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SITI's US Tour of Julia Wolfe's STEEL HAMMER Continues in VA, TN & Brooklyn

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Since its founding in 1992, SITI Company has redefined contemporary theater in the United States through an innovative approach to collaboration, cultural exchange and actor training. The company's newest project is a dramatic incarnation of 2015 Pulitzer Prize-winner Julia Wolfe's profound art ballad STEEL HAMMER. Anne Bogart directs this musical retelling of the John Henry legend for six members of SITI Company who perform with the Bang on a Can All-Stars and singers Emily Eagen, Katie Geissinger, and Molly Quinn.

STEEL HAMMER premiered at Actors Theatre of Louisville in the 2014 Humana Festival of New American Plays, and continues its U.S. tour this fall at Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA (November 17), OZ Arts Nashville in Nashville, TN (November 20-21), and as part of BAM's 2015 Next Wave Festival (December 2-6).

Wolfe's text in STEEL HAMMER is culled from the many iterations of the century-old John Henry ballad and her music incorporates elements of minimalism, Appalachian folk music, and rock. Deconstructing and resetting more than 200 versions of the famous ballad, STEEL HAMMER examines not only the subject of human vs. machine, but delves into the richly populated mythos of American folklore and roots music. Intersecting the music in this production is text commissioned from four remarkable American playwrights -- Kia Corthron, Will Power, Carl Hancock Rux and Regina Taylor -- based on hearsay, recollection, and tall tales. Performers in STEEL HAMMER take on wooden bones, mountain dulcimer, step dancing, and more as they explore the human impulse to tell stories and this quintessential tale of an American folk hero who worked on the railroad.

"STEEL HAMMER is nothing less than a meeting of hearts, minds and bodies," says Bogart. "Julia Wolfe's extraordinary music composition, the brilliance of the Bang on a Can All Stars, the fluency of four remarkable playwrights and the shared sensibilities of SITI Company's actors and designers."

"STEEL HAMMER was really inspired by my love for the legends and music of Appalachia," Wolfe explains. "It's a return to my musical roots in folk music, and when I wrote the piece, I looked to the breadth of musicianship in the Bang on a Can All-Stars. I was also moved by the myriad of songsters, some known, some not-so-known, who filled my ears with their own personal versions of the John Henry ballad."

STEEL HAMMER the score was commissioned by Bang on a Can with generous support from Maria and Robert A. Skirnick and Carnegie Hall. The play STEEL HAMMER was created with support from Actors Theatre of Louisville and the National Endowment for the Arts. The dramatized stage production of STEEL HAMMER was commissioned by the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts/University of Illinois and by BAM for the 2015 Next Wave Festival.

On December 3, SITI Company will honor Kristy Edmunds at the Company's 2015 Benefit. As an artist, teacher, curator and artistic director, Kristy Edmunds holds a reputation for innovation and insight in the presentation of contemporary art in all disciplines. The 2015 Benefit will begin at 5:30pm with cocktails and dinner at UrbanGlass (647 Fulton St, Brooklyn) followed by a 7:30pm performance of STEEL HAMMER at the BAM Harvey Theater (651 Fulton St, Brooklyn), followed by an after-party at UrbanGlass. Tickets - starting at \$500 for the full event, and with \$150 tickets for only the performance and after-party - can be purchased by contacting Development & Communications Manager Alexandra Lalonde at alexandra@siti.org or 212.868.0860 x102. Visit www.siti.org/2015benefit for more information.

Watch a clip from the show below!

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About the Artists:

Julia Wolfe, winner of the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in music, draws inspiration from folk, classical, and rock genres, bringing a modern sensibility to each while simultaneously tearing down the walls between them. Wolfe's music is distinguished by an intense physicality and a relentless power that pushes performers to extremes and demands attention from the audience. Her music has been heard in venues worldwide including BAM, the Sydney Olympic Arts Festival, **Théâtre de la Ville**, Lincoln Center, and **Carnegie Hall**, and has been recorded on Cantaloupe, Teldec, Point/Universal, **Sony Classical**, and Argo/Decca.

Formed in 1992, New York's electric chamber ensemble, Bang on a Can All-Stars is recognized worldwide for its ultra-dynamic live performances and recordings of today's most innovative music. Freely crossing the boundaries between classical, jazz, rock, world, and experimental music, this six-member amplified ensemble has consistently forged a distinct category-defying identity, taking music into uncharted territories.

Anne Bogart is the artistic director of SITI Company, which she founded with Japanese director Tadashi Suzuki in 1992. She is a professor at Columbia University where she runs the Graduate Directing Program. She and SITI have created several dozen works including *A Rite* (Next Wave 2013), *Trojan Women* (After Euripides) (Next Wave 2012), *Hotel Cassiopeia* (Next Wave 2007), *bobrauschenbergamerica* (Next Wave 2003), *War of the Worlds-the Radio Play* (Next Wave 2000). She is the author of five books: *A Director Prepares*; *The Viewpoints Book*; *And Then, You Act*; *Conversations with Anne*; and *What's the Story*.

SITI Company is an ensemble theater company based in New York that tours extensively throughout the United States and internationally. SITI is dedicated to the creation of new work, the training of theater artists, and to international collaboration. Founded in 1992 by **Anne Bogart**, Tadashi Suzuki and a group of like-minded artists, SITI seeks to redefine and revitalize contemporary theater in the United States through an emphasis on international cultural exchange and collaboration.

SITI provides a rich context where the interaction of art, artists, audiences and ideas inspire the possibility for change, optimism and hope. Led by Co-Artistic Directors **Anne Bogart**, Leon Ingulsrud and **Ellen Lauren**, the company believes that through the practice of collaboration, a group of artists working together over time can have a significant impact upon both contemporary theater and the world at large.

Through the Company's performances, educational programs and collaborations with other artists and thinkers, SITI continues to challenge the status quo, to train to achieve artistic excellence in every aspect of our work, and to offer new ways of seeing and of being as both artists and as global citizens.

SITI has traveled to 22 countries on five continents and created more than 40 new productions including such iconic works as *Under Construction* (2009), *The Medium* (1994), *Death and the Ploughman* (2004), *bobrauschenbergamerica* (2001), *War of the Worlds-The Radio Play* (1999), *Hotel Cassiopeia* (2006), and a triptych of solo pieces inspired by great artists: *Bob* (1998), *Room* (2000), and *Score* (2002). SITI has also engaged in collaborations with other great artists such as the **Martha Graham Dance Company** (*American Document*, 2010), the **Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company** (*A Rite*, 2013), visual artist **Ann Hamilton** (the theater is a blank page, 2015), and Bang on a Can (*STEEL HAMMER*, 2014).

Among the countless accolades SITI as a whole, as well as its members individually, have garnered are: seven OBIE awards; two Guggenheim Fellowships, Doris Duke Artist Award, USA Artists Rockefeller Fellowship; **American Theatre Wing's Henry Hewes** design award, Best Foreign Production at the Dublin Festival, and several Drama Desk Award nominations.

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