



## Taylor Mac - A 24-DECADE HISTORY OF POPULAR MUSIC

USA

22 & 23 May 2020, Fri & Sat, 8pm

KC Arts Centre – Home of SRT

Rating: Rating to be advised.

Admission for audience age 18 years and above.

### Synopsis

In a fabulous hybrid of performance art, music, theatre and social commentary, American theatre artist, Taylor Mac performs a dazzling mashup of American popular music from the last 240 years.

At 246 songs and 24 hours long, the original 2016 performance of *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* was recognised as the Guardian's top five most important theatre works of the 21st century.

It's devised by Taylor Mac – drag queen extraordinaire, a Tony nominated playwright and Pulitzer Prize Finalist for Drama – who's no stranger to flipping history on its head or giving voice to the outliers of America's counterculture.

This ambitious and audacious two-hour version is a gorgeously realised feat of storytelling chutzpah. Expect an outrageously entertaining crash course in the last 240 years of American music, history and dysfunction. Yet cleverly embedded in this extravaganza are Mac's astute commentaries

about politics, marginalised groups, and queer culture.

Joined by music director Matt Ray, costume designer Machine Dazzle, and an incomparable band, Mac dazzles through musical styles and artistic voices ranging from murder ballads to disco, Walt Whitman to David Bowie and beyond.

Told with a generous humanity that will provoke and embrace diverse communities, *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* is a landmark work that will open your mind to the imaginative possibilities of art and the constructed histories around us.

### Journey with SIFA



Taylor Mac says: "This being our Singaporean debut, I'm so curious to learn how our unique interpretation of American culture can be in dialogue with a country and customs half a world away. And it is always thrilling for us to do our small part in representing an alternative vision of what the world has been, is, and could be".

"Writer, director, producer, theatre-maker, political activist, drag queen; Taylor Mac is all of these and more. I have followed Mac's career for six years as he built *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* from its first hour in New York, and what drew me to it was how Mac's performance had this incredibly diverse crowd laughing, crying, and embracing together at the end of it. It is an explosion of humanity at its most vulnerable and vital, and I want to encourage everyone to come and see the amazing experience that I know Taylor will bring to Singapore," shares Gaurav Kripalani, Festival Director.

### Interviews:

Taylor Mac will be available for an email interview to share more on the following topics (proposed topics):

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- The experience when Mac staged the 24-hour performance and what can audiences expect from this abridged SIFA 2020 version
- Mac's approach in co-creating the play with the audiences

### **About Taylor Mac**

Taylor Mac is a writer, director, actor, singer, and performance artist whose fearlessly experimental works dramatise the power of theatre as a space for building community. Mac (who uses judy [lowercase] as a gender pronoun) merges high and low theatrical conventions—from classical Japanese theatre to popular music concerts—and interacts with the audience to inspire a reconsideration of assumptions about gender, identity, ethnicity, and performance itself.

In *The Lily's Revenge* (2009), audience members are encouraged to interact with the actors during intermissions of this allegorical breaking down of binary conventions of sexuality. Mac stretches and reconfigures the social arrangements of the traditional living room drama in *HIR* (2014), as the locus of power shifts away from the patriarchal figure to a wife and gender-transitioning teenager. For the hugely ambitious *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* (2014–2016), he reimagines America's history through a queer lens and explores the homophobia, racism, and other forms of exclusion that have marked the American experience. Each decade of America's existence is presented through one hour of popular music and historical commentary performed by Mac; usually presented in three- to four-hour segments, Mac performed the entire 24 hours in fall 2016. His joyful, charismatic, and vulnerable performance style disarms the audience, turning passive spectators into active participants. Over the course of the hour depicting 1896–1906, sections of the audience move to the stage to represent the waves of immigrants coming to America.

Mac's songs about life in the crowded tenements of 1920s New York come to life as the entire audience is crammed onto the stage for an hour. The enactment of a "gay junior prom" in the 1966–1976 decade—in which the audience is asked to dance with a partner of the same gender—crystallises his goal of transforming a roomful of strangers into something more intimate through shared experience.

With these and other works, Mac is challenging audiences to reimagine our relationships to one another and demonstrating ways in which the arts can be a tool for inspiring social change.

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