



NEW YORK CITY
AIDS MEMORIAL

***Hear Me: Voices of the Epidemic* to debut at the New York City AIDS Memorial on World AIDS Day, 2020**

This open-space experiential sound-and-light based installation will run for thirty consecutive evenings beginning Tuesday, December 1

New York City AIDS Memorial | Corner of West 12th Street & Greenwich Avenue



Photo: Mark Abrahams

New York, NY – October 15, 2020—The New York City AIDS Memorial will launch an original sound-based installation on **Tuesday, December 1**, in recognition of **World AIDS Day**. The hour-long soundtrack is composed of historical texts, poetry, speeches, music, and more that capture the history of the epidemic. Examples include a powerful speech by activist Vito Russo, a touching song composed by Michael Callen, historic recordings of an ACT UP-led protest made by artist David Wojnarowicz, and a contemporary poem by artist Kia LaBeija, who was born at St. Vincent’s Hospital in 1990, steps from where the Memorial sits today. The program will be broadcast from within the Memorial nightly at 7 p.m. through December, accompanied by a distinctive lighting installation. *Hear Me* will be preceded each day, beginning at 10 a.m., by a recording featuring the names of over 2,000 New Yorkers lost to AIDS and read by *What Would an HIV Doula Do?*, a group of activists, caregivers, friends, long-term survivors of HIV/AIDS, and people living with HIV today.

Hear Me will invite audiences to experience both the transformation of the permanent structure of the New York City AIDS Memorial by using state-of-the-art speakers and advanced lighting systems designed by leading engineering firm Arup. This program will be

free and open to the public and can easily be experienced while maintaining all advised social distancing protocols. *Hear Me* is the third exhibition under the **NYC AIDS Memorial Arts and Education Initiative**. This initiative supports interactive, experiential, digital, and site-specific educational and arts programming and furthers the Memorial's aim throughout the world.

"In times of uncertainty, people look to the past for guidance," says New York City AIDS Memorial Executive Director Dave Harper. "Since our dedication on World AIDS Day in 2016, it has been the goal of the New York City AIDS Memorial to create a living and breathing tribute to the 100,000 New Yorkers lost to AIDS, and to the activists and caretakers who led the fight to end AIDS. This installation will connect the power of this place to the voices of the past, allowing visitors to learn and engage within our sacred space. We are thrilled to launch a new project that centers our organizational mission of remembrance during these challenging times while also creating public awareness of the ongoing AIDS epidemic through educational and cultural initiatives. We look forward to welcoming the public to the Memorial during a time when cultural projects have been limited by this ongoing pandemic."

"During this time, I think a lot of us are trying to figure out how to be together," observes the creative consultant for *Hear Me*, Theodore (ted) Kerr. "*Hear Me* is an answer, a bold and visionary way forward. It is a sound installation that uses our AIDS history, voices from our movements, and the Memorial as a place for community. Every night, for a month, *Hear Me* is an open invitation for people to social distance together, a place to reflect on the past, gather in the present, and imagine and work towards a better future."

Hear Me will be supported by a new, online conversation series called *A Time To Listen*. This six-episode recorded series features a wide breadth of thought leaders, artists, and activists sharing current experiences and knowledge of AIDS history connected to New York City and beyond through a discussion of media, including speeches, songs, poems, plays, and oral histories. Contributors include journalists Ann Northrop and Kenyon Farrow, activists Cecilia Gentili and Kiara St. James, playwright Donja R. Love, DJ Danny Krivit, poet Timothy DuWhite, and author Alysia Abbott, along with *Hear Me* creative team Dave Harper and Theodore (ted) Kerr. Episodes will be published on Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout the month of November, beginning November 5, in the lead up to the launch of *Hear Me* at the New York City AIDS Memorial on World AIDS Day. For more information, and a full list of participants, please visit our mini-site at www.atimetolisten.org or at www.nycaidsmemorial.org.

Funding for *Hear Me* has been generously provided by the Ralph Lauren Corporate Foundation, Google, Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, Doordash, Twitter, and the New York City Council Speaker's Fund.

About The NYC AIDS Memorial:

Founded as a grass-roots advocacy effort in early 2011, the NYC AIDS Memorial organization is now a 501(c)3 corporation, with a fourteen-person board of directors, chaired by Keith Fox.

The Memorial sits at the gateway to a public park adjacent to the former site of St. Vincent's Hospital, which housed the city's first and largest AIDS ward. The hospital became the symbolic epicenter of the disease through depictions in *The Normal Heart*, *Angels in America*, and other important works of film, literature, and art that tell the story of the plague years in New York. The park site is also one block from the LGBT Community Center on 13th Street, where ACT-UP and other AIDS advocacy/support groups first organized, and it sits within blocks of the first headquarters of GMHC as well as the office of a doctor on West 12th Street, who Lambda Legal protected from eviction for treating early AIDS patients. Furthermore, the site is highly visible, accessible, and surrounded by amenities for visitors. For all these reasons, New York City officially named the new park that houses the memorial the "New York City AIDS Memorial Park at St. Vincent's Triangle." The Memorial was dedicated on World AIDS Day, December 1, 2016.

Sound design, programming, and production for Hear Me are by Helen Searle, Léonard Roussel, Ryan Cox and Raj Patel, Arup. Lighting design is by Kristen Garibaldi and Xena Petkanas, Arup.

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