



**Igor Levit and Marina Abramović Premiere
New Interpretation of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*
at Park Avenue Armory**

New York, NY—October 8, 2015/ Updated December 3, 2015—Park Avenue Armory has commissioned pianist Igor Levit and performance artist Marina Abramović to create a reimagining of the traditional concert experience. *Goldberg* transforms the soaring Wade Thompson Drill Hall into a meditative environment and applies elements of the Abramović Method to classical music, crafting an audience experience that transcends the rituals of contemporary daily life and invites a deep and personal engagement with Levit's performance of Johann Sebastian Bach's keyboard masterpiece, *Goldberg Variations*. The new work is presented for seven performances, December 7 – 19, 2015.

"This collaboration examines the importance of challenging ourselves to escape today's world of constant digital connection and experience works of art free from preconception and the noise and distractions of contemporary existence," said Rebecca Robertson, President and Executive Producer of Park Avenue Armory. "We have worked with both Igor and Marina in the past, and are excited to welcome them back to the Armory as they unite their expertise for the realization of a new work that pushes past audiences' typical engagement with classical music."

Goldberg invites audiences to become a part of the music and experience the *Goldberg Variations* in an entirely new context. The audience prepares for Levit's performance by dispossessing themselves of the trappings of everyday society and entering the experience from a position of complete internal and external silence—elevating their engagement and focus on the work, itself a study of a single harmonic foundation, and heightening the effect of the piece on their mind and body. Upon entry audience members are asked to place their personal belongings—including cell phones, watches, and other technological devices—inside a private locker within the Armory's historic head house rooms. They are then guided into the drill hall, where seating is arranged in the round and a minimalist lighting design by Urs Schönebaum frames the performance space. Wearing noise-canceling headphones, the crowd will sit in silence for 30 minutes, after which Levit performs all 30 of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* on a platform that slowly moves into the center of the audience and rotates as the piece progresses.

"One Armory programming strand has been to invite music and visual artists to stage concerts in the drill hall, beginning in 2013 with Stockhausen's *OKTOPHONIE* by Rirkrit Tiravanija, followed by Massive Attack and Adam Curtis and most recently Hélène Grimaud with Douglas Gordon's *tears become... streams become...*," said Artistic Director Alex Poots. "This culminates with the prodigal Igor Levit performing the *Goldberg Variations* envisioned by Marina Abramović, with her rare and precious talent for work that explores the relationship between performer and audience."

Goldberg marks the second time Park Avenue Armory has engaged both artists and also continues the organization's commitment to presenting groundbreaking realizations of contemporary, popular, and classical music that utilize the expanse of the drill hall to engage with audiences in intimate and innovative ways. In 2014, the Armory presented Levit's acclaimed North American recital debut—an all-Beethoven program, part of the annual recital series held in the exquisitely renovated Board of Officers Room. In 2013, the Armory presented the U.S. premiere of *The Life and Death of Marina Abramović*—an intersection of theater, opera, and visual art chronicling the performance artist's life and work. Additional music engagements include: a radical re-staging of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, performed by the Berliner Philharmoniker, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle, and directed by Peter Sellars; the New York and indoor premiere of John Luther Adams' *Inuksuit* performed by dozens of percussionists throughout the Armory's drill hall and historic head house; an intimate series of concerts by The xx blurring the boundaries between artist and audience; Stockhausen's electronic masterpiece *OKTOPHONIE* in a lunar environment created by Rirkrit Tiravanija; the New York Philharmonic performing Karlheinz Stockhausen's sonic

masterpiece *Gruppen* with three orchestras surrounding the audience; and Bernd Alois Zimmermann's harrowing *Die Soldaten*, in which the audience moved "through the music."

Goldberg is the final presentation of the Armory's 2015 season, which encompassed site-specific installations, commissions, and cross-disciplinary collaborations across a range of art forms including: *FLEXN*—an evolution of the Brooklyn-born street dance flex co-directed by Peter Sellars and dance pioneer Reggie (Regg Roc) Gray; *H(N)Y P N(Y) OSIS*, Philippe Parreno's largest exhibition in the U.S. to date, a multi-sensory journey within the monumental interior of the Armory's drill hall; the U.S. premiere of the new contemporary dance *Tree of Codes* by Wayne McGregor, Olafur Eliasson, and Jamie xx; *HABEAS CORPUS*, a penetrating new work by Laurie Anderson in collaboration with Mohammed el Gharani; and the third annual recital series featuring the U.S. premiere of *The Night Dances* by Charlotte Rampling and Sonia Wieder-Atherton, a concert of songs from World War I by Ian Bostridge, a performance of Viennese lieder by Christian Gerhaher and Gerold Huber, and more.

Goldberg

December 7 - 19, 2015

Monday: 7:00pm

Tuesday - Friday: 8:00pm

Saturday - Saturday: 3:00pm

World Premiere

Igor Levit, Pianist

Marina Abramović, Visual Artist

Urs Schönebaum, Lighting Designer

Commissioned by Park Avenue Armory

Tickets are \$65 and are available at armoryonpark.org or by calling (212) 933-5812

About Marina Abramović

Since the beginning of her career in Belgrade during the early 1970s, Marina Abramović has pioneered performance as a visual art form. The body has always been both her subject and medium. Exploring her physical and mental limits in works that ritualize the simple actions of everyday life, she has withstood pain, exhaustion, and danger in her quest for emotional and spiritual transformation. From 1975 to 1988, Abramović and the German artist Ulay performed together, dealing with relations of duality. Abramović returned to solo performances in 1989.

Abramović has presented her work at major institutions in the U.S. and Europe, including the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 1985; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1990; Neue National Galerie, Berlin, 1993; and the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, 1995. She has also participated in many large-scale international exhibitions including the Venice Biennale (1976 and 1997) and Documenta VI, VII, and IX, Kassel (1977, 1982, and 1992). Performances include *The House with the Ocean View* at Sean Kelly Gallery, New York in 2002, and the Performance *7 Easy Pieces* at Guggenheim Museum, New York in 2005. In 2010, Abramović had her first major U.S. retrospective and simultaneously performed for over 700 hours in *The Artist is Present* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Using herself and the public as medium, Abramović performed for three months at the Serpentine Gallery in London, 2014; the piece was titled after the duration of the work, "512 Hours".

Recent projects include the theater piece *The Life and Death of Marina Abramović* directed by Robert Wilson, which premiered and toured Europe beginning in 2011, and was performed in 2013 at the Park Avenue Armory. Her collaboration with the Paris Opera for the restaging of *Bolero* premiered in May 2013. Abramović founded the Marina Abramović Institute (MAI), a platform for immaterial and long durational work to create new possibilities for collaboration among thinkers of all fields. The institute inhabited its most complete form to date in 2015 as part of the exhibition "Terra Comunal", SESC Pompeia, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Abramović was awarded the Golden Lion for Best Artist at the 1997 Venice Biennale for the video installation and performance *Balkan Baroque*. In 2008 she was decorated with the Austrian Commander Cross for her contribution to art history. In 2013, the French Minister of Culture accepted her as an Officer to the Order of Arts and Letters. In addition to these and other awards, Abramović also holds multiple honorary doctorates from institutions around the world.

About Igor Levit

Igor Levit is an internationally acclaimed pianist, who made his U.S. recital debut in 2014 at Park Avenue Armory. His 2015–16 season focuses on three of the piano literature’s most paramount cyclic works—Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*, Ludwig van Beethoven’s *Diabelli Variations*, and Frederic Rzewski’s variation cycle *The People United Will Never Be Defeated*. Levit performs all three variation cycles at Frankfurt’s Alte Oper in September before presenting *Goldberg* at the Armory in collaboration with Marina Abramović, *Diabelli* in London’s Wigmore Hall, and Rzewski’s *The People* in Hamburg and in Birmingham. In October 2015, Sony Classical released Igor Levit’s third solo album for the label featuring all three variation works in cooperation with the Festival Heidelberger Frühling. The season marks the finale of his Beethoven Sonata cycle at the Schubertiade, spanning over three years, and saw him perform all Beethoven sonatas at Tonhalle Düsseldorf. Further solo recitals bring Igor Levit to the Lucerne Festival, the Musikverein Vienna, Bilbao’s Philharmonic Society, and to the U.S. in a multi-city tour. The season marks his debuts with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, Tonhalle-Orchester Zurich, and NDR Sinfonieorchester, and return engagements with Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, Deutsches Symphonieorchester Berlin, and the Royal Scottish National Symphony (Thomas Søndergård). Igor Levit continues his close relationship with the Heidelberger Frühling as the Artistic Director of the Festival’s Chamber Music Academy in April 2016.

An exclusive recording artist for Sony Classical, Levit’s debut disc of the five last Beethoven sonatas won the BBC Music Magazine Newcomer of the Year 2014 Award, the Royal Philharmonic Society’s Young Artist Award 2014, and the ECHO 2014 for Solo Recording of the Year (19th Century Music)/Piano. His second recording for Sony—Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Six Partitas*—was released in August 2014.

Born in Nizhny Novgorod in 1987, Igor Levit moved at age eight with his family to Germany, where he completed his piano studies at Hannover Academy of Music, Theatre and Media in 2009 with the highest academic and performance scores in the history of the institute. Levit has studied under the tutelage of Karl-Heinz Kämmerling, Matti Raekallio, Bernd Goetze, Lajos Rovatkay, and Hans Leygraf. As youngest participant in the 2005 Arthur Rubinstein Competition in Tel Aviv, Igor Levit won the Silver Prize, the Prize for Best Performer of Chamber Music, the “Audience Favorite” Prize, and the Prize for Best Performer of Contemporary Music. Previously, he had won the First Prize of the International Hamamtsu Piano Academy Competition in Japan. Igor Levit has been a scholarship student at Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes as well as at Deutsche Stiftung Musikleben. In Hannover, where he makes his home, Igor Levit is playing on a Steinway D Grand Piano kindly lent to him by the Trustees of Independent Opera at Sadler’s Wells.

Funding for *Goldberg* and Park Avenue Armory’s 2015 Season

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

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Support for Park Avenue Armory’s artistic season has been generously provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Booth Ferris Foundation, The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, The Shubert Foundation, the Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, The Marc Haas Foundation, the Juliet Lea Hillman Simonds Foundation, The Leon Levy Foundation, the May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation, and the Isak and Rose Weinman Foundation.

About Park Avenue Armory

Part palace, part industrial shed, Park Avenue Armory fills a critical void in the cultural ecology of New York by enabling artists to create—and audiences to experience—unconventional work that cannot be mounted in traditional performance halls and museums. With its soaring 55,000-square-foot Wade Thompson Drill Hall—reminiscent of 19th-century European train stations—and array of exuberant period rooms, the Armory offers a new platform for creativity across all art forms.

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

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

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