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THE DEBATES 2021

MARCH EVENTS: **3/18: Civics Happy Hour**
 3/23: Candidate Forum Watch Party
 3/25: Political Analysis Meeting



"The perfect capsule of our surreal political culture"

—*New York Magazine's Bedford + Bowery*

New York, NY (March 18, 2021)—The New York-based theater company, Theater in Asylum (TIA), returns with political theater events for this year's upcoming elections. *The Debates 2021* marks the company's fourth iteration in their political-theater series. The 2021 edition centers on New York City's 2021 Democratic primaries with electoral contests for mayor, comptroller, and a huge swath of city council. In *The Debates 2021*, Theater in Asylum asks, "What do we want our city to be?" As in past years, the Company will host a slew of events including debate watch parties, political analysis meetings, and finally, an original play about the election. The project

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seeks not only to get out the vote, but to empower the voter to engage in the electoral process with understanding and confidence. Blending mimicry, abstraction, and earnest curiosity, *The Debates 2021* again seeks to illuminate the candidates, the issues, and ourselves.

New collaborators, friends, and audience are welcome to engage with the process and learn about voting at theaterinasylum.com/debates. Before the full production premieres online this spring, Theater in Asylum invites New Yorkers to its pre-production events listed below.

Civics Happy Hour: Mayor and City Council Edition

Thursday, March 18, 7-9pm on Zoom

Join Theater in Asylum for a discussion about the roles, responsibilities, and opportunities of NYC's Mayor and City Council. We'll give a brief overview of the positions, dig in to a few key activities they perform (making laws and setting the budget), and then open things up for a discussion. While we're no experts at any of this, we are theater and politics enthusiasts who believe in learning about these things together and empowering each other in the process. FREE. RSVP at theaterinasylum.com/debates.

Watch Party: The League of Independent Theater's "Meet the Candidates 2021" Forum

Tuesday, March 23, 6:30pm on Zoom

Join us to watch the League of Independent Theater's (LIT) first 2021 forum where candidates will be introduced and asked about arts policy. FREE. RSVP at litny.org/mtc2021.

Political Analysis Meeting

Thursday, March 25, 7-9pm on Zoom

Join us to debrief and discuss LIT's "Meet the Candidates 2021" forum. We encourage you to watch the forum live or the recording afterwards (we'll post the YouTube link when it's available). This conversation will be casual, with no political wonkery required! All are welcome, even if you didn't watch the whole forum. We'll be looking to tease out the issues that came up in the forum and see what excited or frustrated folks about the candidates' policies. FREE. RSVP at theaterinasylum.com/debates

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

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

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.

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**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: Rolling events March-June, 2021

Where: Online

Admission: Free, RSVP required

Information: theaterinasyllum.com/debates

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www.theaterinasyllum.com