

The Civilians Welcome 2019-20 R&D Group



[The Civilians](#), under the leadership of Founding Artistic Director [Steve Cosson](#) and Managing Director [Margaret Moll](#), announces the members of its [2019-20 R&D Group](#), comprised of writers, composers, and directors who are creating new works derived from creative inquiry.

Selected from nearly two-hundred applicants, the members of the 2019-20 R&D Group are Gabriel "Gaby" Alter, [Michael Alvarez](#), Matt Barbot, Kathleen Capdesuñer, Rachel Dickstein, [Kate Douglas](#), [Darrel Alejandro Holnes](#), [Grace McLean](#), [Whitney Mosery](#), [Crystal Skillman](#), and Jason Tseng.

Celebrating its tenth year, the R&D Group provides artists a season-long developmental residency. The group meets over nine months, during which time each artist or team will develop a new piece of theater through the creative investigation of a pre-selected subject chosen by the artists. The artists' process may include interviews, community engagement, research and/or other experimental methods of inquiry. Led by R&D Program Director Megan McClain, the group shares their works-in-progress, examines artistic choices and provides a community of support. The year's work culminates in the FINDINGS Series in May 2020, with presentations of each work-in-progress to the public.

Last season, [The Civilians](#) premiered PAUL SWAN IS DEAD AND GONE by 2015-16 R&D Group member Claire Kiechel. This production marked the first time [The Civilians](#) premiered a new work that had originated in the R&D Group. Former R&D Group members have included [Jackie Sibblies Drury](#), [Heidi Schreck](#), and [Lauren Yee](#), and past projects have found production at the Humana Festival (Susan Soon He Stanton's WE THE INVISIBLES), the Under the Radar Festival Incoming! Series at [The Public Theater](#) ([Eva Von Schweinitz](#)'s THE SPACE BETWEEN THE LETTERS), and [HERE Arts Center](#) ([Rob Handel](#), Kamala Sankaram, and [Kristin Marting](#)'s LOOKING AT YOU).

Projects this year will investigate a wide cross-section of topics. In DROWN MY BOOK, Matt Barbot will tackle the controversy around the Arizona House Bill 2281 passed in 2010 which banned Mexican Studies programs in the Tucson Unified School District by making it illegal to teach classes that "are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group," and "promote the overthrow of the United States government." [William Shakespeare](#)'s THE TEMPEST, which touches on themes of colonization, indigeneity, and enslavement, was also caught up in the crossfire. DROWN MY BOOK will borrow and remix words found in legal documents, public statements, interviews, and Shakespeare's plays to tell an original story of high school resistance.

Ripe Time Artistic Director Rachel Dickstein, working with composer Kamala Sankaram and playwright Aisha Zia, will be developing CANDIDATE X. A dynamic cross between documentary theatre, dance theatre, and immersive spectacle, CANDIDATE X celebrates risk-takers who challenge the gendered expectations our country has of those who lead and hold public office.

Writer [Kate Douglas](#) and writer/composer [Grace McLean](#) will be developing AGAINST WOMEN & MUSIC!, an anachronistic chamber musical about a female piano tuner's love affair with her instrument that explores perceptions of female sexual behavior and music in the 1800s. Through an aesthetic of dry politeness and absurdity, AGAINST WOMEN & MUSIC! delves into the entanglement of morality and order with women's bodily autonomy.

[Darrel Alejandro Holnes](#) will take an in-depth look at the Black community in Berlin. From refugee and immigrant narratives to native-born stories, AFRIKAN•ISCH will present a rich tapestry of theatrical narratives created from interviews Holnes conducted in Germany.

Writer [Crystal Skillman](#) and composer Gabriel "Gaby" Alter are creating a musical about both the 1 and the 99 percent. THIS SHOW IS MONEY is about American's love affair with the almighty dollar and asks how our choices with this fictional creation called money affects people around us in ways that are difficult to see.

Jason Tseng will be developing SANCTUARY ([Working Title](#)), a play that will investigate the role citizens can and should play in the inhumane immigration detention and deportation system by interviewing volunteers and staff of the New Sanctuary Coalition. The

work will focus on New Sanctuary Coalition's accompaniment program, which trains and organizes volunteers to join immigrants at court dates and check-ins.

The R&D Group is rounded out by three participating directors: [Michael Alvarez](#), Kathleen Capdesuñer, and [Whitney Mosery](#).

"We are thrilled to welcome these dynamic storytellers who are investigating vital questions that shape our society today," said Megan McClain. "The R&D Group provides a unique space for creative experimentation within a community, and we look forward to supporting the works as they develop."

[The Civilians](#) began in 2001 with a company of artists, led by Founding Artistic Director [Steve Cosson](#), who were interested in making new work at the intersection of the theatrical and the real. Shows include *Gone Missing*, with several US and UK tours culminating in a one-year Off-Broadway commercial run; *This Beautiful City*, about the politicized Evangelical movement; *The Great Immensity*, the first major American play about climate change; *Another Word for Beauty*, created from a residency inside Bogotá's national women's prison during their annual beauty pageant; and *Pretty Filthy* created from months of immersion in L.A.'s adult film industry. The company also has a rich history of nurturing new work by some of America's leading playwrights and composers, such as [Anne Washburn](#)'s *Mr Burns*, a post-electric play, which has gone on to hundreds of subsequent productions around the world and was recently named the fourth best play of the past twenty-five years by The New York Times. The company has participated in several BAM Next Wave Festivals and has been produced at major New York and regional theaters. For more information, visit www.thecivilians.org.

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