

THE MARSH BERKELEY PRESENTS

AREN'T YOU...?

Written and Performed by Fred Pitts

Directed by ShawnJ West

Dramaturgy by David Ford

April 7 – May 5, 2023

BERKELEY, CA (3 March 2023) – **The Marsh Berkeley** presents **Fred Pitts'** lauded solo work *Aren't You...?* which recounts his hilarious journey to visit all 21 California Mission churches, where he discovers that being black makes him an instant celebrity – the question is which one? The piece follows Pitts on a summer-long tour to one Mission after the next, encountering docents and fellow tourists. Some are experts on the Catholic Church, a few are experts on Native American history, others are experts on...everything else. Yet, they have one thing in common: they are all experts on which famous black person he resembles. Full of Pitts' personal experiences and love of history, *Aren't You...?* perfectly blends delightful insights into the Missions, cogent thoughts on early California settlers' interactions with Native Americans, and the experience of walking in the shoes of an African American male. *Aren't You...?* will be presented **April 7 – May 5, 2023** (*press opening: April 7*) with performances 7:00pm Fridays at **The Marsh Berkeley**, 2120 Allston Way, Berkeley. For tickets \$20-\$35 sliding scale, \$50 and \$100 reserved) or more information, the public may visit themarsh.org.

In January 2019 this work, Fred Pitts' first solo show (under an earlier title), had its debut at PlayGround Solo Performance Festival. It went on to be featured at The Marsh as part of its *Marsh Rising Series* (May 2019), Dragon Productions Theatre's Inaugural *Singular Stories* (August 2019), and PianoFight (August 2019). In April 2020, *Aren't You...?* was scheduled to return to The Marsh San Francisco for a full run but was canceled due to the pandemic. Since then, it has performed in several Bay Area venues, including a limited run with Palo Alto Players in fall 2021. *Aren't You...?* has captured raves from local critics, with *Metro Silicon Valley* calling it a “timely examination of both conscious racism and unconscious bias,” while *Theatrius* hailed it as “a timely, important show, offering surprises, factoids, and existential awareness.”

THE MARSH BERKELEY PRESENTS “AREN’T YOU...?”

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ABOUT FRED PITTS

San Francisco-based actor **Fred Pitts** (Actor/Writer) has been performing in the Bay Area for over 20 years. He has worked with numerous regional theatres, including Shotgun Players, Altarena Playhouse, The Pear Theatre, Palo Alto Players, African-American Shakespeare Company, Custom Made Theatre, Contra Costa Civic Theatre, and Exit Theatre, among others. Pitts also has numerous film and commercial credits. After being an Emergency Medicine physician for 20 years, Pitts now works in the field of drug safety.

ABOUT SHAWN J WEST

Working in both stage and film, **Shawn J West** (Director) is an actor and director who relocated to the Bay Area in 2011 after 16 years in Seattle, Washington. He directed four episodes of SIS Productions’ cult hit *Sex in Seattle*, ReAct’s *WELL*, and the West Coast premiere of *Illyria* with Redwood Theatre, as well as their productions of *The Seven Year Itch* and *Nunsense*. Bay Area directing credits include the World Premiere of *Interlude* at New Conservatory Theatre Center, the regional premiere of *DOT* at New Conservatory Theater Center, the African-American Shakespeare Company’s 2015 production of *Cinderella*, and the West Coast premiere of Donja R. Love’s *Sugar in Our Wounds* at the New Conservatory Theatre Company. West also served as the assistant director on *Macbeth* and *A Soulful Christmas* with the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre.

ABOUT DAVID FORD

David Ford (Developer/Dramaturg) has been collaborating on new and unusual theatre for three decades, and has been associated with The Marsh for most of that time. The San Francisco press has variously called him “the solo performer maven,” “the monologue maestro,” “the dean of solo performance,” and “the solo performer’s best friend.” A week rarely goes by when residents of the Bay Area cannot enjoy one of his productions. Collaborators include Geoff Hoyle, Brian Copeland, Charlie Varon, Echo Brown, Marilyn Pittman, Rebecca Fisher, Wayne Harris, Jill Vice, and Marga Gomez. Ford’s work has been seen regionally at the Public Theatre, Second Stage Theater, Theatre at St. Clement’s, Dixon Place, Theatre for the New City (New York), Highways Performance Space (Los Angeles), and Woolly Mammoth Theatre Co. (Washington, D.C.). His work has also been featured in most of the fringe festivals in North America, as well as at theaters around the Bay Area including Berkeley Repertory Theatre, the Magic Theatre, and Marin Theatre Company. Ford’s directing has garnered several “Best of Fringe” Awards and a Goldie Award.

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

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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.” Since its launch in April 2020, the theatre’s digital platform MarshStream has garnered more than 100,000 viewers. Notable MarshStream moments include the debut of MarshStream International Solo Fest 1 and 2, The Marsh’s first-ever digital festivals, and the U.S. premiere of *The Invisible Line*, a new documentary about one of the world’s most famous social experiments gone wrong. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic MarshStream has hosted over 700 LIVE streams, providing some 300 performers a platform to continue developing and producing art. The Marsh will continue to offer digital content on MarshStream, as well as in-person performances.

For Calendar Editors

WHAT: The Marsh Berkeley presents **Fred Pitts’** lauded solo work *Aren’t You...?* which recounts his hilarious journey to visit all 21 California Mission churches, where he discovers that being black makes him an instant celebrity – the question is which one? The piece follows Pitts on a summer-long tour to one Mission after the next, encountering docents and fellow tourists. Some are experts on the Catholic Church, a few are experts on Native American history, others are experts on...everything else. Yet, they have one thing in common: they are all experts on which famous black person he resembles. Full of Pitts’ personal experiences and love of history, *Aren’t You...?* perfectly blends delightful insights into the Missions, cogent thoughts on early California settlers’ interactions with Native Americans, and the experience of walking in the shoes of an African American male.

WHEN: **April 7 – May 5, 2023**
Opening Night: April 7

SHOWS: 7:00pm Fridays

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, \$50 and \$100 reserved

INFO: For information or to order tickets visit themarsh.org.

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PRESS: Contact Sydney Albin, Carla Befera & Co.
sydney@cb-pr.com

PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here: <http://cbpr.co/press/arentyou>