

MBC Alumnus John Pancho Demmings



We moved into our new house February of 1969, the first black family in an all white neighborhood. My mother's intuition was to move her children away from the heat, away from the fire in order to give us a chance at greater things in life, something that seemed so fleeting in the place we left behind.

I REMEMBER.....

I remember sitting on a windowsill in the attic of the old house the evening of April 4th, 1968, the night Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. My 6 year old eyes and ears absorbed the indelible images and riotous sounds reaching across the whole of my neighborhood, a tumult of anger and despair, the hope of a nation exploded by an assassin's bullet.

• EDUCATION: Economics & Business B.A. Degree, Macalester College, Religion Minor, Extensive Spanish

• TALENT & INTEREST: Basketball, Football, Boxing, Jeet Kune Do, Tennis, Swimming, Weightlifting, Golf, Roller Skating/Blading, Tenor Voice

THANK GOD FOR MY MOTHER'S INSTINCTS,

In the new place my brothers James and Keith, my sister Kitisha, and myself were the first black children to attend an all white elementary school. The transition would not be an easy one. The racial tensions tested my mettle, for the playground was the arena where I would earn my stripes one contest at a time. The unfounded hatred aimed at my skin's color worked to shape some sharp edges in me, and threaten to steal my innocence. I was the gladiator of my youth with an onslaught of willing opponents all wanting to be the one take "Pancho" down.

My parents' faith and prayers kept me framed in God's grace. They kept me in church where I was a member of my church choir. However, their efforts didn't keep me out of the principal's office, so this particular day didn't seem like any other. I was greeted by a woman whose eyes seemed to know me, and whose calming voice reached a place in me.

THAT DAY BEA SPEED-HASSELMANN CLAIMED ME AS ONE OF HER OWN,

and the rest they say is history.....

She introduced me to a whole new world, a fraternity that has helped to mold and shape the lives of thousands of young men just like me. She has been an incredible support and mentor my entire life. The singing, the dancing, the discipline, the smiling embracing faces in the audiences of the Boys Choir performances set my life on a new course, for a flame was kindled inside of me.

REALIZING YOUR DREAMS

Today I am an actor living in Hollywood who has worked with the likes of Harrison Ford, Will Smith, Tommy Lee Jones, Mark Harmon, Keiffer Southerland, Gary Sinese, David McCallum, Dick Van Dyke, Courtney Cox, David Arquette, Linda Hamilton and many others.

My humble beginnings were facilitated by the generosity of people like yourself. I was the 8th of 11 children, and my brother Keith was number 9.

My parents were not able to pay for our participation in The Metropolitan Boys Choir, but Bea would not turn us away, as she never turned away any boy because he lacked the means.

It is your contributions that have helped to tell my story, and that will continue to tell the stories of my many MBC brothers.

Thank you for your Priceless Gift,
John Pancho Demmings

Director's note:

Thank you to John for sharing his story. Needless to say, I am so very proud of him and his accomplishments and humbled by the personal credit given. What a fine and compassionate gentleman! It is so rewarding to hear what the power of music does to help young boys develop confidence, self esteem and discipline that stay with them for life. Our many alumni, like John have attested to this. Thank you for your part in making this all happen. Please read on to learn of John's many accomplishments. What a talent!!! I am thankful for the privilege that I have been given to work with the wonderful young boys of the Metropolitan Boys Choir and seeing them grow into wonderfully responsible men. Sincerely,
Bea Hasselmann

FEATURES

- The Fugitive
- The Seat Filler
- The Shrink Is In
- Very Bad Things
- Opposite of Sox
- Shadows of Doubt
- George of the Jungle

- Progeny
- The Fence
- Equinox
- Humanoids

TELEVISION

- 24
- CSI NY
- Bones
- NCIS
- Alias
- The District
- The Division
- Chicago Hope
- Sabrina the Teenage Witch
- 24
- LA Doctors
- City Guys
- Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
- The Norm Show
- Beverly Hills 90210
- Rescue 77
- Louis and Clark

TELEVISION MOVIES

- Babylon 5
- Another Woman's Husband
- A Private Affair
- On the Line

THEATRE

- Othello
- Six Degrees of Separation
- To Kill a Mockingbird
- A Poster of the Cosmos
- Master Harold & the Boys
- Tambourines of Glory
- Imaginary Invalid
- Improv Comedy