<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 23–24</td>
<td>eighth blackbird Hand Eye</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 28–30</td>
<td>Toshiki Okada/chelfitsch God Bless Baseball</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 4 and 6–7</td>
<td>Ingri Fiksdal, Ingvild Langgård &amp; Signe Becker Cosmic Body</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 11–14</td>
<td>Faye Driscoll Thank You For Coming: Attendance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 18–27</td>
<td>Tim Etchells/Forced Entertainment The Notebook, Speak Bitterness, and (In) Complete Works: Table Top Shakespeare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 5–6</td>
<td>Joffrey Academy of Dance Winning Works</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 25–26</td>
<td>eighth blackbird featuring Will Oldham (Bonnie “Prince” Billy) Ghostlight</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 31–Apr 3</td>
<td>Blair Thomas &amp; Co. Moby Dick</td>
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<td>Apr 7–10</td>
<td>Teatrocinema Historia de Amor (Love Story)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 12 and 14–16</td>
<td>Taylor Mac A 24-Decade History of Popular Music</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 28–May 1</td>
<td>Kyle Abraham/Abraham.In.Motion When the Wolves Came In</td>
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Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago
A 24-Decade History of Popular Music:
(1956–1986)

Conceived, Written, Performed, and CoDirected by
TAYLOR MAC

Music Director
MATT RAY

Codirector
NIEGEL SMITH

Costume Designer
MACHINE DAZZLE

Lighting Designer
JOHN TORRES

Dramaturg
JOCELYN CLARKE

Songs to be announced from the stage

Featuring

Vocals | Taylor Mac

With

Music Director/Piano/Backup Vocals | Matt Ray
Bass | Danton Boller
Drums | Bernice “Boom Boom” Brooks
Guitar | Viva De Concini
Baritone Sax, Trumpet, Flute, Clarinet, Banjo | Jon Natchez
Backup Vocals | Stephanie Christian
Backup Vocals | Thornetta Davis
Executive Producer | Linda Brumbach
Associate Producers | Kaleb Kilkenny, Alisa E. Regas

Coproduced by Pomegranate Arts and Nature’s Darlings

MCA commissioning support for Taylor Mac, A 24-Decade History of Popular Music: (1956–1986) is through the MCA Stage New Works Initiative. Established in 2014, the New Works Initiative meaningfully expands MCA Stage’s ongoing commitment to supporting artists and bringing important new performances to audiences.

Lead support for the MCA Stage New Works Initiative is provided by Elizabeth A. Liebman.
A 24-Decade History of Popular Music is commissioned in part by Belfast International Arts Festival and 14-18 NOW; Carole Shorenstein Hays, Curran Theatre, San Francisco; 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; International Festival of Arts & Ideas; New York Live Arts; OZ Arts Nashville; and University Musical Society at 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 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.
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 the experience of a community coming together in the face of such tragedy and injustice—and expressing their rage (and joy in 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 for 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 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 through 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 United States, and abroad—more than 240 popular songs from the United States made over the last 240 years: 1776–2016. The songs aren’t necessarily North American but are songs that were popular in the United States; the set list is broken down into themed concerts, decade concerts (made up of songs that originated in the particular decade), and other “shorter” durational concerts: a twenty-four-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 twenty-four-hour concert that includes all 240 songs and during which I’ll be performing almost nonstop (with a few bathroom breaks) with a twenty-four-piece-orchestra, so bring your bedding and toiletries.

The goal is that with each performance we build a community that participates in the durational work. To date, we’ve performed fourteen 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 and weddings have even been planned. Our next phase is to shoot live video feeds 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

### ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**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* named judy the best cabaret performer in New York (2012), and the Village Voice named judy the best theater actor in New York (2013). 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 Theater, the Spoleto Festival, Dublin’s Project Arts Centre, London’s Soho Theatre, and literally hundreds of other theaters, museums, music halls, cabarets, and festivals around the globe. judy is the author of sixteen full-length plays and performance pieces, including *Hir* (which 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* (nominated for Chicago’s Jeff Award 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 Patinkin.


Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago

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Mac is currently creating and performing sections from the durational concert A 24-Decade History of Popular Music, sections of which have been performed at Lincoln Center, the Under The Radar Festival at the Public Theater, and Joe’s Pub, among many venues. 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 Nomination, 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 Fellow-ship 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
(NÉE 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 into 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
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. His 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, arranging string and piano for the fifth season finale of Showtime’s Nurse Jackie, performing at Joe’s Pub with Joey Arias, performing in Paris with Mx. Justin Vivian Bond, and performing 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 20th Century History of Popular Music.

In addition, Matt directed the music 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).

NIEGEL SMITH
is a performance artist and 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!—which was restaged in London, Lagos, and on its world tour. Smith was assistant director for the off-Broadway production of The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee and both 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.

Taylor Mac, 24 Decade series
Photo: Kevin Yatarola

Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago

JOCELYN CLARKE
is the theater adviser to the Arts Council of Ireland and a dramaturg at American Voices New Play Institute at Arena Stage in Washington, DC. He has taught dramaturgy at the John Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts, Columbia University, and Trinity College Dublin. He was the commis-sioning and literary manager of the Abbey Theatre for
four years, and lead theater critic with the Sunday Tribune for nine years. He is an associate artist with the Civilians and Theatre Mitu in New York. He has written six plays for Anne Bogart and the SITI Company: Bob, Alice’s Adventures Underground, Room, Score, Antigone, and Trojan Women (after Euripides). The first part of his new collaboration with Theatre Mitu, Hamlet/UR Hamlet, premiered in Abu Dhabi in spring 2015. Trial by Fire, his libretto for new electronic opera by Roger Doyle about the philosopher Giordano Bruno, premières in Dublin in late 2016.

JOHN TORRES
is currently designing lighting for dance, theater, opera, and print. Recent projects include several productions with director Robert Wilson, such as the world tour of Philip Glass’s Einstein on the Beach and Cheek to Cheek Live! with Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga, as part of the PBS Great Performances series. His designs for opera include Idomeneo, La Traviata, and Orfeo for Opera Orchestre de Montpellier in France. His work for dance includes designs for the Trisha Brown Company, Jonah Boaker, and the Martha Graham Company, and his publications include a collaboration with photographer Steven Klein.

DANTON BOLLER
has been active in the New York music scene for seventeen years, performing with Roy Hargrove, Jon Fishman, Elysian Fields, Joey Arias, Nomoto, Justin Vivian Bond, Norah Jones, Matt Ray, Q Tip, Taylor Mac, and on the production FELA! on Broadway. Boller leads the instrumental band The Sides, which performs a progressive soundscape ranging from electro to avant-jazz, dub, afrobeat, and rock. He records and produces in his New York studio and coproduced the highly successful Kat Edmonson release Way Down Low on Sony Records.

BERNICE “BOOM BOOM” BROOKS
is a drummer, producer, and teaching artist who has performed and shared the stage with such greats as Tito Puente, Gregory Hines, Patti Labeille, and many other talented jazz and R&B figures. She was a collaborating musician for Jazz at Lincoln Center’s production The History of Blues with Marion Cowings, and has a national commercial airing, Five Fine Fillies, for Bank of America.

VIVA DE CONCINI
is a prolific guitarist and vocalist, whose performances have been compared to a flaming sword, a screaming train, a ringing bell, a scratching chicken, and her singing to Freddy Mercury’s if he had been a woman. Her engagements have included Bonnaroo and the Monterey Jazz Festival, and she has been featured in Guitar Player Magazine. Her recent recordings Rock & Roll Lover and Rhinestones & Rust charted on College Music Journal.

JON NATCHEZ
is a multi-instrumentalist who has toured professionally since the age of sixteen. He has recorded on more than a hundred albums, playing more than thirty instruments, including saxophone, trumpet, bass, lap steel guitar, banjo, tuba, mandolin, trombone, French horn, and modular synthesizers. For many years, he was a member of the band Beirut, and he has performed live and/or recorded with David Byrne, St. Vincent, Spoon, Passion Pit, Macklemore & Ryan Lewis, the Antlers, Camera Obscura, Calexico, The War On Drugs, Herman Dune, Owen Pallett, Stars Like Fleas, Bishop Allen, Yellow Ostrich, Liza Minnelli, Stephin Merritt, John Zorn, Shugo Tokumaru, Craig Wedren, Karen Elson, Nina Persson, James Iha, and Zooey Deschanel.

STEFFANIE CHRISTIAN
is a native of Detroit and a prolific music collaborator in the city, with legends such as Tommy Hearns, Big Proof, Amp Fiddler, and Don Was. She toured with Brooklyn-based Talib Kweli in 2015, and has toured France as a headliner with the Black Rock Coalition. Christian’s debut solo EP, Way Too Much, was released in 2014. She is working on a new EP, Down, planned as a free download, as well as a full length album, It’s Complicated—both released by Kweli’s label Javotti Media.

THORNETTA DAVIS
is a Detroit-based singer and songwriter and the winner of more than thirty music awards, including the 2015 Best Blues/R&B Vocalist. In 2012, she was inducted into the Canada South Blues Museum and received the Detroit Blues Society Living Lifetime Achievement Award. She
This Year’s Enact-Sponsored Program Is

Taylor Mac

A 24-Decade History of Popular Music:
(1956–1986)

In a city famed for performing arts, MCA Stage stands out by presenting memorable performers from around the world and across cultures. Enact brings together longtime performance fans and newcomers alike to support cutting-edge work, gain behind-the-scenes access to artists, and discuss groundbreaking directions with leading curators.

For more information or to join Enact, please visit mcachicago.org/enact.
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For more information, contact us at enact@mcachicago.org.

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**THANK YOU**

Lead support for the 2015–2016 season of MCA Stage is provided by Elizabeth A. Liebman.

Generous support for MCA Dance is provided by David Herro and Jay Franke.

Additional generous support is provided by Caryn and King Harris; Shawn M. Donnelley and Christopher M. Kelly; Lois and Steve Eisen and The Eisen Family Foundation; Ginger Farley and Bob Shapiro; the Martha Struthers Farley and Donald C. Farley Jr. Family Foundation; Mary E. Ittelson; Sharon and Lee Oberlander; Maya Polsky; Carol Prins and John Hart/The Jessica Fund; Ellen Stone Belic; Amphion Foundation, Inc.; Leigh and Henry Bienen; Mark Light; Melynda Lopin; Maecenas; Herbert R. and Paula Molner; Elizabeth Price and Lou Yecies; and Ms. Patricia F. Sternberg.

The MCA is a proud member of the Museums in the Park and receives major support from the Chicago Park District.

**MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART**

**CHICAGO**

220 E Chicago Ave
Chicago, IL 60611

As of April 2016
As an internationally renowned institution devoted to contemporary culture, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago presents the most thought-provoking visual art and performing arts of our time. MCA Stage is a vibrant series presenting theater, dance, and music by leading artists from the United States and around the world in the MCA’s three-hundred-seat Edlis Neeson Theater.

MCA Stage’s groundbreaking performances are an integral part of the MCA’s artist-activated, audience-engaged programming. Along with the museum’s exhibitions and educational initiatives, they encourage a broad and diverse community to experience and discuss the work and ideas of living artists.

PARKING
Validate your ticket at the coat check for $12 parking in the MCA garage (220 East Chicago Avenue) or the Bernardin garage (747 North Wabash). Discounted parking is limited to six hours on the date of performance.

LOST AND FOUND
To inquire about a lost item, call the museum at 312-280-2660. Unclaimed articles are held for thirty days.

SEATING
Please switch off all noise-making devices while you are in the theater.

Patrons are seated at the management’s discretion. Food and open beverage containers are not allowed in the seating area.

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Unauthorized recording and reproduction of a performance is prohibited.

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mcastage@mcachicago.org

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Program notes compiled by Yolanda Cesta Cursach