

THE MARSH PRESENTS
**ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER
(AAPI) ROUNDTABLE**

DISCUSSION OF ASIAN AMERICAN DISCRIMINATION IN THE ARTS
FEATURING BRENDA WONG AOKI, WEI WANG, AND DAVID HIRATA
7:30pm, Thursday, April 15, 2021

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (6 April 2021) – In solidarity with the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, The Marsh brings together three AAPI leaders in the arts for a lively roundtable to discuss issues faced by artists. Leading playwright/producer/performer and First Voice Artistic Director **Brenda Wong Aoki**, SF Ballet’s first ever Asian male principal dancer **Wei Wang**, and Japanese American magician **David Hirata** will join The Marsh Founder/Artistic Director Stephanie Weisman for a free virtual **#marshstreamroundable**. Sharing stories that run the gamut from casual acts of discrimination, to thoughtless, hurtful comments, to wild accusations, the three artists will recount the challenges they have faced working in the arts in America and outline the necessary steps they believe need to be taken going forward. This space will be a space of listening, solidarity, and support. A special edition of Stephanie’s MarshStream series, which airs every Thursday night, the *Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Roundtable* will be streamed live at **7:30pm, Thursday, April 15**. For more information, please visit www.themarsh.org/marshstream.

Brenda Wong Aoki is a multi-award winning storyteller, anthologized playwright, producer, artistic director, and performer who draws inspiration from her family’s 121-year history in San Francisco and the Bay Area, Kabuki legends, ghost stories, and her personal experiences. Her plays have been commissioned and supported by the U.S. Congressional Civil Liberties Public Education Fund, Dramatists Guild, the Asian Arts Council, the Japan Foundation, MAP Fund, the San Francisco Arts Commission, the California Arts Council, the Zellerbach Family Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation. Aoki is a founding faculty member of the Institute for Diversity in the Arts at Stanford University, and has been an artist in residence at the Smithsonian, Duke

University, Kenyon College, Wesleyan, Oberlin College, and Sapporo University, among others. She is the current Artistic Director for First Voice, an organization centered on incorporating Asian theatre (particularly Japanese) as well as musical and spoken word traditions into indigenous American art forms like jazz and contemporary performance art.

Chinese dancer **Wei Wang** is the first-ever Asian male principal dancer of San Francisco Ballet. He was named an apprentice of San Francisco Ballet in 2012, and joined the company as a member of the corps de ballet the following year. From there, Wang was promoted to soloist in 2016 before becoming a principal dancer in 2018. Roles within the company include the Creature in *Frankenstein* (Scarlett); *Within the Golden Hour* and *Cinderella* (Wheeldon); Basilio in *Don Quixote* (Tomasson/Possokhov); Prince Desiré and Bluebird in *The Sleeping Beauty*, plus roles in *Giselle*, *The Nutcracker*, *Romeo & Juliet*, and *Swan Lake* (Tomasson); *Manifesto* and *Stone and Steel* (Thatcher); *Coppélia* (Balanchine); *Onegin* (Cranko); *Glass Pieces*, *Opus 19/The Dreamer*, and *Other Dances* (Robbins). Wang has created roles in *Anima Animus* (Dawson); *Pas/Parts 2016* (Forsythe); *Hurry Up, We're Dreaming* and *In the Countenance of Kings* (Peck); and *Björk Ballet* (Pita). In 2019, he made his Royal Ballet debut as the Creature in *Frankenstein*. Wang trained at the Beijing Dance Academy and San Francisco Ballet School.

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 as well as *Kanji by Starlight* and *A Box Without a Bottom* at The Marsh. Hirata's first performed at The Marsh in 1993, returning in 2006 to perform holidays shows, and in 2017, when he developed *A Box Without a Bottom*, centering on magician Namigoro Sumidagawa who in 1866 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, but whose prize trick was appropriated by American magicians in yellowface and rechristened as the "J*p Box." The work was lauded by the *San Francisco Chronicle* which noted "what once stood for pain and hope now creates something beautiful – another kind of magic trick."

ABOUT STEPHANIE WEISMAN

Stephanie Weisman founded The Marsh in 1989, and has been the Artistic/Executive Director since its inception. Under her leadership, The Marsh has grown from a one-night-a-week performance series to producing 600-700 shows annually on its four stages. Over the years, Weisman has received the Meritorious Achievement Award from the Bay Area Theatre Critic's Circle and was named A Local Hero by the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* for her work at The Marsh. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Weisman pivoted to digital content and launched MarshStream, The Marsh's digital platform with varied daily programming. After receiving her MA in Creative Writing, Weisman started The Marsh to develop her own solo performance. For the first decade she supported the development of thousands of new performances. In 2006 she premiered her opera, *Aphrodisia*, written for a 20-woman chorus, a chamber ensemble, solo performer, and dancer. Since then she premiered *Breed & Rescue*, a solo performance musical about breeding and rescuing dogs and children. She is currently working on another solo, *Planet DoReMi*, and reimagining *Aphrodisia* with Wei Wang for the digital black box. Weisman lives in Oakland and the Trinity Alps with her husband Richard and three American bulldogs Trinity, Junior, and Marsha.

ABOUT MARSHSTREAM

MarshStream launched in April 2020 and has received overwhelmingly enthusiastic response, garnering over 80,000 viewers over the past 11 months. Notable MarshStream moments thus far include the debut of MarshStream International Solo Fest, The Marsh's first-ever digital festival, and the U.S. premiere of *The Invisible Line*, a new documentary about one of the world's most famous social experiments gone wrong.

MarshStream programming varies daily, with Monday Night MarshStream (short performances by a variety of artists), Wild Card Tuesdays (everything from book/writer discussions, sing-a-longs, Tell It On Tuesday, to Sound Healing and Restorative Yoga), Wednesday Solo Arts Heal (offering stories of health, advocacy, and inspiration), Stephanie's MarshStream on Thursday nights (interview and performance excerpts, moderated by The Marsh Founder/Artistic Director Stephanie Weisman), BINGO! hosted by Josh Kornbluth, and weekend Solo Performance Spotlight featuring live full-length performances. MarshStream also offers performance development classes, a noon series that includes CJ's FitnesSing weekly singing lesson/fitness class, and a Zoomba Room. Content is typically offered at 7:30pm nightly, and mid-day throughout the week via Zoom and YouTube LIVE. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic MarshStream has hosted over 500 LIVE streams, providing some 200 performers a platform to continue developing and producing art.

MarshStream viewers are asked to contribute whatever they can afford. Donations can be made by joining The Marsh's membership program and via a virtual "tip jar" on the website, with funds going to support The Marsh and its artists. For more information, the public may visit www.themarsh.org/marshstream. NOTE: Most performance streams from earlier MarshStream dates are also available on the website for viewing.

In addition to nightly program offerings on MarshStream, The Marsh has also launched **Marsh Youth Theater (MYT) MarshStream**, classes offered daily and taught by MYT instructors.

From Creative Dramatics to Storytelling, Dancing, and more, class types, instructors, and age levels vary for each class. For weekly class schedules and additional information, please visit themarsh.org/mytmarshstream.

ABOUT 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 pre-COVID hosted 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.”

For Calendar Editors

WHAT: In solidarity with the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, The Marsh brings together three AAPI leaders in the arts for a lively roundtable to discuss issues faced by artists. Leading playwright/producer/performer and First Voice Artistic Director **Brenda Wong Aoki**, SF Ballet’s first ever Asian male principal dancer **Wei Wang**, and Japanese American magician **David Hirata** will join The Marsh Founder/Artistic Director Stephanie Weisman for a free virtual **#marshstreamroundable**. Sharing stories that run the gamut from casual acts of discrimination, to thoughtless, hurtful comments, to wild accusations, the three artists will recount the challenges they have faced working in the arts in America and outline the necessary steps they believe need to be taken going forward. This space will be a space of listening, solidarity, and support.

DATES: 7:30pm, Thursday, April 15

WHERE: Available to view via MarshStream: www.themarsh.org/marshstream

TICKETS: MarshStream viewers are asked to contribute whatever they can afford. Donations can be made by joining The Marsh’s membership program and via a virtual “tip jar” on the website, with funds going to support The Marsh and its artists.

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PRESS: Contact Sydney Albin, Carla Befera & Co.
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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos coming soon: <http://cbpr.co/press/marshstream>