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Perelman Performing Arts Center and Civis Foundation

Announce

Eight Artistic Commissions Confirmed for Inaugural Year of The Democracy Cycle

October 21, 2024 – New York, NY - **The Perelman Performing Arts Center** (Khady Kamara Nunez, Executive Director, Bill Rauch, Artistic Director) and **Civis Foundation** (a Galvan Initiatives affiliate) (T. Eric Galloway, Co-Founder and President) announce eight artistic commissions for the inaugural year of **The Democracy Cycle**, a program which invites artists to explore themes relating to the nature, practice, and experience of democracy. This multi-year program is committed to 25 commissions across theater, opera, dance, music, and multidisciplinary practices.

The artists and artistic collaborations chosen to receive the 2024 Democracy Cycle commissions are **Javaad Alipoor; Baye & Asa; Charlotte Brathwaite, June Cross and Sunder Ganglani; Pablo Manzi and Bonobo Teatro; Angélica Negrón; Vickie Ramirez, Ty Defoe and Jeanette Harrison; Abigail Nessen Bengson and The Bengsons; Talvin Wilks and Paul Schiff Berman.**

Each selected project will receive \$60,000 in support, consisting of a \$30,000 commission and another \$30,000 for project development.

Launched in January 2024, the first open call of The Democracy Cycle received 450 submissions from around the world, from artists representing all eligible artistic disciplines of theater, music, dance, opera, and multidisciplinary practice. After a first round of review by 27 readers, a panel of 7 arts- and democracy-workers facilitated by the Director of The Democracy Cycle, Boo Froebel, reviewed the finalist proposals and chose the final 8 commissions together. The panelists were: **Ludovic Blain** (Executive Director of the California Donor Table), **Anthony Roth Costanzo** (countertenor and General Director and President of Opera Philadelphia), **Leslie Ishii** (Artistic Director, Perseverance Theatre; CAATA Board President), **Sheila Lewandowski** (Executive Director of The Chocolate Factory Theater), **Samora Pinderhughes** (composer, multidisciplinary artist and Director of The Healing Project), **David Thomson** (interdisciplinary artist, arts consultant, and co-founder of The Artist Sustainability Project), and **Laurie Woolery** (director, playwright, community organizer, and Director of Public Works at the Public Theater).

The Democracy Cycle is designed to support new live performance works that illuminate the promise, practice, imperfection, and opportunity of democracy. The Democracy Cycle aims to invigorate discussion and expression of democratic values by supporting the unique abilities of artists to imagine new worlds, envision new possibilities, and provoke meaningful discourse across any number of divides.

All 25 projects will be commissioned and developed over a 5-year period, with at least eight more artists chosen in each of the 2025 and 2026 open calls.

The Democracy Cycle was jointly conceived by **Bill Rauch** and **T. Eric Galloway**.

“I am overwhelmed by the response this initiative has had in the artistic community,” says **Bill Rauch**, PAC NYC. “We fiercely believe in supporting artists in their work so that the arts can continue to foster civic dialogue and understanding. As a new organization, we take that job seriously. So, it was joyous and humbling to have 450 submissions from around the globe in our very first round. I’m thrilled to see what these remarkable commissioned artists will create and how their work will help us understand democracy in new ways.”

“The question is not whether our future will be interdependent – it will be – but how prepared are we to participate in it?” adds **T. Eric Galloway**, President of Civis (a Galvan Initiatives affiliate). “These bridges between cultural and civic dialogue are essential and at the core of Civis’ mission. The important 20th century American playwright, Thornton Wilder, thoughtfully observed that ‘on the stage it is always now.’ We are excited to witness all aspects of our singular democracy, its joys, hope, and terrors, examined ‘Now’ by this talented inaugural cohort.”

Submissions for The Democracy Cycle’s next open call for proposals will begin in January 2025, with submission guidelines on the website in December 2024. Artists creating in theater, dance, music, opera, and multidisciplinary practices are encouraged to apply. This is a national and international open call.

2024 DEMOCRACY CYCLE COMMISSIONS

America’s Kingdoms (working title)

Javaad Alipoor

America’s Kingdoms is a new scripted theater show which offers a satirical account of the rise of big U.S. oil companies and their meddling in Central American and Middle Eastern politics. The show will take the form of a documentary-style deep dive into the U.S. State Department’s international oil policies, with cutting-edge projection intersecting with a live electronic history of techno music.

At the Altar (working title)

Baye & Asa

At the Altar is Baye & Asa’s new evening-length duet and an exploration of cultural, religious, and political deities. This new dance work reckons with the pitfalls of extreme idolatry and interrogates our collective struggle for survival and salvation. The health and strength of any democratic system rests in its ability to challenge religious, cultural, and political messiahs. At the Altar is our democratic participation.

Douglass v. Democracy (working title)

Charlotte Brathwaite, June Cross, Sunder Ganglani

Douglass v. Democracy, a new multidisciplinary performance work, investigates American Democracy by way of Frederick Douglass – who was subjected to its injustices and offered its dreams of freedom.

Estampida Humana (Human Stampede)

Pablo Manzi and Bonobo Teatro

Estampida Humana, a new theater work by Teatro Bonobo, looks at how the U.S. intervention in Chile during the 1960s and 1970s led to the installation of neoliberal policies and widespread privatization that radically transformed everyday life, leaving Chileans with no sense of community or shared future. When the neighborhood square is the only public space left, the only sense of community (possibly) still alive, a

neighborhood council must decide what to do with a group of homeless people who take over the square. Is the thought of a large-scale community project even possible in a fragmented society?

The Puerto Rico Experiment (working title)

Angélica Negrón

Puerto Rican-born composer Angélica Negrón, Brooklyn based indie electronic transnational band Balún, and GRAMMY award winning vocal group Roomful of Teeth will collaborate to create a new concert length work, *The Puerto Rico Experiment*, a series of sonic vignettes using the human voice, reimagined Caribbean folk traditions, and layered electronic textures exploring the role of democracy in Puerto Rico's current financial crisis as connected to issues caused by post-colonialism and disaster capitalism.

Six Nations: One Fire (working title)

Vickie Ramirez, Ty Defoe, Jeanette Harrison

Six Nations: One Fire explores the Haudenosaunee Confederacy's Great Law of Peace, a 1,000-year-old-Indigenous philosophy of unity, justice, and consensus-based-decision-making. Through interdisciplinary theater, this production highlights the profound influence of these principles on the U.S. Constitution.

Sovereignty Hymns

Abigail Nessen Bengson and The Bengsons

Sovereignty Hymns is a live cantata and communal storytelling ritual celebrating and honoring body sovereignty, created by The Bengsons. The work weaves sung testimony pulled from interviews centering reproductive liberty and new joyful music to remind us we're all meant to be beloved and free, and radical liberation can bloom in spaces of collective joy!

The Truth Beneath

Talvin Wilks and Paul Schiff Berman

The Truth Beneath, conceived and created by Talvin Wilks and Paul Schiff Berman, is a time-shifting, fractured theatrical narrative about memory, politics, social media, and disinformation's effect on a functioning democracy based on Maria Ressa's dramatic personal memoir, *How to Stand Up to a Dictator*, and created in consultation with Ressa, co-founder of the Philippines journalism site Rappler and 2021 Nobel Peace Prize winner.

More information about the commissioned artists is available at: www.pacnyc.org/the-democracy-cycle

The Democracy Cycle is a joint project of PAC NYC and Civis Foundation and is made possible by generous support from Civis.

ABOUT PAC NYC

PAC NYC is a new home for emergent and established artists in theater, dance, music, opera, film, and media from New York City and around the world. Flexible in design, the center is fully responsive to artists' creative visions. Intimate in scale, PAC NYC fosters an immediate connection between artists and audience members. The center's projects will sometimes involve significant community participation and will always strive to have audiences reflect the work onstage.

PAC NYC's mission is to create connections by cultivating bonds between extraordinary artists and communities, with exemplary performances in active dialogue across the arts, and in our flexible, intimate spaces, inviting conversation and new relationships. Our art and our audiences reflect the

dynamic energy of all five boroughs of New York City. Our work asks all of us to consider and embrace the complexities of society. Together, we welcome the entire world. The center is where the world trades ideas.

ABOUT CIVIS

Civis advances the Common Good through investments in root cause advocacy, cultural work, and facilities that illuminate our interdependent future. We pursue our work independently and in collaboration with others whose missions align.

Civis believes that coalitions and partnerships can create winning campaigns for meaningful social change. By leveraging the unique strengths of private sector companies, government programs, and nonprofit organizations, we are nurturing an American democracy with the constant capacity to equitably serve the welfare of all people residing in this country.

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