

THE MARSH BERKELEY EXTENDS TRAIN STORIES

Written and Directed by Wayne Harris
Performed by Wayne Harris, Kirk Waller and Tony Cyprien
Directed by Wayne Harris
October 12-26, 2023

BERKELEY, CA (3 October 2023) — Due to popular demand, **The Marsh Berkeley** has added additional performances of **Wayne Harris’ *Train Stories***. A chronicle of extreme challenges told by three men – played by Wayne Harris, Kirk Waller, and Tony Cyprien, all East Bay locals – who ply their trade on the railroad during the 1948 post-war pre-civil rights period in America, ***Train Stories***, follows the journey of a trio of African Americans – Elder Brown (played by Wayne Harris), Tyrone Little (played by Tony Cyprien), John Henry (played by Kirk Waller) – who leave the South, Jim Crow, and this country’s legacy of slavery only to discover that they may be better off with the devil they know. Pulsating with the mesmerizing rhythms, dreams, and contradictions of being a Black man in America, each story speaks to the fractured connection African Americans have to their heritage through slavery and legislation, and poses the question: how do Black men find their place in an America that doesn’t allow many choices, while maintaining their dignity and pride? Written and directed by Harris, ***Train Stories*** will have three additional performances **October 12-26, 2023** with performances at 7:30pm Thursdays at **The Marsh Berkeley**, 2120 Allston Way, Berkeley. For tickets (\$25-\$35 sliding scale, \$50 and \$100 reserved) or more information, the public may visit themarsh.org.

Originally produced at The Marsh in 2003 as a solo performance, developed with David Ford and Club Solo, ***Train Stories*** returned as a three-person production in September 2023. It was well received by critics, hailed as “a fascinating merging of real-life train stories” by *Theatrius* with *The Daily Californian* noting, “with its gifted cast and a playwright with an expansive vision, ‘*Train Stories*’ is a play of extensive scope and simple scale.” The *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote, “Harris’ writing gleams,” and “as with the best of tragedies, the beauty of its

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expression offers a counterbalance to despair; any world that could produce such a piece can't be entirely hopeless.”

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Wayne Harris (playwright, director, and *Elder Brown*) is an award-winning solo performer, writer, educator, curriculum innovator, and musician residing in San Leandro. He has written and starred in five full-length solo plays, including *Mother's Milk*, *The May Day Parade*, *Jockamo*, and *Tyrone “Shortleg” Johnson and Some White Boys*. Harris was invited by the U.S. State Department to travel to the Middle East and perform his play, *The Letter: Martin Luther King at the Crossroads*. He retired as Program Director for The Marsh Youth Theater in San Francisco, which serves underprivileged students in after-school programs. Harris also travels throughout the U.S. providing “Improvisation & Performance” workshops for Youth Pageantry groups (marching bands, dance teams, and more.) Harris is a co-director of The Formerly Incarcerated Peoples Performance Project (FIPPP) and is currently partnering with Berkeley Rep teaching artists taking storytelling workshops into the San Francisco Jails.

A veteran of the stage and an Oakland local, **Kirk Waller's** (*John Henry*) storytelling and solo performances have built his reputation across the U.S. over the past 25-plus years. He is making his debut at The Marsh with *Train Stories*. Most recently, he played Troy Maxson in Pittsburgh Theatre Company's production of August Wilson's *Fences*, which earned him a Best Performer in a Play honor at the 2022 BroadwayWorld Pittsburgh Awards.

Tony Cyprien (*Tyrone Little*), who discovered his passion for the stage 11 years ago as an improv performer, lives in Oakland and will make his debut at The Marsh. Encouraged by supportive teachers, he took to the stage and captivated audiences with his unique style of storytelling. This led to his first MOTH StorySlam win followed by a compelling performance of a new story he created for the GrandSlam, which earned him invitations to perform at two Moth Mainstage events and a feature spot on *NPR's* “Moth Radio.” Cyprien's storytelling prowess extended beyond these notable platforms, as he delivered original performances at events such as “Bay Area Storytelling Hijacked” (BASH) at Shotgun Players and the “Gather,” where he collaborated with Bay Area Theatresports (BATS) improvisers. Throughout his career, Cyprien has found support, encouragement, and collaborative opportunities with the Marin Shakespeare Company's Returned Citizens Theater Troupe and the Formerly Incarcerated People's Performance Project.

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.” 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

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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: Due to popular demand, **The Marsh Berkeley** extends **Wayne Harris’ *Train Stories***, a chronicle of extreme challenges told by three men – played by Wayne Harris, Kirk Waller, and Tony Cyprien, all East Bay locals – who ply their trade on the railroad during the 1948 post-war pre-civil rights period in America. Pulsating with the mesmerizing rhythms, dreams, and contradictions of being a Black man in America, *Train Stories*, follows the journey of a trio of African Americans – Elder Brown (played by Wayne Harris), Tyrone Little (played by Tony Cyprien), John Henry (played by Kirk Waller) – who leave the South, Jim Crow, and this country’s legacy of slavery only to discover that they may be better off with the devil they know. Each story speaks to the fractured connection African Americans have to their heritage through slavery and legislation, and poses the question: how do Black men find their place in an America that doesn’t allow many choices, while maintaining their dignity and pride? Originally produced at The Marsh in 2003 as a solo performance, developed with David Ford and Club Solo, *Train Stories* returns as a three-person production.

WHEN: **October 12-26, 2023**

SHOWS: 7:30pm Thursdays

WHERE: **The Marsh Berkeley, 2120 Allston Way, Berkeley**
Parking: Allston Way Garage, 2061 Allston Way between Milvia & Shattuck
BART station (closest): Downtown Berkeley BART

TICKETS: \$25-\$35 sliding scale, \$50 and \$100 reserved

INFO: For information, the public may visit themarsh.org.

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PRESS: Contact Courtney Heimbeck, Carla Befera & Co.
courtney@cb-pr.com

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