

**Next Year People
Bender / Mars / Reisman
Project and touring information**



About the Show

"Sharp, sure footed, wickedly funny"

-Bridget Evarts, Fusebox Festival Coverage, 2019

Next Year People is a performance about world-building when the world around you is coming apart. It's about the ugliness, ecstasy, and awkward intimacy of collaboration and the slipperiness of starting over again somewhere else.

Created by writer/performers Katie Bender, Rachel Mars, and Gab Reisman with director Caitlin Sullivan, *Next Year People* is **fast-paced and darkly comic**. Part confessional direct address, part contemporary fable, it follows these three artists as they are granted the opportunity to build a new community on an abandoned island in the Atlantic Ocean.

The show stirs together:

- the language of an arts grant proposal sent-up as a mutating, choral check in
- moments of live spectator/performer space where the audience is cast irreverently as co-conspirators, grantors, and future utopian inhabitants
- the narrative of three friends wrestling (sometimes physically) with contradictory versions of a perfect society
- moments of real-time labor as performers salt, blend and pull fresh mozzarella which is ultimately shared with the entire audience.

Galloping between commonplace conversation and choral edict, between moments of physical danger and moments of unembarrassed sensuousness, *Next Year People* asks: What does it actually mean to start again? Who says we'd do it any better? How can I balance familial responsibilities against pleasure and ambition?

As it explores the lifecycle of a collaboration, the show invites audience into a shared act of radical hopefulness- the mutual imagining of a more harmonious parallel existence.

Video

Full video of the show - <https://vimeo.com/334324781>
password: mars

Web

<https://www.nextyearpeople.org>



What are the guts of the piece?

Katie and Gab have been making immersive performances together as part of the theatre collective, Underbelly, since 2013. They met Rachel at The Orchard Project in 2015, and after Underbelly's third large-scale site-specific production, the three decided to collaborate on something more personal. *Next Year People* began in the political shit-storm of 2016, in the fallout of Brexit and the US election. It is an exercise in grappling with democracies we no longer feel represented by and the real-time possibility of what it would mean to start our lives somewhere else.

We wrestle with a feeling of splitting- of balancing a desire to run away from our families and countries against a desire to maintain and participate. *Next Year People* tracks three women whose overlapping identities- as artist, mother, queer, Jewish, gender-questioning, white- collide at a moment in time when the complexity of female agency is often undervalued and female ambition mistrusted. The piece pushes at what it means to be by turns noble and selfish- personally and politically- and how we can *all* best build alternate spaces where these rough-hewn parts of us might come through.

Who else helped it happen?

Lighting design: Isabella Byrd | **Sound design:** Peter Stopschinski

Next Year People received development support from Fusebox Festival, The Playwrights Center, New Georges/Page 73, and The Museum of Human Achievement. It premiered at Fusebox Festival Austin in 2019 in and available for tour.

Information for Touring

Performances to date:

US Fusebox Festival, Austin 2019

People:

5 people - 3 performers, director and production manager

3 NYC based, 1 Austin based, 1 London based

Running time:

1 hour

Space:

Minimum 9 x 5m playing space

Audience configuration: intimate seating, end stage preferred, thrust possible

LX:

Company tours their own LX desk/USB. Rig plan available on request.

Sound:

Operated on Qlab from Company Laptop. The use of house system and a mini jack input via D.I. to the sound desk, subwoofer provided by venue.

Get in: 1 day with pre-rig, 2 days without

Get out: 30 mins

Touring Contact

Producer (International): Lucy Jackson | Lucy.jackson@gmail.com | +1 917 565 5097





Associated Master Class / Artist Workshops

In tandem with the performance, Bender / Mars / Reisman are available to **teach a flexible master class on generating performance through collaboration.**

Katie Bender has lectured, taught classes and led workshops at The University of Texas at Austin, Texas State University, The Playwrights' Center, St. Gabriel's Catholic School, The Orchard Project & Austin Scriptworks on playwriting and play structure, techniques for devising, self-scripting, collaboration, and immersive theater.

Rachel Mars has led workshops and taught classes at Oxford University, Birkbeck University London, Leeds University, CSSD, Queen Mary University, Cambridge Junction, Royal Exchange Manchester, Birmingham REP & Contact Theatre. She has guest lectured in the US at Harvard University, The University of Texas at Austin and The Orchard Project. Her specialisms are solo performance, working from autobiography, comedy, subversion, and feminist and queer bodies in performance.

Gab Reisman has lectured at SUNY Purchase, Vanderbilt, NYU Playwrights Horizons School, and The University of Texas at Austin, and led master classes at Kenyon Playwrights Conference, Southern Rep, and The Orchard Project. Courses include playwriting, collaboration and immersive theatre, and life as a professional artist.

Some texts referenced in generating *Next Year People*:

- Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* by José Esteban Muñoz
- Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* by Adrienne Maree Brown
- Conflict is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility and the Duty of Repair* by Sarah Schulman

Artist Profiles

Katie Bender (writer/performer) is a theater maker whose plays are filled with games, physical exertion, and a poetic delight in the mundane. Her work has been developed/produced by ZACH Theatre, New Harmony Project, Kitchen Dog, EST, NYTW, The Hangar Theater, The Orchard Project, New Victory LabWorks, Icicle Creek Festival, and The Playwrights' Center, where she was a Jerome Fellow. Her solo show *Instructions for a Séance* will premiere at MOHA in September of 2019.

Isabella Byrd (lighting design) is an Obie award winning lighting designer based in Brooklyn, New York. Recent design credits include *Continuity* (Manhattan Theatre Club), *Plano* (Clubbed Thumb), *Daddy* (The Vineyard), and *Light Shining on Buckinghamshire* (New York Theatre Workshop). With a special interest in developing new work, her process pivots/activates/ blooms around design dramaturgy, musical movement, and color composition.

Rachel Mars (writer/performer) is a London based performance maker with a background in theatre, live art and comedy. Recent commissions have included Royal Court, Fuel Theatre, Leeds Playhouse and Ovalhouse. She is a fellow at the Birkbeck Centre of Contemporary Theatre, and a regular contributor to BBC Radio 2's 'Pause for Thought.' Her piece, *Our Carnal Hearts*, received the Edinburgh Fringe's Total Theatre Award for Innovation. Her show, *Roller*, was the winner of the Oxford Samuel Beckett Theatre Trust Award, and premiered at The Barbican, London. She is currently touring *Your Sexts are Shit: Older Better Letters*.

Gab Reisman (writer/performer) is a playwright and immersive performance maker. Her plays explore relationship between cultural geography and individual identity, consistently queering time and space, and using history as a prism to expose our current zeitgeists. Interested in the liminal, and irreverently political, she examines what it means to sit on the doorstep of some big, uncertain change. Gab has developed work with Sundance, Page 73, GPTC, Ingram New Works Lab, and MacDowell among others. Recent commissions include plays for Clubbed Thumb, EST/Sloan Project, New Plays at Barnard, and The NOLA Project.

Peter Stopschinski (sound design) has composed music for *The Curious Case of the Watson Intelligence* (finalist for the 2013 Pulitzer Prize), string arrangements for Grupo Fantasma's Grammy Award winning album *El Existential*, and the film score for *Rara Avis: The Life of John Audubon*. A regular collaborator with The Rude Mechs, his operas and musicals have been performed across the country from Arena Stage to Playwrights Horizons to Center Theatre Group's Kirk Douglas Theater.

Caitlin Sullivan (director) is a New York based theatre-maker whose work ranges from experimental plays and musicals to solo performance to large format site-specific pieces. Caitlin's work has been presented by Ars Nova, the New Ohio, New Georges, the Drama League, On the Boards, ACT/Hedgebrook, Rutgers University, and Williams College. Caitlin is the Associate Director of *Hundred Days* and *The Lucky Ones* (dir. Anne Kauffman). She has served as Artistic Director for both Seattle's critically acclaimed Satori Group and the Williams College Summer Theatre Lab, where she developed new work with The Bengsons, Dipika Guha, and Martyna Majok among others.