

EXTRA FESTIVAL BIOS NOT IN PRINTED PROGRAM:

Alayo Dancers:

Julianna Cressman is a dancer based in Oakland. She worked with Sarah Bush Dance Company, Alayo Dance Company and performed in Paul Flores' multidisciplinary work *We Have Iré*. She currently collaborates nationwide with violinist Jenny Scheinman's All Species Parade band, and teaches her beloved weekly intermediate contemporary class at City Dance in San Francisco on Thursday nights. When not dancing, you'll find her on a variety of boats in a harbor near you.

Alain Amilicar Soto Aguilera was born in Santiago de Cuba and began his dance education there at the Escuela Vocacional de ARte at age eleven. In 1994 he was accepted into Havana's Escuela Nacional del Arte where he studied Ballet, Cuban popular, modern and he specialized in Folkloric dance. In 1998, Soto became one of the principal dancers of Ban Rarrá, the prestigious Folkloric dance company specializing in Eastern Cuban dance forms. In 2011, he came to the United States on tour with Ban Rarrá where they performed in various universities and theaters throughout the country, including ODC Theater. Since moving to California, he has danced with Arenas Dance Company, Patakin, Raices Cubanas, San Francisco Carnaval and Timba All Stars, and Alayo Dance Company. This is his fourth season with Alayo Dance Company after a xxx year hiatus.

Alejandro Perez is a first generation Mexican-American from and living in Los Angeles, CA. First introduced to dance at the age of twelve, Alejandro joined a street dance crew, which gave him the opportunity to compete and showcase internationally. Alejandro's passion continued to unfold as he enrolled at Hamilton Performing Arts High School, where he began refining his techniques. He is a recipient of scholarships at UCLA, Jacob's Pillow Ballet Summer Programs the year of its 85th Anniversary GALA and Alonzo King LINES Ballet Training Program. Alejandro completed a three-week residency in the world renowned Orsolina28 in Moncalvo, Italy, where he danced under the direction of Mike Tyus. He has been a performer and a collaborator with Sidra Bell Dance NYC, ISHIDA Dance, DawsonDancesf, ZiRu Dance, Mike Tyus & Co. and several other companies throughout the U.S. Alejandro has set work on the LINES Ballet Summer Training Program in San Francisco, Youth American Grand Prix (YAGP),

California Summer School for the Arts, AMDA LA, and Santa Monica College. This is his third season with Alayo Dance Company.

Delvis Savigne Friñon is a gifted dancer and teacher from Cuba who specializes in modern, contemporary, and folklore genres. He received his training from the School of Art, Jose Maria Heredia, in Santiago de Cuba. He began his professional dance career with Danza Teatro del Caribe, under the direction of Eduardo Rivero Walker, which led to international performances in such countries as Spain and Jamaica. He also danced with the National Dance Company of Jamaica. In recent years, he has performed with numerous San Francisco Bay Area dance companies, including Alayo Dance Company with Ramón Ramos Alayo, the Dance Brigade with Krissy Keefer, Zaccho Dance Theatre with Joanna Haigood, and the Robert Moses' Kin Dance Company. This is his tenth season with Alayo.

Marco Palomino is a choreographer, dancer, and director based in Los Angeles, CA. Originally born in Cuba, he graduated from Escuela Nacional de Arte with a BFA from La Universidad de las Artes in Havana. Marco has worked with Jacob Jonas The Company, Ballet Revolución, Rosario Cárdenas, Carlos Acosta's Acostadanza in collaboration with Birmingham Royal Ballet, Juliano Nuñez, Jacob Jonas, Pontus Lidberg, Micaela Taylor, Javier de Frutos, Norge Cedeño, Jorge Cesis, Osnel Delgado, Mike Tyus, Alexis Fernández (Maca), Goyo Montero, Rosanna Gamson and Carlos Acosta. Recently nominated for the Princess Grace Award in Choreography. Marco has created commission works for dance companies, museums, film, immersive experience and live theater. He has shared his work in 11 different countries, some notable theaters include Sadler's Wells- London, Admiralspalast- Berlin, Alicia Alonso- Havana, State Theater- Sydney, Halle 622- Zürich, Museumsquartier- Vienna, Chaillot- Paris, among others.. This is his third season dancing with Alayo Dance Company.

Dominique Michelle Duo has been dancing since childhood, training in Argentine folklore, Spanish dance, and contemporary styles, along with a foundation in ballet. She later studied contemporary dance at the university level and expanded her training in Los Angeles, exploring hip hop, house, and African dance. She received a scholarship to KreativMndz Dance Academy in LA, where she trained for six months with renowned choreographers. Alongside performing, Dominique is passionate about teaching and has led contemporary, acrobatics, and aerial silks classes. She continues to grow her practice through capoeira and diverse movement styles.

Patricia West is an Educator, Director, and Choreographer. Born in San Jose, she works/has worked with Alayo Dance Company, Zaccho Dance Theater, Joe Goode Performance Group, Fog Beast as well as many others. In 2017, Patricia co-founded DAP, a performing arts collective. Patricia is the Director of Berkeley/Oakland AileyCamp, a program of Cal Performances. She is grateful for every opportunity to teach, create and perform.

Aja Randall (she/her) is from St. Louis, Mo and graduated from Stephen College in Columbia, Mo with a BFA in Dance and Minor in Education in 99'. Aja moved to the Bay Area in 2004, has danced for several local artists with the longest stretch for Afro-Cuban based Alayo Dance Company from 2006 - 2012. Co-creator of the trio DAP Dance Collective, 2012 to present. Yoga Alliance Certified since 2017, she strongly believes in its philosophy and practice to help in maintaining longevity in art making and the care taking of the aging body. Is currently the Venue & Ops Manager for Joe Goode Performance Group and loves being in community, supporting and connecting with local bay area artists and beyond. Aja is thrilled to be back sharing the stage with the Alayo Dance Company and alums.

Stephanie Emmanuela Da Silva, currently a professor of dance at the College of Alameda, pursued an MFA in dance after becoming captivated with Afro-Brazilian dance, music, and culture from the source, in Salvador, Brazil. She lived and immersed herself in the dance culture of Salvador Bahia from 2007-2012, and continues to visit and train with master teachers annually. She danced professionally with the Norma Santana Dance Co, Attomos Dance Co and Diaspora Dance Co, she trained with the Bale Folklorico da Bahia and holds a dance degree from the Escola de Danca da FUNCEB. She is the artistic director and choreographer of Agua Doce Dance which was founded in 2015.

Óscar Trujillo is an embodiment practitioner whose practice bridges somatic education, the expressive arts, body and energy work. Currently residing in Kansas City, Óscar occasionally pops into the Bay to perform, most recently with Joe Goode Performance Group. And now, with Alayo Dance Company for the first time in 17 years!

Hilary Davidson studied dance in Santa Cruz, CA and performed as a Hot Box Dancer in the Cabrillo Stage production of *Guys & Dolls*. After moving to the Bay Area she studied Cuban salsa and urban contemporary and performed with Loose Change at the San Francisco International Hip Hop Dancefest. She has

traveled to Cuba twice for dance workshops and has worked with CubaCaribe. This is her first time performing with Alayo Dance Company.

Enraizando Artists:

Dr. Jade Power-Sotomayor is a Cali-Rican educator, scholar and performer who works as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Theatre and Dance at UC San Diego. Moving from Puerto Rico to California as a young person, she came into full *conciencia* through her experiences in collaborative artistic projects that sought to bring attention to how elite powers target and feed on the most vulnerable in our society. Today, her research and writerly interests span across Puerto Rican cultural studies, Latinx/Latine theatre and performance, dance studies, nightlife cultures, epistemologies of the body, land-based performances, feminist of color critique, bilingualism, race and language, and intercultural performance in the Caribbean diaspora. Her writing and publications have been recognized with multiple awards across various professional organizations. Her first single-authored book *¡Habla! Speaking Bodies Dancing Our América* is forthcoming from NYU Press. In addition to decades of experience on the stage, she is also a dramaturg and co-directs and performs with the San Diego-based group Bomba Liberté.

Maritxell Carrero is a multidisciplinary artist whose love for Afro-Puerto Rican Bomba fuels her work as a performer, producer, and cultural advocate. Based in Los Angeles, she teaches and performs Bomba as a *cantaora* and is the founder of *Taller Kurubina*. She has performed with groups such as *Atabey & Cunyá*, and has collaborated with *Aguacero*, *Bomba Liberté*, *Peace Inside Out*, *Areyto Borincano*, *Ifé*, *Boricua y de Mayagüez*, *Qualia*, and others across California and Puerto Rico. She co-founded Carrero Creatives and produced *Calle de la Resistencia*, a docu-drama-musical now streaming on Amazon Prime. Her acting credits include *Seven*, *Esperanza*, and Peter Sellars' *The Indian Queen*, which won five Golden Mask Awards in 2015 and toured internationally at the English National Opera, Teatro Real in Madrid, and Moscow's Bolshoi Theater. Maritxell has served as a cultural consultant for the Grammy® Awards, Apple, Pepsi, Verizon, and Amazon, and has been featured in national campaigns for AT&T, Toyota, Modelo, and Western Union. She currently serves as Company Manager for CONTRA-TIEMPO, continuing to blend culture and advocacy. You can listen to her original bomba fusion music on [Spotify](#).

An emcee whose artistry and activism are one in the same, **Rico Pabón** has been delivering poetic lyrics bound by themes of struggle and resilience for more than 30

years. Rico grew up moving between the Bay and New York, and discovered young that writing helped to ease the pain and anxiety that he experienced daily, so he wrote profusely. He honed his voice as an emcee and singer with groups such as Prophets of Rage, and acclaimed Afro Latin Fusion bands O-Maya and AguaLibre. As a composer, he's had his songs placed in nighttime television dramas "October Road" and "CSI: Miami" and he's appeared on numerous recordings and shared the stage with an array of highly acclaimed artists, across many genres of music.

Yairamaren Maldonado completed a Ph.D. in Latin American and Caribbean Literature and New Media at the University of California, Berkeley. She is a published writer with over 15 years of experience co-creating community-based storytelling with hundreds of folks, mostly women, in California, Latin America, and the Caribbean. She is also the founder and executive director of Escritura Pública, a non-profit dedicated to uplifting BIPOC women's voices through storytelling, the literary arts, and wellness. Her second book *Ciencia ficción en el mirador / Sci-fi at the Mirador* was published by Ediciones del Flamboyán in 2022, her third book, *Bioluminiscencia*, will be published with La Criba editorial in 2025, and she regularly publishes on her Substack newsletter *Escritura Imperfecta*. She is also the author of multiple academic research articles and book chapters, and has served as the editor of several academic and creative writing volumes, including the recently published volume *Historias para todas (2025)*, a compilation of the stories and poetry of more than 30 Puerto Rican women from all walks of life.

Jo-Annie Seda is a dancer, singer, and long standing member of the Bay Area Bomba community. Growing up on the East Coast she always loved music, dance, and especially singing. But it was not until she arrived in the Bay Area that she began to study Bomba after seeing a performance at a nightclub in San Francisco. That performance inspired her to connect with her Puerto Rican roots and launched her on a journey of personal, cultural and artistic growth that continues 22 years later. Jo-Annie's other passions include being the mother of a 19 year old, Spartan racing, working out, traveling and having fun with her furbabies!

Raised in Puerto Rico, **Roman "Ito" Carrillo** began to learn Bomba as a teenager, studying with Rafael Cepeda Afiles, founder of Familia Cepeda and the patriarch of Puerto Rican Bomba. Ito also danced with the First National Folkloric Ballet of Puerto Rico, one of the most important Bomba institutions in Puerto Rico. Since then, he has played with many of the leading Bomba groups on the island and in the diaspora, including the legendary Pleneros de la 21 in New York. He began teaching Bomba in the mid 1990s (leading workshops and participating multiple times in ACTA's

Apprenticeship Program), and has recorded Bomba professionally on two albums (with a third in production).

Ali Luna is a percussionist and culture bearer with over 20 years of experience performing across Afro-Caribbean and Latin music traditions. Rooted deeply in Puerto Rican Bomba and Plena, Ali is a lifelong student of folklore dance and drums, honoring rhythm as both music and living history. Ali has performed with groups such as Aguacero, Saboriqua, Rasquache Liberation Front, Los Lobos, Candelaria, Cuarteto León, Agua Libre, and La Familia SC. Known as a Bay Area powerhouse of Bomba, Ali brings ancestral energy, precision, and heart to every stage.

Daughter of a political activist who started her activism in her late 60's, **Forooza Baradar** is a reminder that it is never too late to find your purpose and passion in life. Forooza began taking weekly Sunday Bomba and Plena classes at La Peña Cultural Center in 2011 after hearing Bomba played by a friend at her cousin's party. She fell in love with the music and the community values. In addition to weekly Sunday classes under the direction of her teachers, Shefali Shah and Hector Lugo, she was invited to a weekly Friday gathering of women dedicated to studying, playing, singing and dancing Bomba. The supportive environment helped her grow in her musicianship and deepened her dedication to the Bomba and Plena workshop community. Also in attendance at these workshops and gatherings was her 3 year old daughter who is currently a member of the young women's Bomba group, Enraizar.

Eileen C.V. Skorman is a dedicated practitioner of Puerto Rican traditional music. Born and raised on the island, Eileen seeks to honor her culture through rigorous study and performance. A seven-year veteran of the ensemble Aguacero (dir. Shefali Shah), she has refined her craft under the tutelage of masters including Ito Carrillo, Elia Cortés, and Jorge Emmanuelli. Guided by her Catholic faith and a commitment to God, Eileen views her work as a sacred inheritance. Her participation in "Enraizar" reflects her lifelong mission to preserve the sounds of her homeland and pass that legacy down to her son, Noah, and the generations that follow.

Dr. Marina Romani is a queer multimedia writer and artist, editor, translator, educator, and performer of Western classical music and Puerto Rican music. She holds a PhD from UC Berkeley, and she is a lecturer in the Sociology Department at UC Berkeley, teaching upper-division courses in sociology of culture and cross-cultural communications. She presented her original research at international conferences in Europe and in the US. She was the recipient of fellowships and scholarships from the Townsend Center for the Humanities, the UC Berkeley Arts Research Center, the Berkeley Language Center, among others. As a singer, Marina has performed with

Aguacero in concerts supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and the San Francisco Arts Commission, and at venues such as Brava Theater, Dance Mission Theater, Stanford University, CubaCaribe Festival, MACLA Cultural Center in San Jose, California Environmental Justice Alliance, La Peña Cultural Center.

Guest Musician

Mari Luna, daughter of Ali Luna, is a former student under Shefali and Hector. At a young age she grew her passion for Bomba with a youth group called Quenepas led by Hector & Shefali. Mari has continued to study Bomba and its empowering history along with its evolution within communities around the US. Outside of Bomba, she has pursued a technician career for motorboat mechanics. Mari practices and perfects her role as participant in the culture alongside her community group in Boston MA named BOMBAntillana. Mari Luna is a lifetime student of Bomba continuing to educate herself and carry her tradition with pride.

Guest Dancer

Jennifer Pedelaborde is a longtime student and practitioner of Bomba, with over 25 years devoted to Afro-Puerto Rican drum and dance traditions. Their artistic path is shaped by deep, ongoing study of Afro-Caribbean folkloric music, movement, and ritual practice. An expressive arts therapist and astrologer, they honor dance as a living pathway for healing, intergenerational connection, and creative expression.

Translation for monologue for Ya Sale el Sol

Maritxell — Naeli, my daughter:

There are things that happen while the breeze blows and can only be felt. The most powerful forces are silent. Like your roots that grow from your hair—on your skin—absorbing the sea of your land, transmitting minerals, affection, and memories: the ancestral, the earthly, the universal traits that you and all Puerto Rican women carry. They anchor you, truly holding you to the ground—honest, rebellious, strong, fearless. You are the earth that sustains you. Mother, grandmother, young woman, and girl—they all live in you.

I am the daughter of Mayagüez. I dance, and sea droplets leap from my feet.

My mother is from Adjuntas. The mountain I carry is no coincidence. I am a Puerto Rican woman. We are strength. Rebellion. Doulas of our truth. We carry entire generations on the shoulders of our wombs. Hurricane winds challenge the stability of our undergrowth, and we resist the shaking. Our hips are waves that splash beauty and carry *sandunguerías*, sorrows, and joys.

We are the archetype of strength, of nourishment—like the tenderness of your Abu disguised as: “Come eat a little more.” “You’re skinny!” And that tenderness that lives in our maternal ancestry could not be taken away. Generations of mass sterilization could not destroy *nuestro encanto*. A race made of fury flows through the wisdom of our veins—to love our land above all else. A condemnation of love.

We are a land that flourishes on the sustenance of sisterhood and seeks to rid itself of all inherited lies. From patriarchy comes the wound that we have been stitching together over the years.

It took us time to reaffirm who we are. And it doesn’t matter if we were born on the island, if we are second or third generation, if life took us far away, or if it gave us parents from different countries in addition to the island—like you, Naeli. We carry the greatness of Puerto Rico in our souls.

And...

“I will continue to sow even if others trample the harvest. I will continue to shout even when others are silent. I will draw smiles on faces with tears. I will bring relief when I see pain. I will give reasons for joy where there is only sadness. I will invite those who have decided to stay to walk with me, and I will lift the arms of those who have given up. Because in the midst of desolation, there will be a girl who will look at us—hopeful, expecting something from us. And even in the midst of a storm, somewhere the sun will come out.”