

THE MARSH BERKELEY PRESENTS
LONGEST RUNNING SOLO SHOW
IN SAN FRANCISCO HISTORY,
BRIAN COPELAND'S
NOT A GENUINE BLACK MAN
FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY IN BERKELEY
7:00pm Friday, September 13, 2024

BERKELEY, CA (20 August 2024) — **The Marsh Berkeley** presents **Brian Copeland's** stunning work, *Not a Genuine Black Man*, for a special one night only performance in celebration of the play's 20th anniversary and its passing of the 1000th performance mark in April. Premiering at The Marsh San Francisco in 2004, this production became the longest-running solo show in San Francisco theater history. This funny, honest, and harrowing piece by award-winning actor, playwright, and talk show host Copeland recounts the struggles he faced growing up in what was declared one of the most racist suburbs in America. *The Mercury News* highlighted the show's continued relevance, noting, "it's a perfect time to get acquainted with a classic," while *The Daily Californian* said the historic solo show has "attracted theatergoers of diverse backgrounds, resonating with people across the board in a way that is even truer now than when the show debuted." This hit one-man show is now in development with television and film producer Rob Reiner, who told the *Los Angeles Times* that *Not a Genuine Black Man* is the "rarest combination of powerful emotion, great humor and social insight – a truly great one-man show." *Not a Genuine Black Man*, written and performed by Brian Copeland, developed by Brian Copeland and **David Ford**, and directed by David Ford, will be presented 7:00pm Friday, September 13, 2024 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.

"In the current political climate, empathy seems to be a lost commodity," said Copeland. "By showing people the world through the eyes of a bullied and lonely little African American boy, I hope they will develop compassion for the demonized 'other.'"

"There is a reason that *Not a Genuine Black Man* is San Francisco's longest running solo

show,” added The Marsh Founder and Artistic/Executive Director **Stephanie Weisman**. “So many can relate to Brian’s tale of what one’s identity means to them and who defines you.”

In 1972 The National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing called San Leandro a “racist bastion of white supremacy,” becoming the subject of features on *CBS News* and *Newsweek* among other national outlets. As the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights conducted hearings, Copeland’s family moved to town – where they faced astonishing and humiliating harassment and isolation. A critically acclaimed exploration of race, identity, and empathy, *Not a Genuine Black Man* offers a unique blend of laughter, tears, and social commentary. The *San Francisco Chronicle* described the show as “relentlessly introspective and disarmingly honest, Copeland takes apart the false notion that black masculinity is some monolithic concept, in a way that has continued, unfortunately, to be relevant long after the show’s 2004 premiere.” During a previous run, *Theatrius* declared “Copeland tells stories like a master. The tenderness and intimacy of Copeland’s storytelling gives way to a rigorous examination of the complexities of Black identity and masculinity.”

Not a Genuine Black Man is the longest running solo play in San Francisco theatrical history. The *San Francisco Chronicle* hailed Copeland’s work “a beautiful mix of wry humor and heartbreak, indignation and inspiration, a singular story of extreme isolation that speaks to anyone who’s ever felt out of place.” The show has enjoyed successful runs in Los Angeles and Off-Broadway and was adapted into a bestselling book, which has been listed as required reading at high schools and colleges throughout the nation. It was also chosen as part of Santa Clara County’s “Silicon Valley Reads,” an annual community program that selects books focused on a contemporary theme to engage the public in reading, thinking, and discussing current topics in the community.

ABOUT THE CAST AND CREATIVES

Brian Copeland (Writer/Performer) has been in show business since he first stepped on the comedy stage at age 18. Soon, he was headlining clubs and concerts across the country and opening for such artists as Smokey Robinson, The Temptations, Ringo Starr, and Aretha Franklin, in venues from The Universal Amphitheater to Constitution Hall in Washington D.C. Copeland then branched off into television, appearing on comedy programs on NBC, A&E and MTV. Copeland was recently seen on the big screen in the S.M.A.S.H. Marvel film, *Venom: Let There Be Carnage*. He spent five years as co-host of San Francisco FOX affiliate KTVU breakfast program *Mornings on 2* and two years hosting San Francisco ABC affiliate KGO’s

Emmy Award-winning afternoon talk show *7Live*. His first network special, *Now Brian Copeland*, premiered on NBC after *Saturday Night Live* for West Coast audiences in January 2015. In 1995, KGO Radio premiered *The Brian Copeland Show*. With his unique blend of humor and riveting talk, the program was the most listened to program in its time slot, reaching more than 100,000 listeners. Copeland's other theatrical works include his acclaimed play *The Waiting Period*, a story of combatting depression; *The Scion*, a taken-from-the-headlines tale of privilege, murder, and sausage; the critically-acclaimed Christmas classic, *The Jewelry Box*; the poignant look at single parenting *GRANDMA & ME*, winner of the 2023 *BroadwayWorld* San Francisco Bay Area Award for Best Solo Performance; and *The Great American Sh*t Show*, a collaboration with Charlie Varon featuring monologues on life in the Age of Trump. Copeland's first crime fiction novel *OUTRAGED*, published by Black Odyssey Media, was released nationwide.

David Ford 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 have included Geoff Hoyle, Brian Copeland, Charlie Varon, the late 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, 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.” 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 Marsh Berkeley presents **Brian Copeland**'s stunning work, *Not a Genuine Black Man*, for one night only this September. Premiering at The Marsh San Francisco in 2004, this production became the longest-running solo show in San Francisco theater history. This funny, honest, and harrowing piece by award-winning actor, playwright, and talk show host Copeland recounts the struggles he faced growing up in what was declared one of the most racist suburbs in America.

Not a Genuine Black Man is:

Written and performed by Brian Copeland

Developed by David Ford and Brian Copeland

Directed by David Ford

WHEN: September 13, 2024

SHOWS: 7:00pm Friday

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 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, CBCO Public Relations & Marketing
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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available
here: <https://cbpr.co/press/notagenuineblackman/>