

Taylor Mac

A 24-Decade History of Popular Music: 1846-1856

***Whitman vs. Foster:
Songs Popular Near the Breaking Point***

Saturday, December 5
E.C. Mabie Theatre
Hancher
University of Iowa



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presents

A 24-DECADE HISTORY OF POPULAR MUSIC: 1846-1856

WHITMAN VS. FOSTER: SONGS POPULAR NEAR THE BREAKING POINT

Conceived, written, performed, and co-directed by

TAYLOR MAC

Music Director

MATT RAY

Co-Director

NIEGEL SMITH

Costume Designer

MACHINE DAZZLE

Associate Producer

Kaleb Kilkenny

Associate Producer

Alisa E. Regas

Executive Producer

Linda Brumbach

Co-Produced by

Pomegranate Arts and Nature's Darlings

A 24-Decade History of Popular Music is commissioned in part by 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; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; New Haven Festival of Arts & Ideas; New York Live Arts; OZ Arts Nashville; University Musical Society of the University of Michigan.

This work was developed with the support of the Park Avenue Armory residency program and the 2015 Sundance Institute Theatre Lab at the Sundance Resort.

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Cover photo: Ves Pitts



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A 24-Decade History of Popular Music: 1846-1856

*Whitman vs. Foster:
Songs Popular Near the Breaking Point*

Featuring
TAYLOR MAC, Vocals

with

Matt Ray, *Music Director/Piano/Backing Vocals*
Colin Brooks, *Drums*
Jessica Lurie, *Tenor Saxophone/Clarinet*
Greg Glassman, *Trumpet*
Gary Wang, *Bass*

A 24-DECADE HISTORY OF POPULAR MUSIC

I suppose I've been subconsciously kicking around the idea for *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* for many years. I can pinpoint the catalyst to an AIDS action I attended in 1987. The action was a profound experience for me, a fairly isolated suburban queer kid who had never met an out-of-the-closet homosexual, as I was suddenly exposed to thousands of queers. What has stuck with me from that day was experiencing a community coming together—in the face of such tragedy and injustice—and expressing their rage (and joy at being together) via music, dancing, chanting, and agency. Not only was the community using itself to destroy an epidemic but the activists were also using a disease, their deterioration, and human imperfection as a way to aid their community. In many ways my entire career has been about reenacting this experience on the stage, in one form or another, but a couple years ago I decided to consciously go at it. The result is a durational work that explores the various ways imperfection can foster community.

Most of my work uses the technique of content dictating the form (thank you Mr. Sondheim). So when figuring out what form would best represent the content/theme of *Imperfection Fostering Community*, I was drawn to popular music. One could argue that a classical song's goal is to touch the hem of God (to strive for perfection), whereas a popular song is written and performed to touch the people. Popular songs use their simplicity, imperfection, and humanity to rally people towards a cause (whether that cause is to love, fight, celebrate, or mourn). They are egalitarian songs; ones we have easy access to and can all join in on. As a result, I've decided the popular song was the form I wanted for a show about imperfection fostering community. But one song or one concert wouldn't do. A community is built over a number of years and experiences and is multifaceted. I needed variety and a form that would not only represent the thing but actually do the thing I was interested in exploring. So I'm making a durational concert that spans multiple years, locations, and contains an onslaught of popular songs. It goes like this:

For a number of years (at least five but perhaps ten) I'll be performing, in New York, the U.S., and abroad, over 240 popular songs from the last 240 years of the United States (1776–2016). The songs aren't necessarily American songs but songs that were popular in the U.S., and the set list is broken down into themed concerts, decade concerts (made up of songs originated in the particular decade), and other "shorter" durational concerts: a 24-song concert, a ten-hour nineteenth-century concert, a ten-hour twentieth-century concert, and, in 2016 in New York City, the mother of them all, a 24-hour concert that includes all 240 songs and during which I'll be performing almost non-stop (a few bathroom breaks) with a 24-piece-orchestra (bring your bedding and toiletries).

The goal is that with each performance we build the community that is participating in this durational work. To date we've performed 14 of the decades at least once and more and more audience members are becoming a part of the *24-Decade History of Popular Music* community (we call them The Guild of Lilies). They're starting to get to know each other and are using the ritual of a shared experience as the impetus for further involvement (businesses have been started, lovers have been made, weddings are even being planned). Our next phase is to start shooting live video-feed of the concerts so that audience members who have seen various concerts in New York or Chicago can watch what happens in London and stay connected with the progression of the work.

It's a dream come true to share this work here and if this is your first time joining us, welcome.

—Taylor Mac

THE ARTISTS



Taylor Mac

TAYLOR MAC is a theater artist (who uses the gender pronoun, judy) which means judy's a playwright, actor, singer-songwriter, cabaret performer, performance artist, director, and producer. *TimeOut New York* has called Mac, "One of the most exciting theater artists of our time" (naming judy the best cabaret performer in New York in 2012, and a future theater legend). *American Theatre* magazine says, "Mac is one of this country's most heroic and disarmingly funny playwrights. *The New Yorker* says, (of Mac's acting in the title role of Brecht's *Good Person of Szechwan*), "One of contemporary theater's more unforgettable performances." *The Village Voice* named judy the best theater actor in New York (2013), the *New York Times* says of Mac in general, "Fabulousness can come in many forms, and Taylor Mac seems intent on assuming every one of them." Judy's work has been performed at New York City's Lincoln Center and The Public Theater, the Sydney Opera House, American Repertory Theater, Stockholm's Sodra Theatern, the Spoleto Festival, Dublin's Project Arts Centre, London's Soho Theatre, and literally hundreds of other theatres, museums, music halls, cabarets, and festivals around the globe. Judy is the author of 16 full-length plays and performance pieces including *Hir* (recently premiered at San Francisco's Magic Theater), *The Lily's Revenge* (Obie Award), *The Walk Across America for Mother Earth* (named One of the Best Plays of 2011 by the *New York Times*), *The Young Ladies Of* (Chicago's Jeff Award nomination for Best Solo), *Red Tide Blooming* (Ethyl Eichelberger Award), *The Be(a)st of Taylor Mac* (Edinburgh Festival's Herald Angel Award), and in collaboration with Mandy Patinkin, Susan Stroman, and Paul Ford, Mac created *The Last Two People On Earth: An Apocalyptic Vaudeville*, which judy is currently performing/touring with Mr. Patinkin. Mac is also currently creating and performing sections from, a durational concert called *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* (sections of which have been performed for Lincoln Center, The Under The Radar Festival at the Public Theater (as well as Joe's Pub), and Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art (among many others). *Playscripts*, *Vintage Press*, *New York Theatre Review*, and *New York Theatre Experience* have published judy's plays, and judy is the recipient of a Helen Merrill Playwriting Award, two Sundance Theater Lab residencies, three Map Grants, the Creative Capital Grant, the James Hammerstein Award for playwriting, three GLAAD Media Award Nominations, two New York State Council on the Arts Grants, a Massachusetts Council of the Arts Grant, an Edward Albee Foundation Residency, the Franklin Furnace Grant, a Peter S. Reed Grant, and the Ensemble Studio Theatre's New Voices Fellowship in playwriting. Mac is a proud alum of the HERE Arts Center Resident Artists program and is currently a New Dramatists fellow and a New York Theater Workshop Usual Suspect. Taylor Mac is the recipient of the 2015 Herb Alpert Award for Theater.

MACHINE DAZZLE (costume designer) (né Matthew Flower) moved to New York City in 1994 after attending the University of Colorado, Boulder. Mixing odd jobs by day with art and dance clubs by night erupted in a unique lifestyle grounded in costume and performance art. Machine's DIY and transgressive nature comes face to face

with his conceptualist-as-artist identity; the results can be seen on stages all over the world. Machine has worked with Taylor Mac, Justin Vivian Bond, Joey Arias, Julie Atlas Muz, Big Art Group, the Crystal Ark, the Dazzle Dancers, Stanley Love Performance Group, and the Pixie Harlots, to name a few.

MATT RAY (music director/piano/backing vocals) can be seen in some of New York's best venues where he performs nightly either fronting his own band, or accompanying some of the city's most dynamic performers. Recent work includes performing at Carnegie Hall with Kat Edmonson, touring with Reggae legend Burning Spear, music directing The Billie Holiday Project at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, string and piano arrangements for the fifth season finale of Showtime's *Nurse Jackie*, performances at Joe's Pub with Joey Arias, performing in Paris with Mx. Justin Vivian Bond, and monthly gigs at Joe's Pub with Bridget Everett and the Tender Moments. Other recent work includes performing at the Edinburgh Fringe with Lady Rizo, and touring the world with Taylor Mac and the Nature's Darlings ensemble in *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*. In addition, Matt music directed and played piano in Taylor Mac's Obie award winning play *The Lily's Revenge* at the HERE Arts Center in New York. Matt has released two jazz albums as a leader: *We Got It!* (2001) and *Lost In New York* (2006); and one album of original pop/folk material called *Songs For the Anonymous* (2013). www.matrraymusic.com

NIEGEL SMITH (co-director) is a performance artist, theater director. His theater work has been produced by the Public Theater, Classical Theatre of Harlem, Magic Theatre, Mixed Blood, HERE Arts Center, Hip Hop Theatre Festival, Summer Play Festival, New York Fringe Festival, and the Phoenix Theatre Ensemble, and his walks have been produced by Elastic City, American Realness, the Prelude Festival, Abrons Arts Center, Visual AIDS, the Van Alen Institute, and PS 122. He often collaborates with artist Todd Shalom. Together, they conceive and stage interactive performances in public and private environments. Smith was the associate director of the Tony Award-winning musical *FELA!*—restaging that production in London, Lagos and its world tour, assistant directed the off-Broadway production of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* and both the Broadway and off-Broadway productions of Tony Kushner's *Caroline, or Change*. He has worked on the artistic staffs of the Public Theater, Trinity Repertory Company, and Providence Black Rep. He is the Artistic Director of the Flea Theater. www.niegelsmith.com

COLIN BROOKS (drums) is a drummer from Little Rock, Arkansas. He started piano lessons at age five and started playing the drum set at age seven. After some jamming with his father, a self-taught guitar player, he began to form and play in many local bands with various schoolmates. After finishing high school and doing numerous DIY tours throughout the U.S., he was offered the drumming chair in the NYC-based band Skeleton Key, and relocated to Brooklyn. After their break up, he toured Australia and New Zealand with singer Bic Runga. Upon returning to New York, he performed with many local singer-songwriters, drummed on jingles, and worked with the band BETTY on their off-Broadway musical *Betty Rules*. Through BETTY he met Dan Zanes, and has been a member of his touring band since 2003. He keeps busy as the drummer/collaborator on many projects (Hurricane Bells, the Big Cats, the Majorleans, Diane Gentile, Fox Bay, Samiam, Giovanni James, Drexel & The Spirit, and drums in a weekend house band called Heathens at the McKittrick Hotel/the home of *Sleep No More*). He thanks Taylor Mac and Pomegranate Arts.

JESSICA LURIE (tenor saxophone/clarinet) is an award-winning multi-instrumentalist, composer, and improviser, performing on saxophones, flute, clarinet, voice, accordion, and electronics. Known for “melding lyrical pop, stinging rock, rhythmic Eastern European folk music, and improvisation-heavy jazz with a dose of free-wheeling avant-groove-meets-grind” (Dan Oulette), she has received international critical acclaim for her work with her Megaphone Heart Band, the all-female Tiptons Saxophone Quartet, and the Living Daylights Trio. As a leader, side-person, composer, and collaborator, Jessica is featured on over 60 recordings. She composes for multi-media, dance, theater, and film, and has collaborated on over 30 multi-media works

with visual artist Danijel Zezelj, and theater companies Great Small Works and Circus Amok. Collaborations with international artists include Fred Frith, Billy Martin, Skerik, John Zorn, Cyro Baptista, OU, Todd Sickafoose, David Krakauer, Bill Frisell, Jenny Scheinman, Chris Cochrane, Bill Horist, Robert Dick, Jamie Baum, Chuck D, The Indigo Girls, Mark Ribot, Eyvind Kang, Frank London, Allison Miller, Vinicio Caposella, Nels Cline, Amy Denio, Jacob Fred Jazz Odessy, Kenny Wolleson, Sleater Kinney, Bernie Worrell, and Ivan Neville, among others. She is currently working on a new recording to be released spring 2016. www.jessicalurie.com

GARY WANG (bass) originally hails from Boston and San Francisco. Since graduating from Columbia University in 1995, Gary has been living and playing bass professionally in New York City, playing and recording with artists including Anat Fort, Ben Monder, Michael Leonhart, T.S. Monk, Jon Gordon, Tessa Souter, John McNeil, Matt Wilson, Bill McHenry, Chris Cheek, Brad Shepik, Madeleine Peyroux, Dena DeRose, Donald Fagen, Jon Gordon, Seamus Blake, Kevin Hays, Bill Stewart, and Billy Drummond, among many others. Gary has toured the U.S., Europe, Asia, and the Americas extensively, and in 2002 was a participant in the U.S. State Department Jazz Ambassadors program, performing in several nations of the former Soviet Union. Gary has also been involved in composing and music production, most recently contributing production, overdubbing work to projects by numerous artists, among others, the SF-based band the Invisible Cities, Michael Leonhart, Sam Sadigursky, Goh Nakamura, Andrew Watt, and film composer Jeff Grace. Gary also composed and recorded the music for several recent collaborations with choreographer Kakuti Lin.

GREG GLASSMAN (trumpet) has shared the stage and recording studio with some of the greatest voices in jazz, including Clark Terry, Marcus Belgrave, Roswell Rudd, Sheila Jordan, Oliver Lake, Sherman Irby, and John Esposito. He has performed around the world with a diverse array of artists including The Skatalites, Oscar Perez's Nuevo Comienzo, and Burning Spear. Mr. Glassman's current focus is his quintet, co-led with Stacy Dillard, which holds a residency of eight years at Fat Cat in Greenwich Village. They released a dynamic live recording in 2014.

POMEGRANATE ARTS (executive producer) is an independent production company dedicated to the development of international contemporary performing arts projects. Pomegranate Arts is the exclusive producer and management for the revival of Robert Wilson, Philip Glass, and Lucinda Childs' Olivier award-winning production of *Einstein on the Beach*. Since its inception, Pomegranate Arts has conceived, produced, or represented projects by Philip Glass, Laurie Anderson, London's Improbable Theatre, Sankai Juku, Dan Zanes, Lucinda Childs, and Goran Bregovic. Special projects include *Dracula: The Music And Film* with Philip Glass and the Kronos Quartet; the music theater work *Shockheaded Peter*; Brazilian vocalist Virginia Rodrigues; Drama Desk Award winning *Charlie Victor Romeo*; *Healing The Divide, A Concert for Peace and Reconciliation*, presented by Philip Glass and Richard Gere; and Hal Willner's *Came So Far For Beauty, An Evening Of Leonard Cohen Songs*. Upcoming projects include the remount of *Available Light* by John Adams, Lucinda Childs, and Frank Gehry, the North American tour of Sankai Juku's newest work *Umusuna*, Taylor Mac's *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*, and a new work in development by Lucinda Childs, Philip Glass, and James Turrell.

Pomegranate Arts

www.pomegranatearts.com

info@pomarts.com

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Just LIVING

A SOCIAL JUSTICE THEME SEMESTER
THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

UI Theme Semester to address social justice

By the Office of Outreach & Engagement

Just Living, the University of Iowa's second annual Theme Semester, will unite the campus and Iowa communities in programming surrounding social justice. The semester will explore values, beliefs, and positioning by examining the past and looking to the future to better understand the relationships between individuals and the natural world.

Students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of the university, are encouraged to get involved with *Just Living*, which will get under way on January 28. Students can add a social justice related class to their spring schedule; faculty and staff can submit course information or research opportunities; and all are encouraged to attend events that are free and open to the public. There will be a variety of activities offered throughout the semester that focus on different areas of social justice. Some of the marquee events associated with *Just Living*:

January 28

The Old Capitol Museum will open *Them: Images of Separation* and host a reception to kick off the semester long programming.

February 1

Laverne Cox, an outspoken transgender advocate, will speak about gender expectations.

March 8

Angela Davis will address her work combating oppression in the U.S. and abroad.

March 28

Eboo Patel will speak to campus and community members on interfaith cooperation.

April 8-9

Students from across the state will convene on campus for the Iowa Human Rights conference hosted by the Center for Human Rights. Guest lecturers include **Sister Helen Prejean** and former Iowa Congressman **Jim Leech**.

April 19

Robert Bullard will discuss the subject of environmental justice in his lecture.



Laverne Cox



Robert Bullard

Just LIVING SPEAKERS

(clockwise from
top left):

Laverne Cox

February 1

Robert Bullard

April 19

Angela Davis

March 8

Photo credit:
The Lavin Agency



Angela Davis

For a full listing of event details and academic courses or to learn how to get involved, visit justliving.uiowa.edu. Additional opportunities are being organized and will be announced throughout the semester. Individuals can join the conversation online using **#UIjustliving**.

Housed out of the Office of Outreach & Engagement, the Theme Semester is a collaboration that brings diverse perspectives to bear on a topic of importance to Iowa and the world. Grounded in the university's mission, the Theme Semester encourages teaching, engagement, and learning both on campus and throughout the state of Iowa. *Food for Thought*, the inaugural semester held in spring 2015, brought the university's 11 colleges to the table in discussions surrounding food, curating over 400 events and activities. Opportunities were held in five Iowa counties, allowing for place-based programming to address local needs.

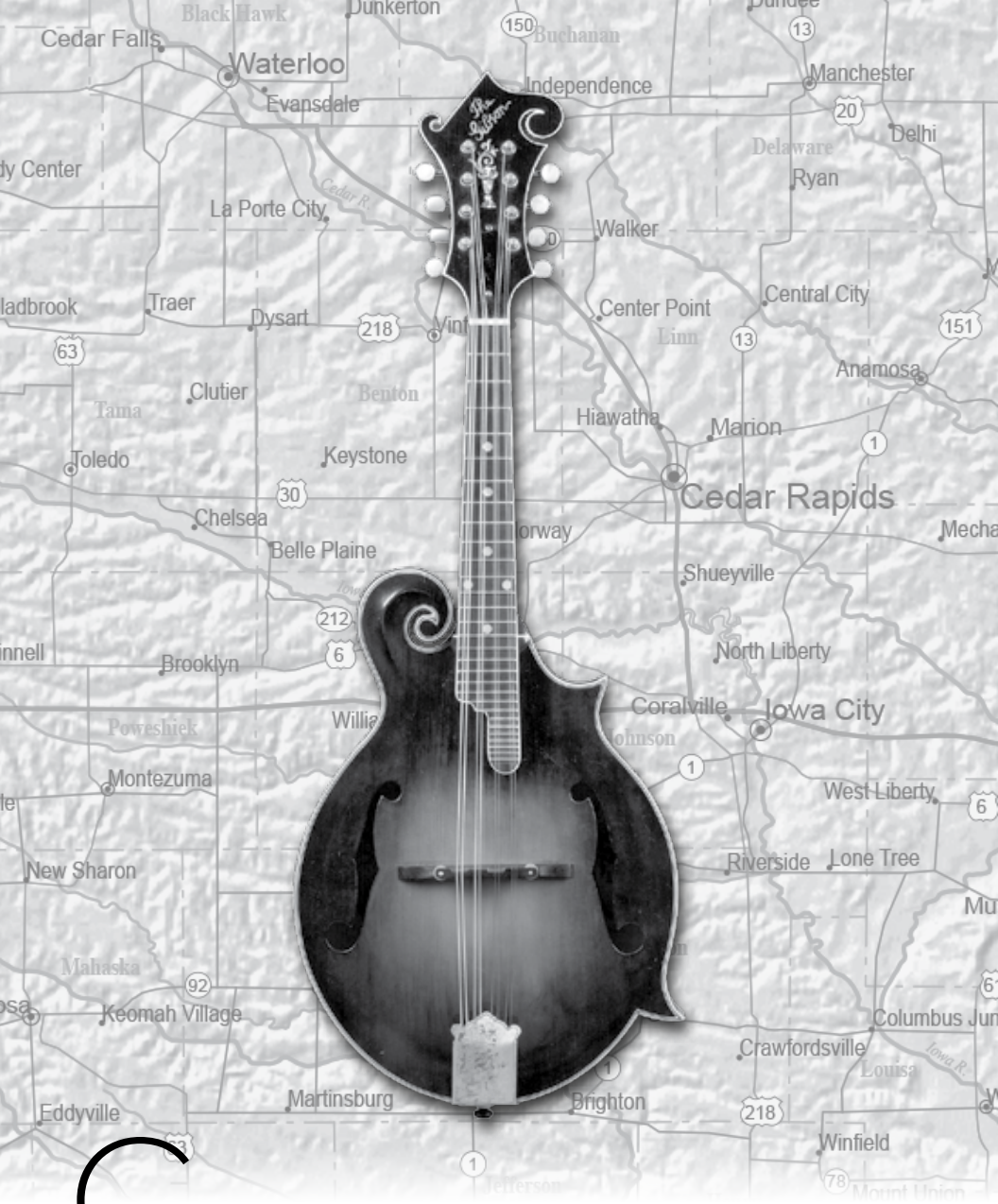
Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to attend all UI-sponsored events. If you are a person with a disability who requires a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in this program, contact the Office of Outreach & Engagement at (319) 335-0684.



CHRIS THILE

VISITS IOWA CITY ON THE WAY
TO LAKE WOBEGON





C hris Thile touched down at the airport in Cedar Rapids early in the afternoon on Wednesday, November 4th. Half-an-hour later, mandolin in hand, he was on stage at Riverside Recital Hall in Iowa City. Thile played a few songs, drifting easily between classic folk songs, original compositions, and Bach, before opening the floor for questions.

Among the nearly one hundred people who attended this Q&A session was Scott Conklin, associate professor in the School of Music and Thile's childhood friend, who helped arrange the event. The violin professor was thrilled to have Thile—an accomplished solo artist, composer, songwriter, and new host of *A Prairie Home Companion* (beginning in September 2016)—spend a little time with his students, colleagues, and other members of the Iowa City community.

Thile, whose performance at the Englert that evening was very well-received, noted that Conklin is not his only connection to Iowa City. His grandfather, Robert Shallenberg, was the Director of the Electronic Music Studios at the University of Iowa from 1963 to 1968.

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