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PERELMAN PERFORMING
ARTS CENTER

THE
DEMOCRACY
CYCLE

A joint project of PAC NYC and Civis Foundation

Perelman Performing Arts Center and Civis Foundation
Announce

Nine Artistic Commissions for Second Year of The Democracy Cycle

January 20, 2026 – New York, NY - **The Perelman Performing Arts Center** (Khady Kamara Nunez, Executive Director, Bill Rauch, Artistic Director) and **Civis Foundation** (T. Eric Galloway, President) are pleased to announce nine artistic commissions for the second year of **The Democracy Cycle**, a program which invites artists to explore themes relating to the nature, practice, and experience of democracy.

The artists and artistic collaborations chosen to receive the 2025 Democracy Cycle commissions are **Andrea Ambam, Holly Bass, Justine F. Chen, David Dorfman, Molly Joyce, Samora Pinderhughes, Sofia Rei and Jasmine Garsd, Daniel Leeman Smith and Blossom Johnson, and Nathan Yungberg.**

This group of commissioned artists are looking at democracy in distinct ways, and the work represents a broad range of disciplines, stylistic approaches, and themes. These include a futurist choral satire examining anti-Asian legislation, a documentary play about a historic Indigenous occupation of Alcatraz showing how freedom of assembly and speech can advance political equality, and a dance piece built around the experiences of poll workers.

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.

This multi-year program is committed to 25 commissions across theater, opera, dance, music, and multidisciplinary practices. Eight more will be chosen in 2026. The artists will each 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 resulting in eight commissions and the second round in 2025 grew to 744 submissions. These project proposals came in from around the world, from artists representing all eligible artistic disciplines of theater, music, dance, opera, and multidisciplinary practice.

The finalists were chosen by a panel of 7 arts- and democracy-workers facilitated by the Director of The Democracy Cycle, Boo Froebel. The 2025 panelists were: **Jesse Cameron Alick** (dramaturg, and co-director of HERE Arts Center), **Kit Baker** (dramaturg and culture worker), **Jamie Bennett** (former Interim co-CEO, Americans for the Arts; former Interim President & CEO, United States Artists, thought leader at Lord Cultural Resources), **Modesto “Flako” Jimenez** (Brooklyn-based artist and educator, founder of Oye Group), **Ben Johnson** (Arts & Cultural Affairs Director of the city of Minneapolis), **Isabel Kim** (curator, and Associate Director of Joe’s Pub) and **Peggy Monastra** (Vice President of G. Schirmer/Associated Music Publishers).

“We are extremely pleased with the response to this project from artists around the world, and the progress our pilot program has made, from the seed of an idea, to 17 projects well underway in their commissions. It is especially thrilling to see the range of creative ideas and artistic disciplines being used to explore the ideas behind our shared democratic values,” says **Bill Rauch**, Artistic Director, PAC NYC.

2025 DEMOCRACY CYCLE COMMISSIONS

Twelve Angry Black Women (Theater)

Andrea Ambam - www.andreaambam.com

In *Twelve Angry Black Women*, a new experimental play by Andrea Ambam, the fate of a peculiar and unprecedented case in American history rests in the hands of an all-Black, all-Femme jury. Set within a USA stamped as a backsliding democracy, *Twelve Angry Black Women* is a theatrical interrogation of The American Experiment, deconstructed through the vital, unfiltered lens of one of the nation’s most formidable and misunderstood “voting blocs.” Audiences are summoned to witness—and participate in—a demonstrative deliberation space where satire, ritual, and reenactment collide to stress-test American democracy and contemplate the consequences this country would face if Black women voted not with our resilience, but our righteous rage.

Civilities, or How to Secede Without Really Trying (Theater)

Holly Bass - www.hollybass.com

Civilities, a satire using texts from 1860 to the present, imagines the Confederate states as Southern belles grappling with politics, soft power, and propriety during a crisis of democracy. The work explores the limits of empathy and ways white femininity has been deployed to both advance and hinder political equality. Set as a tour of a historic plantation, the audience will be swept back in time and invited to explore the American political divide through comedic commentary and rarely discussed historical documents and artifacts.

MUSEUM OF THE UNAMERICANS, a futurist choral satire (Opera)

Justine F. Chen - www.justinefchen.com

This evening-length futurist theatrical oratorio presents select forms of legislated Asian-American racism in America and asks: Is racism at odds with our democracy when racism is legislated? What does it mean to be American? Who decides? Set in the future, this work presents with a twinkle in its eye, exhibits of the Oriental Wing of the Museum of the Unamericans, led by a charming Asian A.I. Docent, represented by a front person and the phenomenal sonic all-powerful creative force of Donald Nally and The Crossing.

The Front Line (Dance)

David Dorfman – www.daviddorfmandance.org

The Front Line is David Dorfman Dance’s new dance/music/theater work set in a middle school gymnasium turned polling site for an imagined Election Day 2040. The movement, song, and

words of the poll workers—aka the front line—interact with those of community cast members to explore and unravel the act of voting and going beyond voting in a dense moment of aspiration, dreaming, anger, disappointment, frustration, and hope—combining sober reflection with joyous celebration about what it means to participate in America. What if our Founding Mothers had been listened to? If votes are wishes, what is their action?

Criptocracy (Music)

Molly Joyce - www.mollyjoyce.com

Criptocracy is a multidisciplinary performance project featuring disabled individuals reflecting on what democratic ideals—freedom, equality, participation, and justice—mean to them. Combining video displays of interview responses, accompanying live music, and real-time audience polling, the work extends the reclaimed disability-culture term “crip” to democracy, imagining what it means to “crip” democratic values through a disability lens. With disabled Americans comprising roughly 13% of the population yet facing threats from proposed census changes and Social Security cuts, the project centers those most affected by these shifts. Through interviews, musical composition, and accessible performance design, *Criptocracy* asks who is truly valued in a democracy.

I Hope This Finds You Well (Music)

Samora Pinderhughes - www.healingprojectsound.org

Combining musical compositions with a choir, film, and raw audio testimonials, *I Hope This Finds You Well* is a searing examination of the prison industrial complex and a celebration of resilience, repair, and resistance—examining the effects of incarceration, policing, and detention while envisioning a world built around healing. This piece investigates the impacts of the U.S. carceral system and provides alternate routes for our society, at a moment where police and prisons are being used to tamp down dissent, create censorship, affect voting outcomes, and engage in fear-based social control. In this piece, we hold space for community engagement, collective pain, and participatory action.

Reinitas (Multidisciplinary)

Sofía Rei and Jasmine Garsd - www.sofiamusic.com

There is a bar in the Nebraska plains that feels like a refuge for meatpacking workers. It’s called Reinita, in honor of owner Berta Quintero’s mother. This bilingual multimedia performance follows three generations of Quintero women in Fremont, Nebraska—a city shaped by the meatpacking industry and mass deportations. *Reinitas* examines how America’s immigration policy impacts civil liberties by spotlighting the experiences of those whose rights are most precarious at this time, and asking: What happens to democracy when some sectors live in fear? Which parts of American history do we remember, and which do we choose to forget?

Proclamation to the Great White Father and All His People (Theater)

Daniel Leeman Smith and Blossom Johnson -

www.leemansmith.com www.blossomjohnson.com

Proclamation to the Great White Father and All His People is a documentary play about the 1969 Indigenous occupation of Alcatraz, led by pan-Indigenous protest group Indians of All Tribes. Blending interviews, Anna Deavere Smith-style reenactments, and archival footage *Proclamation...* will show how the 19-month, Indigenous-led takeover became a radical experiment in self-governance, highlighting the 400-person pan-Indigenous community that redefined freedom and collective care. Each performance will end with a participatory “civic-re-

imagining circle,” inviting audiences to reflect on sovereignty, justice, and relational governance, transforming archival memory into a shared act of imagining a more expansive democracy.

Barry, The 1970s Black Comedy Spinoff That Never Happened (Theater)

Nathan Yunkerberg - www.nathanyunkerberg.com

Barry, The 1970s Black Sitcom That Never Happened refracts a fictional sitcom set in Minneapolis through an Afro-surreal prism. The story exposes the city’s liberal veneer masking the daily brutality inflicted on Black families pioneering Midwestern suburbia despite America’s democratic promises. The play unfolds on a Hollywood soundstage. Barrington “Barry” Greene—a charismatic Black news anchor hired by a Minneapolis affiliate—relocates his family, giving mainstream audiences a palatable story of racial integration. But once the taping wraps, the set warps into truer dimensions, revealing hostile neighbors, racial housing covenants, and the terror behind Minnesota Nice. Democracy fractures where the laugh track stops.

Submissions for The Democracy Cycle’s next open call for proposals will begin February 9, 2026. Artists currently creating in theater, dance, music, opera, and multidisciplinary practices are encouraged to apply. This is a national and international open call.

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.

PAC NYC is grateful for the support of Bloomberg Philanthropies.

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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.

Media contact: Jessica Johnson, Jessica.Johnson@pacnyc.org

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