

**THE MARSH CELEBRATES 35TH ANNIVERSARY
WITH FIRST EVER
IN FRONT OF YOUR EYES
PERFORMANCE FESTIVAL**

Wednesdays – Sundays August 1 – 25, 2024

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (14 June 2024) — To celebrate its 35th anniversary, **The Marsh** will host its first *In Front of Your Eyes Performance Festival* this August. The Marsh, a breeding ground for new performance, will curate and present this festival of developing work focusing on works by women and nonbinary performers. Said The Marsh’s Founder, Artistic and Executive Director Stephanie Weisman, “We are finding the theatre world, particularly since the pandemic, has been able to offer fewer and fewer opportunities for performers to develop and present their original work. With this Festival, The Marsh can provide performers with stage time, eager audiences on which to try out new work, and a real opportunity for developing their voices.” The Festival will be staged at both the Berkeley and San Francisco locations of The Marsh, with performances that include musicals, ensembles, and solo shows. Each show will be presented three times over the course of the festival and may be accompanied by short performance “openers” before the full-length pieces. The *In Front of Your Eyes Performance Festival* will be presented Wednesday – Sundays August 1 – 11, 2024 at **The Marsh San Francisco**, 1062 Valencia Street, San Francisco and Wednesday – Sundays August 14 – 25, 2024 at **The Marsh Berkeley**, 2120 Allston Way, Berkeley. For tickets (\$15-\$35 sliding scale, \$50 and \$100 reserved) or for more information, the public may visit themarsh.org.

The *In Front of Your Eyes Performance Festival* will feature developing new works from performers and playwrights including **Laura Jane Bailey, Tina D’Elia, Celina Demos, Elizabeth Du Val, Marga Gomez, Candace Johnson, Pearl Louise, Pearl Ong, Shubhra Prakash, Kathryn Seabron, Ananda Bena-Weber, and Stephanie Weisman.**

The lineup includes:

SUPER SECRET SUPER POWER

Written and performed by Laura Jane Bailey

Directed by David Ford

The Marsh San Francisco

Super Secret Super Power follows the heartbreaking yet hilarious origin story of an average, ordinary girl who suddenly realizes she has a mind-blowing new power. Is it an unbelievable gift? Or something else entirely? As she grapples with this super-secret, she's forced to confront life's big, weighty issues—sex, violence, and margaritas. This captivating journey is filled with unexpected twists, laughter, and profound moments.

Laura Jane Bailey (Playwright & Performer) is an accomplished Bay Area actress. Her performances include roles in *The Roommate* at Capital Stage in Sacramento, *Luna Gale* and *Mud, Blue, Sky* at Aurora Theatre, *Crimes of the Heart* at Theatreworks, *Equus* at Boxcar Theater, *Man of La Mancha* at San Francisco Playhouse, and *Fiction, Les Liaison Dangereuses, Bad Dates, and Smell of the Kill* at Dragon Productions Theatre. In Chicago, she has appeared in productions including *The Cider House Rules, Tattoo Girl, Raised in Captivity, and I Am Yours*.

David Ford (Director) has been collaborating on new and unusual theater 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 Theater, 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, and 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.

THE BREAK UP! A LATINA QUEER TORCH SONG

Written and performed by Tina D’Elia

Directed by Mary Guzmán

Developed with David Ford

Music by Aden Gray & Peter D’Elia

The Marsh San Francisco

Trina Maria thought she had found her dream rom-com butch, but life had other plans. When yelling at a pigeon doesn’t bring her the relief she seeks, she embarks on a journey up a steep hill to join a mystical break-up support group filled with quirky queer misfits.

Tina D’Elia (Playwright and Performer) is a mixed-race Mexican queer/lesbian SAG-AFTRA actor, award-winning solo performer, co-screenwriter, casting director, and producer. Currently developing her fifth solo show, *The Break-Up! A Latina Queer Torch Song*, for its West Coast premiere at The Brava Theater Cabaret in December 2024, D’Elia has received accolades such as the Best of Fringe and Best of Sold-Out Shows for *The Rita Hayworth of this Generation* at the San Francisco Fringe Festival in 2015. She has performed at venues including the National Queer Arts Festival, The Marsh, and Stage Werx. Her film and TV credits include “Earth Mama,” “The Pursuit of Happiness,” “Sense8,” “Dyke Central,” “Chosen Fam,” and “Assigned Female at Birth.” Recognized in *Go Magazine’s* “100 Women We Love” and *Curve Magazine’s* Power List, she has also received a Best Actress Award and Diversity Casting Award from the Equality International Film Festival and a Frameline33 Audience Award for co-screenwriting the short film “Lucha.”

Mary Guzmán (Director) was selected for Directors Lab West, an intensive program hosted by Pasadena Playhouse to inspire the future of American Theatre. She has directed at theater companies including Crowded Fire, Shotgun Players, Theatre Rhinoceros, and The Marsh. A highlight of her career includes directing Enrique Urueta’s award-

winning *Learn to be Latina* at Impact Theatre in Berkeley. Guzmán has also directed acclaimed one-person shows, including Julia Jackson's *Children are Forever: All Sales are Final*, which won the Best Non-Fiction Show Award at the United Solo Festival, and Tina D'Elia's *The Rita Hayworth of this Generation*, which won Best of Sold-Out Show and Best of at the San Francisco Fringe Festival.

ARISTOTLE, FREUD, MOBSTERS, AND GONADS: THE EEL MUSICAL!

Written and directed by Celina Demos

Book by: Celina Demos & Nicole Jost

Music by: Celina Demos & Tony Eiras

Lyrics by: Celina Demos

**Performed by Julia Wright, Celina Demos, Faustino Cadiz, & Daniel Rios
The Marsh Berkeley**

How do eels have sex? When biologists Gabby and Lacy find their research funding cut, they dive into an unexpected solution: producing a musical! Brimming with humor, heart, and an outrageous number of fish puns, *Aristotle, Freud, Mobsters, and Gonads: The Eel Musical!* hopes to hook audiences and reel in laughs with its disarming approach.

Celina Demos (Music, Lyrics, Libretto, Direction, & Charlotte the Piano Player) is a dedicated musical theatre enthusiast with a passion for tarot cards, local politics, and tattoos, who admires Stephen Sondheim, and has a unique fondness for eels.

Tony Eiras (Music & Arrangement) is a musical director, conductor, composer, and teacher. His choral compositions have been recorded by the Laudamus Singers and Orchestra and are performed in parishes and churches across the United States.

Nicole Jost (Book) is a playwright, teaching artist, and theater producer. She co-founded Queer Cat Productions, a theater company dedicated to creating consent-forward accessible, immersive experiences from 2017 to 2023. With Queer Cat, Nicole co-wrote four interactive plays, including *The Gay Divorce Play* (Potrero Stage, 2019) and *Felix B. Love Is Not Alone!* (virtual, April 2020). She is also part of the musical theater writing team Grabmeier and Jost, currently working on a queer rom com titled *Love U*.

Julia Wright's (Dr. Gabriella Cunningham) past roles include Natalie in *Next to Normal* (Sunnyvale Community Players), Wednesday in *The Addams Family* (WVLO Musical Theatre), and Piggie in *Elephant & Piggie's 'We're in a Play'* (Plethos Productions).

Faustino Cadiz (Joey) is a Filipino-American educator and performing artist, who has appeared in *A Chorus Line*, *Yellow Face*, *Assassins*, and *Sondheim on Sondheim*. He has collaborated with numerous local theatre companies, including Bindlestiff Studio, San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Company, Tri-Valley Theatre Company, and Center Repertory Company.

Daniel Rios (Tom) is an opera singer with extensive experience in both classical and contemporary operas. He has performed with esteemed companies such as Opera San Jose, Opera Modesto, and the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival.

BENJAMIN'S PASSION

**Written and performed by Elizabeth Du Val
The Marsh San Francisco**

Benjamin's Passion is a true tragicomedy that follows a Ukrainian ballet director stranded in Idaho and an aging dancer who finally lands her big break. Together, they confront existential

questions including: "Is it possible to love something without it driving you crazy?", "What comes next at the end of the line?", and "Does the football team belong in *The Nutcracker*?" This tale of passion, disappointment, and murder will keep audiences on the edges of their seats.

Elizabeth Du Val (Playwright & Performer) is a retired ballet dancer with over 15 years of experience, having performed with Tulsa Ballet Theatre, Connecticut Ballet, and American Festival Ballet, among others. Her diverse career also includes touring with *Phantom of the Opera*, performing in *Le Cirque*, dancing with New York Baroque Dance Co., and traveling the world as a cruise ship performer.

SPANISH STEW

Written and performed by Marga Gomez
The Marsh San Francisco

Spanish Stew is a whimsical memoir set in 1976, where a young, brown, and naively green Marga Gomez follows her first love across the country to San Francisco—only for them to break up immediately. Now single and broke, Marga bluffs her way into a job at a bohemian cafe that transforms her life. *Spanish Stew* is a heartfelt and humorous journey of self-discovery, resilience, and unexpected twists.

Marga Gomez (Playwright & Performer) is the author and performer of 14 solo plays which have been produced nationally, internationally, and in New York at The Public Theater, 47th Street Theatre, Performance Space 122, Dixon Place, and La MaMa Experimental Theatre Company. Her acting credits include Off-Broadway and national productions of *The Vagina Monologues*, A.C.T.'s *Fefu and Her Friends*, Ars Nova New York's *Dr. Ride's American Beach House* and roles in Warner Bros. films *Sphere* and *Batman Forever* as well as a guest role on Netflix's *Sense8*. Her awards include a GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding New York Theater, a 2023 San Francisco Artist Commission Artist Grant, a 2022 United States Artists Fellowship for Theatre and Performance, a 2021 Center for Cultural Innovation Grant, a Los Angeles Stage Alliance Ovation Award for Best Featured Actress, and the 2010 Bay Area Critics Circle Award for Best Performance. Gomez is a winner of the 2023 Best Comedian Award from both *48 Hills* and *Bay Area Reporter*. Gomez's solo theater career began at The Marsh San Francisco in 1991, where she has since been seen in award-winning, long-running productions including *Latin Standards*, *lovebirds*, *Long Island Iced Latina*, *Memory Tricks*, *Not Getting Any Younger*, among others.

SCAT-ER BRAIN: THE MUSIC OF ADHD

Written and performed by Candace Johnson
The Marsh San Francisco

Diagnosed with inattentive attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) after 40, CJ—a multi-talented woman—embarks on a profound journey of self-discovery to finally understand her true worth. With the power of music, community, and faith, she conquers her deepest fears and begins to build the life she always dreamed of. This show illuminates both the joy and challenges that people with ADHD bring to the world and offers a transformative glimpse into the world of those living on the neurodivergent spectrum.

Candace Johnson (Playwright & Performer) is a multifaceted artist, serving as a singer, actress, poet, voice instructor, and director of the University of California Berkeley's Gospel Choir. She is also a voice coach for the Formally Incarcerated People's Performance Project (FIPPP), a theater organization supporting artists impacted by incarceration. Johnson excels in opera, musical theater, gospel, and jazz. In 2018, she premiered her first one-woman show, *VOX in a BOX*, a musical biography about discovering her voice. Since then, she has written and performed seven original shows and continues to create new works.

PASS THE NAILS AND SHAME THE DEVIL

Written and performed by Pearl Louise

Directed by David Ford

The Marsh San Francisco

A true story unfolds in the mid-1980s as a Southern Black family from Louisiana sets out to build their dream home in a predominantly Black neighborhood in Oakland, California. Amidst the dangers and destruction of the crack epidemic, this struggling community faces immense challenges. Yet, with the unyielding determination of a strong-willed mother, father, and their daughter Pearl, they rally a motley crew of men—parolees, individuals battling drug addiction, and the less fortunate. Together, they embark on a powerful journey to turn their dream home into a reality, showcasing resilience, hope, and the strength of community.

Pearl Louise (Playwright & Performer) is a distinguished performance artist and mother based in the Bay Area. She has appeared at the Fresno Fringe Show, in several shows at San Francisco Stage Werx, and Tell It On Tuesday at The Marsh. She also showcased two solo pieces for the Formerly Incarcerated People's Performance Project (FIPPP), leading to the opportunity to perform at Berkeley Repertory Theater.

David Ford (Director) - see bio above.

NIGHT DRIVER

Written and performed by Pearl Ong

Directed by David Ford

The Marsh San Francisco

What's a Hong Kong princess doing behind the wheel of a San Francisco cab? And how does her very proper mother react? *Night Driver* takes audiences on the unexpected journeys of a model minority gone rogue. This captivating story blends humor, rebellion, and cultural clashes, offering a glimpse into a life that is determined to defy expectations.

Pearl Ong (Playwright & Performer) embarked on her performance journey in 2019 at Stage Werx in San Francisco. Since then, she has showcased short autobiographical pieces at Solo Sundays at Stage Werx, Tell It On Tuesday at The Marsh Berkeley, Monday Night at the Marsh, and Marsh Rising at the San Francisco Marsh.

David Ford (Director) - see bio above.

FONTWALA

Written and performed by Shubhra Prakash

The Marsh San Francisco

In 1990s India, Fontwala, an ambitious typographer and font designer, creates the Anglo Nagari Keyboard—one of the first software to enable typing Indian scripts on a Latin-based keyboard. Now, his niece Shilpi has returned to India after two decades in the United States to chronicle her uncle's story. As she delves into his groundbreaking work, Shilpi uncovers the challenges of preserving a complex script in the digital age and the struggles of conveying a multifaceted

history in a single narrative. This work was inspired by the true story of Rajeev Prakash, a pioneering typographer and font designer of Indian scripts.

Shubhra Prakash (Playwright & Performer) is a writer and performer who gained attention for her work on the educational comic *Priya's Mask*, covered by NPR and BBC India. She co-wrote, produced, and acted in *The Music In My Blood*, exploring Indian classical music and the story of Walter Kaufmann, a Jewish refugee in India during World War II. Prakash, an immigrant from India to the United States during her teenage years, has acted in productions in the San Francisco Bay Area and New York City, where she co-founded Hypokrit Theatre Company in 2014, promoting BIPOC artists. During the pandemic, she collaborated remotely with the Same Boat Theater Collective. Shubhra's dramaturgy work for *Fontwala* resulted in digital exhibitions exploring the evolution of Indian Devanagari script. She also staged a version of *Fontwala* in Hindi with SwaangGhar ensemble actors in New Delhi.

ANGRY BLACK WOMAN 101

Written and performed by Kathryn Seabron

Directed by Lynn Vidal

The Marsh San Francisco

Angry Black Woman 101 is a powerful solo show that delves into the microaggressions, tropes, and misogynoir that Black women face in the workplace and society at large. Set against the backdrop of a hurtful work experience at a local nonprofit, this performance exposes the harsh realities of enduring microaggressions, being micromanaged, and facing higher scrutiny. It highlights how Black women's well-being and safety are often overlooked and how white women's tears can be weaponized to disenfranchise them. *Angry Black Woman 101* vividly illustrates the intersection of misogyny and racism that Black women navigate daily—at work, at school, on the street, and in everyday life—through compelling vignettes, stories, poetry, and media pieces, offering a raw, honest exploration of their struggles and resilience.

Kathryn Seabron's (Playwright & Performer) theatrical career began as a stage manager for the legendary Lorraine Hansberry Theater. She has directed for the Asian American Theater, African American Theater Company, Oakland Ensemble Theater Company, and Oakland Public Theater. When Seabron shifted her focus to performing, she joined the cabaret and burlesque community, becoming well-known as "Juicy D. Light!" As Juicy, she is an internationally recognized burlesque performer, choreographer, and the head of the award-winning troupe Rubenesque Burlesque. Seabron has performed for AfroSolo, San Francisco Playground, the National Women's Theater Festival, and the San Francisco Fringe Festival, where she won the "Best of the Fringe" award.

Lynn Vidal (Director) is an actor, director, musician, and iconoclast. Vidal returns to the theater to direct Kathryn Seabron's one-woman show, *Angry Black Woman 101*.

FANCIFOOL: FOLKS!

Written and performed by Ananda Bena-Weber

The Marsh San Francisco

In this vibrant show, representative democracy is the magic potion that unites the audience as one. Based on real stories from Americans, *Fancifool: Folks!* brings the collective narrative to life through dance, song, and clowning in a vivid production that reminds audiences love is the key to making this grand experiment called democracy work.

Ananda Bena-Weber (Playwright & Performer) is a versatile interdisciplinary performing artist whose acclaimed solo show *Fancifool: Folks!* received awards at prestigious festivals including the United Solo Theatre Festival in New York City and The Marsh San Francisco's International Solo Festival. Her theatrical experience includes roles in regional theater productions of *As You Like It*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard III*, and *Hamlet*, and many others. As a

dancer, she has collaborated with The Jazz Tap Ensemble and The Sierra Nevada Ballet. An accomplished teacher, Bena-Weber has led performing classes and workshops across the United States and Europe.

180 DAYS. TO DIE. TO LIVE

Written by Stephanie Weisman

Developed with Kathryn Keats and Marc Montserrat-Drukker

The Marsh Berkeley

180 Days. To Die. To Live is a compelling story of two people's end-of-life journeys, as seen through the eyes of the narrator. The play focuses on the final six months of the narrator's husband, Richard, and her friend, Shelley, both diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Richard undergoes seven rounds of chemotherapy, while Shelley chooses no treatment. Both decide to use California's end-of-life assisted suicide option, legalized in 2016 but still largely unknown.

Through these poignant stories, the play sheds light on the eligibility requirements and the challenges of navigating the healthcare system for this option. Amidst the seemingly somber subject matter, comic relief is provided by the narrator, a widow and cancer survivor herself, who is learning qigong and other healing practices to stay healthy during her grief-stricken time. *180 Days. To Die. To Live* explores the choices available at the end of life, touching on personal decisions, healthcare options, and legal considerations.

Stephanie Weisman (Playwright & Performer) has been the Artistic/Executive Director of The Marsh since 1989, transforming it from a weekly performance series to producing over 500 shows annually across its San Francisco and Berkeley stages. The Marsh's programs include the development and premiere of new performances, after-school classes for at-risk youth, and performance development classes. Weisman spearheaded the purchase of The Marsh's facility in San Francisco and opened The Marsh Arts Center in Berkeley, and initiated MarshStream, The Marsh's broadcast platform, in response to COVID. Her work has been nationally published, and she has received awards from the Bay Area Theatre Critic's Circle and the San Francisco Bay Guardian. Her notable works include the opera *Aphrodisia* and solo performance musicals *Breed & Rescue* and *Planet DoReMi*.

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 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 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: To celebrate its 35th anniversary, **The Marsh** will host its first *In Front of Your Eyes Performance Festival* this August. The Marsh, a breeding ground for new performance, will curate and present this festival of developing work focusing on works by women and nonbinary performers. Said The Marsh's Founder, Artistic and Executive Director Stephanie Weisman, "We are finding the theatre world, particularly since the pandemic, has been able to offer fewer and fewer opportunities for performers to develop and present their original work. With this Festival, The Marsh can provide performers with stage time, eager audiences on which to try out new work, and a real opportunity for developing their voices." The Festival will be staged at both the Berkeley and San Francisco locations of The Marsh, with performances that include musicals, ensembles, and solo shows. Each show will be presented three times over two weeks and may be accompanied by short performance "openers" before the full-length pieces.

WHEN: August 1 – 25, 2024
August 1 – 11, 2024 at The Marsh San Francisco
August 14 – 25, 2024 at The Marsh Berkeley

SHOWS: Wednesdays – Sundays
Specific show dates and times can be found at themarsh.org

WHERE: **The Marsh San Francisco, 1062 Valencia St., San Francisco**
*Parking: New Mission Bartlett Garage, 3255 21st St.
(21st St between Mission & Valencia)
BART station (closest): Mission & 24th Street*

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

TICKETS: \$15-\$35 sliding scale; \$50 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 Paige D'Encarnacao, Carla Befera & Co.
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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here:
<http://cbpr.co/press/InFrontofYourEyesPerformanceFestival>