

Taylor Mac: A 24-Decade History of Popular Music: 1836-1896

A fierce history of American popular music



NORTH ADAMS, MASSACHUSETTS — *The New York Times* says, “Fabulousness can come in many forms, and **Taylor Mac** seems intent on assuming each and every one of them.” On **Saturday, April 9**, from **4 to 10pm**, the inimitable artist presents a six-hour work-in-progress performance of *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music: 1836-1896*, covering six decades of material from Mac’s wildly ambitious, multi-year effort to chart the history of popular music in America from the nation’s founding in 1776 to the

present day. The performance culminates a two-week residency in North Adams by Mac and collaborators. MASS MoCA gallery hours are extended until 7pm on show night, as viewers are encouraged to come and go during the six-hour performance.

Taylor Mac (who prefers the gender pronoun “judy”) is a New York-based theater artist, playwright, actor, singer-songwriter, cabaret performer, performance artist, director, and producer whose many talents combine in the spectacular *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*. The project is a unique mash-up of music, history, performance, and art. In it, Mac performs songs spanning the history of America, with approximately one hour of performance (and a riotous corresponding costume by longtime Mac collaborator Machine Dazzle) dedicated to each decade. Since the undertaking began in 2012, Mac has been creating shows covering single decades or a few decades at a time; Mac will stitch these together in the 24-hour extravaganza planned for New York City this fall, in which Mac will be joined by a 24-piece orchestra, dancing beauties, and an array of special guests.

A 24-Decade History of Popular Music is a vibrant whirlwind of musical theater, drag performance, and historical storytelling that delights audiences with razor-sharp wit and musical brilliance. *Artforum* has called the project a “face-wrenchingly funny...chronicle of sex, repression, expression, and community” and said, “Mac is a master performer, riveting storyteller, and charismatic, otherworldly creature, dressed to the tens in artist/designer Machine Dazzle’s magnificent metamorphic glitz.” *The Los Angeles Times* has described it as “glorious.”

Reviewing a recent run of shows from the project, *The New York Times* wrote, “In this playful and thoroughly winning tour through American pop history, Mr. Mac isn’t merely performing a concert, although he sings...in a voice that can range from a silken croon to a blistering belt...His interest in pop is as much anthropological as musical. Drawing links between the songs he sings and contemporaneous history and culture...finds in popular music a revealing mirror of the times. With an emphasis on the

experience of outsiders in America...he invites the audience to time-travel along with him and experience the turbulent past by playing its own role in the show.” The review added, “With its scholarly title, Mr. Mac’s show may sound soberly academic...but if you’ve ever seen him in performance, you know there’s nothing even faintly fusty about him.”

A 24-Decade History of Popular Music is conceived, written, performed, and co-directed by Taylor Mac. Collaborators include music director Matt Ray, co-director Niegel Smith, costume designer Machine Dazzle, dramaturg Jocelyn Clarke, lighting designer John Torres, executive producer Linda Brumbach, and associate producers Kaleb Kilkenny and Alisa E. Regas. The work is co-produced by Pomegranate Arts and Nature’s Darlings.

Taylor Mac has garnered acclaim as a playwright, actor, singer-songwriter, cabaret performer, performance artist, director, and producer, for work ranging from Mac’s OBIE Award-winning piece *The Lily’s Revenge* to Mac’s critically lauded collaboration with Mandy Patinkin, Susan Stroman, and Paul Ford, *The Last Two People On Earth: An Apocalyptic Vaudeville*, which co-stars Mac and Patinkin. Mac made many top critics’ “Best Theater of 2015 lists” for *Hir*, a dark comedy that made its New York premiere at Playwrights Horizons in the fall. *The New York Times* described *Hir*, Mac’s off-Broadway playwrighting debut, as “sensational in all senses of the word” and called Mac “immensely gifted.”

Taylor Mac dazzles audiences with *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music: 1836-1896* on **Saturday, April 9, from 4 to 10pm**, in MASS MoCA’s Hunter Center. Dinner will be available at Lickety Split before and during the show. A full bar serves Berkshire Brewing Company beers and Berkshire Mountain Distillery spirits. Tickets are \$10 for students, \$14 in advance, \$20 day of, and \$24 preferred. All ticket-holders receive half-price gallery admission during this six-hour performance (the audience is invited to come and go as they please). Tickets for all events are available through the MASS MoCA box office located on Marshall Street in North Adams, open 11am to 5pm every day except Tuesdays through June 25, 2016. Beginning June 25, the box office is open 10am to 6pm every day, with extended evening hours to 7pm on Thursdays through Saturdays. Tickets can also be charged by phone by calling 413.662.2111 x1 during box office hours or purchased online at massmoca.org. All events are held rain or shine.

About MASS MoCA’s Residency Program

MASS MoCA’s performing arts residencies offer well-equipped and professionally staffed technical facilities and stages, and a sophisticated, diverse, and sympathetic audience for new work, especially technically complex work that requires generous allocations of time and space. MASS MoCA’s vast galleries and expert fabrication staff offer visual artists the time and tools to create works of a scale and duration impossible to realize in the time-constrained and space-cramped conditions of most museums. We take every opportunity to expose our audiences to all stages of art production; rehearsals, sculptural fabrication, and developmental workshops are frequently on view, as are finished works of art. Since 1999, MASS MoCA’s performing arts department has hosted over 50 artists-in-residence and their collaborators, including Sekou Sundiata, Liz Lerman, Laurie Anderson, Robert Wilson, Philip Glass, Shirin Neshat, DJ Spooky, Basil Twist, David Neumann, Cynthia Hopkins, David Herskovits, Philip Miller, Terry Allen, Alison Chase, Kid Koala, David Byrne, Beth Morrison, Lucinda Childs, and David Levine.

Sponsorship

A 24-Decade History of Popular Music is commissioned in part by Belfast International Arts Festival and 14-18 NOW; Carole Shorenstein Hays, The Curran SF; Carolina Performing Arts, at the University of

North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Center for the Art of Performance at UCLA; Hancher Auditorium at the University of Iowa; Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts; Melbourne Festival; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; New Haven Festival of Arts & Ideas; New York Live Arts; OZ Arts Nashville; and University Musical Society of the University of Michigan.

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Images

High-resolution images of MASS MoCA's spring 2016 events are available through this link: bit.ly/1T143F0.

About MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA is one of the world's liveliest (and largest) centers for making and enjoying today's most important art, music, dance, theater, film, and video. Hundreds of works of visual and performing art have been created on its 19th-century factory campus during fabrication and rehearsal residencies, making MASS MoCA among the most productive sites in the country for the creation and presentation of new art. More platform than box, MASS MoCA strives to bring to its audiences art experiences that are fresh, engaging, and transformative.

MASS MoCA's galleries are open 11am to 5pm every day except Tuesdays through June 24, 2016. Beginning June 25, MASS MoCA's galleries are open 10am to 6pm every day, with extended evening hours to 7pm on Thursdays through Saturdays. The Hall Art Foundation's Anselm Kiefer exhibition is seasonal and reopens April 30, 2016. Gallery admission is \$18 for adults, \$16 for veterans and seniors, \$12 for students, \$8 for children 6 to 16, and free for children 5 and under. Members are admitted free year-round. For additional information, call 413.662.2111 x1 or visit massmoca.org.