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STAGE REVIEWS - Pomo Afro Homos Offers 'Dark Fruit'

By DON SHIRLEY
August 01, 1992

The name Pomo Afro Homos stands for "Postmodern African American Homosexuals." But postmodern sometimes implies a rather detached aestheticism. This remarkable San Francisco-based trio will have none of that.

Consider the opening sketch in "Dark Fruit," the group's latest collection of work, now at Highways. Inspired by an actual "pulp/porn pseudo-science novel" from the '60s, Brian Freeman's "Black & Gay: A Psycho-Sex Study" is a rollicking piece of [satire](#) that manages the formidable task of making fun on one level and involving us with the fates of its two closeted teen-agers—one black and one white—on another level.

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Freeman and Djola Bernard Branner switch between characters with such precision that it's hard to believe there aren't a half-dozen [actors](#). Freeman's eight years with the San Francisco Mime Troupe are evident here.

Three monologues follow, beginning with "Sweet Sadie," Branner's tart yet affecting reminiscence of growing up with his middle-aged mother in South-Central L.A. Again he displays the chameleonic skill of the most rigorously disciplined actors.

Next up is a Freeman story about a childhood acquaintance, too sketchy and marred by a problem in the [soundtrack](#) on opening night. Eric Gupton's "Tasty" is a sharp account of an office fling that tackles issues of sexual harassment without becoming preachy about it.

The finale, "Chocolate City, U.S.A.," moves from the personal to the political with sure-footed skill, incorporating a poem by Dave Frechette that takes virtually all of the players in the AIDS crisis to task, most notably Magic Johnson.

"Dark Fruit," Highways, 1651 18th St., Santa Monica, today, 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. (213) 660-8587. \$12. Running time: 1 hour, 10 minutes.

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