaboration



Images from 'Reich Richter Pärt' at the Shed, which features two immersive live performances

STEPHANIE BERGER/THE SHED (3)

BY STUART ISACOFF

New York

THE NEW performing arts colossus, the Shed, opened at Hudson Yards last week, hoping to dazzle a city that has pretty much seen it all. Despite the hurdles, one of the venue's initial offerings, "Reich Richter Pärt," held out the promise of bringing something new, powerful and groundbreaking to town, with collaborations between celebrated German painter Gerhard Richter and two of our greatest living composers, the Estonian Arvo Pärt and American Steve Reich.

One could envision the impetus behind the couplings: Mr. Richter's most famous works reveal a technical organizing principle, such as applying varying brush strokes and textures to gray monochromes, or endowing colored rectangles with a seemingly limitless range of hues. Both composers have similarly been associated with a "process" approach to composition, using repetition and slow transformation to expose the scaffolding of their music.

In the first room of the presentation, which is to be repeated several times a day, Tuesday through Sunday, 10 original wallpaper designs by Mr. Richter hang on facing walls—their dramatic, colorful visages vaguely suggesting angry Tibetan deities—along with four large jacquard tapestries meant to emulate stained glass. Mr. Pärt's contribution, a choral piece entitled "Drei Hirtenkinder aus Fátima" ("Three Little Shepherds of Fatima"), with its repeated "Alleluias," is far removed from his famous earlier "trance" pieces like "Spiegel im Spiegel" (1978), a work whose hypnotic allure helped make him one of the most performed composers of our time.

This music is not haunting or



wistful, but lilting, cheery and extremely short: a mere 95 seconds. Given that brevity, the singers, members of the Choir of Trinity Wall Street, wandered about the room in street clothes while performing, before stopping, pausing and then singing the work again—a total of four times. If the hope was somehow to dissolve the separation between performers and attendees, it didn't succeed; the movement seemed merely an outdated gimmick. Messrs. Richter and Pärt admire each other, but this pairing revealed little artistry to link them.

Surprisingly, "Drei Hirtenkinder aus Fátima" had been used in a previous collaboration with Mr. Richter in 2015 at the Manchester International Festival, where Alex Poots, now artistic director of the Shed, was also in charge; the visuals then included darker-themed abstract paintings based on photographs taken at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

Following the Pärt presentation, the crowd moved to an adjacent room, where musicians (the new music group, Ensemble Signal) gathered at the back of the space to perform the intricate Reich work commissioned by the Shed to accompany a 37-minute animation created by Mr. Richter and filmmaker Corinna Belz, which was projected onto the front wall. Here the collaboration made more sense.

The film's concept was based on Mr. Richter's 2012 book, "Patterns," in which the scan of an abstract painting is cut in half, then halved again—with the quarters formed into mirror images—and so on, producing a series of ever shrinking, mirrored divisions. As Mr. Reich describes it, the original painting becomes "a series of gradually smaller anthropomorphic 'creatures'" before reducing further to become mere stripes of color. For the film, Mr. Richter's painting "Abstraktes Bild" (1990)

undergoes a similar process, but this time it begins with stripes—created with just two pixels—and gradually builds, through increasing resolutions, toward the original image, before reversing the process—ending with rainbow-like stripes once again. The music loosely follows that arc form, beginning with a two-note oscillation that gradually grows to patterns of four notes, then eight, and so on.

As Mr. Richter's art vibrates and shifts, opening from the middle of the image and moving outward, the music pulsates, vibraphone and flute figures darting about above sustained woodwinds. With each change on screen, the music responds: As the colors differentiate into intricate shapes, thunderous piano basses and descending clarinet melodies emerge.

Mr. Richter's hues can become dramatically supersaturated—bold reds, oranges, blues and greens—and at other times pull back to resemble a pale Impressionist garden, reminiscent of Monet's waterlilies. Colorful threads undulate, punctuated by emerging figures. As the visual changes ramp

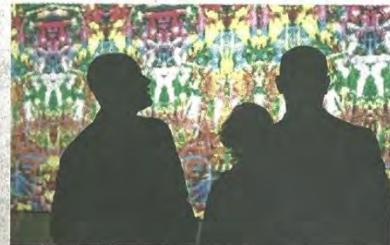
up, Mr. Reich's music becomes more raucous and syncopated. This is not quite like anything he has done before.

At times, the music seems like something out of Stravinsky's neoclassical period, like his Symphony in Three Movements. When the image almost congeals back into the original painting, the music offers vaporous hints of an ethereal tango, along with suspended clouds of dissonance.

Then Mr. Richter's process reverses, and for a while time is suspended as the music moves into slow motion. But the work is a bit long: At about the halfway mark, both the film and music seem momentarily depleted of energy, though things pick up again as zig-zag patterns fill the screen. At the end, Mr. Reich's oscillating figure returns, and the horizontal bands begin to consolidate and vibrate, before racing across the screen like a bullet train of color. The effect is exhilarating. Then all becomes black.

Reich Richter Pärt
The Shed, through June 2

Mr. Isacoff's latest book is "When the World Stopped to Listen: Van Cliburn's Cold War Triumph and Its Aftermath" (Knopf).



LIFE & ARTS | THE SHED OPENS



LAWRENCE STAGG/ON THE SHED CO.

Victory, right, Jon Batiste and the 369th Experience, below, and Rapsody, bottom, at the Shed's opening night of 'Soundtrack of America'

tions as a kind of collage, where connections between the artists and songs become more clear over time.

On opening night, singer-songwriter Victory, who began her career busking in Central Park, exhibited a clarion vocal tone, and she had the strength of presence to cover Nina Simone's version of the show tune "Feeling Good." Later, singer Sheléa offered a read of "Misty," and she introduced the song by mentioning the arrangement written decades ago for jazz singer Sarah Vaughan by Quincy Jones. (Mr. Jones, for his part, helped assemble the festival and offered onstage remarks on opening night.) The North Carolina rapper Rapsody incorporated music from Lauryn Hill and was joined by Victory for a snippet of Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit."

If the first night seemed especially steeped in the past, "Soundtrack of America" hit its stride with more experimental offerings on Sunday evening. Saxophonist Braxton Cook paid tribute to John Coltrane with an impressionist piece accompanied by guitar and samples. The cellist and vocalist Kelsey Lu, striking in a flowing pink dress, was joined by an ensemble of 10 cellos for an incantatory set that included a performance of a piece by the avant-garde composer Julius Eastman. The equally riveting Tank and the Bangas, a difficult-to-classify outfit from New Orleans, performed original songs that mixed spoken word, jazz, funk and hip-hop.

Tuesday's night three began with a performance by Dom Flemons, a multi-instrumentalist and musical scholar who plays songs that stretch back into the 19th century. But the evening's highlight came from another storyteller, word-dense Los Angeles rapper Ill Camille, who brought the jazzy flow of Golden Age hip-hop into the present moment. Such jumps in time, setting music from the 1890s against a current style indebted to the 1990s, are what this show is all about, and when it all lines up just so, the results can be thrilling. Future sets from hip-hop/soul duo OHUN (Friday) and Moses Sumney (Saturday) carry this potential.

Soundtrack of America
The Shed, through April 14

Mr. Richardson is the Journal's rock and pop music critic. Follow him on Twitter @MarkRichardson.



New York
You have to credit the organizers behind "Soundtrack of America," the five-night concert series that serves as the opening pop music event in the McCourt performance space at the Shed, the long-in-the-making and sometimes-controversial new arts center that just opened in Hudson Yards on the West Side of Manhattan. It would have been easy to throw even more money at the project (the complex cost more than \$400 million) and bring in big names for the launch. But the organizers chose another, more difficult path, one that tries to channel the spirit of the past through the artists of the future.

Conceived and directed by the British film director Steve McQueen ("12 Years a Slave"), "Soundtrack of America," which began on April 5 and continues Friday and Sunday, attempts to tell the full story of African-American music, stretching back to slavery and through developments in blues, jazz, popular song, modern composition and more. The programming focuses primarily on emerging performers, some of whom are just on the verge of releasing their first albums.

Introducing the program each night, Mr. McQueen recounts a visit to Congo Square in New Orleans, often described as the place where jazz was born, and his desire to learn how those influences wind through America's musical

culture. "Soundtrack of America" is an onstage realization of Mr. McQueen's quest.

Maureen Mahon, a cultural anthropologist and New York University music professor, was called in to create a "family tree" showing the interconnectedness of various strands of black music, and performers were asked to reflect on this history and incorporate it into the work they present. Each night, backed by a house band under the leadership of music director Greg Phillinganes, a handful of artists offers short sets over the course of the two hours, often including a cover song or two to situate their own work in the tradition.

If all this sounds a bit more like an academic symposium than an opening-week party, well, sometimes it felt that way. But each night

so far has had plenty of musical surprises to offset the occasionally starchy tone.

The McCourt, the area created when the Shed's sliding shell is extended, is a cavernous space with a ceiling rising six stories above the audience, and the design is ultra-minimal, to the point where it almost seems unfinished. Wooden risers in the standing-room general admission area mean that there isn't a bad sightline or poor sound anywhere in the house. But as it's structured now, the Shed is not a space that invites delirious revelry.

That said, opening night started with a bang, as the 369th Experience—a performance ensemble clad in period uniforms that pays homage to the African-American military bands of World War I—was joined by bandleader Jon Batiste (musical

director of "The Late Show With Stephen Colbert") and the Howard University Showtime Marching Band. Their set included work from James Reese Europe, a pioneering black composer of jazz and ragtime from the early 20th century.

The sound of the explosive brass and crashing drums as the musicians wound their way through the crowd offered a truly immersive experience, but it also hinted at one of the show's challenges: There's a lot of context to take in, and the audience is expected to do some work to put the pieces together. To be clear, this isn't to the show's detriment. "Soundtrack of America" func-



THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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ART REVIEW

TRISHA DONNELLY: A TREE FALLS IN HUDSON YARDS

BY PETER PLAGENS

New York

TRISHA DONNELLY'S conspicuously untitled (and unexplained—there is no press release) work of installation art at the Shed is a lyrical op-ed about humanity's inhumanity to nature. Into a capacious, dark gallery illuminated only by a little daylight coming in through vertical openings in one wall, Ms. Donnelly has brought the trunks of two large redwood trees and placed them atop the kind of padded, rolling platforms that furniture movers use. She's also bandaged, as it were, the ends of their amputated limbs with cloth and twine. Across the room, the artist has placed a large number of similarly wounded, albeit smaller, sections of trees. (All the examples were already diseased and dying, and taken from private land.) Off to the side, separate from the mournful arboretum sits a black speaker that emits—at considerable volume—Leontyne Price singing "Habanera" from "Carmen."

The effect is something like a World War I field hospital, minus the moaning and screaming. Each morning, in fact, someone from the Shed comes in and pours water on the two big trunks to keep them from drying out. On the floor, the spilled liquid looks not unlike blood in a black-and-white war movie.

One of the openings in that wall is aligned with a Hudson Yards skyscraper to the north so that it's



An installation view of Trisha Donnelly's exhibition at the Shed, which includes the trunks of two large redwood trees

involving all the senses, however, I found myself in an interior debate over the work's methods and effectiveness as poetic propaganda.

"It's good that the Shed let the piece speak for itself," I thought. No, said a skeptical little voice, viewers deserve some guidance. "Well, it's not the artist's fault that too many of them are just strolling around smiling, a couple even doing a few dance steps to 'Carmen,'" one side of my mind countered, "and then proceeding to the next attraction." No, the little voice responded, the author of an editorial, visual or otherwise, should take account of its readers, so to speak, and figure out a way to make things clear to them.

"Carmen" reinforces the tragic mood of the work." *Au contraire*, it's a gimmick. "The installation as a whole, you have to admit, is really well done; it's actually quite moving." Come on, bandaged trees are pretty obvious and cartoonish. Besides, the whole idea of damaged trees as bodies on gurneys is—how to put it?—simplistic. "The installation is nevertheless beautiful." Granted, but its aesthetics are those of a piece of contemporary art in a currently popular style; installation art is as art-historically specific as interrupted pediments in Baroque architecture. It's just that the art audience agrees not to see this, preferring to regard such works as expansively universal.

"Every work of art is historically defined, but some works transcend their moment. Goya's 'The Disasters of War' etchings,

projected onto the opposite wall of the gallery as a vague, camera obscura image. The ghost skyscraper represents—if it needs pointing out—the corporate, commercial, mechanized and essentially soulless side of society responsible for the massacre of the redwoods. The developers of Hudson Yards probably didn't see that one coming.

Ms. Donnelly, a professor of art at New York University, was born in 1974 and has a daunting track record of solo shows at such venues as the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Serpentine

Galleries in London. Her overall style is a fleshed-out conceptual art halfway between, say, Joseph Kosuth and Doris Salcedo. She works pretty much in black, white and gray—which fits well with the Shed, where everything, indeed everyone, is similarly decked out.

If the purpose of Ms. Donnelly's installation is—to invoke an increasingly conventional art-world rationale—to "address the issue of..." it mostly succeeds. Rather than being aesthetically immersed in what the Germans call a *Gesamtkunstwerk* or "total work of art"

created two centuries ago, for example, still pack a punch." Yes, but they required a lot of drawing talent and craft, and prints are a format that lasts rather than ending up disassembled like a stage set as soon as the play is over.

"In the end, the work raises the viewer's environmental consciousness, which is all to the good." But there's a paradox here: An arcane contemporary-art exhibition, in a venue (let's be honest) that's a cultural embellishment for a huge urban real-estate enterprise, nominally laments our culture's mistreatment of nature by talking to an audience whose members may very well not get the point. If they do, will they care about it as they exit into Hudson Yards and proceed to its glistening, high-end mall?

"What do you want? A completely green work of art in a 100% carbon-neutral location seen by an audience that didn't consume an ounce of fossil fuel in order to travel to see it?" Point taken. As the saying goes, the perfect should not be the enemy of the good. Ms. Donnelly's work of art is startling and tinged with tragic beauty. The fact that it's also elegant, as installations go, should not count against it. Game, set and match—narrowly—to those who are moved by the visual poetry of this nameless work of art.

Trisha Donnelly exhibition
The Shed, through May 30

Mr. Plagens is an artist and writer in New York.

Björk's Ecstatic and Feminist Fairy Tale

CONTINUED FROM PAGE C1
head, Which, at the moment, is focused on a feminist, female, body-alterating future; the show is based around the music of her last album, "Utopia." "It's like a fairy tale, I guess," she said, "or like very purposedly ecstatic, and kind of crazy."

She was sitting at a dinner last week during a break from rehearsals, dressed in a long pleated cloak in bifurcated marigold and purple florals, over a matching gloved jumpsuit; a glove dangled at her wrist while she ate. We sat in a space overlooking the

Björk's *Coruscopia*
Through June 1 at the Shed, Manhattan;
theshed.org

theater and for no apparent reason — except, of course, that I was dining with Björk — the lights in the room grew progressively dimmer, until we were discussing hope and utopia in near-total pitch blackness. (It felt just right.)

Alex Poots, the Shed's artistic director, commissions "Coruscopia," and sat back while Björk developed it over the last few years, with a particular focus on "creativity," he said. "There's this combination of real rigor and punk brought together; that creates this explosion of creativity, because it never becomes stale or safe. There's always this yearning to reinvent."

In the beginning, Björk would be one of the Shed's first commissioned artists. "I would've been really upset if we hadn't seemed relevant to her," he said. He first presented her in 2011, when he lured her to the *Myth & Memory* festival, which at the time was his personally artistic director, with her conceptually-minded production for her album "Biophilia." It spawned a long-running children's educational project, and became a turning point in her career; she has hardly done a traditional tour since.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANTONIO TECLES

ed what she called materiality and physicality, by, say, projecting video (by Tobias Gremmer) onto curtains instead of screens, creating transparency and the ability for people to modify their vision by touch. Sometimes, Björk presented ideas, particularly about wardrobe or dramaturgy, that made her fear "this is a disaster," she said. "And when I see everything together, it's like, 'Oh, it's great.'

Collaborators include Björk regulars like James Merry, her co-creative director, who made intricate golden masks by hand for Björk and other musicians. The costumes are made by Olivier Rousteing of Balmain. The show, with performances through June 1, is sold out.)

Björk has been the boss almost since she began recording. She still has the same manager, Derek Birrell, she chose as a punk teenager, and feels he has always signed with major labels as distributors. "I never had anyone, not even Derek, nobody I have to play the album for and say, 'Oh, I don't like song three,'" she said.

She signed the record, getting top-tier cuts after "Biophilia," she said, "because I just didn't believe it anymore. Also, I had a family." She adapted her career to suit her. "If I want to pretend I'm a matrarch I might as well, you know, walk the walk."

The lifestyle suited her, but it had a profound effect. "I have to say, I'm from the generation that I could actually buy a house, because I sold CDs in the '90s," she said. "I sold a couple of houses in the '90s in New York, and I'm from the '80s. I probably haven't made a penny in the last, I don't know, 20 years. It just all goes back into my work — and I like it that way."

That her last two albums have been far outside the pop-radio firmament does not seem to bother her. "I'm not afraid to say when she was living in London in the '90s, has she, she said, like an A-list celebrity. "I was invited to all the hot parties," she said, "and I just did it, had a laugh and then it was over." But then I woke up the morning and I was like, 'O.K., I'm done — like, the music is terrible, conversations are awful, I'm done.'

She moved to Spain and wrote "Homogenic," with the realization that she was not

Above, a scene from Björk's "Coruscopia," billed as her "most elaborate staged concert to date." Left, Björk in performance.

the kind of musician who could be in the spotlight and still be creative. "I have to go in the shadow, in the corner, and have no one watching me," she said.

In "Ceremony," her introversion is represented by the reverberant, a booth on the side of the stage with minimal amplification that's meant to recreate the effect of her singing alone on long, rural walks, as she sang her way up, on a previous tour. Monday, she sometimes disappeared from view when she stepped inside. "I'm scared," she said with an expletive, of showcasing her vocals in such a raw way.

But there's a lot to distract: Eight-meter-long origami-style canons are suspended in midair. They were specially made in Iceland and are used on only one song, "Body Memory." Björk also sings from inside a Hula-Hoop-size circular flute.

"The whole show is a lot about females supporting each other," she said. The flutists have been coming to her cabin in Iceland for years. "We would have Friday night parties, and then brunch the next day," she said, describing her arrangements for them as "bite-folk music for the future."

The most direct appeal to the future comes from Greta Thunberg, a teenage Swedish climate activist, who delivers a video message from the stage at the end. Like Thunberg, Björk's daughter has participated in climate strikes on Fridays. Her generation, Björk wrote in an email, "is extremely aware of the power of activism and the importance of being heard." In an "Utopia" video, she wrote, "are about proposing to come up with a more compassionate way to interact with nature. Hopefully to start from a female point of view will help."

That is what Björk, who has been roasting in Iceland's sun, has done. She has surrounded herself with. During our dark dinner, she said she was happy, and in love.

Romantic love? I asked in an email later. Or the spark that comes with creative connection from others like her?

"People all of the above," she wrote back. "'Coruscopia' is probably as expansive as I will get . . . an effort to find an equilibrium between all areas. And a way for love to be present."



"Utopia," released in 2017, was Björk's return to feminism, enthusiasm and romantic possibility — her "Tinder" album, as she has sometimes jokingly called it. Made in collaboration with the Venezuelan DJ Arca, it was suffused with bird song, loose melodies and the female flutists, all Icelandic musicians. The title track, "Utopia," which Arca produced, was a response to "Vulnicura," the bleak 2013 record she made after the end of her relationship with the artist Matthew Barney, the father of her teenage daughter, Voigt.

"Voigt was really sad," she said. "Just, like, winter in Iceland, rocks on the ground, no plants — you know, the melody was literally lying on the floor. It didn't ever make big leaps."

Her visualization for "Utopia," by con-

trast, was like a 3-D scan of fireworks, exploding over a cymbalistic lush island in the sky. Musically, she and Arca "talked a lot about it, and we wanted the synths to sound like flutes and the flutes to sound like birds and the birds to sound like synths," Björk said. "Nothing holding it down."

Lorecia Williams, a concertgoer from Argentina, who has seen Björk's New York and theatrical debut directing "Coruscopia," was tasked with staging Björk's vision. Asked about the glockenspiel-flute metaphor, Williams, who has a degree in art history, was of that style," she said, through a translator. "And sometimes it's a little bit hard to understand what that actually means."

Still, she followed Björk's lead. Björk did the musical arrangements, and Mariel add-

JOSE SOLIS | THEATER REVIEW

Education Sweetened With a Teaspoon of Titillation

A play offers more information about bondage than insight about the characters.

THE PLAYS OF S. ASHER GELMAN try to fill the void left by the cultishness of some television by the likes of "Queer as Folk" and "The L Word" — that shows that promised titillation about L.G.B.T. life but also educated audiences. In his first professional play, "Afterglow," two men in an open relationship are forced to move into their bed and lives. The frank depiction of sex and the chiseled actors' nudity turned the play into a sleeper hit. It ran Off Broadway for more than a year and even once made a small audience night, during which patrons were invited to describe emotionally and physically what it delivered.

Gelman's second play, "Safeword," is hoping to do for bondage what "Afterglow" did for open marriage. But the male characters are a little more, or a lot, over the play premises more than it can deliver.

When the curtain rises at American Theater of Actors, we see Micah (Joe Chisholm) down on his knees as the muscular Xavier (Jimmy Brooks) stands behind him in full leather, seat holding a whip. "Tell me why it's like it," Xavier says as he strikes Micah and Xavier, drama is what he gets.

Little is made of the fact that Micah is white and Xavier is black (the script speci-

fees the race of all the characters) but that dynamic could've warranted a play all its own. (Thank you for "Steel Play," Jeremy Hart!?) Instead, the play aims to focus on their possessive, colesblind existence.

Micah is married to Lauren (Traci Elaine Lee) and the two own a restaurant. Though Lauren is just as creative a chef as Micah, she can also see how he can run the place by himself. She also has no idea about his secret life as a submissive.

Xavier runs his pro dom business from an apartment next to his partner Chris' place. Chris (Maybe Burke) is white, gender queer and doesn't believe in marriage, although the two have been together as a couple for seven years.

Lauren and Micah live in the same building as Xavier and Chris. Convenient for drama, perhaps, but probably impossible. (The white, black and red set design is courtesy of Ann Beyersdorfer.) In a city where finding the right coffee and bar takes endless trial and error, what are the chances of a sub finding a pro dom living above him?

Mr. Gelman isn't one for verisimilitude, though. Lauren assumes the marks and burns on her husband's back are the consequence of Chris' abuse. But, what informs Mr. Gelman is getting all his characters together to unleash forced drama. And once Lauren and Chris find out about Micah and Xavier, drama is what they get.

Leaving "Safeword," audiences should be



Joe Chisholm, left, and Jimmy Brooks in S. Asher Gelman's play "Safeword."

Safeword
Through July 1 at American Theater of Actors, Manhattan;
safewordthepplay.com. Running time: 1 hour 30 minutes.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANTHONY MELCHIONE

quizzed. Can straight people be involved in bondage? Yes, we learn. Are all sub men gay? No, we learn. If you're into bondage what do you need to respect your partner's safeword? Always.

Would it be too much to ask that we knew the characters as well as we know the rules of bondage? Mr. Gelman, who also directs, seems more concerned with dispising

myths and setting up perfect tableaus (the scene transitions feel rushed) than he is with writing characters that connect with us. We're never privy to what makes these people tick; they're all painted in broad, generic strokes, like the mock-dating profiles you see on the sunsets above him.

And we wouldn't want to go home with any of them.

CULTURE BY THE YARDS

The Shed, a West Side venue devoted to new work, opens.

BY ALEX ROSS



The Shed, Manhattan's newest arts complex, sits on the south side of Hudson Yards, a colossal real-estate development that aspires to be a city unto itself. Some twenty-five billion dollars has been spent to erect an array of office towers, condominiums, and shopping arcades in lower midtown, west of Tenth Avenue. The main buildings resemble skyscrapers that have been expelled from other cities and deposited here, their mismatched angles gesturing in an aesthetic void. Corporate lobbies are done up in billionaire-supervillain décor: pyramid-block walls, skeletal hanging globes, gold-dusk lighting. An outdoor structure called the Vessel offers

stair-climbing exercise for tourists who haven't yet been worn out by their trek along the High Line. The landscaping on the central plaza has the soulless neatness of a digital architectural rendering. Several stone flower beds are strangely menacing, with jagged edges redolent of counterterrorism chic. The entire assemblage has a prematurely dated air, like one of yesterday's forgotten tomorrows. There is no trace of New York City's past, its grit, its chaos.

Within this oligarchic citadel, the Shed cuts a funny, funky profile. Diller Scofidio + Renfro and the Rockwell Group, the architects, have given it a deliberately makeshift look: its dominant

Within the oligarchic citadel of Hudson Yards, the Shed cuts a funky profile.

feature is a puffy-surfaced, parallelogram-shaped shell, which rests on giant wheels and can be rolled out to enclose part of the main plaza. The interiors have an unvarnished, downtownish feel. The main theatre, the McCourt, exists only when the shell is rolled out and bleacher-style risers are set up for the audience. You enter not from the plaza but from Thirtieth Street, which, for now, still looks like Manhattan. In the Shed's lobby, one finds, instead of perfumes and luxury watches, an aggressively intellectual pop-up bookstore, run by McNally Jackson. More than a few of the titles on offer—"The Marx-Engels Reader," Theodor W. Adorno's "Minima Moralia," works by Angela Davis—seem to protest against the materialism all around.

The artistic director and chief executive of the Shed is the Scottish-born impresario Alex Poots, who came to New York, in 2011, to lead the Park Avenue Armory, after running the Manchester International Festival. He is noted for cross-disciplinary projects that involve notable figures in unexpected configurations. Under his aegis, the rock stars Damon Albarn and Rufus Wainwright moved into opera and the performance artist Marina Abramović worked with the director Robert Wilson. The inaugural season at the Shed, which began in April, has included "Reich Richter Pärt," a collaboration between the German painter Gerhard Richter and the composers Steve Reich and Arvo Pärt; and "Norma Jeane Baker of Troy," in which the actor Ben Whishaw and the soprano Renée Fleming perform a text by the poet Anne Carson. An ad campaign encapsulates the philosophy: "The Shed: Where Ben Whishaw Meets Renée Fleming."

Collaboration is unimpeachable in theory, but Poots's approach can lead to a hastily arranged packaging of over-scheduled artists—Gesamtkunstwerk by Skype. Programming at the Armory has also shown a tendency toward gigantism: the floor gets covered by water; a flock of sheep wanders around the arena; everyone says, "Wow, cool," and takes pictures for Instagram. As Zachary Woolfe wrote recently, in the *Times*, New York has enough venues geared toward "interchangeable boldface names and their flashy output." What the city needs is sustained support for lesser-

known artists, at all stages of their careers.

The Shed is about more than just celebrity allure. This summer, it will present fifty-two emerging artists, in a series titled "Open Call." Another program, "Dis Obey," is designed to cultivate "protest and creative action" among New York high-school students. How such initiatives will consort with the capitalist behemoth of Hudson Yards remains to be seen. Adorno, in "Minima Moralia," defined culture as whatever resists the domination of the material world. At the Shed, which itself cost half a billion dollars, domination is close enough to touch.

Norma Jeane Baker," a theatre piece with operatic elements, exemplifies the risks of meet-cute art-making. Carson's text interweaves the stories of Helen of Troy and Marilyn Monroe, attempting to deconstruct mythologies of beauty. It is set in an empty New York office on New Year's Eve, in 1963. As noises of celebration intrude from outside, a nervously fidgeting young man, played by Whishaw, begins a rambling, opaque monologue. A stenographer, played by Fleming, arrives to transcribe his words; it emerges that the monologue is an adaptation of Euripides' "Helen" garlanded with Monroe motifs. As Whishaw spins out modern-ancient parallels, including a comparison of Arthur Miller to Menelaus, he strips down and changes into drag, eventually assuming Monroe's look in "The Seven Year Itch." Fleming, meanwhile, becomes increasingly involved in the shaping of the text, breaking into flights of jazz-inflected song. In a predictable climax, Whishaw ingests champagne and pills, re-enacting Monroe's fatal overdose.

The performers handle their often perplexing assignments adroitly. Whishaw recites the torrent of text with pinpoint flair, his herky-jerky physicality suggesting the young Anthony Perkins. Fleming sings beautifully, as is her wont, and finds an understated wit in the predicament of an upright stenographer caught up in Whishaw's obsession. The director, Katie Mitchell, known for her severe, oblique productions of theatre and opera (including George Benjamin's "Written on Skin"), gives ominous momentum to the proceedings. The composer Paul Clark creates arresting soundscapes from samples of

Fleming's voice. Ultimately, though, the fixation on Monroe feels stale—a re-tread of an already heavily exploited pop-culture tragedy.

"Reich Richter Pärt," which runs through June 2nd, is a more satisfying construction, probably because it rests on organic connections among the artists. Richter, an artist alert to musical currents ranging from John Cage to Sonic Youth, has painted while listening to works by Reich and Pärt. Those composers, in turn, have long been kindred spirits—minimalist pioneers who invest their music with an austere spirituality. At once exhibition and concert, "Reich Richter Pärt" is presented four times a day, in two gallery spaces. In one, singers who have infiltrated the audience give four consecutive performances of Pärt's brief choral piece "Drei Hirtenkinder aus Fátima" ("Three Shepherd Children from Fátima"). On the walls are ornately abstract wallpapers and tapestries that Richter created for the occasion. The day I was there, members of the Choir of Trinity Wall Street made a sound at once immaculate and vital. Although the music felt distant from Richter's images—simple and sombre set against bright and busy—the experience enigmatically cohered.

The second gallery is given over to an animated film based on Richter's art book "Patterns," in which an abstraction is successively subdivided, mirrored, and subdivided again, until it is reduced to thin stripes of color. The film, directed by Richter and Corinna Belz, reverses that process, moving from simple stripes to complex shapes. For the occasion, Reich wrote a thirty-seven-minute score for fourteen players, titled "Reich/Richter." It is one of the composer's strongest works in recent years, recapturing the spacious, swirling beauty of "Music for 18 Musicians," his classic piece of the nineteen-seventies. At times, sound and image achieve an exhilarating synchronicity, as when stripes are hurtling across the screen and Reich's instruments are racing in parallel motion. The daunting task of giving twenty-four performances a week is divided between the new-music groups Ensemble Signal and the International Contemporary Ensemble. During my visit, members of the latter, under the direction of Jeffrey Means, attained a gleaming precision. For a while,

I turned away from the hypnotic screen and watched them play: sometimes one art form is sufficient.

The third major offering of the Shed's opening weeks was "Cornucopia," an exuberantly overpowering stage show by Björk, with extravagant visual designs by the Argentine filmmaker Lucrecia Martel and the digital artist Tobias Gremmler. Collaboration has always been an essential component of Björk's œuvre, yet her various alliances with poets, visual artists, pop producers, fashion designers, filmmakers, and instrument inventors all lead back to a relentlessly distinctive personal vision, one that is grounded in her singing and composing. That singleness of purpose sets "Cornucopia" apart from other events at the Shed.

The show, which ends on June 1st, is based largely on Björk's most recent album, "Utopia," although the set list also includes earlier songs ("Venus as a Boy," "Isobel," "Hidden Place," "Mouth's Cradle"). Björk's lyrics often gesture toward a world in which humanity finds balance with nature. The visual dimension of "Cornucopia" elaborates on that mythic vision, conjuring exotic plant life and animal forms on which Björk's face is sometimes superimposed. Pictures of intact glaciers accompany the hopeful manifesto of "Future Forever" ("Imagine a future and be in it"). The ensemble includes the Hamrahlid Choir, from Iceland; Viibra, an all-female flute septet; harp, percussion, and electronics; the experimental gospel-inflected musician serpentwithfeet; an echo chamber; and two deep-bass organ pipes, which descend dramatically from the ceiling for "Body Memory." ("The body memory kicks in, and I trust the unknown / Unfathomable imagination / Surrender to future.")

Interlaced through these voluptuous hallucinations are premonitions about what kind of dystopia might arise if humanity continues on its present path. Near the end of the show, the audience is shown a stark video message by the teen-age Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, who has inspired climate-change strikes by schoolchildren around the world. "The adults are not mature enough to tell it like it is," Thunberg says. A similar kind of radical innocence has always dwelled in Björk's work—fantasy as a weapon for change. ♦

THE ADVOCATES

KATHLEEN FINLAY

President, Glynwood

SARA GRADY

Vice President of Programs, Glynwood

KATHLEEN FINLAY (right)—She made her way to her current job as president of Hudson Valley's Glynwood through "a respect and love for the natural world." Finlay grew up in California, went to graduate school at Boston University for science journalism and worked in communications at the Bermuda Biological Station of Research. "It was there that I became intrigued with how the health of the natural world is coupled with the health of human beings."

Thinking about how humans are put at risk as the world at large is "degraded" led Finlay to Harvard Medical School, as the managing director of the Center for Health and the Global Environment. In 2012 she came to Glynwood.

"Moving here allowed me to put into practice what I was thinking about academically," she said. Finlay noted that the Hudson Valley has a "unique ability to build a regional food system." She is most passionate about bringing women together in the fields of food and agriculture. "My philosophy is that women's talents and skills have been suppressed in our culture." To that end Finlay makes it her mission to offer opportunities for women to succeed, which she stated, "happens when they're supported by their peers."

—Abbe Wichman

SARA GRADY (left)—Simply put, Glynwood's mission is to support farmers and farming throughout the Hudson Valley, and Sara Grady's role is to help shape the strategies and content of its widely varying programs. Grady worked behind the scenes to launch Hudson Valley Cider Week, a series of events that connect cider makers with retailers, beverage directors and chefs. Its success put New York State craft cider in top restaurants throughout the Hudson Valley and New York City. Grady also helped to create the New York Cider Association, a trade organization for the cider industry. Meanwhile, she's behind the Kitchen Cultivars project, which seeks to save heirloom varieties of produce that are uniquely suited to grow on our land. Grady has also developed programs that connect chefs with livestock growers. Her reach is widespread—and it's only growing.

Grady sees a link between all those divergent projects. "The work that I've created has been guided by my sensibility and my background, which is from creative media production. And I made art—I did all kinds of different things: I sewed costumes for the circus, I made documentaries, I was a performer and a dancer. All of those things inform my thinking about how we can grow and share good food."

—Julia Sexton

GLYNWOOD | Glynwood.org | @glynwoodorg



PHOTO: ANDRE BARANOWSKI

Valley Grown: Kitchen Cultivars Series Highlights the Region's Native Produce

Pumpkin is one of the oldest cultivated squash varieties in the United States. One of note is the Long Island Cheese Pumpkin, an heirloom product of the Hudson Valley, which has provided culinary inspiration for centuries. Recipes from the 1800s laud the Long Island Cheese Pumpkin in particular as one of the sweetest and most versatile regional vegetables.

Currently, Glynwood's Kitchen Cultivars series features the Long Island Cheese Pumpkin and shows off the region's agricultural history as it removes the pumpkin from the realm of the spiced latte cliché. Chef Shawn Hubbell of Amuzae, Vice President of Programs at Glynwood Sara Grady, and Angry Orchard's Head Cider Maker Ryan Burk all emphasized the versatility and history of the pumpkin throughout the course of the event.

Glynwood, a non-profit organization located in Cold Spring, NY, "works to advance regenerative agriculture that benefits the natural environment, energizes local economies, enhances human health and strengthens rural communities." Kitchen Cultivars grew out of Glynwood's combined efforts with Hudson Valley Seed Co. to "identify heirloom varieties that deserve to be known and grown for their agronomic and culinary value." The annual events series features a different regional heirloom seed each year. The Long Island Cheese Pumpkin is the star of this year's show with Hank's X-tra Special Baking Bean on deck for 2018.

Glynwood's mission statement to "ensure the Hudson Valley region is defined by food, where farming thrives" aligns them with Angry Orchard, which was one of the venues for this year's Cultivars series. Angry Orchard's Innovation Cider House, which turns two years old this summer, was strategically placed in Walden to tap into the region's rich agricultural history and restore it to public awareness. The little-known Hudson Valley town is in the heart of the Hudson Valley apple belt and boasts orchards and apple varietals that are more than a century old. The Innovation Cider House sits in the center of a 60-acre orchard that has belonged to the Crist family for generations.

While the orchard in Walden produces mostly culinary apples, Angry Orchard planted saplings of cider apple trees native to the UK and France last Spring, making it one of very few cider apple orchards in the United States. Despite being one of the fastest growing industries in the area, cider has a long history in New York State. The nationwide comeback started recently, but in the Valley it was never really gone, just neglected. In fact, Grady cites hard cider as the Hudson Valley's "signature regional beverage," echoing Burk's statement that the pairing dinner on January 26 showcased "what we can do in New York State."

The partnership between Glynwood and Angry Orchard was a natural one. The occasion itself felt friendly and easy going. People lucky enough to score tickets shared the five-course meal with cider pairings at one long table, conversing and laughing easily amongst themselves. Burk and Hubbell hosted the evening, with both artisans showing off their expertise as they gave detailed explanations of each cider pairing and dish as they were served.

All of the ciders poured were developed at the Innovation Cider House and made with New York apples. Burk's single-varietal Newtown Pippin was served alongside the amuses-bouche, pumpkin chips with foie gras mousse, pumpkin falafel and spiced yogurt, salmon tartare with pumpkin kimchee, and pumpkin latkes with creme fraiche and caviar. Next came Edu, a Spanish-style dry and savory cider was paired with the first course of lobster favaida with pumpkin foam. Oval Nouveau, a French-style tannic and round cider aged in oak oval casks accompanied the second course of roasted Long Island cheese pumpkin steak with burrata, toasted pumpkin seeds, and vanilla tarragon vinaigrette. First Flora, a complex Calvados apple brandy barrel-aged cider was served alongside the main course of pan-seared ribeye with celery root and pumpkin chips. Lastly, Maple Wooden Sleeper, a Bourbon-barrel aged cider fermented with Crown Maple syrup, (which will be available to the public beginning in March), was paired with rosemary and pumpkin macaroons, McGrath cheese, and roasted apple tart tatin for dessert.

This event was characteristic of the entire Cultivar series, which features many partnerships between like-minded people and businesses. There are two more events in the current series, a cider cocktail party with Amuzae at Soon's Orchard on February 4, and a collaborative dinner with Talbott & Arding at Gaskins in Germantown on February 6. I highly suggest you try your best to make it to one or both of these final events as the food is delicious and attending helps support Glynwood's mission in the Hudson Valley. However if you can't swing it this year, Grady assured me that Kitchen Cultivars "will continue to be an annual project."

Aside from showcasing the ideal pairing of ecological benefits and culinary innovation, the main take away from Kitchen Cultivars is that the effort to revive local and sustainable living is gaining momentum in a serious way. In summary, Chef Shawn Hubbell said the Cultivars series shows that "farm-to-table" has developed beyond the trend or buzzword that it was when it first appeared almost a decade ago. According to Hubble, "it's just obvious now that this is how everyone should eat and live."

The Long Island Cheese Pumpkin can also be found on the menu at these restaurants through February 6: Amuzae (New Hampton), Brushland Eating House (Bovina Center), Crabtree's Kittle House (Chappaqua), Crossroads Food Shop (Hillsdale), Duo Bistro (Kingston), Essie's (Poughkeepsie), Fish & Game (Hudson), Gaskins (Germantown), Gramercy Tavern (NYC), Le Express Bistro (Poughkeepsie), The Local (Rhinebeck), Panzur (Tivoli), Phoenicia Diner (Phoenicia), Purdy's Farmer & the Fish (North Salem), Restaurant North (Armonk), Swoon Kitchenbar (Hudson), Talbott & Arding (Hudson), 251 Lex (Mt. Cisco), 273 Kitchen (Harrison) and The Village Tearoom (New Paltz)

To learn more about Glynwood and Kitchen Cultivars you can visit their website [here](#).

THE NEW YORKER

RIP VAN WINKLE DEPT. MARCH 28, 2016 ISSUE

MAGIC BEANS

By David Owen

Ken Greene taught school in California for five years. In 2000, he came east to work on a master's degree, and he took a part-time job running the children's programs at the public library in Gardiner, New York, a small town eighty miles up the Hudson from the Bronx. His field is special education, but he had been reading everything he could find on biodiversity. "We've lost a huge percentage of the vegetable varieties that existed in the nineteen-thirties," he said recently. With help from the three- and four-year-olds who attended his story hours, he turned the library's tiny front yard into a garden, mostly for heirloom vegetables, and in the fall the children helped him collect seeds from the plants they had grown. "I loved the fact that the seeds had stories—genetic stories, cultural stories—and I added the seeds to the library's catalogue, so that people could check them out, like checking out a book." The idea was that borrowers would later bring back other seeds, from their own gardens. By 2008, the project had become so all-consuming that Greene quit his teaching job to pursue it full time. He and his partner, Doug Muller—who left his own job running a teen-crisis hotline—founded the Hudson Valley Seed Library, on the site of a long-defunct Ukrainian summer camp not far from Gardiner. "People who attended the camp, back in the seventies, sometimes come by to reminisce," he said. "The No. 1 thing they talk about is where they lost their virginity."

Greene has a dark beard and thick circular earrings that look as though they must be painful to insert. "When I was young, I was really, really small," he said. "I think that

gave me an appreciation for seeds. Seeds are tiny, but they're powerful." He and Muller converted a derelict cabin into a barn, and they turned the bunk beds into trellises for peas. The H.V.S.L. now has six full-time employees, a seventy-plus-page catalogue, and members all over the country. There are four hundred seed types in this year's collection, among them Hank's X-Tra Special Baking Beans, which Greene propagated from a single jarful that he was given in 2004. The jar came from Peg Lotvin, his boss at the Gardiner Library. Her late father had been a farmer, in nearby Ghent, and the beans in the jar were all that remained of a cherished project of his. Each fall, he would select the most robust-looking specimens from that year's harvest to plant the following spring—a type of genetic engineering that, so far, nobody seems to have a problem with.

Last year, the H.V.S.L. and Glynwood, an agricultural nonprofit in Cold Spring, distributed fourteen pounds of resurrected Hank's beans among seven Hudson Valley farmers, who planted them in their own fields and then, in the fall, brought the dried pods to Glynwood for a communal "threshfest." This year, nine local chefs used the beans to make nine versions of the classic French peasant dish cassoulet, which they served at a series of public dinners. The final dinner was held in the main house at Glynwood Farm. The evening's other refreshments included hard cider, made from Hudson Valley apples, and *violino di capra*, whose name is Italian for "goat violin." (It's like prosciutto, but it's made from the leg of a goat; when you slice it, you look a little as though you are playing a violin.)

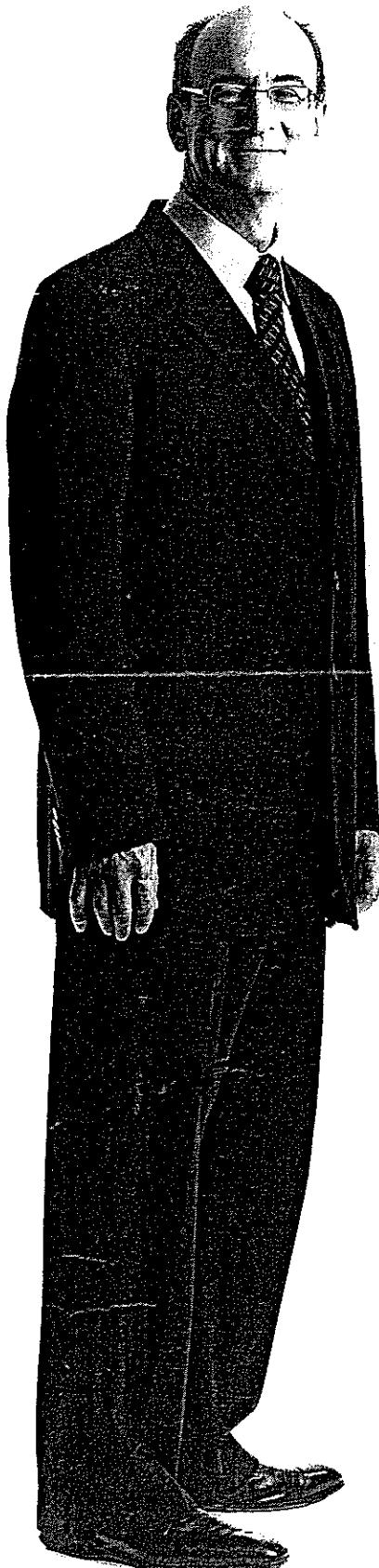
Greene himself was among the diners. Shortly before the cassoulets were served, he held up three ziplock bags, each of which contained a small number of exotic-looking beans: mottled pink, eggplantish purple, near-black. He had acquired them at a conference of organic farmers, in a swap with another collector. "This is almost all there is in the world of these," he said, and put them back in his pocket. At each place setting, near the salad fork, was a shot glass filled with Hank's beans, which are the color of heavy cream. The beans were decorations, not party favors, Greene explained. He was going to retrieve them all at the end of the evening, for eventual planting—a necessity, because the dinner series had depleted the global inventory. (Each chef had been given about nine pounds of beans.) The person sitting on Greene's right accidentally knocked over one of the shot glasses with a notebook in which he was writing down something

Greene had said. The beans went everywhere: behind a wineglass, under the edge of a dinner plate, onto a rectangle of slate that was serving as a breadboard. Greene stopped talking and hunted them down, one by one. When he had refilled the shot glass, he moved it to the other side of the table. "I'm taking these away from you," he said. ♦

David Owen has been a staff writer at The New Yorker since 1991.

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September 24, 2006



9/24/06

QUESTIONS FOR PETER GELB

Hitting the High Notes

The new general manager of the Metropolitan Opera talks about taking music to the masses, why filmmakers are more fun than opera directors and why Almodóvar said no.

Q

As the new general manager of the Metropolitan Opera, you are trying to revive the institution by poaching the populist luster of Hollywood and Broadway. Tomorrow night, the fall season opens with a "Madama Butterfly" that has been directed by a filmmaker, Anthony Minghella. In order to attract a new audience, it is necessary for the Met to be thought of as a place which is more than just singers standing and singing. I'm trying to demonstrate that opera can be great theater and not just great music.

But don't we already know that? Opera has always been an impure art form that draws as much on visuals as on voice. The problem is that decades ago the Met was at the forefront of experimentation under Rudolph Bing. Since that time, things have slowed down.

You've signed on some inspired theater directors — Bart Sher, Mary Zimmerman — for future productions. But film is such a different language. Where will you draw the line? Have you called Steven Spielberg? I haven't called Spielberg, but I would certainly be interested in talking to him if he wanted to discuss an opera.

Have you approached any film directors who declined to participate? Pedro Almodóvar. He's so theatrical in his films, but he has never done any theater. So I had a series of conversations — not with him directly, because he doesn't speak English, but with his deputies — and he doesn't want to do an opera.

Why would a film director who might not be able to read music do a better job of directing an opera than a veteran opera director? It's terrible to generalize, but the directors who only do opera are more likely to have forgotten what the theatrical essence of opera needs to be.

I am guessing that the project that will cause the most controversy is Julie Taymor's "Magic Flute" lite — an abridged, 90-minute, English-language version of Mozart's opera, which usually runs more than three hours. It's an attempt to create an operatic answer to "The Nutcracker" as a holiday entertainment for kids, basically. That's the only case that I have planned of abridging a work.

It's admirable to broaden the audience for opera, but how do we know that you won't invite James Horner to the Met to do his "Titanic," a movie soundtrack you produced as the head of Sony Classical? James Horner is not coming to the Met. I have no interest in pursuing crossover music at the Met, where it wouldn't be artistically appropriate.

You grew up in a famously cultured family. Your father, Arthur Gelb, a former managing editor of this newspaper, wrote a landmark biography of Eugene O'Neill with your mother, Barbara Gelb, who was the niece of the great violinist Jascha Heifetz. When I was a little boy, my father was the second-string drama critic to Brooks Atkinson. And every night my parents would come home with a different swizzle stick from a different nightclub and present it to me because I would wait up for them. These swizzle sticks epitomized the glamorous life of, what was in my mind as a young boy, the arts.

Do you have a good ear? I believe I have a good ear. I have worked very closely with some of the greatest artists of all time.

Right. During your years at Columbia Artists Management, you managed the pianist Vladimir Horowitz. What was he like? Off the stage, he was a handful. If we were traveling, he would stay holed up in his hotel room and watch B science-fiction movies until 3 or 4 in the morning and expect everyone to stay up with him.

Have you written all this up? I wrote an article on the centennial of his birth, which The New York Times didn't want.

Oh, well. I guess connections aren't everything. Not in this case, although The L.A. Times ran the article. I have another article coming out in the September-October issue of Playbill.

Great. Playbill already accepted the piece? They have to. We control the editorial content of the Met Playbill. DEBORAH SOLOMON

Photograph by Christopher Lane

INTERVIEW

SPOTLIGHT ON...
Peter Gelb

GENERAL MANAGER, METROPOLITAN OPERA

Peter Gelb became general manager of New York's Metropolitan Opera at the beginning of August. Until 2005, Gelb was head of Sony Classical and oversaw the introduction of mainstream 'crossover' to the classical genre. Gelb replaces Joseph Volpe at the Met, who retired after 15 years in charge amid falling box office numbers. He talks to Oliver Condy about the challenges that lie ahead in reviving one of the world's most important opera houses.

It's a huge responsibility being the Met's general director.

It's something that I didn't lobby for – some of my closest friends told me I should think twice before accepting such a difficult job! The Met is extremely bureaucratic; one of the assistant stage managers whispered to me when I first arrived, 'you know, we live in a feudal system here'. But the excitement of working for one of the greatest theatres more than makes up for any difficulties. It's a very thrilling time for me.

The Met needs to regain its footing in mainstream culture.

There are 2.5-3million people a week across the nation and Canada – and many millions more worldwide – that listen to Met broadcasts, but what is missing from them is the immediacy that entertainment spectacles like opera require. In the same way a sports event, when well covered, requires expert analysis and live interviews, so that's what opera needs: something light years away from the current stodgy approach. I'm looking at a global audience for whom we can make the whole experience a more thrilling one – partly by making it available through new technological platforms: high definition TV broadcasts and downloads.

9/11 masked a box-office decline that was about to occur.

Around 9/11 there was about a ten per cent drop off of the box office. But now the number of foreign tourists at the Met is as high as it ever was. While foreign tourism was slowly recovering, the local audience was slowly declining; after all, the audience has aged and with the ageing process, there is a natural drop-off. And this old audience goes to the opera a lot – they buy 20 or 30 tickets

each a year. My recovery plan is based on the idea that it's possible to keep the local audience while building an entirely new one.

You can't produce art in a vacuum.

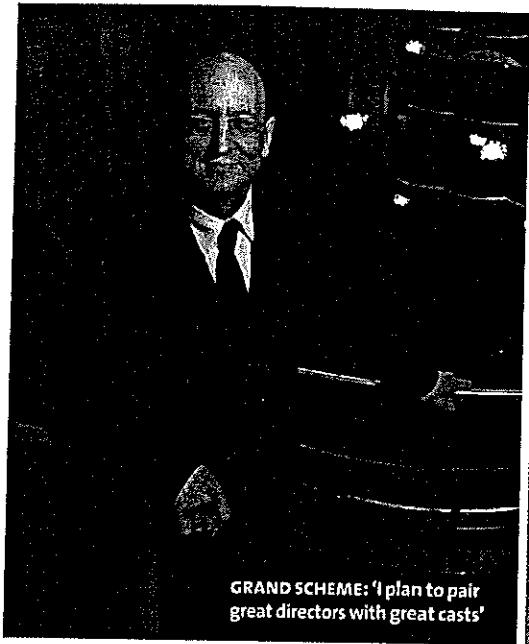
When you're running a theatre, you have to demonstrate that the theatre is a vibrant place – you can't open a season without a new production; that's elementary. This year is the first time in 20 years that the opening of the season will be a new production [Minghella's *Madam Butterfly*]. Back in the 1980s, when Domingo and Pavarotti were the reigning superstars, Bruce Crawford [then general

'It's hard to imagine how a new opera can have a success when it's judged by its first performance'

manager] had the clever idea of having an open night gala with both on the same stage by putting on a mixed bill of different acts from different operas. It was successful and glamorous, but it became the formula.

In many opera houses, commissioning new work is all about muscle flexing.

There's very little emphasis on theatrical development – it's more the pride of commissioning something than seeing it become a success. There are no previews like there are in a theatre, the rehearsal process is very limited and there's no chance to change things – it's all very anti-theatrical. It's hard to imagine how any new opera can have a success when it's judged by its very first performance.



GRAND SCHEME: 'I plan to pair great directors with great casts'

My plans to link up with the Lincoln Center should change all that. New work will have a longer artistic gestation process with lots of workshops and readings and chances to fiddle with the pieces. Because it's so expensive to produce opera, it's essential we increase the chances of it being successful.

We have to increase the number of new productions.

I plan to pair great directors with great casts and we will have a greater presence of fantastic singers as a result. Angela Gheorghiu, Anna Netrebko et al are interested in appearing in new productions and so their commitment to the Met has increased; the singers that the local audience adores will be there more and by increasing the theatrical experience, we'll be able to bring in a new audience. New York has a large pool of sophisticated culture lovers.

Making changes at the Met is a gamble.

But hopefully a calculated gamble. But I think a greater gamble is to not take these moves. If we do nothing we will have to address the future of the Met in a different way by down-sizing and cutting back. I don't see how you can succeed by reducing, so that means doing what I plan to do – which is to demonstrate that opera is a living artform just as it was when Puccini, Verdi and Wagner were putting on operas.

The Met's production of Madam Butterfly runs from 25 Sept. For tickets, call (+1) 212 362 6000 or visit www.metoperafamily.org

Inc.

The Handbook of the American Entrepreneurs

October 2007

Tactics to
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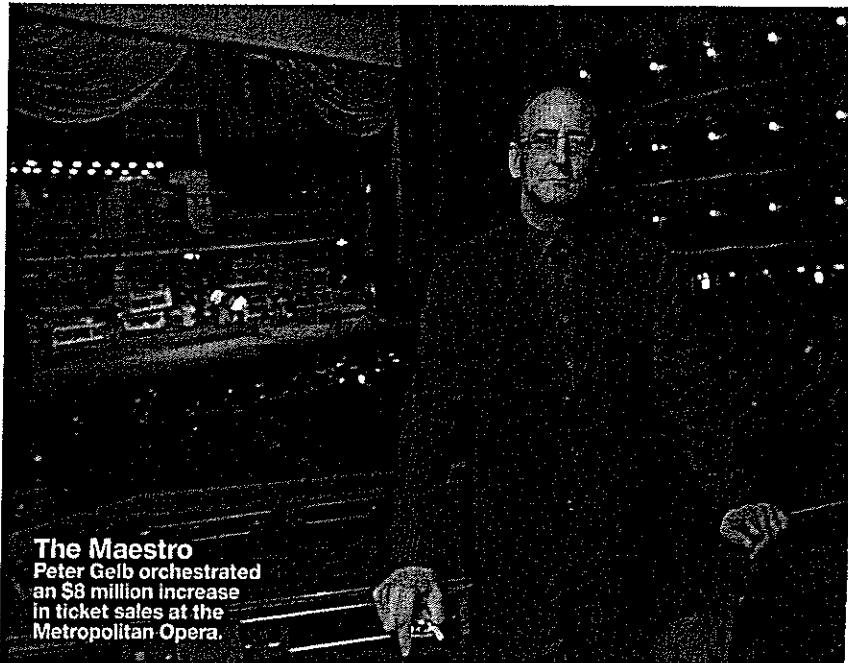
TURNAROUNDS

DRAMATIC RESULTS MAKING OPERA (YES, OPERA) SEEM YOUNG AND HIP

THERE ARE FEW institutions as staid as the opera. So it's more than a little surprising that New York's Metropolitan Opera has emerged as one of the most media-savvy organizations, cultural or otherwise, around. Over the past 12 months, the Met—the nation's oldest opera company—has unleashed a remarkable multipronged media strategy, using everything from skillfully produced events to streaming audio to simulcasts on satellite radio and in movie theaters, all to communicate the unlikely message that opera (that's right, opera) is hip.

The effort has been spearheaded by the opera's new general manager, Peter Gelb, a former head of Sony Classical. When Gelb took the job last year, the situation was fairly dire: Revenue at the Met had been flat for six straight years, more tickets were being sold at discount to fill the house, and the average age of the audience had jumped to 65. Gelb wasted no time, doubling the marketing budget and making some daring moves, such as enlisting filmmaker Anthony Minghella (*The English Patient*) to stage Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*.

The risks paid off. Revenue jumped more than \$8 million last season, and the overall audience expanded 15 percent. Advance sales for the 2007–2008 season are up 10 percent. Getting all of this done so quickly, especially at a 124-year-old institution with 900 employees and a \$220 million budget, was no small feat. Senior writer Stephanie Clifford recently asked Gelb about how he pulled it off.



The Maestro
Peter Gelb orchestrated
an \$8 million increase
in ticket sales at the
Metropolitan Opera.

When you took this job, how did you plan to make this old-school institution relevant to a new crowd?

When I was being interviewed, I explained to the board that if I was to take this position, we'd all have to recognize what was wrong with the Met. There was a reason the audience was declining. And it had to do not just with the marketing of the Met, but with the core artistic essence of the Met. It needed to go through a quiet revolution that would be exciting enough to engage a new audience. I wasn't looking to suddenly turn the Met into an audience of 20-year-olds, but to draw upon the broader cultural audience of New York City.

"The model for me is professional baseball and football, where the more connected they are electronically, the more people want to come experience the real thing."

How do you get something like that past a board that might not be so eager to change?

By explaining to them that it was necessary. And telling them I had a plan of how I was going to do it. I was very careful. I did it almost like a political platform. I laid out planks, specific initiatives that were going to be undertaken. And I kept repeating them in stump speeches. I held a press conference on the state of the Met. And luckily—and when you're producing something, luck always is a factor—my first few new productions, starting with *Madama Butterfly*, were successful. They not only were looked on benignly by the core audience, but also attracted a new audience.

How did you position *Butterfly*, a 103-year-old opera, as a must-see new event?

The Met previously did not run advertising beyond basic listings ads, so all of the advertising last season was meant to engage the public in new ways. We spent half a million dollars on a public outreach campaign in which we established the new Met with a very striking image of a performer from *Butterfly*. That became an iconic image and we put it everywhere: on the sides of buses, on entries into subways, on lampposts, in newspaper ads. We also did radio.

Then we staged a number of events to let people know that the Met, without dumbing itself down artistically, was going to be more accessible to a broader audience. So I said the final dress rehearsal of *Butterfly* would be the first rehearsal in the history of the Met that was open to the public. When we made tickets available for free, 4,000 people lined up and all the TV crews came. That in itself became an amazing event. We created a documentary about the rehearsal, and I'm bringing in filmmakers to work on intermission features for the simulcasts.

We are emerging from this very conservative, staid way of engaging the public into a much more active one. Because it's such a stark contrast, that in itself creates interest from the public and the news media.

The opening-night performance of *Butterfly* was simulcast in Times Square, where you set up seats on the sidewalk and people watched the show. What was the thinking behind that?

I wanted to demonstrate that the Met was a different institution going forward. That as elite and spectacular and grand as this opening night was inside, we were thinking about a larger pub-



The Hit Parade
Gelb's first season featured a new production of *Madama Butterfly* (top). This season, Natalie Dessay stars in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (bottom).

lic outside. It took a certain amount of wrangling to coordinate, but Mayor Bloomberg told me he was thrilled, because the incongruous image of opera lovers sitting watching *Madama Butterfly* with the Nasdaq and Reuters and Panasonic screens behind them appeared in newspapers all over the world. It was on the front page of *Le Monde* in Paris, it was everywhere. And that's good for the city.

You've been aggressive about getting the operas out on lots of unexpected media platforms.

I see media as key to the revival of the Met, as a resuscitation tool. There were so many years when not enough was being done that now, it's kind of like I have a golden opportunity to show what can be done. For example, we closed a deal with [the satellite radio network] Sirius to create a 24-hour Metropolitan Opera digital channel. And we started streaming performances and audio on our website.

How did the simulcast program, which broadcast six operas into movie theaters around the world, come about?

It was a question of convincing the theaters to clear the time. I explained that we were going to be able to get opera lovers to come. And they wanted it to work because the reason all these theaters had been converted to digital projection systems is that they want to find alternative entertainment to put into their theaters. If it made no money whatsoever for the Met, it still would be well worth doing because it's a huge audience development tool. The model for me is professional baseball and football, where the more connected they are electronically, the more people want to come experience the real thing.

It's exciting to be able to buck a trend. As the classical record industry has declined, and as opera has aged and its audiences were declining, our subscription sales for next year are up 10 percent. The question is, is it a temporary blip or is it the beginning of a long-term trend for recovery?

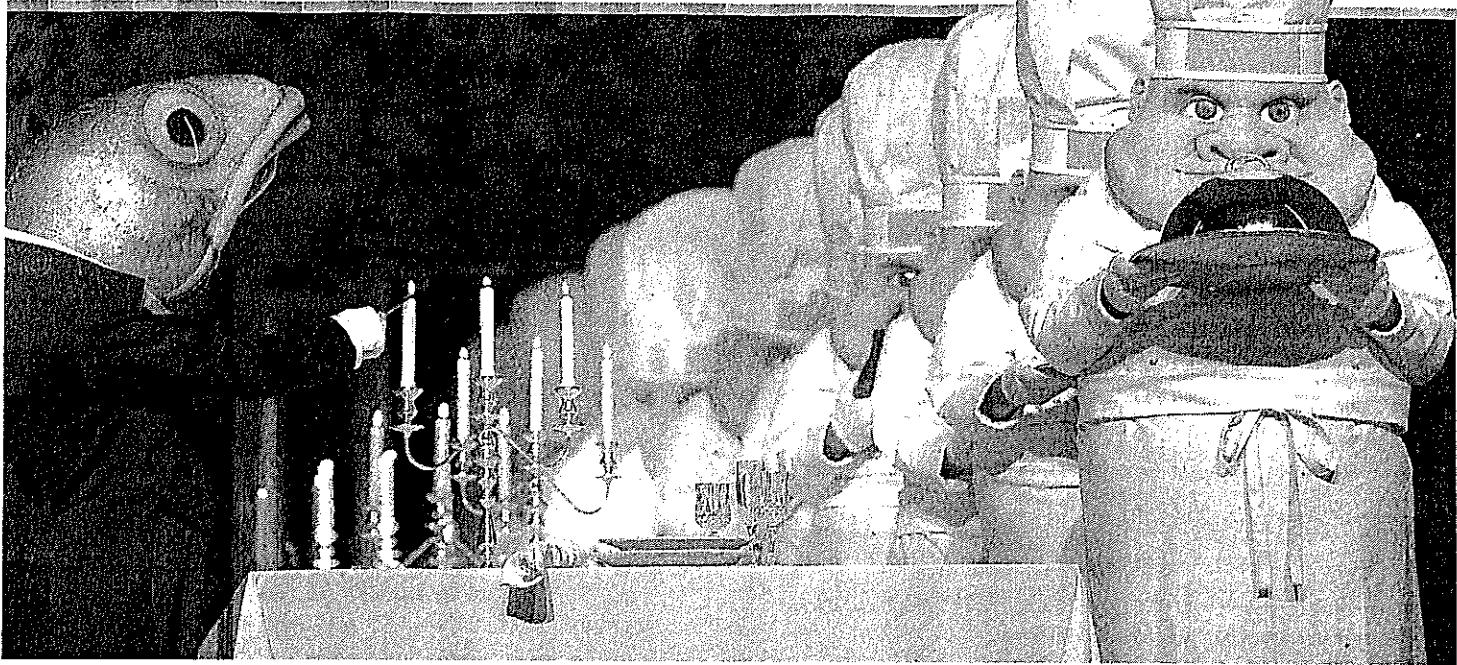
Did your multimedia events and red carpet openings turn off any long-time subscribers?

I think they secretly wanted us to try new things. Sure, I get an occasional hate letter. But far more often, I get letters and e-mails from subscribers who tell me how excited and proud they are about what's going on. There was an assumption that the old-time audience wanted this to be some discreet art form. I don't believe that was ever true. Opera is bigger than life.

December 29, 2007

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NOW PARENTING



NEW ARIA FOR YOUTH

The Met reaches out to NYC schoolkids with discounts, hi-def shows

BY NANCIE L. KATZ

Hey, parents! Thought opera wasn't for kids? The Metropolitan Opera wants you to think again. In a new initiative to bring the high-priced performance art to the masses, the Met has partnered with the city's Department of Education to beam opera "Live in High Definition" into a school in every borough, as well as local movie houses.

And for a second year in a row, the glittering opera house has opened its doors to students at a discount, or even for free.

On Dec. 21, some 2,500 enthralled city students packed the elegant theater to see the final dress rehearsal of "Hansel and Gretel" gratis.

"This is great! I've never been here before!" gasped Brianna Gilbert, 8, of Brooklyn's Public School 219, pointing to the lobby's sparkling lights. "I love the chandeliers! I loved the singing, and dancing and music!"

General Manager Peter Gelb intends to put the Met on the map of family holiday performances, calling the English-language version of "Hansel and Gretel" the high-art response to the New York City Ballet's "Nutcracker."

Last year, Gelb offered \$25 orchestra seats to students from the Opera Guild's school programs to see the enchanting "Magic Flute," featuring Julie Taymor's breathtaking puppet artistry.

This year, it's the darker Grimm's fairy tale. Educators disagree on whether the scary themes of lost children, stressed parents and evil witches will bring nightmares instead of happy family entertainment. The

Met advertises the program for 8 years and up, but the guild warned that children under 10 should stay clear.

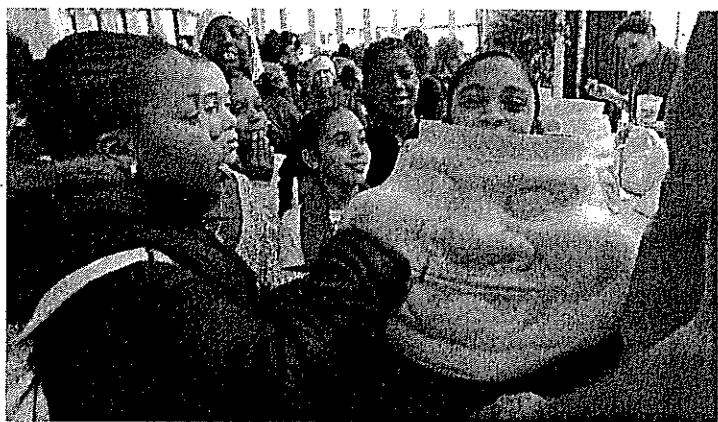
Those attending on Dec. 21, though, were undaunted. A very random survey of half a dozen students said they weren't scared at all, but they definitely ruled out bringing a kindergartner.

"It was excellent," said Bronx fourth-grader Ira Bilgeln, 10, who admitted to being a bit unnerved by the curtains depicting a cavernous, greedy mouth. "That was crazy," he added, referring to when the lost children saw "trees starting to move."

In an aftershow Q&A, soprano Christine Schaefer (Gretel) branded the responsive young audience "fantastic."

"I wish there were much more opportunities. Why can't young people come to every performance? It brings us alive! It fuels the atmosphere!" she exclaimed.

Can't afford the \$100-\$200 tickets to see "Hansel and Gretel"? You can see a live HD transmission for free on New Year's Day at Manhattan's Washington Irving; Long Island City High School in Queens; Staten Island's Susan E. Wagner High School; Celia Cruz Bronx High School of Music's Lovinger Theater, at



New York City schoolchildren eye "cook heads" in the Met's prop shop; at top, a rehearsal performance of "Hansel and Gretel." Photos by Susan Watts/Daily News

Lehman College's Music Building; and Brooklyn's High School for Enterprise, Business and Technology at the Grand St. Campus.

The program is part of Gelb's plan to beam eight live operas like "Macbeth" and "La Bohème" into schools and theaters through April.

"It's worth trying to reach a broader public to ensure that there is a future audience for the Met," said Gelb. "Certainly, I don't expect every kid to become an opera lover. Kids, when they are little, are very open to all kinds of cultural experi-

ences. If they are exposed to great art and music, like "Hansel and Gretel," hopefully it will somehow result in seeing opera as an adult."

He might have picked up some fans from the south Bronx. "Awesome" is how Sunita James, 9, from Public School 31, described the production and her first trip to the opera. "I wish we could come here again with our parents."

For complete information on locations and tickets, visit metopera.org/hdlive or call 1-800-Met-Opera (1-800-638-6737).

DAILY **VARIETY**

Friday December 14, 2007

Tunes, Smith at B.O.

By PAMELA McCLINTOCK

Feel like singing to a different tune at the multiplex this weekend?

On Saturday, the Metropolitan Opera kicks off its second season simulcasting live performances in digital high-def to more than 300 commercial theaters across the U.S., as well as more than 100 theaters in Canada and roughly 200 abroad. Saturday's opera is Gounod's "Romeo et Juliette," conducted by Placido Domingo and starring Anna Netrebko and Roberto Alagna.

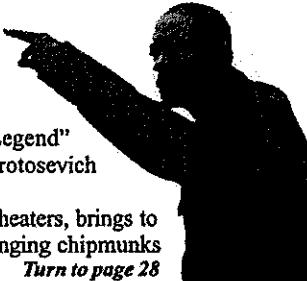
Dominating marquees nationwide will be Warner Bros.' Will Smith starrer "I Am Legend" and 20th Century Fox's live-action/CGI hybrid "Alvin and the Chipmunks."

"Legend" bows in 3,606 theaters. Pic marks the third time that Richard Matheson's classic 1954 sci-fi tome has been adapted for the bigscreen after "The Last Man on Earth," starring Vincent Price, and "The Omega Man," toppling Charlton Heston. Tracking suggests that "Legend" could be one of the biggest openers of the fall, possibly crossing the \$40 million mark.

Francis Lawrence directed "Legend" from an adapted script by Mark Protosevich and Akiva Goldsman.

"Alvin," which opens in 3,475 theaters, brings to the bigscreen the trouble-causing singing chipmunks

Turn to page 28



"I Am Legend"

LEGEND, 'CHIPMUNKS' BOW

Continued from page 1

that began as a musical recording group before adaptation into a TV cartoon series. Pic, directed by Tim Hill, helmer of Fox's "Garfield" franchise, stars Jason Lee. According to tracking, the pic could play more broadly than a typical family-friendly family and across all age groups.

One wild card: A strong winter storm predicted for parts of the Northeast could have an impact on B.O., according to distrib execs.

On the limited side, new releases include Marc Forster's "The Kite Runner," based on the book by Afghan-raised author Khaled Hosseini and adapted by scribe David Benioff. Paramount Classics opens the film in 35 theaters in key markets. Release was delayed from Nov. 2 so that Par Classics could relocate four of the young actors from Afghanistan to the United Arab Emirates out of fear for their safety.

Sony Pictures Classics unspools Francis Ford Coppola's "Youth Without Youth" in six theaters in Gotham, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Metropolitan Opera general manager Peter Gelb, along with music director James Levine, came up with the theatrical initiative — Metropolitan Opera: Live in High Definition — as part of a campaign to broaden the opera house's audience and make its programming more accessible.

Met series is being distributed in the U.S. through a renewed partnership with National CineMedia, and through a renewed partnership with Cineplex Entertainment in Canada. In Canada's Atlantic Provinces, the simulcasts will air in eight theaters through a deal with Empire Theaters. Program began a year ago in 90 theaters in the U.S.; that number was upped to 209 by the last simulcast of the opera's 2006-2007 season. All told, the simulcasts grossed \$4 million. Many of the shows were sold out.

In addition this year, the simulcasts will be shown in 17 independent theaters, performing arts orgs and colleges in the U.S.

With moviegoers distracted by other forms of entertainment, exhibitors say they are eager to offer alternative content, such as the Met broadcasts. Also, the ticket prices for the simulcasts are significantly higher than for a regular movie.

The 2007-08 season includes six other simulcasts after "Romeo et Juliette"; "Hansel and Gretel" (Jan. 1), "Manon Lescaut" (Feb. 16), "Peter Grimes" (March 15), "Tristan und Isolde" (March 22), "La Bohème" (April 5) and "La Fille du Régiment" (April 26).

Abroad, the Met simulcasts will play in more than 250 theaters in Australia, Europe, Japan, as well as in Greece, Hong Kong and Turkey,

just-added Poland and Puerto Rico. Elsewhere on the foreign front, "The Golden Compass" will remain the dominant player as the fantasy expands into Hong Kong, Italy, Mexico and much of Eastern Europe. "Compass" has shown more traction overseas than domestically, underlining the ability of fantasy fare to connect with customers outside the U.S. It's banked nearly \$60 million in international coin from 25 offshore markets as of Wednesday, led by \$18 million in the U.K. and \$8.5 million in Spain.

Warner Bros. will also be an international player via day-and-date openings of "I Am Legend" in Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Given the foreign appeal of Will Smith and the offshore appetite for action, the sci-fi's expected to be the leading pic once it moves into Euro territories the following frame. Disney's "Enchanted" and Paramount's "Bee Movie" — a pair of family-oriented pics that are still early in their foreign runs — have set expansions for the frame, with "Enchanted" widening into Brazil, Holland, Mexico and the U.K. while "Bee" flies into France, Germany and the U.K. "Bee" opened respectively in France with \$1.1 million Wednesday. Fox is opening "Alvin" day-and-date in a few markets including

Weekend B.O. Preview

Variety.com/weekendopeners

YEAR TO DATE (in billions of \$)

Pic (distib)	BOWING	Engagements
I Am Legend (WB)	3.606	3,475
Alvin and the Chipmunks (Fox)	1.307	1,307
The Perfect Holiday (Yari)*		
The Kite Runner (Paradise)	35	35
Youth Without Youth (Sony Classics)	LA 6	6
Half Moon (Strand)	2	2
Shotgun Stories (Int'l Film)	2	2
A Walk Into the Sea... (Arthouse)	NY 1	1
Goodbye Bafana (Paradise)	NY, Seattle 1	1
Alone Again (Focus)	32 - 117	32 - 117
Juno (Fox Searchlight)	7 - 40	7 - 40

Source: Rentrak

AUDS TOON OUT

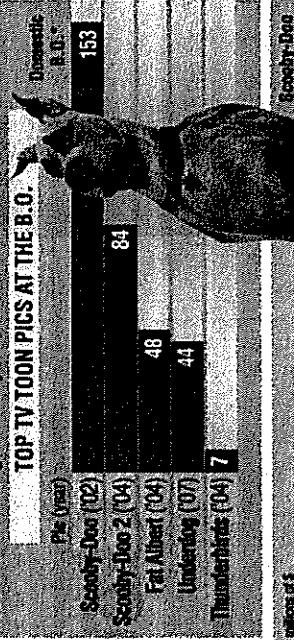
In the wake of the success of 2002's blockbuster version of "Stuart Little," live adaptations of 11 Toons have taken a dive at the B.O. Fox looks to re-use some of the subplots in "Aval and the Chipmunks."

TOP TV TOON PICS AT THE B.O.

Pic (USA)	BOWING	Engagements
Space Dog (Q2)	13	13
Smash Dog (Q4)	84	84
Fat Albert (Q4)	48	48
Unnatural (Q1)	44	44
Thunderbirds (Q4)	7	7
Family Bee		

and Warner's taking "Fred Claus" for American comedies to succeed in Japan, Par's opening "Blades of Glory" in that market a full nine months after its domestic launch. (Dave McNary contributed to this report.)

And in a sign of how difficult it is



APRIL 2-8, 2007

POP GOES THE OPERA

Met brings classics to masses at plexes

By ELIZABETH GUIDER and IAN MOHR

After years on the ropes, high art is battling back.

And it's the august Metropolitan Opera leading the way, cribbing moves from the pop culture playbook by wooing talent from other fields, adopting hip marketing strategies, exploiting ancillary revenue streams and otherwise throwing off elitist mantles.

Under general manager Peter Gelb, the Met has dusted off its classical repertoire and is opening it up to new generations of potential fans.

Film directors Anthony Minghella and Zhang Yimou were brought onboard to direct "Madama Butterfly" and "The First Emperor," respectively. Richard Eyre and Matthew Bourne will jointly take on "Carmen" next season.

A free screening of "Madame Butterfly" in Times Square last September provided a splashy kickoff to the season. Some 2,500 people showed up.

And over the past three months the Met has been taking its productions directly to the masses via simulcasts in hundreds of movie theaters on Saturday afternoons.

By at least one measure, a half-dozen Met operas -- including the recent "The Barber of Seville" -- have quietly outgrossed many films released Stateside and in a handful of countries overseas.

The simulcast of Rossini's "Barber" -- at \$18 per adult ticket and \$15 for children -- grossed \$853,836 on 275 U.S. screens on March 24, for a per-screen average of \$3,104.

Those grosses would have put "The Barber of Seville" in the No. 18 slot in *Variety's* weekly box office rankings, ahead of Germany's Oscar-winning "The Lives of Others," which landed \$742,648.

All told, the Rossini opera sold almost 58,000 tickets, for a 77% capacity averaged over all the theaters Stateside and abroad that carried it.

This "Barber" was also far removed from conventional productions. It was staged by "an outsider," theater director

Bartlett Sher, who can't read music and doesn't speak Italian but who nonetheless mounted a bold and sexy version of the opera.

Gelb, whose office includes a giant plasma screen from which he can monitor what's going on at the Met via 10 high-def cameras mounted onstage, launched "Metropolitan Opera: Live in HD" as an initiative to keep the art form current and vibrant.

Following extensive negotiations with its three largest unions, the Met last year gained the ability to send its productions out via live electronic distribution.

The current series launched in 98 venues worldwide with the Dec. 30 transmission of "The Magic Flute," a new abridged, English-language version by Julie Taymor. Subsequent performances included "I Puritani" in 123 venues on Jan. 6; "The First Emperor" in 176 venues on Jan. 13; "Eugene Onegin" in 208 venues on Feb. 24; and "Barber" on March 24. The series concludes April 28 with "Il Trittico."

Next season's offerings will expand from six to eight, including Gounod's "Romeo et Juliette" (Dec. 15) and Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde" (March 22).

The list of exhib venues will double, and at least four of the operas will also be transmitted live into NYC public schools.

Even a pay-per-view deal is in the works.

"All opera has been suffering, the age of the average Met-goer, for example, having hit 65. The future of the institution -- as well-known worldwide as it is -- was in peril. We needed a resuscitation program," Gelb told *Variety* in explaining the rationale for the outreach initiative.

The Met produced a series of trailers to drive awareness for the series. In addition, it promoted the series using media it controls, including the Toll Bros. Saturday Matinee Radio Broadcasts, Metropolitan Opera on Sirius, metopera.org, and the Met's patron base.

In the U.S., such alternative use of cineplexes is gathering steam. Stateside, the Met is partnered with National CineMedia, whose exhib outlets include the AMC, Cinemark and Regal Entertainment chains. 50-50 split of the grosses mirrors that of standard pics.

Venues, obviously, have to be equipped with the latest high-def and satellite reception equipment, and the Met is reckoned to be the first such high art institution to offer artistic perfs live via satellite to movie theaters abroad.

It's in discussions with a number of exhibs in Europe and elsewhere to become cinema partners. Germany recently joined the "The Barber of Seville" transmission and, with the help of local minimogul Herbert Kloiber, turned the event into a red carpet gala. Gelb says the number of moviehouses will double Stateside next season, and also expand to other European countries.

Will other cultural capos take a page from the Met's book?

Says Richard Pena, program director for the Film Society of Lincoln Center, envisioning a hybrid art form melding high-tech and high art: "This holds open the concept for the possibility of a new genre or new field."

Matthew Kearney, CEO of Screenvision, a joint venture of Britain's ITV and Thomson that is one of two players (along with National CineMedia) in the business of ads and non-film content screened in U.S. movie theaters, is upbeat about the larger impact of the Met's success.

"The take-away for our industry is that if you get the formula right, you can provide meaningful alternative content in movie theaters."

The only difference in not being there in person at Lincoln Center: You don't have to put on a tux.

But then again, you don't get to sip champagne, either. At least, not yet.

(Dade Hayes contributed to this report.)

Wednesday, May 16, 2007

Metropolitan Opera Ticket Sales Rise for First Time in 6 Years

By Patrick Cole

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601088&sid=aexH.A7wt5Ss&refer=muse>

Ticket sales at the Metropolitan Opera, which has been striving for a broader audience under new General Manager Peter Gelb, rose 7.1 percent in the 2006-07 season.

It was the opera house's first ticket-sale increase by season in six years, with 810,225 sold, compared with 755,255 in 2005-06, Gelb said today in an interview.

In all, the Met sold 83.9 percent of tickets offered this season for its 3,800-seat opera house at Manhattan's Lincoln Center, compared with 76.8 percent last year.

Since succeeding Joseph Volpe in August, Gelb has introduced new ways to expand the Met's audience, including offering \$20 rush tickets for orchestra seats, Internet broadcasts of performances on the Met Web site and live telecasts of operas such as "Madama Butterfly" in Times Square on opening night.

There were 88 sold-out performances this season, up from 22 last season, Gelb said. "Madama Butterfly," "The Barber of Seville," "The First Emperor," "The Magic Flute" and "Orfeo ed Euridice," were among the productions that sold out, he said.

Gelb, former president of the Sony Classical record label, said sales of 323,751 tickets for all high-definition broadcasts of operas in about 400 movie theaters around the world helped bolster interest in the Met. The U.S. led all countries with 35,014 tickets on 179 screens, followed by Canada with 16,535 on 60 screens. Tickets to live broadcasts also were sold in Denmark, Sweden, Germany and Japan, he said.

Popularizing Opera

"These numbers are a reflection of the beginning of our campaign to regain the audience and popularize opera," Gelb said. "We want to sustain the art form of opera in the 21st century."

Gelb plans to increase the number of live telecasts to 750 to 800 screens next season. The Met is currently in talks with theaters in the Netherlands, Italy and France, he said.

"By offering this broad menu of ways in which to enjoy the Met outside the Met, we're actually stimulating an interest in the Met," he said.

Gelb has lured performers, directors and choreographers within and outside the opera world to join its productions. Peruvian tenor Juan Diego Florez and soprano Anna Netrebko were big factors in boosting ticket sales, he said. Oscar-winning film director Anthony Minghella's staging of "Butterfly" and Isaac Mizrahi's costume design for "Orfeo ed Euridice" made those shows popular among ticket buyers, he said.

"The day of a Luciano Pavarotti or a Placido Domingo selling out a performance on their own is no more," Gelb said. "The future of opera is going to be secured through presenting combinations of star artists, an attractive repertoire and acclaimed directors."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

March 29, 2008; Page W18



SIGHTINGS

By Terry Teachout

The Metropolitan Opera Goes to the Movies

And a Skeptic Finds Himself Won Over by the Experience

WHEN PETER GELB took over the Metropolitan Opera in 2006, one of the first innovations he announced was a series of live closed-circuit opera telecasts to be beamed from New York's Metropolitan Opera House into movie theaters around the world. I promptly noted in this space that such telecasts had already been tried and found wanting, both by the Met itself in 1952 and by other high-culture institutions, and I predicted that the venture would be quietly scuttled after a season or two.

Wrong. Way, way wrong. Nearly 300,000 people turned out for the Met's first season of five Saturday afternoon simulcasts, and attendance is expected to climb to a million this season.

(The next simulcast, Puccini's "La Bohème," is set for April 5, with second-day repeat transmissions in many locations.) For more information, visit the company's Web site, www.metoperafamily.org/metopera.) They've been so success-

ful, in fact, that they're already spawning imitators: La Scala aired its first movie-house relay in December, and San Francisco Opera launched a series of its own earlier this month.

Why are these telecasts so popular? To find out, I traveled to Philadelphia on

his ingenious small-scale Broadway version of Stephen Sondheim's "Company" and "Sweeney Todd." I prepared myself by first seeing the production in the 3,800-seat Metropolitan Opera House, where it opened on Feb. 28. That performance left me with the same mixed feelings described by Heidi Wallace in her Wall Street Journal review of "Grimes," in which she criticized Mr. Doyle's staging as abstract, undramatic and confusing. The simulcast, by contrast, was considerably more effective than the live performance I'd seen at the Met two weeks earlier. In fact, it was overwhelming—one of the most memorable experiences I've had in a lifetime of opera-going.

What made the difference? Watching a well-directed, high-definition digital telecast of an opera on a movie-house screen puts you within arm's length of the singers. (One of the cameras is actually mounted on a remote-controlled dolly placed on the lip of the stage.) In a large house like the Met, all but a few

seats are far from the stage, meaning that you have to use opera glasses to see the singers' faces. Not so on screen, where Gary Halvorson, the video director, emphasized tight close-ups and shrewdly chosen reaction shots that clarified the dramatic relationships between the various characters. What had been unsatisfyingly vague in the opera house became compellingly specific on the movie screen. Add to this the excellent interimmission features, which included on-the-spot backstage interviews with Mr. Doyle, conductor Donald Runnicles and Anthony Dean Griffey and Patricia Racette, the stars of the production, and the result was a show far more involving than the one I saw in the opera house from my opening-night orchestra seat.

The audience for the Philadelphia screening of "Peter Grimes" clearly shared my enthusiasm. I sat next to a local opera buff who has never enjoyed watching operas on TV and was skeptical about seeing one in a movie theater. "Grimes" changed her tune. ("I've never been close enough to the stage to be able to see that kind of detail," she said. "I can't afford it—I sit in the cheap seats. Watching the singers up close changes the whole effect. It got me right in the throat.")

Nearly 300,000 people turned out for the first season of live Saturday afternoon simulcasts.

I wondered whether the crowd there was representative, so I called up my father-in-law, Charles Dyson, who saw the second-day replay of "Grimes" at a multiplex in suburban Connecticut, and

asked him what it was like. "Everybody in the theater seemed really excited," he told me. "And the simulcasts have been selling out here—if you don't buy tickets in advance, you can't get in on Saturday."

So will the Met's movie-house simulcasts create a new audience for opera in America? Maybe—but there's a catch. One of the goals of the Met's various new-media ventures, which also include live broadcasts of selected performances via Sirius Satellite Radio and Web-based streaming audio, is to attract a younger cohort of media-savvy opera-goers. Alas, the audience that saw "Grimes" in Philadelphia consisted mainly of senior citizens, and so, Mr. Dyson told me, did the Connecticut crowd.

Can the Met persuade under-30 viewers to attend its simulcasts? Is it even trying? Why not launch an ad campaign aimed specifically at college students? I can think of one selling point right off the bat: You'll pay as much as \$295 for a premium orchestra seat at the Metropolitan Opera House, with center parterre boxes going for a cool \$320 apiece. I paid \$22 for my movie-house ticket, not counting popcorn. Cheaper tickets for a better show—that's my kind of deal.

Mr. Teachout, the *Journal's* drama critic, writes "Sightings" every other Saturday and blogs about the arts at www.terryteachout.com. Write to him at tteachout@wsj.com.

January 7, 2007



CLASSICAL MUSIC

The Sopranos on the Big Screen

Could high-definition opera at the movies become as addictive as popcorn?

BY JUSTIN DAVIDSON

IF YOU HAPPENED to be at the Metropolitan Opera a couple of weeks ago for *Roméo et Juliette*, you saw the two lovers first beguile each other across an empty stage. The tenor, Roberto Alagna, slumped behind a wall while soprano Anna Netrebko sang the free spirit's anti-matrimonial credo, "Ah! Je veux vivre," enveloped in her private bubble of lyricism. If, at that exact moment, you were watching from the Caribbean Cinemas in Santurce, Puerto Rico, or the Metropol in Copenhagen, or the Luna in Perth, Australia, however, you saw a feverish exchange of close-ups and flirtations, the void between Capulet and Montague extinguished by editing, soprano and silent tenor joined in the embrace of Gounod's urgent music. *Roméo* isn't even supposed to be in that scene, but the camera made him indispensable.

I was sitting in a high-tech truck parked behind Lincoln Center, where the TV director Gary Halvorson was furiously calling shots. On a wall in front of him was a grid of screens, showing three angles on Alagna and several more on Netrebko, plus a handful of shots that took them both in. Halvorson issued a steady stream of orders to the button-pusher on his right, cuing each cut with a peremptory finger-snap. "Three! Five! [Snap.] Three. Ready, Six... ready, Six, but hold it. Holditholditholdit—and Six! Back to Three! I said *Three*, goddamn it! Forget it. Now Five! [Snap!] Then, an aside: "They're doing it totally differently than they did in rehearsal—Roberto's all over the place." In theory, Halvorson, the camera operators, and a couple of assistant directors all follow the same script, but Alagna's vagaries had triggered a few minutes of frantic group improv. "That was fun," Halvorson remarked afterward. "Don't try that at home."

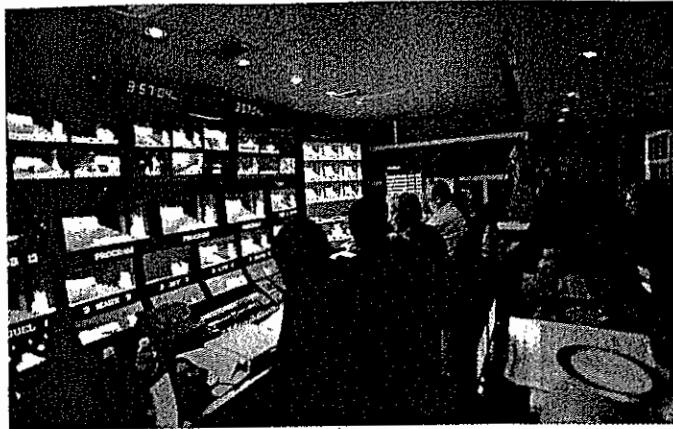
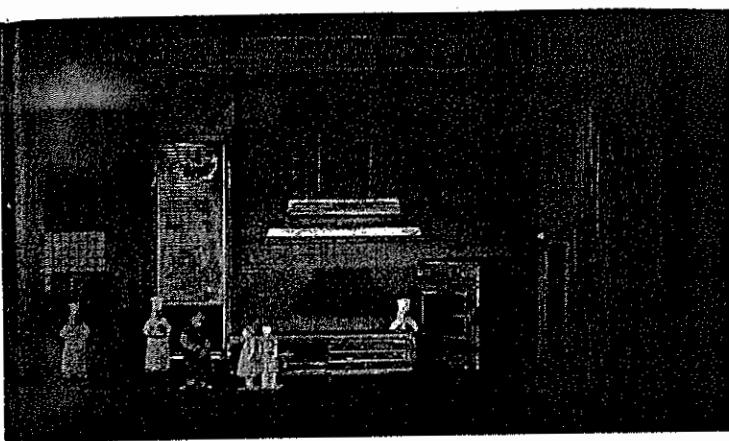
Roméo et Juliette opened the Met's second season of high-definition broadcasts to some 600 movie theaters on four continents; about 100,000 people saw the matinee on December 15, and only 3,800 of them were in the opera house. (*Hansel and Gretel* is up next, on New Year's Day, and *Macbeth* on January 12.) Those aren't big numbers in Hollywood, and with each broadcast costing almost \$1 million to produce, the whole project is merely breaking even. But the Met has learned it can, in many cases, sell out the movie theaters weeks in advance and reach pockets of interest everywhere. (The broadcasts are also coming out as commercial DVDs and will eventually show up on pay-per-view.) Milan's La Scala has also started sending pretaped shows to American movie theaters, and the San Francisco Opera is trying to one-up the Met by teaming with the Bigger Picture, a distribution company that claims to have better projection systems than the Met's partner, National CineMedia.

HANSEL AND GRETTEL
METROPOLITAN OPERA
NEXT BROADCAST
JANUARY 1.

Opera has been a presence on television for decades, but to me it always seemed stunted and pained on the small screen. In the theater, audiences can let their eyes wander. Distance and intoxicating music disguise the fact that the child bride is actually a sturdy lady of a certain age. But in the old-fashioned style of repackaging performance for TV, the camera just stays riveted on a soprano's quivering tonsils and her gaudy, pulsing greasepaint. In the Met's new broadcasts, however, the production values recall *Monday Night Football* more than they do PBS. Halvorson uses more than a dozen cameras for 1,600 shots—enough to reinvent the way opera appears onscreen and to nudge the form into its next evolutionary stage. And while the broadcasts may not change the way opera sounds, they do transform the way audiences hear it. In *Roméo et Juliette*, Halvorson followed the conductor, holding a shot for the length of a fermata, waiting for the downbeat before ordering a switch. The broadcast is not merely a record of a performance but an interpretation of an interpretation.

A wiry Hollywood veteran, Halvorson brings to opera a sensibility honed by pop entertainment. He studied piano at Juilliard before starting a directing career that has included scores of episodes of *Friends* and *Everybody Loves Raymond*, plus the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. At his bidding, the Met fitted the stage with cameras that roll on rails, horizontally along the lip and vertically along the proscenium, so that the viewer's eye can burrow into the drama or glide above it. In *Roméo et Juliette*, one overhead camera offered what Halvorson calls the "the Busby Berkeley view" of the turntable. He also framed Alagna from below, so that the tenor could loom heroically against a spangled purple sky. During a couple of scene changes, which the Lincoln Center audience spent looking at the curtain, he had Steadicams following the principals backstage.

Traditionalists worry that such ubiqui-



Scenes of the Met at the movies:
from left, Verdi's Macbeth; Gounod's Roméo et Juliette, starring Anna Netrebko; John Macfarlane's set design for Hansel and Gretel; and some of the technology behind it all (that's Peter Gelb leaning on the counter at right).

tous video might turn opera into a cheap reality show, privileging pretty people over old-fashioned artists with platinum vocal cords and lumpish bodies. In fact, though, the lens favors singers who know how to use their eyes and the corners of their mouths—singers who can act, in other words. The star of last season's *Il Trittico* was Stephanie Blythe, an unsvelte mezzo-soprano who sang three roles in three personalities, linked by an incandescent voice and her natural onscreen magnetism. Even beautiful people have to adapt: Renée Fleming told me that performing for the camera involves completely different techniques from playing to the house, and she didn't exclude the possibility that she might tailor her singing, too.

Naturally, the Met's general manager, Peter Gelb, doesn't want anyone to think that a broadcast, no matter how sonically faithful or technologically resplendent, rivals the real thing. "Live opera is still a three-dimensional experience, and there's no substitute for that," he told me. I'm not

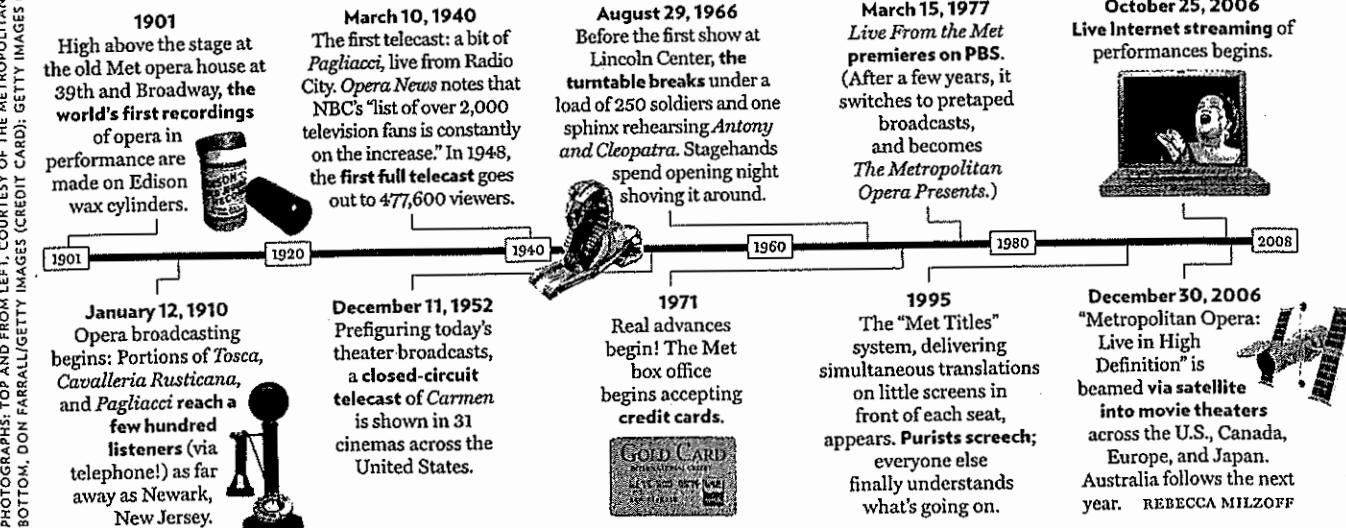
so sure. I'm not about to give up my orchestra seats at the Met, but if I had to choose between paying \$80 for a spot in an upper balcony and \$22 to sit in the middle of the action, I just might make for the nearest multiplex.

The next chance for that will be at *Hansel and Gretel*, in the new production by Richard Jones that restores some bracing creepiness to the tale Engelbert Humperdinck so sweetly bowdlerized. Jones refuses to find the charming side of starvation, or to candy-coat the cannibalism. Kids don't mind—children like a little artful bloodshed, and at the Met for the Christmas Eve premiere, my 10-year-old consultant gave the stark weirdness his stamp of approval.

He (and I) particularly enjoyed Philip Langridge's memorably mad performance as the Witch. The trim tenor, swaddled in a fat suit with a mountainous bosom, plays her as a fusion of Mrs. Lovett and Julia Child, stirring, beating, and whipping buckets of ingredients in a delirium of culinary sadism. He splatters himself with battery gore as if he's just murdered a cake, and funnels a gallon of his Pepto-Bismol-colored concoction into the trussed Hansel's mouth, spilling it voluptuously onto the floor. It's a cooking show for psychopaths.

Beautifully sung, and brilliantly conducted by Vladimir Jurowski, this is a production geared to children fortunate enough to grow up immersed in their parents' food neuroses, surrounded by talk of diets, diabetes, and bad carbs. If the original story of Hansel and Gretel emerged from primal fears of famine, Jones has brilliantly translated it for an era terrified by abundance. ■

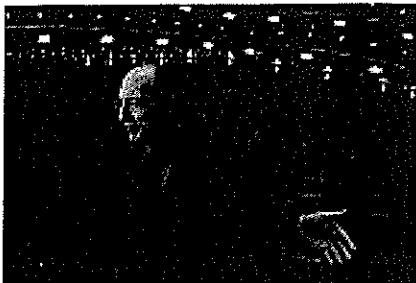
MET TECH A CENTURY OF OPERATIC ADVANCES (PLUS THE ODD GLITCH).



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Metropolitan Opera moviecasts filling theaters from Frisco to Fargo

BY VERENA DOBNIK, Associated Press; with contributions from Associated Press writer Ron Blum



Metropolitan Opera general manager Peter Gelb explains the positioning and use of cameras to broadcast a performance of "Macbeth" in New York. The performance was captured on camera last Saturday and broadcast live to movie audiences around the world. (Julie Jacobson/AP)

NEW YORK (AP) - Last week in Fargo, N.D., moviegoers had a choice between "Aliens vs. Predator," "The Great Debaters" - and "Macbeth," live from New York's Metropolitan Opera.

Murder, mayhem, romance - the plot elements of Verdi's opera were packing 'em in in North Dakota and about 600 theaters across North America, Europe, Japan and Australia.

It's all part of a marketing strategy by Met general manager Peter Gelb to attract a new and younger audience to an aging art form associated with the elite.

"We're creating, basically, satellite opera houses," Gelb told The Associated Press. "But the Met offers something you don't get at a performance - cameras that show action behind the scenes and interviews in dressing rooms, the equivalent of going into the locker room of a sports team."

On a recent weekend, ticket sales for the Met broadcasts reached \$1.65 million, pushing Charles Gounod's "Romeo and Juliet" to No. 11 in U.S. box office gross receipts, according to Variety magazine.

To promote the broadcasts - and the live performances as well - Gelb chose a poster of a sexy-looking soprano Anna Netrebko as Juliet.

"I knew that it would attract teenage boys," he said with a grin.

After more than a year of boffo reviews for the high-definition satellite simulcasts, other companies are getting in on the act, including the San Francisco Opera, Milan's La Scala and London's Royal Opera.

Last Saturday, as Verdi's "Macbeth" was beamed to theaters around the globe, Gelb sat in a satellite truck behind the opera house at

Lincoln Center, editing on the fly as 13 cameras captured the drama on stage.

Some of the cameras rolled on a track just inches above the foot of the stage, providing cinematic-style, low-angle shots.

"That's never been done, because nobody believed there would be a market for it," Gelb said.

Hundreds of venues around the world were sold out for "Macbeth," even three theaters in New York, where tickets for the actual performance were still available, although at higher prices. Movie tickets cost \$22, compared to \$27 to \$295 for the Saturday afternoon performances at the Met.

Moviegoers say they like the immediacy of the experience - the drama unfolds on 40-foot screens - as well as the informality. While the Met's HD digital technology isn't quite up to feature-film standards, most people wouldn't know the difference.

"You're a lot closer here than at the actual performance - you're practically onstage," said Craig Chesler, 39, a rock guitarist from Brooklyn watching "Macbeth" at a theater about 50 blocks south of the Met.

Joan Bloom, a Manhattan public relations executive, enjoyed it too - except for one thing. "I don't think people should bring their lunch and sit here eating hard-boiled eggs during the opera."

Opera lovers - and wannabe lovers - can find out where the broadcasts are playing by going to the Met Web site and clicking on the link for the HD series. The next of this season's eight shows, on Feb. 16, is Puccini's "Manon Lescaut."

The cost of each transmission, including satellite feeds, equipment and crew, is about \$1 million - in addition to up to \$3 million for each new Met production, according to Gelb. The Met expects to break even with the HD series by the end of this year, including revenues from repeat, taped transmissions and DVD sales.

Gelb, a former television producer and Sony recording executive, began the simulcasts in December 2006, four months after taking over America's premier opera house.

When he took on his new job, no more than about 75 percent of tickets for actual shows were selling, largely due to an aging audience.

To attract new enthusiasts, Gelb launched a public relations blitz that included the live simulcasts; Internet and radio broadcasts; iPod

downloads; splashy ads on city subway cars and buses; and a free screening on Met opening night in Times Square and at Lincoln Center, as well as regular telecasts to city public schools.

His plan to expand his potential audience seems to be working:

About 100,000 people saw "Romeo and Juliet" on Dec. 15, but only 3,800 of them were in the opera house.

This season, Met ticket sales have topped 90 percent so far, and have proved to be popular among schoolchildren in New York and elsewhere.

"I really thought they did an amazing job - I felt like I was there," said 11-year-old Jesse Burgum after a friend invited her to see her first opera at the Century Theatre in Fargo. "I want to get the soundtrack now."

More than half the 244 seats for "Macbeth" were filled at the Century, a sharp increase from the 40 or so people who saw the first Met production the theater offered, "Romeo and Juliet," said theater manager Rick Solar斯基.

"Word-of-mouth is building the audience," he said.

Gelb said the presence of cameras also is exciting for the performers, who never know when a camera might zoom in on them for a closeup.

"There's a certain adrenaline level that goes up and it also gives a chance for members of the company to kind of step out," Gelb said.

Other opera houses are taking note.

The San Francisco Opera is preparing to offer six shows to about 200 theaters, beginning in March. The shows will be taped during a performance for later transmission.

Italy's La Scala is already showing seven taped productions per season in 30 U.S. theaters, while the Royal Opera in London is considering its own program. The Washington National Opera transmits simulcasts to a dozen college campuses and a few high schools.

Stephane Lissner, La Scala's general manager, said his company's transmissions to U.S. theaters are aimed at the American viewer who wouldn't travel to Europe for opera.

"This is a message of the existence and the importance of world culture," he said.

Gelb couldn't agree more.

"The Met is where the action is now, reaching the global movie audience," he said.

Stars of stage and screen

The Met's broadcasts of live opera into cinemas are a hit by any definition

By Hugh Canning



Tomorrow, the Metropolitan Opera's hugely successful series of live high-definition cinema relays from New York continues with Humperdinck's seasonal classic, *Hansel and Gretel*. It will be sung in English translation and seen in the scary, fantastical production by Richard Jones, first staged by Welsh National Opera

more than a decade ago. Alice Coote and Christine Schäfer star as the hungry children, with Rosalind Plowright as their short-tempered mother, and Philip Langridge in his role debut as the Witch – a devilish piece of casting. Vladimir Jurowski, the original conductor of this well-travelled show, presides over the wonderful James Levine-trained Metropolitan Opera orchestra. It should be a treat.

Exposing the Met to cinema audiences has been the most signal achievement of the company's new general director, Peter Gelb. The take-up for last season's series of six relays – four to the UK – extended beyond his wildest dreams, and he predicts upwards of 1m viewers for this season's eight relays to 600 cinemas in 13 countries. All the world's leading houses are keen to follow Gelb's lead: Glyndebourne has made a modest start with commercial DVD screenings, and La Scala, in Milan, has announced that five of its productions, including the *Tristan und Isolde* I wrote about last week, will receive the HD movie-theatre treatment.

The Met's Live in HD season began on December 15 with everyone's favourite diva *du jour*, the Russian beauty Anna Netrebko, as Gounod's Juliette. Her *Roméo* should have been her regular stage beau, Rolando Villazon, but the Mexican tenor's six-month rest break meant that the Met had to commandeer four Montagues Jr for a run that began in September and finished last week. On a recent visit to New York, I got the HD relay's *Roméo*, Roberto Alagna – portlier of figure and greyer of voice than when he made his sensational Covent Garden debut in the role in 1994, but still a force to be reckoned with in romantic French opera. Nowadays, he has to work hard for his high notes, but his sung French is always a pleasure. When he sings Ah! *Lève-toi, soleil* (Ah, sun, arise), you hear every word, with immaculate vowels and incisive consonants. In today's world of operatic verbal mush, he is a shining light.

No such luck with his lady, whose French comes from the dark recesses of a Russian throat. Once again, Netrebko, for all her physical attractions, showed that she is no vocal virtuosa,

but, after a splodgy Waltz Song, she rose to the lyrical challenge of her shining, ever-darkening soprano, and she fills the 4,000-seat Met with apparent ease. I await her *Butterfly*, even her *Tosca*, with barely contained impatience. Those who attended the live cinema relay on December 15 will no doubt have appreciated La Netrebko's movie-star looks, but I wonder if they were convinced by her tarty antics in Act I. Juliet as sexual predator – a carbon copy of her *Manon Lescaut* in Massenet's opera – is a new take on Shakespeare's virginal ingénue, but not one I hope to see repeated with regularity.

Gelb talks incessantly about innovation in opera, and he is always prepared to think the unthinkable. While I was in New York, rumour was rife that he was going to offer Andrea Bocelli admittance to the Golden Horseshoe's hallowed halls, though presumably only in concert. (On the subject of Bocelli, I was mistaken, in my article two weeks ago, that he had never sung an opera on stage: in fact, he sang *Werther* in Detroit in 1999, and has since sung with several of the smaller Italian companies.)

Not that you would think much innovation is going on in the production department. There are revivals of *Roméo et Juliette*; Prokofiev's *War and Peace*, with Covent Garden's rising Young Artist Marina Poplavskaya as Natasha Rostova – her biggest international assignment to date, to which she rose magnificently – and a fine young Kirov baritone, Alexej Markov, as Prince Andrei; and Stephen Wadsworth's new production of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride*, with Placido Domingo singing his first *Oreste* opposite Susan Graham's widely travelled sacrificial priestess. All suggest that Gelb will have his work cut out weaning his audiences off grand, period-costumed spectacles, although, to be fair, none of these productions was his commission.

Graham enjoyed a personal triumph as *Iphigénie* in her home town, and Domingo remains a vocal phenomenon, even if he is, to put it mildly, cavalier with the text. His presence and virile, ringing tone belie his 66 years.

Upcoming Met goodies in the cinema include Karita Mattila as Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* (on February 16); John Doyle's new production of *Peter Grimes* (March 15); Ben Heppner and Deborah Voigt as *Tristan and Isolde* (March 22); Angela Gheorghiu as Mimi in the spectacular Zeffirelli *La bohème* (April 5); and Natalie Dessay and Juan Diego Florez in the co-production of Donizetti's *La Fille du régiment* seen last January at Covent Garden (April 26).

For full details, visit www.picturehouses.co.uk; for La Scala's series, go to www.emergingpictures.com/opera_venues.htm. The Royal Opera's *La Fille du régiment* is on BBC4 tonight.