INTERNATIONAL CEREMONY
FOR THE CENTENARY OF THE 1918 ARMISTICE

SUNDAY 11TH NOVEMBER 2018
The first Irish Guards battalion rejoices over news of the armistice in Maubeuge.
12th November 1918.
INTERNATIONAL CEREMONY
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SUNDAY 11TH NOVEMBER 2018
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On the 11th November at 11 a.m. the guns fell silent. A deafening stillness reigned over the battlefields of the western front where only a few minutes before men were still being killed. The soldiers were overcome with amazement. “We just couldn’t believe it,” wrote a priest, Father Lissorgues. “No shouting, no drunkenness. Men went up to each other and shook hands. The feeling of joy was too deep, too serious to be expressed in words or rowdiness”. Some wept. The cheering would come later.

Officers had known the news since the day before and the armistice had been signed at 5:45 am. But soldiers and civilians had no inkling of it. Parisians were the first to be informed, and as soon as 11 o’clock came, the bells rang out and the inhabitants came out onto the streets. They sang, waved French and allied flags and decked buildings in the national colours. That afternoon saw the official announcement to parliament followed by Clemenceau’s speech. In the provinces it took time to telephone the town halls so that the bells sounded later – half past twelve in Mende and later still in the villages. But everywhere there was the same immense joy though of course many were in mourning and the widows, dressed in black, often stayed at home.

As a clean break with the fighting, the armistice had earlier roots. At the end of September, Ludendorff and Hindenburg obliged the Emperor to end the war. Since defeat was certain, it was better to negotiate while the army was still fighting in France. Because President Wilson of the United States of America had formulated the Fourteen Points (January 1918) as a programme for a just peace and a condemnation of secret diplomacy, the Germans thought it preferable to negotiate with him rather than with Foch, Clemenceau or Lloyd George. They did not ask for an armistice but wrote to him on 4 October to say that they were ready to negotiate peace on the basis of the Fourteen Points.

Since the United States had declared war on Germany separately from the Allies, Wilson did not consult the latter before replying. Faced with their shocked reaction, he negotiated the detail of his responses with them but it was he who provided the overall framework. Agreement was reached on the issue of whether the war should be continued onto German soil. Public opinion would not have understood why men should continue to die when Germany had thrown in the sponge. However, if the Allies had to accept the Fourteen Points, they got Wilson to agree that Germany must make compensation “for all damage done to the civilian populations […] by the aggression of Germany by land, by sea and from the air.”

Meanwhile, the situation in Germany deteriorated. Austria had signed an armistice; the army was beginning to disintegrate; and the shops were empty. Following the example of the Soviets in Russia, sailors’, soldiers’ and workers’ councils were taking power: it was the revolution. The government accepted the conditions that Wilson had sent on 5 November. On the 9th, Emperor William II abdicated, Wilson having insisted that “representatives of the German people” sign the armistice. The socialists formed a government that was weakened by the parallel power of the councils. At one and the same time, Germany went from the hope for victory to the recognition of defeat and from empire to democracy.

The armistice was tougher than expected. Germany had to evacuate Belgium, Luxembourg and above all Alsace-Lorraine within a fortnight. The west bank of the Rhine and three bridgeheads were occupied. However, German soldiers were not made prisoners; they were able to return home, parading in good order and welcomed as heroes who had victoriously prevented the enemy from invading national territory. Germany did not have the sense of being vanquished and that provided the base on which the legend of the stab in the back was built.

The armistice, however, was not the peace. While the Peace Conference assembled in Paris in January 1919 and France demobilised part of its army, revolution spread in Austria and Hungary, civil war broke out in Russia, and aggravated nationalist sentiments unleashed violence and massacres across Eastern and Central Europe. The war was not over for everyone. It would take years to emerge from it.

Antoine Prost
Emeritus Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Paris - Sorbonne and President of the Scientific Committee of the First World War Centennial Mission
The eyes of the world were riveted on France on 11 November 1918. Not only had a majority of countries participated in the war but six million soldiers from abroad (Germany, the British Empire and the United States) were still fighting on French and Belgian soil. Rumours had abounded for five days about the negotiation of an armistice, requested by the Germans owing to their trouble in pursuing even a defensive effort since their allies (Bulgaria, the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary) had crumbled. Nonetheless, the cease-fire at 11 a.m. on the last front – after more than four years of industrialised warfare and over ten million military dead – was a shock. In an instant, the news travelled around the world thanks to that thoroughly modern invention, wireless telegraphy.

Never before had there been such a spontaneous explosion of emotions (especially in the victorious countries) at a global level. Offices emptied, factories were abandoned and to the background of ringing bells (Big Ben in London chimed for the first time since August 1914), crowds invaded the streets. After such efforts, such anxieties, it was time to celebrate. The British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, declared: “At eleven o’clock this war will be over. We have won a great victory, and we are entitled to a bit of shouting.” In London, New York, Melbourne and in the most remote corners of the allied countries, there was the same mixture of joy, hope and simple survival. Of course, there were those (as in France) isolated by their grief. “It’s come too late for me,” said Vera Brittain, a volunteer nurse, 24 years of age, who had lost both her fiancé and her brother.

The defeated countries experienced the same sense of relief. However, defeat overturned the political situation from one day to the next. In Germany as in Austria, the 10 and 11 November respectively witnessed the emperors fleeing into exile, both countries having become parliamentary democracies in the midst of more radical social movements. In eastern Europe, nation states emerged or were consolidated with the collapse of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires. Thus 11 November saw the rebirth of an independent Poland. On the other hand, Bolshevik Russia, which had exited the Great War nearly a year earlier, plunged into a civil war in which the western powers and Japan intervened. The chaotic creation of a Europe of nation-states in the east, the Bolshevik Revolution, and counter-revolutionary outbursts in Italy and the defeated countries of central Europe (Germany, Austria, Hungary), all triggered new conflicts in the midst of which the victorious powers would try to create peace. Similarly, in the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain and France would appropriate the former Arab provinces (laying the basis of the current Middle East) while at the same time failing in their attempt to prevent the emergence of an independent Turkey at the expense of national minorities in the region, the Armenians among others. This “greater war” would continue until round about 1923.

However, all that, on 11 November 1918, remained veiled by a future that it was hoped would be more radiant. For a vision floated over public opinion in the victorious countries as in the vanquished. According to the man who embodied it, President Wilson, in the speech that he delivered to Congress in Washington on 11 November, it was a matter of freeing the world from war and from “armed imperialism” and allowing the different peoples to take “their place among the nations.” The armistice was not the peace; nor was the Peace Conference that opened in Paris in January 1919, from which emerged the various peace treaties. Peace was a long process which unfolded across the 1920s and whose fate was by no means a foregone conclusion. We can still perceive its lessons today.

John Horne
Emeritus, Trinity College Dublin. Emeritus Professor of Contemporary History, Trinity College Dublin and member of the Scientific Committee of the First World War Centennial Mission
Australian troops and civilians celebrate Armistice Day, Hunter Street, Sydney, 11 November 1918.
On 11th November 1918 the armistice was signed between Germany and the Allied forces, and the sound of the ceasefire echoed across the Western Front. More than four years of fighting in the north and east of France ended at that moment, to be replaced by relief and mourning in all the warring countries. The time was not yet ripe for the drawing up of treaties – even if the peace settlement was already a crucial issue for the forces present.

Citizens of what today amounts to more than eighty countries set foot on the Western Front during the four years of war. Soldiers, workers, paramedics, spies, nurses... whatever their role in the war, these men and women are the strongest testimony to the international nature of the Great War, a world war both in the diversity of the fronts where it took place as well as in the plurality of nationalities represented on the battlefields and behind the lines. Today, a hundred years after the signing of the armistice, we want to remember that this conflict was the first in history to have plunged all of humanity into turmoil.

The memorial season which has been taking place in France since 2013 reflects this international conflict. Throughout these five years of commemoration, many countries have come to pay tribute to their soldiers who fell at the front on French soil. Britain commemorated the Battle of the Somme in Thiepval in 2016, in the presence of its Prime Minister and members of the royal family. On 9th April 2017, 23,000 spectators, including 18,000 Canadians, came to Arras and Vimy for the centenary of the Battle of Vimy. 2017 was also the centenary year of the United States’ entry into the war and the arrival of the first American troops in France. In Villers-Bretonneux, 25th April 2018, 8,000 Australians met at the Australian Memorial for ANZAC Day and the Centenary of the Battle of Villers-Bretonneux. Portugal, New Zealand, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and so many others have also actively participated in the commemorations by holding ceremonies in France. And of course Germany became involved in the Centenary, from the laying of the first stone of the Franco-German memorial for the Great War at Hartmannswillerkopf (Haut-Rhin) on 3rd August 2014, to the visits of the German Chancellor at Compiegne and Paris on 10th and 11th November 2018, and of course the centenary of the Battle of Verdun on 29th May 2016.

Today, at the Arc de triomphe, the majority of countries that sent troops or workers to the Western Front are represented at the highest State level. Artists from America, Africa and Europe will bring this crucial international aspect to the ceremony. Testimonies written on 11th November 1918 by soldiers, by a worker, and by a woman, will be read by high school students in French, English, Chinese and German: we do not want to forget even for a moment that the First World War turned the whole world upside down, that it was equally difficult for all who experienced it, regardless of their nationality. To pay tribute to them is also to ask the question of the years to come: this will be at the centre of the discussions at the Paris Peace Forum, which will be launched on Sunday 11th November the afternoon.

A hundred years ago, soldiers from more than eighty countries laid down their arms on the Western Front. On Sunday, November 11th, 1918, we pay tribute to their sacrifice and that of their families, not forgetting a single one of the countries who paid such a high price in what remains one of the most tragic episodes of our shared history.
PROGRAMME
OF THE
INTERNATIONAL
CEREMONY
FOR THE CENTENARY
OF THE 1918 ARMISTICE

SUNDAY
11TH NOVEMBER
Military ceremony

The President of the Republic is welcomed by the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Armed Forces, the Secretary of State by the Minister of the Armed Forces, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, the President’s Chief of Staff and the Military Governor of Paris.

Accompanied by these authorities, the President of the Republic salutes the flags.

Military honours.

Review of Troops.

The President of the Republic and the authorities gather in front of the emblems of the bereaved military units. Roll call of soldiers who have died for France during the past year. “Last Post”. Minute of silence.

Performance of "La Marseillaise" by the French Army Choir.

Allons ! Enfants de la Patrie !
Le jour de gloire est arrivé !
Contre nous de la tyrannie,
L’étendard sanglant est levé ! (Bis)
Entendez-vous dans les campagnes
Mugir ces féroces soldats ?
Ils viennent jusque dans vos bras
Égorger vos fils, vos compagnes

Chorus
Aux armes, citoyens !
Formez vos bataillons !
Marchons, marchons !
Qu’un sang impur... 
Abreuve nos sillons !

The President of the Republic takes his place in the official gallery.

The Arc de Triomphe, place de l’Étoile (Paris).
The Saraband from Cello Suite no. 5 in C minor, BWV 1011, by Johann Sebastian Bach is part of a set of six suites for a solo cello (BWV 1007 to 1012) composed between 1720 and 1725, while the composer was master of music to the court of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen. In these suites, J.S. Bach highlights all the polyphonic capabilities of the instrument. They are today considered essential classics of the modern cello repertoire.
The younger generations wish to honour the memory of the women and men who lived through the Great War. For this tribute, eight French high school students will read testimonies written by soldiers from the main armed forces fighting on the Western Front in 1918, a Chinese worker serving in Normandy and a young French woman.

The eight readers and the forty-eight pupils accompanying them during the formal tribute to be paid to the grave of the unknown Soldier come from three high schools in the Seine-Saint-Denis region: André Boulloche High School (Livry-Gargan), Albert Schweitzer High School (Le Raincy) and the Paris East International High School (Noisy-le-Grand).

Enrolled in general studies programmes, Abibac classes (simultaneous issuance of the French baccalaureate and the German Abitur) or the international Baccalaureate (IB), they attest to the excellence of the students of the Créteil Academy, the investment of Éducation nationale in commemorations and the involvement of young generations in memorial work.

**READERS**

Nino NARBEY, final-year student at the André Boulloche High School (Livry-Gargan)
Yassine BEN HAMMOUDA, final-year student at the André Boulloche High School (Livry-Gargan)
Myriam AGUENI, final-year student at the André Boulloche High School (Livry-Gargan)
Jade GILLAS, final-year student at the André Boulloche High School (Livry-Gargan)
Nathalie XU, first-year student at the Paris East International High School (Noisy-le-Grand)
Alistair RENAUD, second-year student at the Paris East International High School (Noisy-le-Grand)
Alistair RENAUD, final-year student at the Paris East International High School (Noisy-le-Grand)
Louise MARIE, second-year student at the Albert Schweitzer High School (Le Raincy)

**PRESENTATION**

November 1918, Alsatian children giving flowers to soldiers (Strasbourg, Alsace).
INTRODUCTORY TEXT

The year 1918, one of the deadliest years of the First World War, mobilised exhausted societies on all fronts: on land, in the air and at sea. Soldiers on all continents were fighting and dying in thousands. On 11th November, at 11 a.m., the bugle and bells heralding the armistice rang out. A major turning point towards peace. In their notebooks and correspondence, women and men, both at home and at the front, bore witness to that day.

FIRST EXTRACT

Testimony from a French soldier
Sergeant Major Alfred Roumiguières, 343rd infantry regiment

7 novembre 1918,
Est-ce que je rêve ? Je me le demande. Le bruit court avec persistance. Est-il vrai qu’à l’heure qu’il est, l’armistice avec l’Allemagne a été conclu ? Je suis tellement content que j’ai peine à croire que cette nouvelle soit vraie. Dès que je me rends compte de mon bonheur, je pense à mon frère et à ma sœur, victimes l’un comme l’autre de la guerre, mes yeux se brouillent.

Vendredi 8 novembre,
Hier je croyais que la guerre n’était plus qu’un vieux cauchemar. Aujourd’hui, je me rends compte que je me faisais des illusions. La lutte va continuer, on va brûler de la poudre et verser encore du sang.

Le 11 novembre 1918,
Plus que jamais je suis convaincu que la guerre est enfin finie. Les armes sont déposées : on ne les reprendra pas. J’ai encore beaucoup de papier à noircir, mais fini le ronflement des marmites et le sifflement des balles.

Translation (not read)

7th November 1918,
Am I dreaming? I wonder if I am. The noise is constant. Is it true that the armistice with Germany has been finished? I am so happy I find it hard to believe that this news is true. As soon as I realise how happy I am, I think of my brother and sister, both victims of the war, and my eyes mist over.

Friday 8th November,
Yesterday I thought the war was nothing but a nightmare. Today, I realise I was mistaken. The fight will continue, we will burn powder and pour out our blood.

11th November 1918,
More than ever I am convinced that the war is over. The weapons have been put down: they will not be picked up again. I still have much to write, but finally the whir of the shells and the whistling of the bullets are over.

SECOND EXTRACT

Testimony from a British soldier
Officer Charles Neville, Royal Horse Artillery

My darling parents,
Today has been perfectly wonderful. We got news of the armistice at 9.30 this morning. I got ten minutes to sort out a detachment for a grand parade in the square of Mons, so I got everybody I could lay hand to scrub the mud off. The streets were packed with wildly cheering civilians chucking flowers at us and carrying on like only a foreigner can. All the street and the square was a blaze of colour, mostly, of course the Belgian colors red, yellow and black. Union jacks, French flags, American flags, in fact every conceivable flag of the allies.

THIRD EXTRACT

Testimony from a Chinese worker
Gu Xinggqing, translator, from a Rouen depot

欧战工作纪实

The sirens of the factories seemed to be sounding and cries and joyful songs ring out. The end of the war was announced. It was then 11th November 1918. The date is etched forever in my memory. At 11 a.m., arms and work stopped everywhere. I wanted to see for myself how the French celebrated the armistice. In the city, there was already a sea of people: men and women, young and old, soldiers and civilians, people of all skin colours marched together, hand in hand, singing or cheering.
FOURTH EXTRACT

Testimony from an American soldier
Captain Charles S. Normington, 127th Infantry, 32nd Division

11 November 1918
In the parade were hundreds of thousands of soldiers from the U.S., England, Canada, France, Australia, Italy and the colonies. Each soldier had his arms full of French girls, some crying, others laughing; each girl had to kiss every soldier before she would let him pass. There is no where on earth I would rather be today than just where I am. I have had many an old French couple come up to me cry like children, saying, “You grand Americans; you have done this for us.” I only hope the soldiers who died for this cause are looking down upon the world today. The whole world owes this moment of real joy to the heroes who are not here to help enjoy it.

Paris, children wearing uniforms march with the allied flags.

FIFTH EXTRACT

Testimony from a German foot soldier and writer
Soldier Erich Maria Remarque, Regiment of the XV Infantry Reserve
From the book After


Translation (not read)
The war is over and in an hour we will leave. We will never have to come back here… When I leave, it will be forever. It’s an incredible moment. Standing side by side, we gaze into the distance. A light fog curls over the ground and we can clearly see the line of pits and trenches. […] The uniformly grey landscape extends in front of us. […] These elements of a frightening world and an unforgiving life. And now, all of this is going to be left behind, simply, fading behind us gradually, at the pace of our steps. In an hour’s time, everything will have disappeared and disappeared to the point that one might believe it never existed. How can we comprehend this? And we who are here, who should laugh and cry out for joy, feel a heaviness in our stomachs […].
SIXTH EXTRACT

Testimony from a French woman
Denise Brüller, in a letter addressed to her fiancé Pierre Fort

Mon Pierre, ardemment chéri...
Au même instant où je vous écris, dans votre lointaine forêt d’Alsace vous apprenez l’immense nouvelle !
Ici, les cloches sonnent à toute volée.
Je suis malade de bonheur. Je ne peux écrire. De joie je sanglote désespérément.
Jamais, jamais, je ne pourrai vous dire l’émotion et le délirant enthousiasme de cette première journée d’armistice. Le bouleversement jusqu’au tréfonds de son être, et cette pensée incroyable qu’aucun homme ne tombe plus, que l’étendue immense du front est silencieuse. Rien que du silence. De grosses larmes, en songeant que tout, tout est terminé.

Translation (not read)

My Pierre, my darling...
As I write to you, in your distant Alsatian forest you are learning the incredible news! Here, the bells ring out wildly.
I am sick with happiness. I cannot write. I’m sobbing desperately with joy.
Never, I can never, express to you the feeling and delirious joy of this first day of armistice. The upheaval to the very depths of my being, and this incredible thought that not one more man will fall, that the immense length of the front is silent. Nothing but silence. Great tears fall, as I think that it is all over.

November 1918,
Alsatian children giving flowers to soldiers
(Strasbourg, Alsace).
BLEWU, by Angélique Kidjo

“Blewu was composed by Togolese singer Bellow in the mina language. It is a song of gratitude for the dedication of others and also a celebration of living together. The beauty and serenity of this melody evoke for me a future of universal peace and reconciliation.” Angélique Kidjo

In 1914, the African army and the colonial army shared common features, but offered two different political realities. Both were made up of troops serving mainly overseas or in the colonial war ports. Nevertheless, the African army can be thought of as an extension of the home army in North Africa insofar as it is mainly composed of men from the Algerian territories (around 173,000), and the Tunisian protectorates (around 60,000) and Morocco (approximately 38,000) to which the Foreign Legion must be added.

Conversely, the colonial army, referred to as such beginning in 1900 when the Navy troops were transferred from the Ministry of the Navy to that of War, can be described as an army of imperial sovereignty. The men of which it was comprised came from the colonies (the “Tirailleurs” or riflemen) rather than from continental France (the infantry and colonial artillery). The men from the colonies came mainly from French West Africa (approx. 165,000), Indochina (approx. 50,000), Madagascar (42,000), the older colonies (approx. 38,000), French Equatorial Africa (approx. 17,000), Somalia (2,500) and the Pacific (1,000).

The most decorated regiments from the Great War were all part of the African army.

THE FRENCH COLONIAL TROUPES

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Maurice Ravel’s Bolero is a ballet for an orchestra in C major composed in 1928 and performed on 22nd November of the same year at the Opéra Garnier by its commissioner, the Russian dancer Ida Rubinstein. A dance with unchanging pace and tempo and a uniform and repetitive melody, Ravel’s Bolero draws its only elements of variation from orchestral effects, a slow crescendo and, at the climax, a short variation in E major.

This unique work, which Ravel said he saw as a simple study in orchestration, has been a global success since its creation, making it his most famous work and, even today, one of the most popular works of scholarly music in the world — to the point that the Bolero’s immense popularity tends to mask the extent of its originality and the true intentions of its author.

MAURICE RAVEL’S GREAT WAR

Exempt from military service for health reasons, Maurice Ravel was not sent to the front in 1914. He went through many administrative procedures to be recognised as fit for service, which he finally achieved in March 1915.

Assigned to the automotive services, Maurice Ravel left for eastern France in March 1916 and joined section MT 171 stationed at Bar-le-Duc. He repaired vehicles and transported soldiers and military correspondence around Verdun. In April 1916 he was admitted to the ambulance corps and joined a unit closer to the front, ambulance 13, where he drove at the Monthairon castle which had been converted into a hospital. He remained there for 15 days and returned to music with the house piano 13th April 1916.

However, his health remained fragile and in the autumn of 1916, posted to Châlons-en-Champagne, he was operated on and hospitalized for dysentery. In January 1917, his mother’s death deeply affected him. He took up composing again and produced a work in tribute to his comrades lost at the front, Le Tombeau de Couperin (1917). He was transferred to Versailles in March 1917 and was then discharged on 1st June 1917, putting an end to his military career.
“Last Post”. 
Minute of silence, ended by the sounding of the “Cease-fire” bugle.

Burial of the unknown Soldier under the Arc de triomphe, 28th January 1921.

The President of the Republic, foreign dignitaries and high school students present in the official gallery pay tribute to the unknown Soldier.
Rekindling of the Flame.
Wreath-laying.
THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE

To the glory of the Great Army

After the battle of Austerlitz, Napoleon I proclaimed to his army: "Soldiers! I am pleased with you. [...] I shall bring you back to France; there you will be the object of my tenderest attentions [...] and all you will have to say is I was at the battle of Austerlitz, for them to reply, There goes a brave man."

On his return to Paris, he ordered the building of an arch of triumph to the glory of the Great Army. The monument had to fit in with the improvement works taking place in the capital at the same time and flatter the Emperor’s taste for Roman antiquity. Napoleon wanted to build it on the site of the Bastille, in the east of Paris, the side on which the armies returned, but the place de l’Étoile was eventually preferred.

Its location was ideal: at the end of the avenue des Champs-Élysées, opposite the Palais des Tuileries, the Emperor’s Paris residence. Unhindered by any other building projects, the square completed the axis designed by Le Nôtre in the 17th century, extending the central walkway of the Tuileries gardens as far as the horizon. Jean-François Thérèse Chalgrin was the monument’s chief architect.

Scene of national events

While under construction from 1806 to 1836, the Arc de triomphe was subject to the whims of political changes and the struggles for influence by the architects succeeding each other at the head of the project.

After coming to power following the July Revolution in 1830, Louis-Philippe I, King of France, wanted a reminder of his military career in the armies of the Revolution and tried to manipulate the partisans of the Empire. The monument’s dedication was changed one last time, and the iconography was designed to glorify the armies of the Revolution and the Empire.

Inaugurated in 1836, the monument later bore witness to major national events such as the return of Napoleon I’s ashes in 1840, the vigil for the funeral of Victor Hugo in 1885 and the First World War victory parade by the Allies on 14 July 1919.

THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

Honouring the fallen

The idea of honouring one soldier to symbolise all those who gave their lives for their country was first put forward in 1916 during the First World War. The day after the armistice of 11 November 1918 that put an end to the conflict, the National Assembly decided to inter the body of an unidentified soldier in the Pantheon. However, veterans’ associations criticised the choice of the Pantheon, and wanted a tomb that would adequately recognise the sacrifice of the 1,500,000 French soldiers who lost their lives during the Great War.

The remains of the unknown Soldier were randomly chosen from among the bodies of eight soldiers who served in a French uniform, and who could not be identified. These bodies were exhumed from the eight regions where the most deadly fighting took place: in Flanders, Artois, the Somme, Île-de-France, Chemin des Dames, Champagne, Verdun and Lorraine. It was Auguste Thin, ward of the state and the youngest soldier in his regiment, who the Minister of War Pensions, Awards and Allocations André Maginot asked to choose, from the eight coffins, one to be buried under the Arc de triomphe.

The ceremony to mark the arrival of the unknown Soldier

On 11 November 1920, a ceremony was held to mark the arrival of the unknown Soldier at the Arc de triomphe. He was interred under the arch on 28 January 1921. He is decorated with the Military Medal, the War Cross and the Legion of Honour. The eternal flame was lit on 11 November 1923 by André Maginot, then Minister for War and Pensions. It is rekindled every day at 6.30 p.m. at a ceremony organised by the “La flamme sous l’Arc de triomphe” association.
Cellist Yo-Yo Ma’s career is testament to his enduring belief in culture’s power to generate trust and understanding. This year, Yo-Yo begins a new global journey, setting out to perform J. S. Bach’s six suites for solo cello in 36 locations that encompass our cultural heritage, our current creativity, and the challenges of peace and understanding that will shape our future. Each concert is an example of culture’s power to create moments of shared understanding, as well as an invitation to a larger conversation about how culture connects us.

The First World War Centennial Mission thanks Dassault Aviation for its role in the international ceremony for the centenary of the 1918 armistice.

Angélique Kidjo, three-time Grammy-Award winner, is one of world music’s greatest artists. Time Magazine calls her “the first African diva” and the Guardian named her one of the hundred most influential women in the world. She was recently awarded Amnesty International’s “ambassador of conscience” prize. She mixes Beninese traditions with contemporary music. Her striking voice has carried her beyond the borders of Africa, from The Olympia to Carnegie Hall. She also carries out her humanitarian engagement as a UNICEF international goodwill ambassador.
VASILY PETRENKO

Vasily Petrenko was born in 1976 and started his music education at the St Petersburg Capella Boys Music School – the oldest music school in Russia. He then studied at the St Petersburg Conservatoire. Following considerable success in a number of international conducting competitions, he was appointed Chief Conductor of the St Petersburg State Academic Symphony Orchestra from 2004 to 2007. Currently, Petrenko holds the position of Chief Conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra (appointed in 2013/14), Chief Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (a position he adopted in 2009 as a continuation of his period as Principal Conductor which commenced in 2006), Chief Conductor of the European Union Youth Orchestra (since 2015) and Principal Guest Conductor of the State Academic Symphony Orchestra of Russia (since 2016). Petrenko has also served as Principal Conductor of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain from 2009-2013, and Principal Guest Conductor of the Mikhailovsky Theatre (formerly the Mussorgsky Memorial Theatre of the St Petersburg State Opera and Ballet) where he began his career as Resident Conductor from 1994 to 1997.

THE EUROPEAN UNION YOUTH ORCHESTRA

The European Union Youth Orchestra is one of the world’s pre-eminent symphony orchestras. Since its foundation in 1976 it has provided an exceptional bridge between music colleges and the professional music world for generations of Europe’s finest musicians. The Orchestra has worked with many of the world’s greatest musicians including Founding Music Director Claudio Abbado, former Music Director Vladimir Ashkenazy, former Music Director and current Conductor Laureate Bernard Haitink, and Chief Conductor Vasily Petrenko. The EUYO’s home is in Ferrara with support from the Italian Ministry of Culture and its summer home and Principal Venue Partner is Grafenegg. The EUYO’s 2018 season includes performances in 14 countries throughout Europe, South America, the Middle East and Asia. The EUYO is a cultural ambassador for the European Union, and receives support from the EU’s Creative Europe programme and all 28 member states of the European Union.
Soldiers from the 2nd Russian infantry regiment,
Caisse d’Epargne Ile-de-France actively supports the First World War Centennial Mission and has supported many projects over these past 4 years. The commemorations of the Great War are finishing up just as the Caisse d’Epargne celebrates its bicentennial. Drawing on its values of solidarity and education, Caisse d’Epargne has always supported the transformation of society. History is made up of a series of events of which we must share memories and understanding so that the generations to come can build a better future. A universal bank, Caisse d’Epargne Ile-de-France, faithful to its mission of supporting the public interest, supports and finances projects for the future.

Crédit du Nord is very invested in history and two of our historical regions, Nord-Pas de Calais and Picardie, were very affected by the first-ever global conflict. In Lille, the Kommandantur set up in the Crédit du Nord headquarters. Gustave Dubar, the president of the bank, was among the notable officials appointed to act as a guarantee of compliance with their instructions. Branches were destroyed. In the occupied North, for more than four years, the company provided its customers with the assistance necessary to maintain their very modest existence. At the end of the war, it participated in the reconstruction. Out of 600 employees enlisted around fifty were taken prisoner, and some one hundred died at the front. Of course it was invested in this commemoration. Celebrating this centenary pays tribute to these men and woman, especially its employees and customers, who experienced this painful period of our history.

Carac is a founding member of the First World War Centennial Mission. In this respect, the Carac Corporate foundation is represented by its foundation on the Centennial Mission’s Board of Directors. Since its launch, it has supported the Mission’s projects by helping to promote them nationally. In 2014, it notably contributed to the presentation of the Joe Sacco fresco dedicated to the Battle of the Somme, the Arles Photography Festival and the adaptation of Maurice Genevoix’s work “Ceux de 14” for television (France 3). In 2016, during the commemorations of the Battle of Verdun, Carac Corporate Foundation supported the renovation of the memorial, the creation of “Apocalypse Verdun” broadcast on France 2 and the creation of educational tools for the exhibition “Verdun, the Aerial War”. That same year, it also contributed to the Centennial Mission’s educational fund and supported some fifteen of its initiatives. In 2018, Carac Corporate Foundation is supporting two major initiatives proposed by the Centennial Mission, the Peace Gardens and Children for Peace.

Dassault Aviation. In 1916, many of the French airplanes fighting in the skies of Verdun, the first aerial battlefield in history, were equipped with a brand new, more efficient and sturdier propeller: the Eclair propeller. Its inventor, Marcel Dassault, is 24 years old. He has just laid the foundations for a company that is now more than a hundred years old. In 2014, Dassault Aviation signed a sponsorship agreement to support the renovation of the Verdun Memorial. This commitment recalls that of Marcel Dassault during the First World War and answers to our duty to remember the generations who sacrificed their lives to defend the nation. Today, like yesterday, Dassault Aviation teams develop, produce and support aircraft serving our armies and our national sovereignty.
PROGRAMME OF THE INTERNATIONAL CEREMONY FOR THE CENTENARY OF THE 1918 ARMISTICE

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