

THE MARSH BERKELEY EXTENDS A BOX WITHOUT A BOTTOM – *SOKO-NASHI BAKO*

Written and Performed by David Hirata
January 4 – 26, 2020

BERKELEY, CA (3 December 2019) – **The Marsh Berkeley** announces the extension of *A Box Without a Bottom – Soko-nashi Bako*, the newest solo show by Japanese American magician **David Hirata**. Through monologue and magic, Hirata will excavate the mysteries and stories of magician Namigoro Sumidagawa as he brings the story of Asian America to life. In 1866, Sumidagawa became the first Japanese citizen in over 200 years to receive a passport to leave the country. As part of the “Imperial Japanese Troupe,” he dazzled audiences across Victorian America with his exotic stage magic and became a media celebrity. By the time Sumidagawa returned to Japan, his prize trick had been appropriated by American magicians in yellowface and rechristened as the “J*p Box.” Over a century later, Hirata unveils illusions and surprises from this Japanese American story in his latest solo show, *A Box Without a Bottom – Soko-nashi Bako*. *A Box Without a Bottom – Soko-nashi Bako* will be presented **January 1-26, 2020** performances at 5:00pm Saturdays and Sundays at **The Marsh Berkeley**, 2120 Allston Way, Berkeley. For tickets (\$20-\$35 sliding scale; \$55 and \$100 reserved) or more information, the public may visit www.themarsh.org or call The Marsh Box office at 415-282-3055 (open Monday through Friday, 1:00pm-4:00pm).

A Box Without a Bottom – Soko-nashi Bako has been welcomed by critics, who called it “humorous, moving, educational, and entertaining,” (*ForAllEvents*), adding that “what once stood for pain and hope now creates something beautiful – another kind of magic trick” (*San Francisco Chronicle*).

Shortly after making its debut at The Marsh, Hirata changed the name of his solo show to *A Box Without a Bottom – Soko-nashi Bako*. Despite having several conversations with family

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members, some of whom had lived through internment during WWII, as well as Japanese-American audience members at the show’s initial run at the San Diego International Fringe Festival in 2018, Hirata’s subsequent discussions with the Japanese-American community in the Bay Area led him to realize that the original title, *The J*p Box*, was unacceptable. “I underestimated the raw pain of the ‘J’ word itself,” said Hirata. He adds, “I’m grateful to those who reached out to me to discuss this issue and have been happy to listen and learn. As with all artistic decisions, the conversation about this change has been interesting (and remarkably civil), and I hope that this living dialogue can continue.”

For over 30 years, **David Hirata** has amazed audiences throughout the Bay Area with theatrical magic creations at the Exploratorium, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, and Oakland Museum, among many others. Hirata’s previous shows include *American Wizards* at the California Magic Dinner Theater and *Kanji by Starlight* at The Marsh. Hirata’s involvement with The Marsh goes back to 1993, when he first performed at the Monday Night Marsh. He started volunteering, and eventually served as operations manager and Monday Night Marsh program director from about 1994-1998. In 2006, Hirata came back to the Marsh to do a few holiday family shows (*Magic Holiday*). Hirata returned to solo performance in 2017, beginning work on what would become *A Box Without a Bottom*, which he workshopped at the Marsh’s Monday Night and Tell It on Tuesday series. Shortly after scheduling the run for *A Box Without a Bottom* the Artist Relations position opened up and he’s once again working at The Marsh.

The Marsh is known as “a breeding ground for new performance.” It was launched in 1989 by Founder and Artistic Director Stephanie Weisman, and now annually hosts more than 600 performances of 175 shows across the company’s two venues in San Francisco and Berkeley. A leading outlet for solo performers, The Marsh’s specialty has been hailed by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as “solo performances that celebrate the power of storytelling at its simplest and purest.” The *East Bay Times* named The Marsh one of Bay Area’s best intimate theaters, calling it “one of the most thriving solo theaters in the nation. The live theatrical energy is simply irresistible.”

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FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

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WHEN: January 4 – 26, 2020

SHOWS: 5:00pm Saturdays & Sundays

WHERE: **The Marsh Berkeley**, 2120 Allston Way, Berkeley
Parking: Allston Way Garage, 2061 Allston Way between Milvia & Shattuck
The Downtown Berkeley BART station is one block away on Shattuck

TICKETS: \$20-\$35 sliding scale; \$55 and \$100 reserved

INFO: For information or to order tickets visit **themarsh.org** or call **(415) 282-3055** (Monday through Friday, 1:00pm-4:00pm).

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PRESS: Contact Sydney Albin, Carla Befera & Co.
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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here:
<http://cbpr.co/press/aboxwithoutabottom>