

**FIRSTWORKS AND BROWN ARTS INITIATIVE CO-PRESENT TAYLOR MAC'S  
AWARD-WINNING *A 24-DECADE HISTORY OF POPULAR MUSIC (ABRIDGED)* AS  
PART OF ARTIST RESIDENCY, SEPTEMBER 12-15**



(photo credit: Little Fang)

**Keynote lecture, performance and panel discussion  
showcase Taylor Mac's multifaceted practice to Providence community**

***A 24-Decade History of Popular Music***

Co-produced by Pomegranate Arts and Nature's Darlings

*"[Taylor Mac's A 24-Decade History of Popular Music] was one of the great experiences of my life." – Wesley Morris, **The New York Times***

*"Taylor Mac defies all comparisons and adjectives." – **The Washington Post***

*"The commanding Mac is a genuine leader of our times." – **Time Out***

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Providence, RI (July 23, 2019) – FirstWorks and the Brown Arts Initiative at Brown University will co-present MacArthur Fellow and Tony-nominated performer and playwright Taylor Mac in an artist residency taking place September 12-15, 2019. The residency features the Rhode Island premiere of Mac's critically acclaimed performance *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music (Abridged)* on September 14 at The VETS. A finalist for the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, this bedazzled mashup of music, history

and theater decodes the social history of the United States—all 240 years—through 246 songs that were popular throughout the country and in its disparate communities, from 1776 to the present day. The 2-hour abridged performance features selections spanning the 24-hour work.

Told from the perspective of communities whose stories are often, according to Mac, “forgotten, dismissed or buried,” the work highlights an array of musical styles and artistic voices ranging from folk songs, ballads and Walt Whitman to disco and more. The performance is part of FirstWorks’ Artistic Icons Series with ticket information at [first-works.org](http://first-works.org).

“Taylor Mac champions the outsider in this performance that is both provocative and interactive. In a time when forces seem to be tearing communities apart, Mac celebrates our diversity in ways that both shock and delight,” said Kathleen Pletcher, FirstWorks Founder and Executive Artistic Director.

Brown Arts Initiative Managing Director Anne Bergeron said, “We are delighted to welcome Taylor Mac to the Brown and Providence community. Mac doesn’t just expose social biases and boundaries in his work, but artfully confronts and topples them. This action is at the core of a liberal arts education at Brown.”

*A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* premiered in its entirety in 2016 at Brooklyn’s St. Ann’s Warehouse. The performance was presented over two weeks in various segments and concluded with a one-time, 24-hour tour de force. It was recognized by *The New York Times* on its 2016 lists of Best Performances, Best Theater and Best Music and received rave reviews.

In performing the work, Mac is joined by a band—led by Music Director Matt Ray, who created new arrangements of all of the songs. The audience is essential to Mac’s spectacular pop odyssey, participating in immersive moments that are by turns deeply touching and hilarious.

Mac’s team includes celebrity costume designer Machine Dazzle, who was recently in Providence for a FirstWorks community workshop during PVDFest. Dazzle returns during the September residency to outfit Mac in his signature, one-of-a-kind regalia.

*A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* is produced by Pomegranate Arts (Executive Producer, Linda Brumbach; Associate Producer, Alisa Regas) and Mac’s company Nature’s Darlings.

Residency events also include a keynote lecture delivered by Mac on September 12, and a panel discussion featuring Mac along with theater arts and performance scholars Sean F. Edgecomb, Kareem Khubchandani and David Román on September 15. Both the keynote and panel discussion take place at the Granoff Center for the Creative Arts at Brown University. The lecture and panel discussion are free and open to the public

but require advance registration at [arts.brown.edu](http://arts.brown.edu).

*NOTE: Audience participation occurs during the performance. Additionally, performance and residency events may include mature content and are intended for adult audiences.*

The artist residency includes the following events:

**September 12, 5:30 p.m. Keynote Lecture by Taylor Mac**

Martinos Auditorium, Granoff Center for the Creative Arts, 154 Angell Street

Mac will deliver a lecture titled “What’s Gonna Happen?” It speaks to the artist’s vision of the theater in uncertain times and how it can be an essential catalyst for meaningful conversation and positive change. Free and open to the public, registration is required. Tickets are first-come, first-served at [arts.brown.edu](http://arts.brown.edu).

**September 14, 8:00 p.m. A 24-Decade History of Popular Music (Abridged)**

The VETS, 1 Avenue of the Arts

Tickets for this one-night event are available for purchase now from \$29 to \$69 at [first-works.org](http://first-works.org) or by calling The VETS Box Office at 401-421-ARTS (2787). The main box office is located in the Providence Performing Arts Center at 220 Weybosset Street. Student discount pricing is available; please call FirstWorks at 401-421-4278.

**September 15, 10:30 a.m. Panel Discussion**

Fishman Studio, Granoff Center for the Creative Arts, 154 Angell Street

Mac will participate in a discussion with Sean F. Edgecomb, assistant professor of theater at CUNY College of Staten Island, and David Román, professor of English and American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California, moderated by Kareem Khubchandani, assistant professor of theater, dance and performance studies at Tufts University. Free and open to the public, advanced registration required at [arts.brown.edu](http://arts.brown.edu).

The residency is funded in part by the New England Foundation for the Arts, Rhode Island Council for the Humanities (National Endowment for the Humanities), National Endowment for the Arts and Brown University’s Office of the President.

**About Taylor Mac**

Taylor Mac (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” (*New York* 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, Washington D.C.’s Kennedy Center, LA’s Ace Theater (through UCLA’s Center for the Art of Performance), Chicago’s Steppenwolf Theatre, the Sydney Opera House, The Melbourne

Festival (Forum Theater), Stockholm's Sodra Theatern, the Spoleto Festival, and San Francisco's Curran Theater and SF MoMA.

judy is the author of many works of theater including the forthcoming *Prosperous Fools*, 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*. Taylor Mac's Tony-nominated *Gary, A Sequel to Titus Andronicus* debuted on Broadway this spring.

Sometimes Taylor acts in other people's plays (or co-creations). Notably: Shen Teh/Shui Ta in The Foundry Theater's production of *Good Person of Szechwan* at La Mama and the Public Theater, in the City Center's Encores production of *Gone Missing*, 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 and 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, a NY Drama Critics Circle Award, a Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, a Guggenheim, the Herb Alpert in Theater, the Peter Zeisler Memorial Award, the Helen Merrill Playwriting Award, two Bessies, two Obies, two Helpmanns, and an Ethyl Eichelberger Award. An alumnus of New Dramatists, judy is currently a New York Theater Workshop Usual Suspect and the Resident playwright at the Here Arts Center. <http://taylormac.org/>

### **About FirstWorks**

FirstWorks is a non-profit based in Providence, Rhode Island whose purpose is to build the cultural, educational and economic vitality of its community by engaging audiences with world-class performing arts and education programs. Since 2004, FirstWorks festivals, performances and programs have attracted more than 600,000 participants. The FirstWorks Arts Learning Program reaches over 4,000 students from public and charter schools across Rhode Island with transformative, arts-based learning experiences. FirstWorks is Founding Partner for PVDfest, collaborating with the City of Providence to produce an international arts celebration held each June that in 2019 drew 130,000 visitors to Providence to experience music, art and spectacular performances. Visit [first-works.org](http://first-works.org) to learn more.

### **About Brown Arts Initiative**

The Brown Arts Initiative (BAI) at Brown University seeks to cultivate creative expression and foster an interdisciplinary environment where faculty and students learn from one another and from artists and scholars in a wide range of fields across the campus and around the world. A consortium of six arts departments and two programs that encompass the performing, literary and visual arts, BAI works collaboratively to enhance curricular and co-curricular offerings, directly engage students with prominent

artists working in all genres and media, and supports a diverse program of concerts, performances, exhibitions, screenings, lectures and symposia each year. BAI takes full advantage of the University's Open Curriculum and builds on Brown's reputation as a destination for arts exploration, contributing to cultural enterprise through the integration of theory, practice and scholarship with an emphasis on innovation and discovery that results from rigorous artmaking and experimentation.

BAI comprises and integrates History of Art and Architecture; Literary Arts; Modern Culture and Media; Music; Theatre Arts and Performance Studies; Visual Art; the David Winton Bell Gallery; and Rites and Reason Theatre/Africana Studies.

[www.arts.brown.edu](http://www.arts.brown.edu)

### **About Pomegranate Arts**

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 *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*, the Drama Desk Award-winning production of *Charlie Victor Romeo* and *Available Light* by John Adams, Lucinda Childs and Frank Gehry among others. 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. Together with Taylor Mac/Nature's Darlings, Pomegranate Arts produced and developed *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*.

<https://www.pomegranatearts.com/>

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High-resolution images available