

**THE MARSH BERKELEY SETS
TALKBACKS, SPECIAL EVENTS
TO ENGAGE COMMUNITY FOR ITS RUN OF
BREED OR BUST**

8:00pm Saturdays, Now through June 8, 2024

BERKELEY, CA (17 May 2024) — The timely, entertaining, and thought-provoking solo show *Breed or Bust* by award-winning actor, director, and “story midwife” **Joyful Raven** at **The Marsh Berkeley**, has scheduled a series of talkbacks and special events to engage the community on **May 18**, **May 25**, and **June 8**. Select performances will be followed by audience talkbacks with speakers including stillbirth prevention and reproductive justice advocate **Suzanne Pullen**, and guest expert in the field of abortion rights **Dr. Grace Howard**, plus a lively pre-show event curated by Sexual Folklorist **Dixie De La Tour** (more details below). *Breed or Bust* takes audiences on a subversive and hilarious journey through female reproductive options, from the taboos of abortion to the nuances often left out of these important conversations. This compelling one-woman production blends unabashedly honest storytelling, stand-up comedy, and dark humor. The *San Francisco Chronicle* called it a “zesty, refreshingly candid work” and noted that Raven’s “punch lines are so juicy as to offer healing catharsis for all your frustrations with constricting gender norms.” In *Breed or Bust*, Raven reckons with her reproductive choices and contends with her primal baby-making instincts. With her “clock ticking down,” she reflects on the complex relationship between womanhood and motherhood. Should she surrender to the role of weird aunt, or should she start a GoFundMe to freeze her geriatric eggs? *Breed or Bust*, performed by Joyful Raven and directed by **Jael Weisman**, will be presented 8pm Saturdays, now through June 8, 2024, 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.

May 18: A talkback with Suzanne Pullen – moderated by solo performer Joyful Raven

Suzanne Pullen is an educator in Human Communication whose applied research focus has been on improving the interactions between patients and health care providers, with a specialty in traumatic death and stillbirth bereavement. Pullen is a stillbirth advocate with a commitment to reproductive justice who has presented at international conferences and local hospitals about the communication needs of parents experiencing the death of a baby. Since 2005, she has been co-creating public memorial services, performances and rituals for bereaved families whose children have died. She currently is a lecturer in Communication Studies at San Francisco State University and in Rhetoric and Languages at the University of San Francisco. She has been teaching since 2008 and has a sub-specialty in Health Communication, with a focus on trauma and bereavement training. Pullen is a former reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and volunteers with stillbirth advocacy groups including Star Legacy Foundation, First Candle and the International Stillbirth Alliance and has also experience working with, and advocating for, LGBTQ+ families.

May 25: A talkback with Dr. Grace Howard – moderated by solo performer Joyful Raven

Dr. Grace Howard is an Associate Professor of Justice Studies at San José State University. She earned her Ph.D. in Political Science at Rutgers University, with concentrations in Women and Politics and Public Law. Her new book, *The Pregnancy Police: Conceiving Crime, Arresting Personhood* is available on June 4 and will be discussed during the talkback. Dr. Howard is a Public Voices Fellow for the 2023-2024 academic year. She was an American Fellow with the American Association for University Women and is Co-Director of the Rutgers University Informed Consent Project. She has authored several published works, including *The Pregnancy Police: Surveillance, Regulation, and Control* in *Harvard Law and Policy Review*, *The Gender of Crime* (2nd edition), *The Limits of Pure White: Raced Reproduction in the Methamphetamine Crisis*, in the *Women's Rights Law Reporter*, and *Informed or Misinformed Consent?: Abortion Policy in the United States*, published in the *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*. Her research areas include reproductive law and politics, law and society, bioethics, criminal justice, gender and public policy, feminist theory, and critical race theory. Her body of work explores reproductive law and policy, and the dimensions of legal personhood for people with the capacity for pregnancy.

June 8: An opening act of “Bawdy Storytelling” with Dixie De La Tour

For more than 15 years, “Bawdy Storytelling” has featured true stories of sex, kink, body image, gender and more to build community, educate, entertain, and bring people together. “Bawdy Storytelling” features an eclectic mix of authors, poets, comedians and actors, and people who share their (true) adventures in 10 minutes or less. Sexual folklorist Dixie De La Tour curates submitted stories, then works with experienced and first-time storytellers to create a one-of-a-kind evening for each and every Bawdy. Her coaching superpowers tease out surprisingly powerful stories of sex, kink or gender. Then at showtime, De La Tour coaches the audience to create an emotionally supportive, unintimidating, and sex-positive atmosphere that’s unique, engaging and fun.

Breed or Bust recently concluded a critically acclaimed run at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, where it garnered an Off West End Theatre Award (Offie) nomination. Critics in Scotland praised the show calling it a “masterful approach to storytelling. Seductive, shocking, and heart-warming to the extreme” (*Theatre Weekly UK*), “a fun and feminist look at one of life’s perennial dilemmas, freshly told,” (*The List UK*) and “a riveting personal story that is funny, shocking and insightful, offering a sensitive and innovative exploration of the pressures and taboos surrounding female reproductive choices” (*The Independent UK*). This riveting and riotous show made its world premiere at PlayGround San Francisco in its 2022 Solo Performance Festival and was given an encore limited run in fall 2022 at the Potrero Stage where the *San Francisco Examiner* lauded Raven, noting that she “tells it openly, without self-pity or sentimentality. And she tells it funny.” It has also been performed in Los Angeles at the Hollywood Fringe Festival, where it received a Producer’s Encore Award, a Gold Medal from *TV-olution*, and was nominated for Best Comedy amongst more than 400 shows.

BroadwayWorld hailed ***Breed or Bust*** as “heartbreaking and deeply heartfelt, taking a serious subject and offering an often humorous look at what women go through when it comes to breeding decisions. It’s a difficult subject, and Joyful made it an easy one to watch.”

ABOUT THE CAST AND CREATIVES

Born to original members of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, **Joyful Raven** (Writer/Performer) has been devising theater for over 25 years. She has directed and mentored hundreds of

storytellers, co-founded the award-winning theater company Rococo Risqué, and co-authored four plays for the Prize of Hope-winning company Human Nature. She also wrote and starred in the solo comedy *Tales of a Sexual Tomboy*, which enjoyed an Off-Broadway run and won Best of the Fringe at the San Francisco International Fringe Festival. *Tales of a Sexual Tomboy* was deemed “one of the funniest shows now on display on Bay Area stages” by *San Francisco Chronicle*. She also teaches regular storytelling and solo theater classes at the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre and her own studio in Oakland, California.

Multi-Obie-winning director, **Jael Weisman** (Director/Developer) is a founding member of the Dell’Arte Players Company and a trailblazer in actor-based theater. With Dell’Arte, Weisman’s works have toured extensively in the U.S., South America, and Europe, earning him numerous Dramalogue Awards for Directing. He has directed acclaimed productions including *Whiteman Meets Bigfoot*, *Performance Anxiety*, and *Mad Love*. Other noteworthy projects include *The Dragon Lady’s Revenge* with The San Francisco Mime Troupe, which traveled to New York and was awarded an Obie; the American premiere of *Red Noses*; *Uncle Gunjiro’s Girlfriend* at the Adelaide Festival; and *Mermaid Meat* for the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra. He has collaborated with luminaries like Carlo Mazzone-Clementi and Joe Chaikin and worked with renowned Bay Area performance artists including Jeff Raz and Brenda Wong Aoki.

ABOUT THE MARSH

The Marsh is known as “a breeding ground for new performance.” Launched in 1989 by Founder and Artistic Director Stephanie Weisman, it annually hosts more than 500 performances 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 the 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.” In April 2020, The Marsh launched its digital platform MarshStream and hosted more than 700 live streams which provided 300 performers and its youth class participants a platform to continue discovering, developing, and producing art during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown. Today, The Marsh presents both in-person live performances and content on its MarshStream, continuing to expand its reach to audiences onsite and around the world. The Marsh believes in the power of people’s storytelling and has several classes for the public to create their own works as well as through its developing work performance series: Monday Night Marsh, Tell It on Tuesday, and Marsh Risings. The theater company also collaborates with over 25 San Francisco public schools providing a year-round youth program serving students at its theater and in the classrooms.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: The timely, entertaining, and thought-provoking solo show *Breed or Bust* by award-winning actor, director, and “story midwife” **Joyful Raven** at **The Marsh Berkeley**, has scheduled a series of talkbacks and special events to engage the community on **May 18**, **May 25**, and **June 8**. Select performances will be followed by audience talkbacks with speakers including stillbirth prevention and reproductive justice advocate **Suzanne Pullen**, and guest expert in the field of

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***Breed or Bust* is:**

Written and performed by Joyful Raven
Directed and developed by Jael Weisman

WHEN: **Now through June 8, 2024**
No show June 1, 2024
May 18: A talkback with Suzanne Pullen – moderated by solo performer Joyful Raven
May 25: A talkback with Dr. Grace Howard – moderated by solo performer Joyful Raven
June 8: An opening act of “Bawdy Storytelling” with Dixie De La Tour

SHOWS: **8:00pm Saturdays**

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: \$20-\$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 | 650-308-4390

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