TAYLOR MAC
A 24-Decade History of Popular Music
MAR 15, 17, 22 & 24, 2018
THE THEATRE AT ACE HOTEL
LOS ANGELES

Photo by Little Fang Photography, Costume by Machine Dazzle, Makeup by Anastasia Durasova
Welcome to the Center for the Art of Performance

The Center for the Art of Performance is not a place. It’s about mobility and a state of mind that embraces experimentation, encourages a culture of the curious, champions disruptors and dreamers and supports the commitment and courage of artists. We promote rigor, craft and excellence in all facets of the performing arts.

UCLA’s Center for the Art of Performance (CAP UCLA) is dedicated to the advancement of the contemporary performing arts in all disciplines—dance, music, spoken word and theater—as well as emerging digital, collaborative and cross-platforms utilized by today’s leading artists. Part of UCLA’s School of the Arts and Architecture, CAP UCLA curates and facilitates direct exposure to contemporary performance from around the globe, supporting artists who are creating extraordinary works of art and fostering a vibrant learning community both on and off the UCLA campus. The organization invests in the creative process by providing artists with financial backing and time to experiment and expand their practices through strategic partnerships, residencies and collaborations. As an influential voice within the local, national, and global arts community, CAP UCLA serves to connect audiences across generations in order to galvanize a living archive of our culture.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CENTER

UCLA’s Center for the Art of Performance is proud to have been one of the early co-commissioners of this uncompromising and brilliant work of art. Taylor Mac’s creative capacity for shaping American history through the marginalized voices of each era, is nothing short of genius. Drawing on a resilient and exuberant queer aesthetic, A 24-Decade History of Popular Music is a production that is so big that it—and every discarded historic community explored in it—simply cannot be ignored. An epic work in every sense, Taylor’s generous threading of popular song with maverick theater tropes could not be more relevant to the current moment. It is a rollicking approach to illuminating how we might reconsider all that has led us to now.

His production is a towering achievement and one that will undoubtedly be remembered for years to come. Los Angeles is the perfect city to celebrate how the persistence of this artist’s vision serves to ignite what is possible in the live theater space, how collaboration lifts a democracy of inclusive principles, and why the arts are vital to our cultural commons, communities and continuity of belonging.

—Kristy Edmunds, CAP UCLA Executive and Artistic Director

Photo by Ryan Miller
THU, MAR 15, 2018
CHAPTER I: 1776 - 1836
Where else to start but with the birth of America? Taylor Mac takes on our country's roots in a lush extravaganza like no other... 24 musicians, a choir, Dandies, blindfolds, beer pong. The American Revolution, the advent of women's lib and a colonial heteronormative narrative debunked.

SAT, MAR 17, 2018
CHAPTER II: 1836 - 1896
Walt Whitman and Stephen Foster go head-to-head for the title of Father of the American Song culminating in the queerest Civil War reenactment in history. A contentious “big American family dinner,” an escape on the Underground Railroad and things get real on the frontier. Oh... and a psychedelic dinner theater production of The Mikado set on Mars.

THU, MAR 22, 2018
CHAPTER III: 1896 - 1956
Coming to America—family life in the Jewish tenement, the War to End all Wars, a speakeasy, a zoot suit riot and white people flee the cities.

SAT, MAR 24, 2018
CHAPTER IV: 1956 - PRESENT
Bayard Rustin’s March on Washington leads to queer riots, the Cold War gets hot, sexual deviance leads to revolution, radical lesbians unite, and a community under siege builds itself into a movement.

6pm | Running time: Approx. 6 hours | No intermission
The Theatre at Ace Hotel

Photos by Sarah Walker (top left) and Teddy Wolff
A 24-DECADE HISTORY OF POPULAR MUSIC

Conceived, Written, Performed and Co-Directed by
TAYLOR MAC

Music Director / Arranger
MATT RAY

Costume Designer
MACHINE DAZZLE

Co-Director
NIEGEL SMITH

Scenic Designer
MIMI LIEN

Lighting Designer
JOHN TORRES

Dramaturg
JOCELYN CLARKE

Choreographic Consultant
JAWOLE WILLA JO ZOLLAR

Production Stage Manager
JASON KAISER

Production Manager
JEREMY LYDIC

Company Manager
MICHELLE STERN

Executive Producer
LINDA BRUMBACH

Associate Producer
ALISA E. REGAS

Co-Produced by
POMEGRANATE ARTS AND NATURE’S DARLINGS

Photo by Teddy Wolff

A 24-DECADE HISTORY OF POPULAR MUSIC is commissioned in part by UCLA’s Center for the Art of Performance, ASU Gammage at Arizona State University; Belfast International Arts Festival and 14-18 NOW WW1 Centenary Art; Carole Shorenstein Hays; Carolina Performing Arts at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; The Curran SF; Hancher Auditorium at the University of Iowa; International Festival of Arts & Ideas (New Haven); Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts; Melbourne Festival; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; 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, SPACE at Ryder Farm, 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. ★ The World Premiere of the complete A 24-DECADE HISTORY OF POPULAR MUSIC was presented in its entirety at St. Ann’s Warehouse, Brooklyn, NY in a co-presentation with Pomegranate Arts September/October 2016 ★ 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.
TOURING COMPANY
Taylor Mac Vocals
Matt Ray Piano, Vocals
Machine Dazzle Performer

WITH
El Beh Cello/Vocals
Danton Boller Bass
Bernice "Boom Boom" Brooks Drums
Colin Brooks Drums
Harlow Carpenter Trumpet
Heather Christian Vocals
Steffanie Christian Vocals
Thornetta Davis Special Guest Vocals
Viva DeConcini Guitar/Banjo
Maiani da Silva Violin
Antoine Drye Trumpet
Timothy White Eagle Dandy Minion
Artistic Director, Performer
James Tigger Ferguson Dandy Minion,
Burlesque Performer, Random acts of
fabulousness
Greg Glassman Trumpet
J. Walter Hawkes Trombone
Erin Hill Harp
Marika Hughes Cello
Dana Lyn Violin
Jon Natchez Baritone/Tenor/Alto Sax/
Clarinet/Flute
Jeremy Wilms Guitar
Jawole Zollar Featured Dancer

LOCAL MUSICIANS
Paul Cartwright Violin (Chapter I)
Rhea Fowler Violin (Chapters I, II)
Pamela Foard Violin (Chapter I)
Sam Gendel Alto sax (Chapter I)
Rachel Hockenberry French Horn
(Chapter II)
Woody Mankowski Tenor Sax
(Chapters I, II)
Robert Perkins Drums (Chapter III)
Kate Outterbridge Violin
(Chapters I, II)
Tony Rinaldi Trombone (Chapter I, II)
David Silverman Tuba (Chapter I)
Ethan Sherman Mandolin
Mona Tian Violin (Chapter I)

LOCAL DANDY MINIONS
Ambrosia Salad, Anita Procedure, Ashley
Romano, Chelsea Rector, Christopher
Scoles, Coco Ono, David Tran, Diana
Wyenn, Diannya Birthday, Dottie, Elliot, Erin
Carere, FREDa SLAVE, Gregory Barnett,
Jazabel Jade, Jason Jenn, Jeff Rose,
Jennifer Jonassenn, Justin Sayre, Kristina
Wong, Miss Barbie Q, Veronica Moonhill

SPECIAL GUESTS
L. Frank (Chapter I)
Tontality (Chapter I)
Alex Blake, Founder, Music Director,
Joshua Bennett, Sam Capella, David
Connors, Dominic Delzompo, Adam
Faruqi, Jett Galindo, Saundra Hall Hill,
Nathan Heldman, Chris Hunter, Taj
Jegaraj, Faith Liu, Vera Lugo, Anastasia
Malilara, Marquerite Mathis-Clark, Carla
Miller-Kupchenko, Stefanie Moore, David
Morales, Arie Moriguchi, Tu Nguyen,
Hannah Penzner, Jaquain Sloan, Gabrielle
Thompson, Hope Thompson, George
Whitaker IV

Troupe Vertigo (Chapter II)
Aloysia Gavre, Founding Director
Rex Camphuis, Technical Director/Setter
Nata Ibragimov, Ganchimeg Oyunchimeg,
Sarah Sporich, Lauren Stark, Darielle
Williams

Mariachi Lindas Mexicanas
(Chapter III)
Maricela Martinez, Founder and Director
Eunice Aparicio, Karina Baeza, Carla
Bibiano, Karina Carrillo, Olga Casillas,
Guadalupe Cortes

Burlesque Dancers
(CHAPTER III)
Anita Cookie, Anna Curtis, Athena Fatale,
Bo Toxique, Caramel Knowledge, Coco
Ono, Egypt Blaque Knyle, Erica Snap,
Gregory Barnett, Jazabel Jade, Jewel of
Denial, Katherine Helen Fisher, Kitten d’
Ville, Kristina Nekyia, Lux LaCroix, Miss
Barbie Q., Mercury Troy, Penny Starr Jr.,
Rita d’Albert, Sheila Starr Siani, Tigger!
Trixie Little, Annie Sperling

Centennial High School
Marching Band (Chapter IV)
Manuel Castañeda, Jr., Music Director,
Rodrigo Aguilar, Arturo Aguilar, Marjorita
Alfaro, Floy reanna Alvarado,
Jocelyn Gonzales Angel, B Jon Baker,
Jose Ledesma Beltran, Maria Bernal,
Sinthyia Cadenas, Tishouna Charles,
Zuny Corona, Dior Cross, Denise Espinoza,
Alexandro Ponce Gil, Bianca Gonzalez
Gomez, Cristain Gonzalez,
Kamren Johnson, Mykalala Jones, Jaconia
Kennedy, Joshua Knox, Jaqueline
Balmaceda Lovio, Kevin Mercado Medina,
E’monni Mitchell, Victor Moncada,
Kimberly Moreno, Nickolas Ortiz, Drexton
Perona, Monserrarr Settle, Yancy Taylor,
Dylan Vasquez, Britney Vines, Darielle
Williams, Jazmin Zaragoza, Brianna
Zepeda

Amber Coffman (Chapter IV)
Margaret Cho (Chapter IV)

“A 24-DECADe” PRODUCTION TEAM
Production Manager Jeremy Lydic
Production Stage Manager
Jason Kaiser

Company Manager Michelle Stern
Technical Director Janet Clancy
Properties Designer Raphael Mishler
Makeup Designer Anastasia Durasova
Audio Supervisor and Monitor Engineer
Jimin Breidsford
Assistant Scenic Designer
Brittany Vasta
Front of House Audio Engineer
Will Neal
Assistant Stage Manager
Cassev Kivnick
Assistant Company Manager
Willa Ellaffair Folmar
Wardrobe Assistant Emma Bizzack

SPECIAL THANKS
Ellen Kuras
RSA FILMS: Jules Daly, David Mitchell, Morna
Cikaki, Jason Groves
KESLOW Cameras: Mel Mathis, Nick Lanata
Diane Max
Robert Perkins
Maiani da Silva
Kristy Edmunds and the amazing team at CAP
UCLA and the Theatre at Ace Hotel

Special thanks to all the willing and spirited
audience participants who help to make this
24-hour journey a true community experience.
A NECESSITY FOR HEALING

A Conversation with Taylor Mac
by Craig L. Byrd/CulturalAttaché.co

I’ve spoken with Taylor Mac a few times. There was my first interview with Taylor (2/8/16) about A 24-Decade History of Popular Music when one segment of the show was performed that year at UCLA’s Center for the Art of Performance. We recently spoke again in advance of the presentation of all 24-Decades at The Theatre at Ace Hotel. But my favorite will always be the conversations we had at Tavern on the Green in New York in 2017. The bulk of this Q&A comes from my most recent conversation with Taylor. Taylor was in New York getting ready for a vacation to Mexico to gear up for the shows here in Los Angeles.

CB: You’ve only performed a portion of A 24-Decade History of Popular Music in Los Angeles. What’s it like bringing the complete show to Los Angeles and The Theatre at Ace Hotel?

TM: Well it’s thrilling. We brought a part of our show to Royce Hall last time we were there and introduced the show to Los Angeles audiences. When I performed and we introduced the show I promised we’d bring the whole show back. Now we get to fulfill our promise. The other part is it is just a gorgeous theater. The Ace, with the history of Mary Pickford and Charlie Chaplin and that group, is stunning. And I like being downtown. It’s my kind of scene.

CB: What special plans do you have for LA and will there be any surprises?

TM: There are always surprises because one of the things I like to do is stitch a surprise in every ten seconds. Sometimes those surprises are small, sometimes they are big like a giant 35-foot inflatable penis.

CB: That seems like an awfully big goal, a surprise every ten seconds.

TM: Have you seen the costumes? I walk out in this one and they transform over the hour. Things get taken off and things get revealed. There’s also the songs and how they are interpreted. Especially seeing a queen singing the song. How many times have you seen a queen singing “Amazing Grace” or “Yankee Doodle Dandy”? It’s different than your average American singing it—it puts a new spin on the song.

CB: A lot has changed since you first developed the show. Have you made changes to keep it topical?

TM: The core show we had at St. Ann’s in New York is the same show we’re bringing. But it’s different. When we took the show to San Francisco we had to change the show for seats that were nailed down and didn’t move. There were three tiers and 1,600 people instead of 800. We’re continuing that in Los Angeles. But what’s happening in the world is so different from when we did the show in New York. Trump is president and has been for a year. And that has changed the conversation and it has changed the way people look at the show. And the way they experience the show now is more as a necessity for healing more than it had been pre-Trump presidency.

CB: As you were developing A 24-Decade History of Popular Music in New York, audiences there were along for the ride and got to see not just what you did but what you wanted audiences to do. What are the challenges you face in getting new audiences to get with the structure of the show?

TM: I think it’s tricky to get them there, but the show has been crafted to prepare you for it. The main thing that always happens is I give permission to the audience for them to feel however they want to feel. I’m not telling them they have to be happy when I ask them to stand up. Usually when a performer like Justin Timberlake says “wave your hands in the air,” half the people are having a great time and the other half is rolling their eyes. I’m happy when they are rolling their eyes. I want them to feel seen and acknowledged, that is part of the art in the room.

CB: In a video clip from the show where you perform “Amazing Grace,” you say at the top of it, “It is a Radical Faerie realness ritual sacrifice.” Is that your call to action for the audience?

TM: It is a call to action, of course. I think that we are holding on to a lot of things that aren’t useful to use from the past. Many of those things we’ve forgotten, dismissed, buried or others have for us. It’s really a good thing to unearth that history and that harm that’s been done to us and throw it out there and see what we can do to transform it and incorporate it into our lives. I keep saying that the show is about taking the calamity in the world and doing something with it.

CB: When we spoke a couple years ago you said “I work in catharsis. That’s my job.” Can you explain how you realize that in these shows?

TM: It’s very rare for people to spend six hours in another room with a group of other people all watching the same thing. Especially when that thing is inspiring them to express and contemplate the full range of themselves. As opposed to a sporting event, it’s about rooting for one time, to be one thing. Or a church service that lasts that long, it’s about rooting for
one ideology. This breaks everyone up so they can think about who they are in relation to a much larger world and this much longer history of 240-plus years and all of that onslaught of culture in terms of music we have. That changes people when they are allowed to see something from many different angles instead of just one. Especially when they see the audience around them doing that.

And they have to do things: get up, sit down, playing beer pong, throw ping pong balls. It’s a very active show and I think catharsis comes from that. Just sitting can build walls. Maybe you can have an emotional catharsis, but not a physical one. It’s nice when theater asks you to get up and do something.

CB: Is it also cathartic for you?

TM: It is cathartic for me. It’s been an interesting process for me, my musicians and my Music Director Matt Ray, but it’s not just six hours. It’s all the tech rehearsals and that entire three-week period when we are intensely in the show. We kind of come out the other side as slightly different people. I always feel more grounded and slightly more at peace and slightly more empathetic after I’ve gone through the whole experience. And sore. My body tends to be sore.

CB: What surprised you the most about the research you did for this show?

TM: What surprised me is we have so much history that we learn in the public schools and I still learned about this stuff: the women’s liberation movement, the civil rights movement and immigration policies. It was a basic education, but I still learned about it. But they didn’t once mention anything queer. That’s kind of a surprising thing.

To do these songs and to sing a Bruce Springsteen song and be a raging queer while doing it. It reframes the history and puts me, puts us, in the history. To do “Gimme Shelter” and to frame it like “it’s just a show away” and talk about Marsha P. Johnson [an African-American drag queen and key figure in the gay rights movement in New York] throwing the shot glass against a mirror at Stonewall. To take a heteronormative song and make it about gay liberation doesn’t happen too much. Despite the arguments of historians, we exist and we find our way into it.

“I always feel more grounded and slightly more at peace and slightly more empathetic after I’ve gone through the whole experience.”

I’ve never felt like more of an American than when doing this show. Especially at this time and being a queen. I feel like a citizen expressing myself and the way we express ourselves in the show is an act of citizenship.

What is happening in the audience when we are performing this is we are making something tangible out of an ephemeral art form. The audience is making it with me. It’s quite moving and interesting to me. And an aspect I was hoping for, but it has surprised me.

CB: On your website (taylormac.org) you have an essay called What’s Gonna Happen in which you espouse the idea of being makers and not markers. Can you elaborate on that and how it applies to your show?

TM: The Public Theatre in New York had a program called Everyone’s an Artist. I don’t think everybody is an artist. Everyone has the capability of being creative. But being an artist is building a craft and putting years of your life into it and building an expertise to be an artist. But everyone is creative. Everyone has the potential to make things, to make something that is tangible. Instead of writing a Facebook post, you can do something in the world. That’s how I approach it. Social media doesn’t feel like direct action. It feels like a performer is going on stage for a tech rehearsal and saving themselves for real life. We do real life at my shows. We don’t mark. That’s kind of how I feel about it. The audience has an opportunity to, and are encouraged to be, makers of the show with us. What they do in the theater is the profundity, I’m just the diviner. It’s the audience’s job to go digging and I give them the tools to do so.

Craig L. Byrd is the creator of CulturalAttaché.co.
A conversation with Machine Dazzle
by Hunter Drohojowska-Philp

Costume designer Machine Dazzle spoke with Los Angeles-based arts writer, cultural historian and journalist Hunter Drohojowska-Philp on February 26, 2018, about the process of distilling decades into dresses with glitter...lots of glitter. As an artist working in costume design, he discusses the ways in which working with this show and Taylor Mac has changed his own thinking over the years.

A conversation with Machine Dazzle

HDP: As you prepare for the show in Los Angeles, did you reconsider in any way what you would be doing for the audience here compared to other locations?

MD: I will say that on my part I’m always wanting to change and make the costumes better, refresh things and add things every time we do the show. That is definitely my plan. I can’t say it’s anything particular to L.A., historically or socially or politically. Because the show isn’t really about anywhere. It is about America at large.

HDP: So you are saying it is about the American condition?

MD: I don’t know that it will touch on anything specific particular to L.A., though I will say that Taylor is sending out notes before this run. So you’ll see a few new things that no other city has seen. Every chance to do the show is another opportunity to make the show better and try new things. Even Taylor himself would say that even though we have done this before, it is still a workshop. America is still a work in progress and so is the show.

HDP: How long does it take to set this up? When will you get here?

MD: We have a show in Washington, D.C. on March 6th so Taylor, Matt Ray and I, the core people, we are coming in fresh from the Kennedy Center. I’m in Las Vegas right now designing costumes for a show here. I fly back to New York the night of the 5th, then D.C., then here.

HDP: Goodness.

MD: I know. I’m already tired. Technically previews for my show here begin while I’m gone.

HDP: What is the show in Las Vegas?

MD: This is not Taylor Mac related at all. I’m working on a new Spiegelworld show called Opium. It opens in mid-April.

It’s different from the stuff I make for Taylor because I’m not there to take care of it and some of these costumes have to last for eight to ten shows a week. I can’t make my beautiful sculptures. Things have to be more basic.

It’s a real Las Vegas commercial venture. I’m not going to call it art in the same way that Taylor Mac is. What I make for Taylor Mac is really art, which goes into how I describe myself. I’m an artist in the role of a costume designer. I think like an artist but I act like a costume designer.

Taylor is wearing my art, he’s wearing ideas on stage. I’m not a traditional costume designer. I’m self-taught, I did not go to school, I’ve never been to a sewing class in my life. I do think that would benefit me [laughs]. But I’m very organic with the way I do everything. If someone invites me into their project, their life, I go with the flow and my design is the same way. I don’t do sketches before hand because by the time you get from A to Z, there are so many unknowns. My process changes every time. My ideas come and go. I do put my ideas on paper.

HDP: You write them down?

MD: I write things down. I might do little sketches but not a full costume. If I sketch the costume, I would hold myself to it. I design as I go. I have my ideas but I don’t always know how they are going to happen. Some ideas are hard to express as a costume. Like I
said, Taylor is wearing ideas, emotions, a moment, it’s not just a dress and a wig.

**HDP:** There is great symbolic content to what you design, isn’t there?

**MD:** Yes, everything means something, comes from somewhere, it’s not just for the sake of fashion. The history of fashion is not in the show at all. Fashion and clothing are two things I don’t put in the same sentence with my name [laughs].

**HDP:** You are creating them not just for shock effect?

**MD:** No. My costumes are performance art in and of themselves.

**HDP:** You have used found objects in the past. Do you still do that?

**MD:** Yeah, even in the Las Vegas show, I’m making a big black coat out of black bubble wrap and garbage bags that I’ve manipulated. It’s hiding a dress underneath that is a big surprise [laughs]. I’m inspired by materials. I’ll find something and keep it because I think, I love this material, I don’t know where it goes yet but when I do, it will be perfect. There is this amazing cardboard packing material I found the dumpster the other day. I thought this is so fun, so sculptural, all I have to do is paint it a color and strap it onto somebody. And hey, I’m recycling.

**HDP:** Tell me about your past history and the performances you did before Taylor Mac.

**MD:** I left UC Boulder with a one-way ticket to New York City. I had never been there and this was the early ’90s before cell phones. I had friends who had moved there, so I stayed on their futon a few weeks, found a job and an apartment to share. My life sort of started when I moved to New York. I came from very conservative places and was never allowed to be myself, not even in college. So my life started in 1994, even though I was born in 1972.

**HDP:** What is your real name?

**MD:** Matthew Flower. I was doing a lot of clubbing, I’ve always been interested in costumes. Originally, I wanted to go to Parsons School of Design but I couldn’t afford to go, even with a scholarship. So fashion was of interest for a long time, I started making art, experimenting with drag. I was not finding what I wanted so I started making things. I started working at this cultural art space, Exit Art.

**HDP:** I remember that gallery.

**MD:** It’s closed now but back in the ’90s I worked there as an intern, then they hired me and I ended up showing my work there. I feel like the luckiest person alive that I got to do performance art there and got to witness all this stuff.

**HDP:** What did that do for you?

**MD:** I was witnessing art in its purest form. I found my people, my tribe. I’m an artist. I don’t do the art world thing, going to galleries, schmoozing. I’m home working. My time to party is when I’m performing on stage.

**HDP:** As someone who knows about performance, how did you differentiate between making your work and having somebody else wear your work?

**MD:** Luckily I have experienced wearing my work so it is easy for me to put it on someone else. Taylor Mac is unusually open to other ideas. He doesn’t have the vanity that other artists have, he’s not afraid to be messy or ugly. That is part of life. Part of the story. I don’t need to sell myself or make myself attractive for someone. That’s not what an artist does. An artist has a language and Taylor understands my language. Conceptually he totally lets me do what I want to do. That is very unusual. A lot of artists in his position would want a lot more control. I think one of Taylor’s art forms is taking control of the audience and stage and using it to his advantage. Knowing that things aren’t perfect, that is part of his art.
HDP: You two seem perfectly suited to one another.

MD: [laughs] I think so.

HDP: In terms of being able to accept that sort of unpredictability?

MD: Usually, we are so far ahead, people are trying to catch up anyway. It’s a radical show in a way.

HDP: Have your own politics changed in the course of working on the show?

MD: I’ve learned a lot from this show. I don’t know where to begin. Taylor is taking these songs, deconstructing them and looking at their meaning. It says a lot about America, what it was built on, the foundation. Just in terms of song. Then throwing it back in people’s faces and saying, look people, this is what America is built on. It’s a problem. Racism. Homophobia.

HDP: How did it affect you?

MD: It made me want to be myself even more. When you are in a room of people who are the opposite of what you are, you feel yourself a lot more. When you are in a place that doesn’t accept you or honor you, you feel yourself a lot more. You feel the difference. When I’m in a room of like-minded people, I can be at ease. I’m not fighting for anything. Do I grow more when I’m in a room of different people, or do I blossom when I’m in a room of like-minded people? I’m still finding that out for myself.

The show raises a lot of questions. I’ve had to work through things personally, too. I was born and raised in middle America where racism, mysogynism, and homophobia were an everyday thing. A lot of Americans have hetero-normative white assumptions.

HDP: Even though this show is still a workshop, the costumes are in place, do you have to change or remake any of them for the show?

MD: There are some things that have to be taken apart and put together every time we do the show simply because they are too big or too fragile to ship. I have about 18 huge wardrobe boxes that include Taylor’s outfits and my outfits and that doesn’t include 24 boxes of mannequins. Every hour, I take Taylor’s costume off of him and put it on a mannequin in the space. By the end, during the course of the show, people can come look at the costumes, and see all the details, and I’m very detail oriented for sure.

It’s part of the show that I’ll change him every hour, sometimes in front of everyone. My job is to reorganize everything, freshen things up. These costumes have been sitting in boxes since we were in Melbourne in October. They can be crumpled, though sometimes a used costume is more interesting than a new one. There is a lot to consider. And there are my own costumes, which are not as grand as Taylor’s. I have choreographed moments, I have a singing moment. I’m very much part of the show as a performer.

HDP: That seems very challenging to me.

MD: I’ve done it before so I’ve got this. I will say I’m on my feet the whole time, I don’t stop for one second. I don’t sit down.

HDP: This incredible energy and stamina, isn’t this part of the origin of your name, Machine Dazzle, that you are a dancing machine?

MD: Right. In the ’90s during my clubbing years, one night my friend called me the dancing machine. Over time, it became Machine. Then I started making costumes for a group called the Dazzle Dancers. Everyone had a dazzle name. The lead was Cherry Dazzle, there was Rinky Dink Dazzle, Cornflake Dazzle, Edible Dazzle, so I became Machine Dazzle. The Dazzle Dancers had their heyday in 2006 but in that time, I was establishing myself as a costume designer to other people in the downtown community. I would be billed as Machine Dazzle. The Dazzle Dancers had their heyday in 2006 but in that time, I was establishing myself as a costume designer to other people in the downtown community. I would be billed as Machine Dazzle. Over the years, the shows got bigger and Taylor got bigger and I came up with him and it was too late to change my name professionally. It is unique.

HDP: Does anyone still call you Matthew?

MD: My partner calls me Matthew. If you are a really close friend or you’re in bed with me, you call me Matthew. Hopefully, though I’m not going to kick anyone out of bed for calling me Machine.

HDP: Do you feel ambivalent about working in Las Vegas after your time in the art world?

MD: I was ambivalent at first. But I think anyone in my position would feel that. When you are working on a show, everyone in the show becomes your temporary family.

You build a show together, it doesn’t really matter if it is art based or commercial. These people become your family because you see them in intense, hard-working moments every day until the show opens and you spend a lot of your personal time together after rehearsal and watching shows. I’ve taken this show in as much as I’ve taken in the Taylor Mac family.

I already know the next three shows I’m doing with Taylor but I love the Spiegelworld family too. I hope they hire me in future. There’s a lot of real talent and passion here and everyone is working really hard. I used to work alone but I can’t do this without assistants. I need it done very well and very fast. My ideas don’t always make sense in the moment but that’s why I’m the designer. I have the vision. Even though I often over-do it, everyone likes the costumes.
HDP: What is your favorite costume in the 24-Decade History of Popular Music with Taylor Mac?

MD: I have a lot of favorite costumes for different reasons. I love Taylor’s opening costume. But my favorite costume today is during the Underground Railroad decade. I am not a person of color. As a white artist, I had to be careful about glorifying or imposing ideas. I’ve learned so much, not to be insensitive.

HDP: How did your thinking change by working on this show?

MD: Using songs popular during the Underground Railroad, which are part of our American history, our story book, how do I dress Taylor? I had to be poetic about it, I decided his costume had to be about migration as a concept, about people moving north, towards safety, about people changing. I’m dealing with something I never had to deal with even though I did have to move to NYC to become myself [laughs].

I lived in Texas, Idaho, Colorado. It was so painful to be different. I’m a misfit even in the gay world. I made my migration. Now I’m alive and happy and making costumes as an artist and traveling the world. At 45, I realized my dream job. I feel like the luckiest person in the world, I hope everyone finds that for themselves.


Photo by Little Fang Photography

SONGS FOR THE FALLEN

A Conversation with Matt Ray
by Carl Wilson

Carl Wilson considers the ways 24-Decade plays with popular music, and talks to music director Matt Ray about how he takes an orchestra through a 24-hour performance. His essay was commissioned by San Francisco’s Curran theater in collaboration with McSweeney’s, and can also be found at sfcurran.com. Reprinted with permission.

A 24-Decade History of Popular Music aims to tear open the seams that bind American history, the better to let everyone in and everything out. But what does it mean to do that not just with words and actions, but with the very rhythms and harmonies and textures of music? This is the question that faced Matt Ray, the Musical Director and arranger of the 240+ songs at the core of the performance. The material is at once slippery and almost too rich. Popular music will admit no stable definition and no fixed hierarchy. It can be a sleazy cluster of processed beats over which a seductive vocalist plies their trade, an anthem to chant in the streets when people rise up against injustice, a marching band at a halftime show, or, in bygone days, a light European operetta in the middle of a program of comedians and dancers. It’s chameleonic, yet stubbornly resilient, too—a vaudeville hit from a century ago might survive as a campfire singalong or the template for a YouTube political parody. Of 24-Decade’s selection, says Ray, “We’re reminding you of things that are forgotten, dismissed, or buried. It’s as if to say, Hey, you know this stuff is out there. You just don’t remember it all the time.”

Consider the first song in the full-length show, the revered gospel classic “Amazing Grace.” The audience is subliminally imbibing layers of significance from the first syllable. The lyrics were written in 1773 by James Newton, an Anglican priest, about his conversion experience decades earlier, when he was caught in a terrible storm on a ship at sea—his gratitude for having survived made him a committed Christian. The irony, given the deep link between “Amazing Grace” and the civil-rights struggle, is that the vessel was a slave ship, and Newton a former slave trader. He would eventually come out as an abolitionist, but not until fifteen years after the song was written. The words then were not sung to the tune we know now—that would come on the other side of the Atlantic, perhaps as late as the 1830s, when believers at American revival meetings began singing it to the melody of the Appalachian folk song “New Britain.” It has accumulated versions and associations ever since, including on the day in 2015 that Barack Obama sang snatches from it at a memorial service for the victims of a white supremacist mass shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. “If we can find that grace, anything is possible,” he said. “If we can tap that grace, everything can change.”

“Amazing Grace” certainly changes when Taylor Mac gets hold of it, making it the pedestal for another kind of sermon, for the verbing of nouns, the
queering of grace, the reframing of worship as a less submissive, more ecstatically communal rite. But Ray has supplied another, strictly musical transformation—he sets the “New Britain” tune and the “Amazing Grace” words to a different set of chords: the familiar, revolving sequence in A minor of “House of the Rising Sun.” Most listeners will know the hit 1964 version by British Invasion band The Animals, but “House” has been part of America’s musical repertoire since at least the turn of the century, and was first recorded by Tennessee-born hillbilly singer Clarence Ashley in 1933. It was another Appalachian tune, descended from Scots Irish ballads about good boys and/or girls gone wrong, but relocated to a brothel in New Orleans (the city that was once the country’s largest slave-trade market) and given an infusion of the blues. Into the song of salvation, then, Ray weaves a song for the fallen. Within the sacred runs a current of the profane, the outlawed, and the erotic.

These kinds of musical subtexts, present throughout the show, were sometimes added consciously and conceptually (turning David Bowie’s “Oh! You Pretty Things” into disco, for example, to bring out its gayest colors) but other times developed improvisationally over the many years of 24-Decade’s creation. “If a song is really bothering us in its major key, we’ll try it in a minor key to see if it darkens it,” says Ray, who grew up is half-Jewish and half-Scots-Irish, and working on songs that connected to those communities really felt close to working on songs that connected to our song list—so what happens if we stick them together? It takes some musical archaeological work—perhaps looking for recordings or sheet music that are New York friends and colleagues of Ray’s drawn from two decades of musical relationships, themselves “great players and professional stars in the worlds they’re in.” While they generally did not compose or improvise their own parts, Ray used them as sources for arrangement and phrasing ideas (“the ‘native’ player of the instrument,” he says, “is going to know the most about what will feel the best”), and often wrote particular parts with individual players’ styles in mind. The diversity of the ensemble, along with the players it picks up along the way, help the show adapt to such a vast range (240 years’ worth) of musical styles, and also address some of the delicacies of drawing upon such varied times, places, and cultures.

Meanwhile, A 24-Decade History of Popular Music is in itself a community, populated by the consistent ensemble members who travel with the show. They are New York friends and colleagues of Ray’s from two decades of musical relationships, themselves “great players and professional stars in the worlds they’re in.” While they generally did not compose or improvise their own parts, Ray used them as sources for arrangement and phrasing ideas (“the ‘native’ player of the instrument,” he says, “is going to know the most about what will feel the best”), and often wrote particular parts with individual players’ styles in mind. The diversity of the ensemble, along with the players it picks up along the way, help the show adapt to such a vast range (240 years’ worth) of musical styles, and also address some of the delicacies of drawing upon such varied times, places, and cultures.

“Kashmir” with the Bee Gees’ Song “Stayin’ Alive” elsewhere in the show. “We don’t know if that’s the greatest thing we ever created or the worst,” Ray says.

In general, it was Mac who researched and selected the songs, though Ray says he suggested five or six. “Sometimes it’d be finding songs that fit the concept we had for that decade, and sometimes the concept would emerge out of the songs that fit the time period,” he tells me. “Taylor would come to me with a list of songs for a certain hour, maybe twenty or fifteen of them, and we’d play through them, narrow the list down, and discuss what they’d mean in the context of the show and what we could do with them stylistically.”

There were so many factors to balance—between songs that might rouse the crowd as familiar favorites, for example, and others that would delight with novelty and strangeness. There’s also some musical archaeological work involved, since the earlier in American history the source material originated, the more challenging it could be to find recordings or sheet music that offered a definitive version of lyrics or melody. And Ray had to work to keep the combinations of instruments and sounds throughout the show varied and fresh.

“You have to think about the longer timeline, such as which musicians are on stage for what time period,” Ray says. “It’s kind of a jigsaw puzzle: We might have a string orchestra on stage, but I won’t use it for this song, so it doesn’t become monolithic. The Civil War-era music, for instance, is all brass and one violin, no reeds—which was intentional, to let the audience refresh their ears, and to give me a different palette to work from.”

Another complication—welcome in a work that complicates everything it touches—comes with the guest artists who are brought into the show wherever it tours, “to add a local flavor,” such as the youth of the Brooklyn United Marching Band in New York, or the All-woman Mariachi Lindas Mexicanas in Los Angeles. Ray will send music to them in advance, and then let them work up their own arrangements. The guests often “raise the level of the whole show,” and thrill the audience by creating a connection between the performance and their own communities.

“In American music,” says Ray, “there are musical structures that come from Africa, or Ireland, or Scotland, or France, and there are Native American influences still, and you can see those little pieces being repeated throughout history… But our ancestors got here in so many different ways, and that plays out in the musical formats. In the show, we have an underground-railroad decade, and working on songs for that is very deep and very complicated to approach, as well as quite moving. My background is half-Jewish and half-Scots-Irish, and working on songs that connected to those communities really felt close to something, to me. It made me realize how strongly people feel about [their heritages].”

However, he says, “I think music is a common language, and as long as you’re respectful you can do things, without being literal—you can take elements and fuse them together. We also spent a lot
of time asking people what they thought about things we were doing. You have to be open to suggestions. When we worked on our radical-lesbian decade, 1996 to 2006, you know, we are queer, but we still asked our guitarist Viva DeConcini what she thought, because why wouldn’t we? If you make sure to include people coming from different backgrounds, who can advise you, that’s a lot easier than if you’re just out there on your own trying to decide what does or doesn’t work.”

A paradoxical stage device subtly helps to underline the bonds between the musicians. Think of the 1983 Talking Heads tour that was documented in the late Jonathan Demme’s great film Stop Making Sense: First David Byrne comes out with an acoustic guitar and a boom box, playing “Psycho Killer” solo. Then, song by song, additional musicians are added, until the stage is heaving with keyboardists and percussionists, tracing the band’s own evolution from performance-art project to semitradiotional rock band to electronic fusion group to polyrhythmic, multicultural large ensemble. It’s like a long, slow crescendo in the scale of the sound, stirring for the increase in togetherness—in-diversity that it implies, though it’s also very rock n’ roll in its bravura triumphalism. With characteristic cabaret irony, 24-Decade uses the same effect in reverse (does this mean it starts making sense?)—the show begins with twenty-four musicians on stage, then loses one each hour, so that the penultimate hour has only fourteen, but when they come back five hours later, there would be multiple drummers and a cymbalist, coming out of New Orleans marching bands. But then to save money, and maybe later to do sound effects for silent films, they created the ‘trap’ kit, trapping all those things together, with the invention of the [foot-operated] high-hat cymbal, the bass-drum pedal, and so on. Likewise the electric guitar eventually comes along, to make a bigger sound, so you don’t need as many different instruments. I don’t know that I thought about that in advance, but it was very convenient that when we got to the 1960s and 1970s, we found ourselves with a small group in a familiar format.”

There’s also some sleight-of-hand going on, to help deal with the endurance issues that the marathon version of the show presented. “It took us a while to decide what does or doesn’t work.”

That applied to everyone, of course, except for Ray and Mac themselves. They “trained” for the ordeal by gradually doing longer and longer sections of the show as full performances, first individual hours, then three-hour sets, then six, and finally twelve-hour halves of the full show. “That was really illuminating. You learn, Oh, this is what I need in order to take care of myself and get through it.” Still, “by the time you get to hour eighteen and nineteen, you’re kind of out of your body. The intensity of the experience revolted around the physical deterioration of a person working that hard. We knew the audience would experience that with us.”

Few reviewers of the marathon show failed to note that Ray burst into messy tears at the end of the twenty-third hour, while embracing Mac before finally leaving the stage. I ask Ray whether it was sheer exhaustion, or whether his heart was breaking a little at separating from his co-creator before the adventure, and the ordeal, was fully completed. “You’re the first person to guess that without me telling them,” he says. “It’s partly complicated, because this project has taken five years of my life. But mainly I just looked at Taylor and felt really deeply sad to leave him alone on stage for the last hour. That was something I hadn’t thought about happening. We’re very close, and we work together so intensely, and I also felt proud and moved by what we’d accomplished. But the primary thing was not wanting to leave him alone up there.”

Even as the closing hours permit the event’s auteurs a last chance to claim their individual spotlights, then, they’re also a diminuendo. This is a coda with a quiet echo of the show’s first inspiration, its artificial absence, its want and need of failure.” It is as if in that final moment the community’s existence is affirmed by its artificial absence, its want and need for one another illuminated in the stark light of one member’s loneliness, and the grandeur of a renegade orchestra summed up in the plink of a ukulele.

Carl Wilson is the music critic for Slate.com, and the author of Let’s Talk About Love: Why Other People Have Such Bad Taste.
WHO’S WHO IN THE CAST & THE CREATIVE TEAM

TAYLOR MAC (Creator/Performer/Co-Director) (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 Sadra Theatre, The Spoleto Festival, and San Francisco’s Curran Theater and MOMA.

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 Theater’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 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, 2 Bessies, 2 Obies, 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.

MATT RAY (Arranger/ Music Director/Piano/Vocals) is a Brooklyn-based pianist, singer, songwriter, arranger, and music director. His arrangements have been called “wizardly” (Time Out NY) and “ingenious” (NY Times), and his piano playing referred to as “classic, well-oiled swing” (NY 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

MACHINE DAZZLE (Costume Designer/ Performer) (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, Machine’s world 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, Pig Iron Theater, Stanley Love Performance Group, and The Pixie Harlots, to name a few.

NIEGEL SMITH (Co-Director) is a theater director and performance artist. He is the Artistic Director of NYC’s Obie Award-winning theater, The Flea; Associate Artistic Director of Elastic City; and ringleader of Willing Participant an artistic activist organization that whips up urgent poetic responses to crazy shit that happens. His theater work has been produced by The Alley Theatre, Classical Theatre of Harlem, The Flea Theater, HERE Arts Center, Hip Hop Theatre Festival, The Invisible Dog, Luna Stage, Magic Theatre, Mixed Blood, New York Fringe Festival, New York Live Arts, Phoenix Theatre Ensemble, Playwrights Horizons, Pomegranate Arts, The Public Theater, St. Ann’s Warehouse, Summer Play Festival, Todd Theatre and Under the Radar, and his participatory walks and performances have been produced by Abrons Arts Center, American Realness, Dartmouth College, Elastic City, The Invisible Dog, Jack, The New Museum, Prelude Festival, PS 122, the Van Alen Institute and Visual AIDS. Before surviving high school in Detroit, Niegel grew up in the North Carolina piedmont, fishing with his dad, shopping with his mom and inventing tall-tale fantasies with his two younger brothers. niegelsmith.com.

MIMI LIEN (Scenic Designer) is a New York-based designer of sets and environments for theater, dance and opera. Having arrived at set design from a background in architecture, her work often focuses on the interaction between audience/environment and object/performer. She is an artistic associate with Pig Iron Theater Company and The Civilians, and resident designer at BalletTech. In 2012, she received an Obie Award for Sustained Excellence in set design. Her work has been presented in New York at Lincoln Center Theater, Signature Theatre, St. Ann’s Warehouse, Playwrights Horizons, the Public Theater, Soho Rep, 13P, Ontological-Hysteric Theater, The Kitchen and around the country. Mimi’s designs for dance have been presented in the Netherlands and Russia, and she was a semifinalist in the Ring Award competition for opera design in Graz, Austria. She has received a Barrymore Award (Outrage), for Barrymore nominations, Hewes Design Award nomination (Queens Boulevard), and Bay Area Critics Circle nomination (Strange Devices from the Distant West). She was
JOHN TORRES (Lighting Designer) John's work includes designs for dance, theatre, music, fashion and print. With darling Taylor Mac, designs include performances at The Curran Theatre in San Francisco, MASS MOCA, and New York Live Arts. In collaboration with Robert Wilson, productions have included Einstein on the Beach (2013-2015 World Tour), Cheek to Cheek Live! With Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga (PBS Great Performances) La Traviata (Landestheater Linz), Garrincha (SESC Teatro Paulo Autran, São Paulo) and Hermes: Here Elsewhere (Cedar Lake, NYC). In Dance, ...Toss and Rogues, Choreographer: Trisha Brown, Theatre National de Chaillot/Paris; Available Light, Choreographer: Lucinda Childs, Walt Disney Concert Hall/Los Angeles. In Fashion, Givenchy S/S 2015 (New York), Yeezy 3 by Kanye West at Madison Square Garden. John is a frequent collaborator with fashion photographer Steven Klein. nyetelyedesign.com

JOCELYN CLARK (Dramaturg) is currently Theatre Adviser to the Arts Council of Ireland and dramaturg at American Voices New Play Institute at Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. He has taught dramaturgy at the John Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts, Columbia University and Trinity College Dublin. He was the Commissioning and Literary Manager of the Abbey Theatre for four years, and lead theatre 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)—and he is currently working on a new collaboration about composer and philosopher John Cage. Here'sy, his libretto for new electronic opera by Roger Doyle about the philosopher Giordano Bruno, premiered in Dublin in late 2016.

JAWOLE ZOLLAR (Choreographic Consultant) In 1984, Jawole founded Urban Bush Women (UBW) as a performance ensemble dedicated to exploring the use of cultural expression as a catalyst for social change. In addition to 34 works for UBW, she has created works for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Philadanco, University of Maryland, Virginia Commonwealth University and others; and with collaborators including Compagnie Jant-Bi from Senegal and Nora Chipaumire. In 2006 Jawole received a New York Dance and Performance Award (Bessie) for her work as choreographer/creator of Walking With Pearl... Southern Diaries. Featured in the PBS documentary, Free to Dance, which chronicles the African-American influence on modern dance, Jawole was designated a Master of Choreography by the John F. Kennedy Performing Arts Center in 2005. Her company has toured five continents and has performed at venues including Brooklyn Academy of Music, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts and The Kennedy Center. UBW was selected as one of three U.S. dance companies to inaugurate a cultural diplomacy program for the U.S. Department of State in 2010. In 2011 Jawole choreographed visible with Chipaumire, a theatrical dance piece that explores immigration and migration. In 2012 Jawole was a featured artist in the film Restaging Shelter, produced and directed by Bruce Berryhill and Martha Curtis, and currently available to PBS stations.
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