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Contact: Kathryn Appleton | kathryn@theaterinasylum.com



THE DEBATES 2021
Presented on Zoom
May 27-28, 2021 at 8pm ET



"The perfect capsule of our surreal political culture"
—*New York Magazine's Bedford + Bowery*

New York, NY (May 13, 2021)—The New York-based theater company, Theater in Asylum (TIA), presents its fourth iteration of their political-theater series, *The Debates*, on Zoom for two evenings. The 2021 edition centers on New York City's 2021 Democratic primaries and explores the candidates for mayor, comp, comptroller, and many city council seats through a blend of mimicry, abstraction, and song. Comprised of individual, non-linear scenes, the piece illuminates

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where the candidates stand and clarifies their differences to provide New York City audiences the knowledge and confidence to vote with purpose. As voters, we get to decide what our beloved city should look like.

The original theatrical adaptation will take place on Zoom and will feature pre-recorded scenes as well as live performances. Each performance begins at 8pm with a pre-show featuring live musical acts by *The Debates* cast members. Following the 60-minute show, the audience is invited to stick around for a post-show discussion and party.

About *The Debates*

Created by Theater in Asylum (TIA), *The Debates* is a process of adapting electoral debates into theatrical performances. After watching a debate, TIA artists and community members gather to analyze and discuss, eventually creating an original performance. Throughout the process, participants speak lines from the debate, imitate candidates' gestures, invent scenes that provide context or history, and analyze the candidates the way an actor would a character in a play. Behind the scenes, every word and assertion (whether from the debate transcript or generated by the participants) is rigorously fact checked by a team of dramaturgs. All sources are noted in a publicly-available script. *The Debates* aims to empower audiences to engage with the democratic process with knowledge and confidence.



After staging adaptations of the 2016 Democratic presidential primary, the 2018 New York Democratic governor's primary, and the 2020 Democratic presidential primary, Theater in Asylum this year turns to New York City and its municipal elections. [New York Magazine's Bedford + Bowery](#) hailed 2016's show as "the perfect capsule of our surreal political culture... The actors seem to transform before your eyes, from a spot-on hunched-over Bernie impersonation to a frozen-lipped Hillary, swaying like a tipsy sailor." [NY City Lens](#) remarked, "Not only was *The Debates*—a play that amused and educated a full house at the Kraine Theater on the eve of the primary elections—about politics. It was politics." The [Hartford Courant](#) noted of Theater in Asylum's touring production, "This was the way to spend the nervous hours before voting began on Tuesday... Forthright, in-your-face, up-to-the-minute."

The Debates 2021 is led by Theater in Asylum co-artistic directors **Paul Bedard** and **Katie**

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Palmer, TIA managing director **Kathryn Appleton**, TIA community engagement manager **Hilarie Spangler**, and lead dramaturg **Ariella Axelbank**.

The larger creative team consists of composer and music director **Ali Dineen**, video designer **Audrey Lorber**, lighting designer **Dan Stearns**, and stage manager **Jennifer Malibussen**.

The Debates 2021 is co-created and performed by **Alexis Atkinson**, **Malcolm Callender**, **Rachael Chau**, **Emily Johnson-Erday**, **Nadia Diamond**, and **Jesse B. Koehler**.

Tickets for *The Debates 2021* range from free to \$20. RSVP is required. For tickets and to register, visit thedebrates2021.eventcombo.com.

Theater in Asylum (TIA) is a New York-based theater company founded in 2010 to challenge and empower our community. TIA joyfully pursues rigorous research and an ensemble-driven approach to theater-making. We create performances to investigate our past, interpret our present, and imagine our future. We prize space to process, space to question—asylum—for ourselves and our community.

**BROOKLYN
ARTS
COUNCIL**

The Debates 2021 is sponsored, in part, by the Greater New York Arts Development Fund of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, administered by Brooklyn Arts Council (BAC).

LISTING SUMMARY

What: *The Debates 2021*

When: May 27-28, 2021 at 8pm

Where: Online

Admission: Free to \$20/RSVP required

Information: theaterinasylum.com/debates

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www.theaterinasylum.com