

Guantánamo Bay Detainee Appears in Laurie Anderson Premiere at Park Avenue Armory

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by Pat Rogers

Laurie Anderson premieres “Habeas Corpus”, a new performance piece combined with an multi-media installation, at the Park Avenue Armory this weekend. One of the youngest detainee at Guantánamo Bay, now living in South Africa, will be “beamed in” to take part in the performance. His story forms the center of “Habeas Corpus”. Presented as part of “Habeas Corpus” is a stand-alone multi-media installation featuring musician collaborations.

The installation soundscape was created by the late musician Lou Reed (1942-2013), Anderson’s husband. Live improvised music will enliven the installation when “Habeas Corpus” is not being performed, creating art at the Park Avenue Armory that’s activated for most of the weekend.



Laurie Anderson. Photo: Tatijana Shoan. Courtesy of Park Avenue Armory.

The U.S. premiere of “Habeas Corpus” will be presented nightly at 8 p.m. from October 2 – 4, 2015. Audiences should be forewarned: not only is the subject matter difficult but experiencing the

performance may be a challenge. General admission only, the performance requires standing for the length of the show.

The multi-media performance piece examines the story of [Mohammed el Gharani](#), one of the youngest detainee at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba. Performance artist [Laurie Anderson](#) has been working with Gharani since March 2016 to develop the performance art, according to a [column she wrote for The New Yorker](#).

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Gharani also appears in “Habeas Corpus”. During the New York performance, his image will be broadcast live from South Africa to the Park Avenue Armory onto an oversized three-dimensional cast of his body that was inspired by the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, wrote Anderson.

“I had planned this as a meditation about real time and telepresence: how to be there and not there at the same time,” she wrote for [The New Yorker](#). “Like all former Guantánamo detainees, Mohammed is not allowed to come to the U.S. I had imagined “Habeas Corpus” as a work of silent witness, deriving its power from live streaming, technology, and stillness—a work of equally balanced presence and absence.”

In addition to the performance, a multi-media installation is open for viewing during the day. Installed in the drill hall, visitors are encouraged to come inside and meditate on time, identity, surveillance and freedom. The installation includes a soundscape originally designed by Lou Reed, film by Anderson, and improvised live music performances held throughout the day.

The soundscape features feedback from guitars and amps combined with sounds pulled from audio surveillance and nature. Films screening include “From the Air” by Anderson, which explores the impact of global events on daily life and resonates with themes explored in el Gharani’s story, according to [The Park Avenue Armory](#).

Evenings wrap up with a concert and dance party featuring Laurie Anderson, Syrian singer Omar Souleyman, Merrill Garbus of tUnE-yArDs, multi-instrumentalist Shahzad Ismaily and guitarist Stewart Hurwood. Libations will be available at a special bar in the Board of Officers Room until 10 p.m.

“Habeas Corpus” was commissioned by The Park Avenue Armory.

Laurie Anderson and Lou Reed lived in Amagansett in The Hamptons. Anderson’s video installation *At the Shrink’s*, 1975 was exhibited at Guild Hall in “[Escape: Video Art](#)” in 2012 at the East Hampton museum. Anderson has performed at Guild Hall and given lectures at LongHouse Reserve, also in East Hampton, N.Y.

BASIC FACTS: “Habeas Corpus” will be presented October 2 – 4, 2015 at 8 p.m. at the Park Avenue Armory. Tickets are \$45 and include access to the installation. Performances are general

admission and has audience members standing for the entire length of the show. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. To purchase tickets, click [here](#). The Park Avenue Armory is located 643 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10065. www.armoryonpark.org.

RELATED: "[Bringing Guantánamo to Park Avenue](#)" by Laurie Anderson. Published in The New Yorker on September 23, 2015.

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