

Taylor Mac

A 24-Decade History of Popular Music (Abridged)

Saturday, April 28, 2018

7:30 pm



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TAYLOR MAC

A 24-DECADE HISTORY OF POPULAR MUSIC (ABRIDGED)

Conceived, written, performed, and co-directed by

TAYLOR MAC

Music Director / Arranger

MATT RAY

Costume Designer

MACHINE DAZZLE

Executive Producer

LINDA BRUMBACH

Associate Producer

ALISA E. REGAS

Co-Produced by

POMEGRANATE ARTS and **NATURE'S DARLINGS**

A 24-DECADE HISTORY OF POPULAR MUSIC is commissioned in part by Hancher Auditorium at the University of Iowa; ASU Gammage at Arizona State University; Belfast International Arts Festival and 14 - 18 NOW WW1 Centenary Art Commissions; 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; Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts; Melbourne Festival; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; International Festival of Arts & Ideas (New Haven); New York Live Arts; OZ Arts Nashville; Stanford Live at Stanford University; University Musical Society of the University of Michigan.

This work was developed with the support of the Park Avenue Armory residency program, MASS MoCa (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art), New York Stage and Film & Vassar's Powerhouse Theater, and the 2015 Sundance Institute Theatre Lab at the Sundance Resort with continuing post-lab dramaturgical support through its initiative with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

A 24-DECADE HISTORY OF POPULAR MUSIC was made possible with funding by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Theater Project, with lead funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.





Photo: Teddy Wolff

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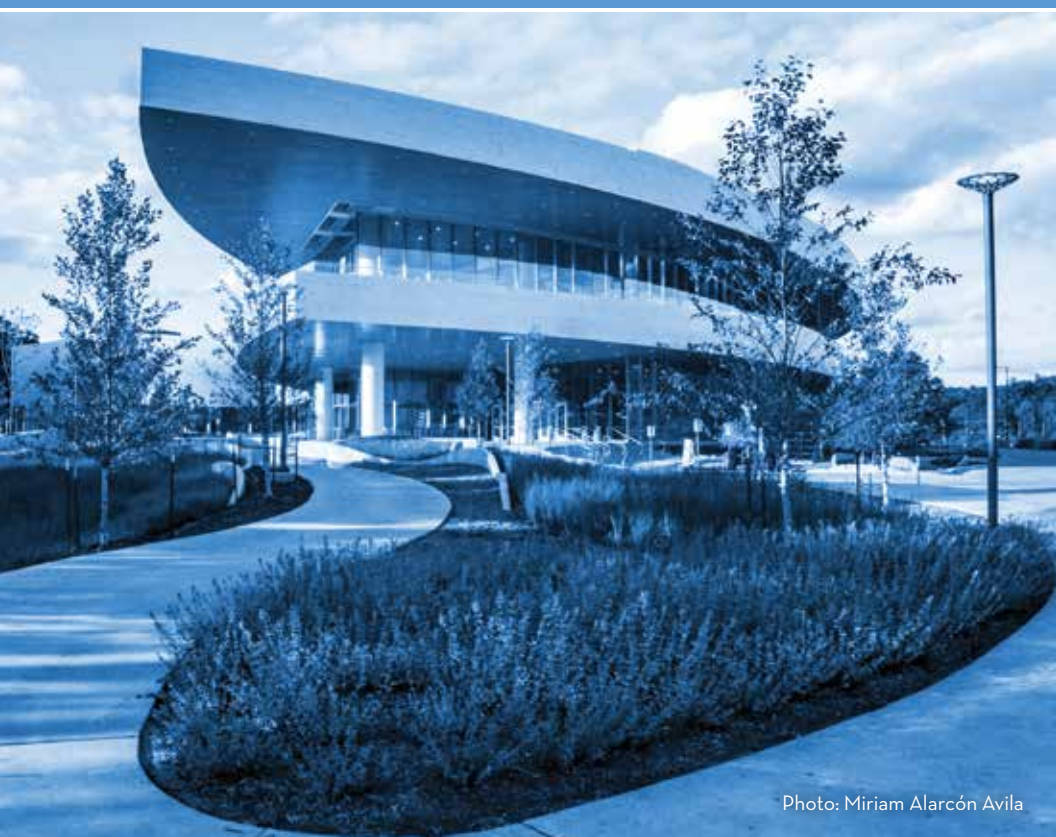


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A 24-DECADE HISTORY OF POPULAR MUSIC (ABRIDGED)

Featuring

TAYLOR MAC

Vocals

with

MATT RAY

MACHINE DAZZLE

BERNICE "BOOM BOOM" BROOKS

STEFFANIE CHRISTI'AN

VIVA DECONCINI

GREG GLASSMAN

GARY WANG

Piano, Vocals, Music Director

Performer, Costume Designer

Drums

Vocals

Guitar

Trumpet

Bass

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Photo: Ves Pitts

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

TAYLOR MAC (Creator/Writer/Performer) (who uses “judy,” lowercase sic, not as a name but as a gender pronoun) is one of the world’s leading theater artists. A playwright, actor, singer-songwriter, performance artist, director and producer, and “Critical darling of the New York scene” (*NY Magazine*), judy’s work has been performed in hundreds of venues including New York City’s Town Hall, Lincoln Center, Celebrate Brooklyn, The Public Theatre and Playwrights Horizons, as well as London’s Hackney Empire and Barbican, D.C.’s Kennedy Center, Los Angeles’s Royce Hall and The Theatre at Ace Hotel (through UCLA’s Center for the Art of Performance), Chicago’s Steppenwolf Theatre, the Sydney Opera House, The Melbourne Festival (Forum Theater), Stockholm’s Södra Teatern, the Spoleto Festival, and San Francisco’s Curran Theatre and the SFMOMA. judy is the author of many works of theater including the soon to be produced plays, *Gary: A Sequel to Titus Andronicus*, *Prosperous Fools*, and *The Fre*, and the previously produced works, *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*, *Hir*, *The Walk Across America for Mother Earth*, *Comparison is Violence*, *The Lily’s Revenge*, *The Young Ladies Of*, *Red Tide Blooming*, *The Be(a)st of Taylor Mac*, *Cardiac Arrest or Venus on a Half-Clam*, *The Face of Liberalism*, *Okay*, *Maurizio Pollini*, *A Crevice*, and *The Hot Month*.

Sometimes Taylor acts in other people’s plays (or co-creations). Notably: Shen Teh/Shui Ta in The Foundry Theatre’s production of *Good Person of Szechwan* at La MaMa and the Public Theater, Puck/Egeus in the Classic Stage Company’s *A Midsummer’s Night Dream*, and in the two-man vaudeville, *The Last Two People On Earth* opposite Mandy Patinkin, directed by Susan Stroman.

Mac is a MacArthur Fellow, a Pulitzer Prize Finalist for Drama and the recipient of multiple awards including the Kennedy Prize for Drama Inspired by American History, a NY Drama Critics Circle Award, a Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Herb Alpert Award in Theater, the Peter Zeisler Memorial Award, the Helen Merrill Playwriting Award, two Bessies, two Obies, and an Ethyl Eichelberger Award. An alumnus of New Dramatists, judy is currently a New York Theatre Workshop Usual Suspect and the resident playwright at the HERE Arts Center.

MATT RAY (Piano/Vocals/Music Director/Arranger) is a Brooklyn-based pianist, singer, songwriter, arranger, and music director. His arrangements have been called “wizardly” (*Time Out New York*) and “ingenious” (*New York Times*), and his piano playing referred to as “classic, well-oiled swing” (*New York Times*) and “to cry for” (*Ebony*). For his work on Taylor Mac’s show *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*, he and Mac shared the 2017 Kennedy Prize for Drama Inspired By American History. Notable live performances include playing at Carnegie Hall with Kat Edmonson, headlining his own show at Lincoln Center, playing the Hollywood Bowl with reggae legend Burning Spear, and touring the Caribbean and Central America with his piano trio as a US Department of State Jazz Ambassador. Other work includes music directing *The Billie Holiday Project* at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, penning a string and piano arrangement for the fifth season finale of Showtime’s *Nurse Jackie*, music directing for Justin Vivian Bond, performing with Joey Arias, a month of shows at the Edinburgh Fringe with Lady Rizo, music directing Taylor Mac’s Obie award-winning play *The Lily’s Revenge* at the HERE Arts Center in New York, and co-writing songs for and performing in Bridget Everett’s one-hour Comedy Central special *Gynecological Wonder* as well as Everett’s hit show *Rock Bottom*. 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). mattraymusic.com

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Support for the exhibition is provided by the Koza Family Fund, the Members Special Exhibition Fund, and the Richard V.M. Corton, M.D. and Janet Y. Corton Exhibition Fund.

Ferdinand Bac (French, 1859-1952), *What are looking for in the sky, crazy old man?*, c. 1950, ink on paper, Collection of Madame Sylviane Jullian



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MACHINE DAZZLE (Costume design, performer) has been dazzling stages via costumes, sets, and performance since his arrival in New York in 1994. Credits include Julie Atlas Muz's *Am The Moon And a You Are The Man On Me* (2004), Big Art Group's *House Of No More* (2006), Justin Vivian Bond's *Lustre* (2008), Taylor Mac's *The Lily's Revenge* (2009), Justin Vivian Bond's *Re:Galli Blonde* (2011), Taylor Mac's *Walk Across America For Mother Earth* (2012), Chris Tanner's *Football Head* (2014), Soomi Kim's *Change* (2015), Pig Iron Theatre's *I Promised Myself To Live Faster* (2015), Bombay Ricky Prototype Festival (2016), Taylor Mac's *A 24 Decade History of Popular Music* (2016-Present), Opera Philadelphia's *Dido and Aeneas* (2017), Spieglerworld's *Opium* (Las Vegas 2018)... Beware!!!! Conceptualist-as-artist meets DIY meets "glitter rhymes with litter," Machine was a co-recipient the 2017 Bessie Award for Outstanding Visual Design and the winner of a 2017 Henry Hewes Design Award.

BERNICE "BOOM BOOM" BROOKS (Drums) is a drummer, producer, teaching artist who has performed and shared the stage with such greats as Tito Puente, Gregory Hines, Patti LaBelle, and many jazz and R&B greats. She was a part of JALC *The History of Blues* with Marion Cowings and has a national commercial airing, "Five Fine Fillies," for Bank of America.

STEFFANIE CHRISTI'AN (Vocals) Whether in front of an audience of 10 or a crowd of 10,000, singer/songwriter Steffanie Christi'an commands the stage with an electrifying blend of grit and sensuality. Singing before she could speak, she bares her soul in her lyrics and awes listeners with her soaring vocals. Distinguished by seamless versatility and an eclectic stable of influences, from Sam Cooke to Kurt Cobain, Steffanie's performances leave audiences feeling flushed and fed. She has performed with a variety of artists including MacArthur award-winner Taylor Mac and hip-hop legend Talib Kweli, has released four independent EPs, and has travelled the world rocking stages from Chicago to Australia.

VIVA DECONCINI (Electric Guitar) plays guitar like a flaming sword, a screaming train, a ringing bell, and a scratching chicken. She sings like if Freddie Mercury had been a woman. She's played everywhere from Bonnaroo to Monterey Jazz Fest, and been featured in *Guitar Player* magazine. Her last two records, *Rock & Roll Lover* and *Rhinestones & Rust*, charted on CMJ.

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, Óscar Pérez'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.

GARY WANG (Bass) has been playing professionally in New York City for over 25 years, performing, touring, and recording with artists including Anat Fort, Ben Monder, Chris Cheek, Matt Ray, Madeleine Peyroux, Taylor Mac, T.S. Monk, Molly Ringwald, Dena DeRose, among many others. Gary has also been involved in composing and music production, most recently, his own solo project *Shapes On Parade*, with two albums released on Bandcamp in the last two years. He has also contributed production and overdubbing work to projects by numerous artists, among others, the San Francisco-based band The Invisible Cities, Michael Leonhart, Sam Sadigursky, Goh Nakamura, among others. Gary also composed and recorded the music for several recent collaborations with choreographer Kakuti Lin and the Full Circle Dance Company.



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AWFUL PURDIES (Special Guests)

Founded in 2006, Awful Purdies is an eclectic modern folk quintet of female multi-instrumentalists who take turns stepping up as songwriter, lead singer, and soloist. Featuring Iowan musicians Sarah Cram Driscoll, Katie Roche, Marcy Rosenbaum, Katie Senn, and Nicole Upchurch, Awful Purdies is a deeply collaborative and community minded project. In 2015, Awful Purdies wrote and performed the music for Working Group Theatre's original musical *All Recipes Are Home*, commissioned by Hancher at the University of Iowa, Grinnell College, and Luther College with support from the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs (IDCA) and the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2017, the Purdies were the lead artists for another IDCA grant, this time working with Family Folk Machine, an Iowa City based inter-generational folk choir to teach song writing, culminating in a concert of 15 new choral pieces. Music from their three albums has been featured in multiple films and television shows, and rumor has it that they'll be back in the studio this summer. The women of Awful Purdies hope to continue to share the music they make together for a lifetime.

POMEGRANATE ARTS (Creative Producers)

For the past twenty years, Pomegranate Arts has worked in close collaboration with a small group of contemporary artists and arts institutions to bring bold and ambitious artistic ideas to fruition. Founder and Director Linda Brumbach, along with managing director Alisa E. Regas produced the Olivier Award-winning revival of *Einstein on the Beach*, the multi-award winning production of Taylor Mac's *24-Decade History of Popular Music*, and the Drama Desk Award-winning production of *Charlie Victor Romeo*. Since its inception, Pomegranate Arts has produced over 30 major new performing arts productions and tours for Philip Glass, Laurie Anderson, Lucinda Childs, Dan Zanes, London's Improbable, Sankai Juku, Batsheva, and Bassem Youssef and collaborated on new productions with the Kronos Quartet, Leonard Cohen, Robert Wilson, and Frank Gehry. We hope to continue to build our community of institutions and individuals that are inspired by the artists in our lives that help bring beauty and truth into the world, ask important questions, and take bold risks.

POMEGRANATE ARTS

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MACHINE DAZZLE

and the art of costume design

Hancher displays Dazzle's costumes, partners on community events featuring the costume designer

By Emily Nelson

Machine Dazzle may be a costume designer, but artist is a more apt description.

"Not all costume designers are artists," says Dazzle. "An artist comes from a different place. A designer makes something that works. An artist is more poetic; they tell a story."

Dazzle (né Matthew Flower) is the award-winning artist behind the elaborate costumes worn by Taylor Mac, one of the world's leading theater artists, in the acclaimed performance, *Taylor Mac: A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*, an abridged version of which Hancher Auditorium is presenting.

Dazzle says it takes a special person to wear art, and Taylor Mac, the playwright, actor, singer-songwriter, performance artist, director, and producer is one of them.

"He owns it. He becomes it," Dazzle says.

Because Mac's *24-Decade* show is 24 hours long, few audiences have had a chance to appreciate the mad brilliance of all 24 costumes Dazzle created for the show. Iowans, however, have had that chance as Hancher's Stanley Café was transformed into an exhibit space to display all the costumes in the days preceding Taylor Mac's show.

Did you know?

Hancher Auditorium was a proud commissioner of a portion of *Taylor Mac: A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*. Local audiences had a chance to see Mac perform the section, *1846-1856 Whitman vs. Foster: Songs Popular Near the Breaking Point*, in December 2015 in E.C. Mabie Theatre in the UI Theatre Building.

Above: Machine Dazzle with costumes from *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*.
Photo © Pomegranate Arts

“This building is crazy. It’s so beautiful and pristine; it’s exactly where you want your art to be,” Dazzle says of Hancher.

Dazzle’s costumes for the theatrical extravaganza are big—really big. They’re cheeky, challenging, and integrate cultural references and various objects—created and found. The exhibit gave the public an opportunity to marvel at the myriad details each costume comprises.

“This was an opportunity to try new things in this building,” Hancher Executive Director Chuck Swanson says. “We’re still exploring and discovering the potential of our new building. This little museum will certainly create a lasting memory.”

The costume exhibit wasn’t the only way for the public to interact with Dazzle’s work—or the artist himself. The *24-Decade* show inspired numerous collaborations between Hancher, the University of Iowa campus, Iowa City, and community organizations.



An artistic retelling of history

A 24-Decade History of Popular Music examines American history through a queer lens, a history that Dazzle says is rarely told. It consists of more than 240 songs—some original and many pre-existing popular songs from 1776 to present. Along with the music, the costumes play an important role in presenting a new conception of our country’s story, and a lot of research went into creating them.

“I know a lot more about American history now,” Dazzle says. “If you thought I paid attention in history classes growing up, you’re wrong. But I love it now.”

Dazzle says he looked at what was new to each decade and what people were doing at the time, then incorporated those themes into the costumes. For the mid-1800s, for example, Dazzle framed a hoop skirt with barbed wire, a new invention at the time. A headdress that appears during the 1980s features skulls with tinsel dripping from the eyes, representing tears for the AIDS epidemic.

Along with helping retell history, the costumes—particularly early in the show’s development—played another role.

“While we were workshopping the show, we didn’t know where we would be

performing and there was no set or props. There were just the musicians and the costumes,” Dazzle says. “So, the costume had to be the scenery and the props.”

The *24-Decade* show is not the first collaboration between Dazzle and Mac, whom Dazzle calls his No. 1 muse.

“As Taylor says, ‘Machine Dazzle doesn’t tell me how to do my job, and I don’t tell him how to do his,’” Dazzle says. “People have to be careful inviting me into their project. Is there room for a layer of art? Because I’m not going to make a regular old costume. It’s not in my bag. If that’s what you want, hire a regular costume designer.”

Performing in some of Dazzle’s costumes requires endurance because they can be heavy and hot to wear.

“I wouldn’t ask someone to wear something I wouldn’t wear myself,” Dazzle says. “I will suffer in a 50-pound costume in high heels—just grab the Advil. But I’m very spoiled. Taylor trusts me and lets me do whatever I want. The most he would say is, ‘It’s too long and tripping me.’”

Dazzle says he grew as an artist as result of being a part of the production.

“People have told us [the *24-Decade*] show changed their lives,” Dazzle says. “It’s very moving to get that kind of response. How often does a show really change you? It’s like nothing else I’ve ever experienced.”



In addition to taking audiences on a tour through American history, the *24-Decade* show also is a celebration of community—of the communities it portrays and the community it creates through the shared experience of performance.

Dazzle got to know the Iowa City community during a visit in November 2017. Along with touring campus and meeting with local artists, he ate at a

Opposite: Machine Dazzle’s costumes for *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*. Photo © Reed Hutchinson. Above: Local artist Emily Jalinsky installs her Dazzle Crawl collaboration with Sayuri Sasaki Hemann, *The Vital Cycle of Fire and Growth*, in the window of Willow + Stock in, April 2018.



Hancher executive director Chuck Swanson, Mark Ginsberg, Machine Dazzle, Flyover Fest co-founder Simeon Talley, and James Wetzel of Iowa City's Fashion Lab on the roof of M. C. Ginsberg, November 14, 2017. Photo: Miriam Alarcón Avila.

local Mexican restaurant—"Mexican is my favorite; it's always a party"—and purchased an ugly Christmas sweater featuring a Santa zombie—"I always check out vintage stores when I go to a new town."

When he returned this month, he participated in panel discussions and workshops, and inspired the creation of storefront art.

"I feel this illustrates what Hancher can and should do: instigate exceptional, unusual, creative collaborations," Swanson says. "These collaborations just really exploded. We're so excited about all of it."

One partnership was years in the making. Swanson met several years ago with Simeon Talley, a co-founder of Flyover Fest—a two-day fashion, music, and arts festival in Iowa City—to discuss how the two groups might work together. The opportunity presented itself when the 24-Decade performance was announced. In fact, Flyover Fest moved its dates to take advantage of Dazzle's visit.

"We believed in the partnership and we were very appreciative for the opportunity to work with Hancher," Talley says. "It was a great opportunity to raise the profile of the festival by collaborating with other community organizations and tap into a broader demographic of people who attend Hancher events and who are great patrons of the arts."

As part of Flyover Fest, Dazzle participated in a conversation about his work, his professional evolution, and what it means to be a queer artist making costumes for a queer show. Vero Rose Smith, associate curator of the UI Stanley Museum of Art, moderated the talk.

"One of the missions of Flyover Fest is to create a platform to amplify the stories of artists who come from underrepresented communities, whether that's race, gender, sexual orientation, class, or ability," Talley says. "I hope that people who meet Machine Dazzle or any of the participating Flyover Fest artists leave with a broader and deeper appreciation of the diversity of art that's being created and that it helps to elevate critical conversations around inclusivity."

Dazzle's influence also was evident in downtown Iowa City storefronts. Public Space One (PS1), a nonprofit arts organization, and the Iowa City Downtown



Machine Dazzle and local artists at Public Space One's "Let's Hot Glue Things" event on November 15, 2017.

District paired 12 visual and performance artists and two art collectives with 11 local businesses to create installations in their storefronts.

While Dazzle didn't have a direct hand in creating any of the installations, he met with some of the participating artists in November at PS1 for a "Let's Hot Glue Things" event.

"The idea was to get creative people in a room and play," PS1 Director John Engelbrecht says. "We accumulate a lot of various debris and art materials, and since Machine often uses recycled or found materials, we thought we'd pull it all out and see what happened. It was a sort of kick-off for the storefront project."

The theme for the storefront installations came from the *24-Decade* show and from a question Dazzle asked while he was in Iowa City: What is your story? Artists were encouraged to think about the history of Iowa City, particularly underrepresented histories. A few of the histories that were told included LGBT nightlife, the Iowa breaking scene, Iowa Mountaineers, and the artists who have called Iowa City home.

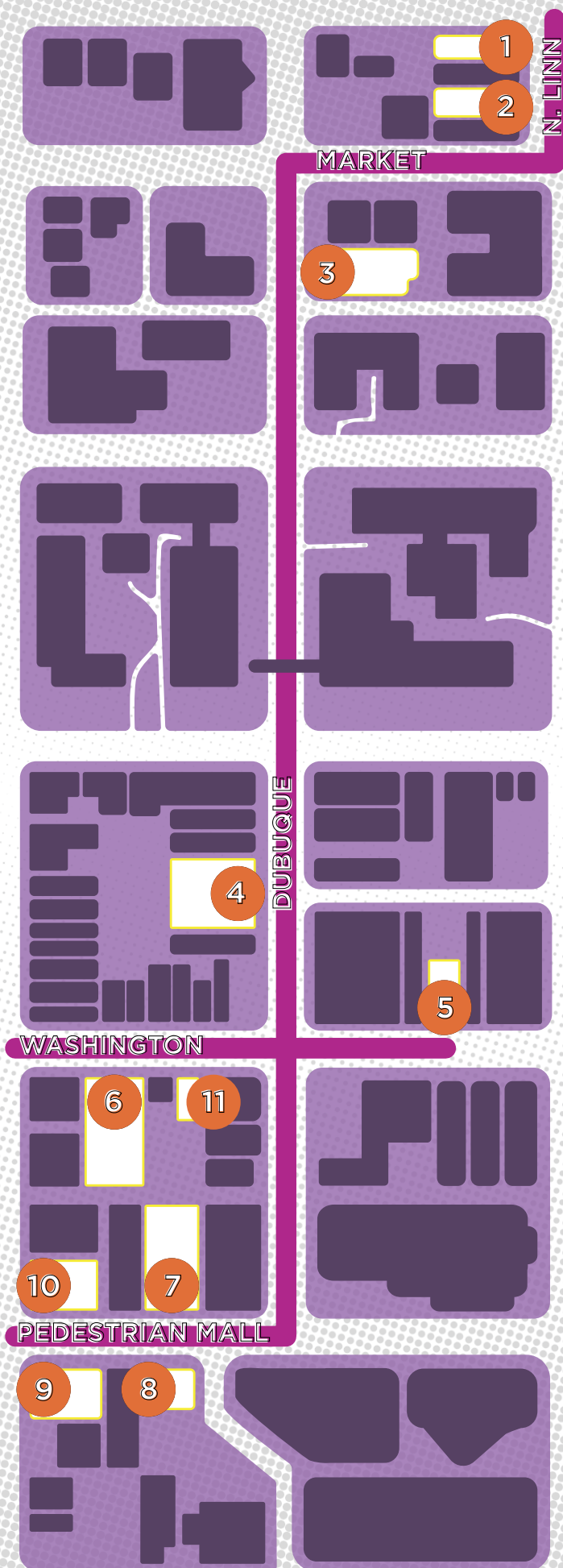
The first storefront installation went up April 1 in Sculpt on the pedestrian mall. The project culminated with the Dazzle Crawl on April 27, during which people joined Dazzle for a parade-like tour of the installations. Costumes were encouraged and a few of the storefronts incorporated performances, including breakdancing and a burlesque show by the Heartland Bombshells.

Engelbrecht says the event was important for local artists because it gave them an opportunity to show their work in highly visible spaces.

Dazzle also spoke to UI theater classes and led a May basket workshop at United Action for Youth. Afterward, the baskets were distributed to children at the UI Stead Family Children's Hospital.

Dazzle says one of the main ingredients to creating community is a desire to come together for a greater good—something he says he saw while in Iowa City.

"When something goes on here, a lot of people get involved. This city is just small enough that people will come together for events," Dazzle says. "It's not always like that in other cities."



HANCHER AND PUBLIC SPACE ONE PRESENT

DAZZLE CRAWL

Friday, April 27, 2018, 5:00–7:00 pm

Area artists took over the windows of an array of downtown businesses in a celebration of radical viewpoints and untold stories in local history.

The Dazzle Crawl is inspired by Machine Dazzle's 2017 work transforming the windows of Neiman Marcus in San Francisco with costumes from Taylor Mac's *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* (Abridged).

Dazzle Crawl displays were installed in downtown Iowa City throughout April, culminating in a parade crawl on April 27, 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Select locations had live performances and special one-night art pieces the night of the Dazzle Crawl.

ARTWORKS ON THE DAZZLE CRAWL:

1 A Shout out to the Breakers Before Us (Performance)

Artists: Chuy Renteria,
Mike Stenerson, and Kenny Morgan
Location: 287 N. Linn St.

2 The Vital Cycle of Fire and Growth

Artists: Emily Jalinsky
and Sayuri Sasaki Hemann
Location: Willow + Stock
(207 N Linn St)

3 Browns and Nudes

Artist: Katherine Simóne Reynolds
Location: Wesley Student Center/
PS1 (120 N Dubuque St)

4 We Are All Immigrants

Artist: Iowa City Community
Carnaval Parade Project
Location: Prairie Lights
(15 S Dubuque St)

5 On the 45th Year of the Emma Goldman Clinic...

Artist: Bluestockings
Location: Beadology
(220 E Washington St)

6 Rising Waters

Artist: Alison Filley
Location: Hands Jewelers
(109 E Washington St)

7 Untitled

Artist: Frankie Schneckloth
Location: Velvet Coat
(118 E College St)

8 Nightlife

Artist: Zoë Woodworth
Location: Revival (117 E College St)

9 FOAM

(Friends of Ana Mendieta)

Artists: Atom Burke, David Dunlap,
and John Engelbrecht
Location: Sculpt
(105 E College St)

10 Guts and Glory

Artist: Vero Rose Smith
Location: Yotopia
(132 S Clinton St)

11 Secret Showcase (Performance)

Artist: Heartland Bombshells
Location: The Garden Room
(123 E Washington St)





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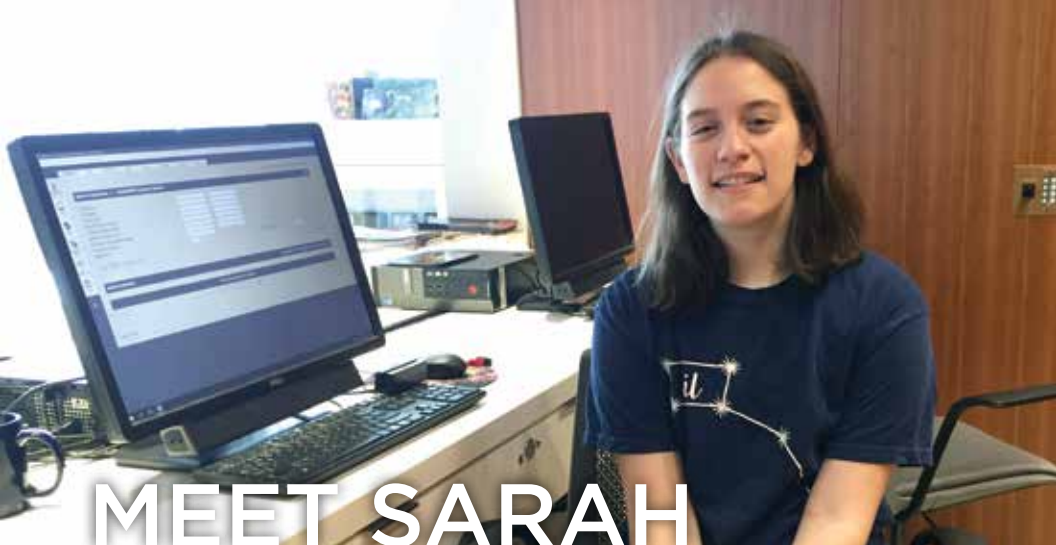
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MEET SARAH

One of Hancher's 197 student employees

Basic information:

Sarah Lopez. Freshman from Kenosha and Chicago (my parents were split so I grew up in both). Double major in Speech and Hearing Sciences and English

What is your position at Hancher?

I work in the Box Office.

How long have you worked at Hancher?

This is my first year.

What is your favorite part about Hancher?

I love Leslie and Elizabeth [assistant box office managers] and all of my awesome coworkers who make work fun to come to.

Do you have any favorite Hancher show you've worked or attended?

The King and I. It's my favorite musical because I love the storyline and the music is exquisite. I hum it all the time. You can ask the Box Office staff, I went nuts when it was in town.

Do you have a favorite spot in Iowa City?

I love the Bluebird Diner because they now serve breakfast all day long, and their chocolate chip pancakes give me life.

Do you have any favorite TV shows, movies, bands, or books?

I LOVE Muse and Paramore. Favorite book? Hands down, *Great Gatsby*. Favorite movie: *About Time*.

Do you have any favorite classes you've taken at the University of Iowa?

I like Children's Literature so much because professor Lori Branch challenges me to be the best student I can be.

What are your eventual career goals? How does working at Hancher help you achieve those goals?

I want to be a writer with Speech Pathology as my stable job. Selling tickets is so exciting because you're contributing to someone's show experience, and that's why I love working here.

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- Thursdays 5:00–7:30 pm



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