THE 20TH ANNUAL

CUBA CARIBE FESTIVAL

OF DANCE & MUSIC

April 8-19, 2026



www.cubacaribe.org





ARTISTIC DIRECTOR Ramón Ramos Alayo

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Jamaica Itule Simmons

DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANT Zoë Klein

BOARD OF DIRECTORS Mayra Padilla, Amy Draizen, Hilary Davidson, Isaac Kos-Read, Marsha Silver, Patricia West, Jamaica Itule Simmons & Ramón Ramos Alayo.

2026 FESTIVAL

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MISSION To preserve, promote and present the vibrant cultural and artistic traditions of the Caribbean and its Diaspora. Founded on the principle that dance, music, and visual art have the power to unite people of diverse perspectives, CubaCaribe fosters greater understanding and appreciation of Caribbean arts and culture.

VISION To become a long-lasting Bay Area arts institution, expanding the number and variety of programs, forging partnerships with arts and other local organizations and reaching more communities. We will continue to meet the changing needs of the Bay Area's Cuban and Caribbean Diaspora arts community.



CubaCaribe is supported in part by:

The National Arts Relief Fund, The Zellerbach Family Foundation, San Francisco Grants for the Arts Hotel Tax Fund, The San Francisco Foundation, The San Francisco Arts Commission, The Fleishhacker Foundation,The Kenneth Rainin Foundation, Gerbode Foundation, Creative West which receives support in part by the NEA, a federal agency, The Campbell Foundation, CalOSBA, Sol Food and Cubita.

A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Our world feels even crazier than it was when I last sat down to write this note, yet when we look back into history, with all of its trials and tribulations, we see our way to the future through art-creating, expressing ourselves, celebrating and gathering in community. It has been and will continue to be a form of healing and survival. Cuba is in a precarious position right now and the future has never felt more uncertain. I feel proud to be producing our 20th Annual Festival of Dance and Music in our 23rd year in existence as an organization.

Born in 2003 after a show some of you might remember, Mis Sueños Mis Ideas, at Dance Mission Theater, CubaCaribe was actually started collaboratively with many others. Kudos to Krissy Keefer for lighting the flame with the first festival in 2005. Over the years different people have shaped CubaCaribe through their ideas, time, energy, expertise, sweat, tears, and passion. I want to take a moment to honor those who helped create it and sustain it and believed in its mission and vision; Kristina Ramsey, Deborah Valoma, Mike Nolan, Stella Adelman, Nicki Alexiev, Bill Martinez. All have worn many hats that enabled its survival with little public recognition.

This year we present a celebratory retrospective of the last 20 years while moving forward in community, resistance and joy. This year is also bittersweet because it will be my last with the organization. In 2011, I reluctantly and finally put a name to my role as Executive Director, thanks to Anne Huang and her consistent nudging. Then in 2014, after many years of fiscal sponsorship by Dance Brigade, CubaCaribe grew up, left home, and became its own 501c3, thanks to Aida Salazar, who took over when I had a baby and went on maternity leave (not great timing!). She was just the advocate we needed.

Speaking of babies, CubaCaribe has been like another child to me, one that needs nurturing, support and community, with many parents helping it grow. Sometimes we stumbled and made

mistakes, but we also achieved success and helped CubaCaribe grow. The organization has a strength and no matter what or who, the vision remains the same: to support incredibly talented and often underserved Caribbean artists create art and to unify our community.

Without a doubt, Cuba changed the trajectory of my life. My journey with Cuba has been immersive, it started the first moment I saw an Afro-Cuban dance class and continued when I first set foot on the island, to investigating and displaying my graduate thesis on Cuban dance, starting a non-profit organization, marrying and having children with a Cuban, studying and performing in Cuban dance companies, leading trips to Cuba, and making CubaCaribe my full-time job. My love of it continues to this day, 25 years later….

As CubaCaribe's co-founder and Executive Director, I have been honored to work with this amazing community for over two decades and I am sure that the organization will continue to showcase the powerful artists who are culture bearers and innovators in a society in which this art form is often undervalued and underrepresented.

I want to thank our former board president, Amy Draizen, a long-time volunteer and supporter who seamlessly took the reins, and our current board president, Mayra Padilla, who is a passionate powerhouse. Thank you to our other amazing board members, our audiences, volunteers, technicians, donors and funders who make this festival happen year after year.

To many more...Con amor xoxo Jamaica



CubaCaribe presents :

Mirando Atras, Moviendo pa'lante / Looking back, Moving forward April 10-12

ODC THEATER STAFF: Chris Chamberlin-Miner, Chloë L. Zimberg
Katya Ponomarenko, Ezra Howlett

PROGRAM

Honoree Ceremony : John Santos (Sunday/domingo)

Alafia Dance Ensemble

Cunamacué

Juntos (Saturday & Sunday/sábado y domingo)

Arenas Dance Company

Intermission / Intermisión

Los Lupeños De San José

Alayo Dance Company

Libete

Alafia Dance Ensemble , 2009

ARTISTIC DIRECTION, CHOREOGRAPHY: Mariella Morales

COSTUME DESIGN: Mariella Morales

DANCERS: Adrian Arredondo, Jennifer Baron, Gabriella Brito, Azaria George, Zaida MacMahon, Akilah McCullum, Angel Nalls, Hailey Robertson, Keli'i "Kaos" Salvador, Alexandria Wooden

MUSIC DIRECTOR: Baba Duru

MUSICIANS: Sebastian Aleman, Preston Justice, Satoko Nealy Miyoshi, Suzette Chaumette

PROGRAM NOTES:

Petwo (or Petro) lwa are a family of "hot," volatile, and fast-acting spirits in Haitian Vodou, often linked to the Congo region and the Haitian Revolution. Representing intense energy, they are characterized by their fierce, aggressive nature and are invoked for rapid results, protection, and revolutionary action.

Rhythms/Movements: Vodou

Mis Manos

Cunamacué, 2017

ARTISTIC DIRECTION & CHOREOGRAPHY: Carmen Roman in collaboration with the dancers

COSTUME DESIGN: Rose Harden

DANCERS: Carmen Roman, Gwen Benitez, Oliva Eng, Stephanie Bastos, Eyla Josie Moore

MUSIC DIRECTOR: Pierr Padilla

MUSICIANS: Pierr Padilla, Erick Peralta, Marina Lavalle, Alex Farrell, Alonzo Zapata

PROGRAM NOTES:

This piece was inspired by women's hands and the work they do.

Rhythms/Movements: Afro-Peruvian Festejo

Water & Fire

Juntos, 2026

ARTISTIC DIRECTION, CHOREOGRAPHY: Ramón Ramos Alayo
COSTUME DESIGN: Ramón Ramos Alayo
MUSIC DIRECTOR: n/a

DANCERS: Belén Pineda-Ramsey, Sophía Vega Tondre, Isabel Olivier, Cataleya Olivier, Kari Taylor, Lena Osterhold, Dante Ramos Suárez, Daniella Pérez Suárez, Amalea Zaina Itule Ramos
MUSIC: David Troy Francis and Codec & Trap Music Now
PROGRAM NOTES:

This choreography is based on the dancers' fluidity, representing the movements of the ocean, as well as the fire these children carry within them and their desire for a better world.
Rhythms/Movements: Afro-Cuban Modern

Ome iya madre ancestral

Arenas Dance Company, 2014 & 2026

ARTISTIC DIRECTION, CHOREOGRAPHY: Susana Arenas Pedroso
COSTUME DESIGN: Ramón Ramos Alayo, Deborah Valoma

DANCERS: Brisa Camacho-Lovell, Daniela Funes, Diana Aburto-Vega, Juliana Romano, Luz Mena, María José Calderón, Skarlet Irigoyen, Sriba Kwadjovie, Stella Adelman, Adetola Williams, Whitney Dawson, Ilana Andujar, Susana Arenas Pedroso, Francys Ramos
MUSIC DIRECTOR: Elizabeth Sayre
MUSICIANS: Jules Hilson, Elizabeth Sayre, Evan Gonzalez
PROGRAM NOTES:

This is a revision of Olomidara from 2014. This dance honors the Afro-Cuban Orisha Yemayá, great mother of the ocean in the tradition of Regla de Ocha. Revered as a universal mother and protector, she governs the seas and all life within them. The dancers embody the rhythm and power of the ocean—at times calm and nurturing, at others fierce and commanding. Flowing movements evoke rolling tides, while grounded steps reflect Yemayá's strength, wisdom, and steady presence. Gestures inspired by casting fishing nets move with the currents, reminding us that Yemayá, whose name means "Mother of Fish," is the source of the ocean's life and abundance.

Rhythms/Movements: Afro-Cuban Folkloric- Yemaya Oro, Afrikete

Pasion Jarocha

Los Lupeños de San José, 2016

ARTISTIC DIRECTION, CHOREOGRAPHY: A.D. Samuel Cortez Balderas, A.A.D. Steven Gastelum I Choreography: Samuel Cortez, Angel Ciro Silvestre Garcia

COSTUME DESIGN: Traditional costumes from Veracruz Mexico

DANCERS: Abigail C. Fernández Topete, Alex Steele, Aliyah Jimenez, Andrea Rocha Trejo, Angela Arvizu Szymusiak, Angélica Ramírez, Ashley Cisneros Ochoa, Ashley Romero, Carolina Meraz Garcia, Cesar Borrego, Christina Gil, Crystal Ortiz, Delia Rebeca Nájera Pando, Dominic Ortiz, Eduardo Zamora Castellanos, Erick Reyes, Evelyn Juarez, Ezekiel De la Rocha, Gabrielle Torrez, Izaya Kinney, Javier Arciga, Joaquin Yadieel Sagahon, Jonathan Ortiz, Karla Partida, Karina Castro Perezchica, Kelly Chu, Luna Medina-Gil, Mario Avalos, Michael Herrera, Montserrat Rocha Trejo, Norma Tellez, Sofia Anaya, Sonia Gomez Valdez, Steven Gastelum, Tristan Steele

MUSIC DIRECTOR: N/A

MUSIC: Danza de Negritos — Traditional music from the rural communities of Veracruz, México, La Bruja — Traditional Son Jarocho, Veracruz, México, El Zapateado Veracruzano — Traditional Son Jarocho, Veracruz, México, Nereidas (Danzón) — Composed by Amador Pérez Torres "Dimas," performed by Acerina y su Danzonera

PROGRAM NOTES:

Son Jarocho, born in the warm lowlands and vibrant port of Veracruz, is a radiant expression of Mexico's cultural fusion. Shaped by Indigenous, African, and Spanish roots, it carries the soul of a people who turned history into rhythm, poetry, and celebration.

In the port, it feels even more alive—bold, joyful, and full of fire. The bright strumming of the jarana, the lyrical requinto, and the soaring arpa weave together with improvised verses that sing of love, land, humor, and resilience. Veracruz, your music is not just tradition—it is heartbeat, memory, and movement. A living testament that with every new voice and every stomp of the feet, your spirit continues to rise.

Rhythms/Movements: Indigenous Dance, Sones Mestizos, Danzón

A Piece of White Cloth

Alayo Dance Company, 2004

ARTISTIC DIRECTION, CHOREOGRAPHY: Ramón Ramos Alayo

COSTUME DESIGN: Deborah Valoma

SEAMSTRESS: María Velasquez

DANCERS: Alain Amilicar Soto Aguilera, Delvis Savigne Friñon, Dominique Michelle Duo, Marco Palomino, Alejandro Perez, Julianna Cressman, Oscar Trujillo, Patricia West, Aja Randall, Hilary Davidson, Stephanie Emmanuela Da Silva, Risa Ofelia Diaz

MUSIC DIRECTOR: N/A

MUSIC: Soweto Community Hall, Amandla Group & Vusi, Mahlasela, Niki Reiser

PROGRAM NOTES:

Ramón Ramos Alayo's well-received choreography entitled A Piece of White Cloth weaves threads of modern, Afro-Cuban folkloric and African dance into a single, hybrid composition. This work traces-in reverse and without interruption-the continuity of Yoruba movement, memory and metaphor from its roots on the western coast of Africa, through Cuba, and into Bay Area contemporary dance. In A Piece of White Cloth, Ramos examines the nuanced cultural meanings of white cloth in Yoruba and Cuban culture. Sometimes called "spirit cloth" in Yoruba, simple cotton cloth is associated with purity, conception, healing, rainfall, milk, tears, saliva, semen, and watery spirit world. The most humble of all cloths, it nonetheless holds great transformative powers, and as such, is used in rituals including initiation ceremonies, marriages, and funerals. The spiritual force of white cloth to "heal bodies, placate spirits and metaphorically transcend the world of humans" is exemplified by this story described by Mary Kinsley in the 1890s in Nigeria: "An old blind slave was found in the bush and brought to the Mission (near Creek Town).... She was in a deplorable state.... but her whole mind was set upon one thing with a passion.... What she wanted was a bit, only a bit, of white cloth. The missionaries refused to give her the cloth as it was associated with indigenous religious practices. The old woman, however, kept on pleading and saying the spirit of her dead mistress kept coming to her asking and crying for white cloth, and white cloth she must get for her, and so at last, finding it was not to be got at the Mission station,

she stole away one day, unobserved, and wandered off into the bush, from which she never reappeared." The African concepts of plain white cloth were transported across the Atlantic with Yoruba peoples brought to Cuba in slavery. Though cultural continuity was severely disrupted under the devastating conditions of slavery, the philosophies of the motherland were tenaciously persevered on the mother island of Cuba. The worship of the Yoruba orishas flourished, veiled under a heavy mantle of Catholicism. Two deities in particular continue to manifest the meanings of the white cloth in Cuban culture: Obatalá, (meaning "king of the white cloth") is father of the orishas and all humanity. He is the source of all that is pure, wise, peaceful, ethical, moral, and compassionate. Obatala's color is white, and therefore, he favors white materials, including silver and white foods. Oyá, (meaning "she tore") is the goddess of wind, storms, rain, fertility, destruction and sudden transformation. Oya is queen of the spirit world; she is goddess of funeral processions and cemeteries and intermediary to the ancestors. When she dances, Oya swings a horsetail. For Ramos, white cloth-with its complex meanings and associations-is a metaphor for the cultural lineage that was torn and frayed, and yet not lost on the long journey from Africa to Cuba to the United States. Along the path of his ancestors and during his personal migration from Cuba to the Bay Area, he has dragged the white cloth wound around his body and has woven ancestral memories into his modern choreographic vision. ~Deborah Valoma

Rhythms/Movements: Afro-Cuban Modern



Photo by Andy Mogg

CubaCaribe presents :

Enraizando April 17-18

COMPANY NAME: Aguacero Featuring the Enraizar Crew, 2026

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR &PRODUCTION: Shefali Shah

PRODUCTION MANAGER: Chi Chi Okonmah

BAYVIEW OPERA HOUSE PRODUCTION: David Saenz

LIGHTING DESIGNER: Daniel Weiermann

COSTUME DESIGN: Shefali Shah, Maria Gonzalez & Enraizar Crew

FILM WORK: Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi

MUSICAL DIRECTOR: Ayla Dávila

MUSICAL CONSULTANT, COMPOSITION & ARRANGEMENTS: Héctor Lugo

MC & SPOKEN WORD: Yairamaren Maldonado

MUSICIANS: Roman Carrillo, Shefali Shah, Héctor Lugo, Ayla Dávila, Ali Luna, Forooza Baradar, Jo-Annie Seda, Marina Romani, Eileen C.V Skorman, Mari Luna, Jade Power Sotomayor, Maritxell Carrero, Enraizar Crew

ENRAIZAR CREW: Serafina Morales Mackintosh, Dulari de León McCalla, Iselah Pabón Ramos, Liris Robles, Nayeli Corado Seda, Naya Pedelaborde Hernández, Ximena Montes

GUEST ARTISTS: Jade Power Sotomayor, Maritxell Carrero, Mari Luna, Rico Pabón, Jennifer Pedelaborde, Poetry Interventions: Serafina Morales Mackintosh, Dulari de León, McCalla, Nayeli Corado Seda, Yairamaren Maldonado

PROGRAM NOTES:

Founded in 2024 by Shefali Shah, ENRAIZAR is a project that creates space for young women of color to explore and share their journeys into womanhood through the Afro-Puerto Rican music and dance tradition of Bomba. Through workshops, performances, and community gatherings, participants use movement, percussion, song, poetry, and improvisation to tell stories about transition, identity, and belonging.

As women we are often forced early on to ignore or hide the

more vulnerable parts of our stories in order to endure a world that dispossesses us of our essence through patriarchal and racist violence. ENRAIZAR challenges this reality by cultivating a space where vulnerability becomes a source of strength, reflection, and transformation. By connecting with past and present female ancestors, participants root themselves in lineage while imagining the futures they wish to create. Through Bomba dance, choreography, music, and storytelling, young women of color claim the power to write their own narratives—and to become future ancestors on their own terms. ENRAIZAR builds legacy by rooting within ourselves. Website: www.aguacerobomba.org

Rooted in resistance and anti-colonialism, Bomba is Puerto Rico's oldest living music and dance tradition. With origins in Puerto Rico's sugar plantations over 400 years ago where enslaved people from Africa and the Caribbean were brought to work under harsh conditions, Bomba became a common language, medicine to emotionally escape oppression, and a way to plan escapes from the plantations through song codes.

PROGRAM

Opening Procession
Aguacero
El Batey Que Nos Dejaron
Nadie Va A Llorar
La Corona Tiene Sombra
Fuego En Mi Alma

Intermission / Intermisión

Dímelo
Ya Sale El Sol
Yo Soy Cimarrona (Cimarron, Cimarrona)
Enraizando
Bombatey

Opening Procession: Preparando Suelo

COMPOSITION AND ARRANGEMENT: Liris Robles, Nayeli Corado Seda, and Ayla Dávila

Aguacero

CHOREOGRAPHY: Shefali Shah

COMPOSITION AND ARRANGEMENT: Héctor Lugo

DANCERS: Nayeli Corado Seda, Dulari de León-McCalla, Iselah Pabón Ramos, Naya Pedelaborde Hernández, Liris Robles, Ximena Montes, Serafina Morales Mackintosh

MUSICIANS: Aguacero

LEAD VOCALS: Héctor Lugo

BOMBA RHYTHMS: Sicá

El Batey Que Nos Dejaron

CHOREOGRAPHY: Jade Power Sotomayor

POETRY & COMPOSITION: Jade Power Sotomayor

ARRANGEMENT & ADDITIONAL COMPOSITION: Héctor Lugo and Ayla Dávila

DANCERS: Nayeli Corado Seda, Iselah Pabón Ramos, Naya Pedelaborde Hernández, Liris Robles

MUSICIANS: Aguacero and Enraizar Crew

LEAD VOCALS: Héctor Lugo

SPOKEN WORD PERFORMANCE: Jade Power Sotomayor and Serafina Morales Mackintosh

BOMBA RHYTHMS: Cuembé, Yubá

Nadie Va a Llorar

CHOREOGRAPHY: Iselah Pabón Ramos

COMPOSITION, ARRANGEMENT AND POETRY: Rico Pabón

DANCERS: Iselah Pabón Ramos, Nayeli Corado Seda, Naya Pedelaborde Hernández, Ximena Montes, Serafina Morales

Mackintosh

MUSICIANS: Aguacero and Enraizar Crew

LEAD VOCALS: Rico Pabón

SPOKEN WORD PERFORMANCE: Iselah Pabón Ramos and Rico Pabón

BOMBA RHYTHMS: Yubá Cuarteado, Yubá

La Corona Tiene Sombra (Saliste Sola)

POETRY: Liris Robles and Nayeli Corado Seda

CHOREOGRAPHY: Liris Robles and Shefali Shah

COMPOSITION: Shefali Shah and the Enraizar Crew With special song support from Cecilia Peña- Govea

ARRANGEMENT: Ayla Dávila, Héctor Lugo and Shefali Shah

DANCERS: Liris Robles, Serafina Morales Mackintosh, Iselah Pabón Ramos, Naya Pedelaborde Hernández

MUSICIANS: Aguacero and Enraizar Crew

LEAD VOCALS: Shefali Shah

SPOKEN WORD PERFORMANCE: Nayeli Corado Seda

BOMBA RHYTHMS: Hoyomula, Holandés, Cuembé

Fuego en mi Alma (Interlude)

CHOREOGRAPHY: Shefali Shah

ARRANGEMENT: Héctor Lugo

DANCERS: Liris Robles, Serafina Morales Mackintosh, Iselah Pabón Ramos, Dulari de León-McCalla, Ximena Montes, Naya Pedelaborde Hernández, Nayeli Corado Seda, Jade Power Sotomayor, Shefali Shah

MUSICIANS: Aguacero

BOMBA RHYTHMS: Seis Corrido

INTERMISSION / INTERMISIÓN

Dímelo

CHOREOGRAPHY: Shefali Shah, Jo-Annie Seda, Nayeli Corado, Jennifer Pedelaborde, Naya Pedelaborde Hernandez, Iselah Pabón Ramos

COMPOSITION: Shefali Shah, Maritxell Carrero

ARRANGEMENT: Ayla Dávila, Héctor Lugo and Shefali Shah

DANCERS: Iselah Pabón Ramos, Nayeli Corado Seda, Naya Pedelaborde Hernández, Jo-Annie Seda, Shefali Shah, Jennifer Pedelaborde, Jade Power Sotomayor

MUSICIANS: Aguacero and Enraizar Crew

LEAD VOCALS: Maritxell Carrero

POETRY AND SPOKEN WORD: Nayeli Corado Seda, Iselah Pabón Ramos, Naya Pedelaborde Hernández

BOMBA RHYTHMS: Sicá

Ya Sale el Sol

CHOREOGRAPHY, COMPOSITION, ARRANGEMENT: Maritxell Carrero

ADDITIONAL ARRANGEMENT: Héctor Lugo, Ayla Dávila

DANCERS: Maritxell Carrero, Nayeli Corado Seda, Serafina Morales Mackintosh, Liris Robles, Iselah Pabón Ramos

LEAD VOCALS, SPOKEN WORD & POETRY: Maritxell Carrero

MUSICIANS: Aguacero and Enraizar Crew

BOMBA RHYTHMS: Hoyomula, Holandés Mayagüez, Cuembé

Yo Soy Cimarrona (Cimarron, Cimarrona)

CHOREOGRAPHY: Shefali Shah, Naya Pedelaborde, Iselah Pabón Ramos

COMPOSITION & ARRANGEMENT: Kily Vializ (Mayagüez, Puerto Rico), Ayla Dávila and Héctor Lugo

DANCERS: Serafina Morales Mackintosh, Iselah Pabón Ramos, Naya Pedelaborde Hernández , Liris Robles, Dulari de León-McCalla, Ximena Montes

LEAD VOCALS: Héctor Lugo and Nayeli Corado Seda

MUSICIANS: Aguacero and Enraizar Crew

BOMBA RHYTHMS: Corvé, Yubá

Enraizando

COMPOSITION: Liris Robles, Nayeli Corado Seda, Enraziar Crew

ARRANGEMENT: Liris Robles, Nayeli Corado, Ayla Dávila and Héctor Lugo

LEAD VOCALS: Liris Robles and Nayeli Corado

MUSICIANS: Liris Robles (Guitar), Nayeli Corado Seda (Keyboard), Ximena Montes (Trumpet and Vocals), Ayla Dávila (Bass), Héctor Lugo (Percussion), Roman Carrillo (Percussion), Ali Luna (Percussion), Background Vocals: Aguacero and the Enraizar Crew

Bombatey (La Brega)

DANCERS AND MUSICIANS: Full Cast

COMPOSITION: Shefali Shah

ARRANGEMENT: Héctor Lugo, Shefali Shah

NOTES: Bombatey closes Enraizando in celebration—an homage to the gathering we know as the Bombazo, where community becomes rhythm and memory finds its voice. Here, practitioners of Bomba drum, sing, and dance together, weaving stories of who we have been and who we continue to become. In each step and beat lives an act of self-determination, a refusal of the labels that claim we are unworthy. Bombatey is our reflection—vivid, proud, and unmistakably ours. And through it we share, without apology or restraint, the living, breathing truth of what it means to be Puerto Rican.

BOMBA RHYTHMS: Holandés, Sicá



More information on Enraizar project & to Donate:







Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi

Special Events: www.cubacaribe.org/2026

Multi-media presentation by John Santos: De un Pájaro las dos Alas (Two Wings of the Same Bird): The Parallel Colonial Histories that Unite the Music of Cuba and Puerto Rico.

Wednesday, April 8, 7-9pm at Museum Of African Diaspora 685 Mission St, SF

The distinct musical traditions of Cuba and Puerto Rico are joined at the hip for good reason. Their shared colonial experience of genocide, slavery and US intervention created a similar foundation for musical resistance and self-expression that resulted in iconic, internationally renowned musical forms such as Salsa and Latin Jazz as well as lesser known forms. $20 advance / $25 door. MoAD members get $5 off

CubaCaribe 2026 Honoree: John Santos

Sunday April 12, 4pm at ODC Theater 3153 17th St, SF

CubaCaribe pays tribute to the community contributions of John Santos. Entrance included in ODC show ticket.

Master Dance Classes

Saturday, April 11, 11:00am-12:30pm: Afro-Cuban Modern w/ Marco Palomino- all levels at ODC Theater 3153 17th St, SF

Sunday, April 12, 11:00am-12:30pm: Afro-Cuban Folkloric w/ Francy Ramos- all levels at ODC Theater 3153 17th St, SF

Each class is $15 advance / $25 at door. No refunds.

Ritmo, Palabra y Movimiento: Una Peña

Wednesday, April 15, 7-9:30pm at CANA: Casa De Carnaval, 683 Florida St, SF

An artistic community gathering & celebration. Showcase & Dance party with DJ Leydis. Homemade Cuban food & drinks available for purchase at the event. $20 advance / $28 door

Photo exhibit Rooting Within: Connecting roots from the Bay Area to Borikén by Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi

Friday, April 17, 5:30pm at Bay View Opera House, 4705 3rd St, SF

Opening night: April 17 with artist. Exhibit will run April 17- May 31st. Documents photographer Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi's journey alongside Shefali Shah and the Enraizar Crew—a process of rooting inward through cultural memory, ancestral connection, and the building of sisterhood, voice, and solidarity. Centered on young women of color, the project unfolds through workshops, performances, communal gatherings and the journey of these young women to the island of Puerto Rico guided by the music and dance of Bomba. Entrance included in Enraizando show ticket.

Bombatey

Sunday April 19, 2:30-6:30pm at La Peña Cultural Center, 3105 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley

A community gathering/Jam where dancers, singers, and drummers gather to celebrate Puerto Rican music and dance culture and tradition. This Batey event will start with an Artist panel & film screening featuring Shefali Shah and artists and collaborators of the Enraizar/Rooting Within project. $15 advance / $25 at door



Tom Ehrlich

DANCE COMPANY BIOS : WEEKEND 1:

Alayo Dance Company/Ramón Ramos Alayo was founded by Ramón Ramos Alayo in 2002 and is currently the resident company of CubaCaribe. The Company has performed throughout the San Francisco Bay Area at venues such as Theater Artaud, Brava Theater, YBCA, ODC Theater, Dance Mission Theater, Herbst Theater, Laney Theater, Sonoma Country Wine Theater, and La Peña Cultural Center, and have presented work in the Black Choreographer's Festival, The CubaCaribe Festival, and Intersection's Culture and Flow, Trolley Dances and more. Alayo Dance Company was featured in "Dance Across America," published in National Geographic Magazine (2006). It was one of the first American companies to perform at the Festival del Caribe at Teatro Martí in Santiago de Cuba in 2010 and then partnered with Dance Brigade in July 2011 to perform in Havana's Teatro Mella in Cuba. Alayo Dance Company also performed at the Diana Wortham Theatre in Asheville, North Carolina in 2014. Alayo's recent full-length work, Mouth of A Shark, premiered and sold out in 2023 with previews in the SF Chronicle, San Jose Mercury News and more.

Artistic director **Ramón Ramos Alayo** was selected by the Cuban government to study dance in Santiago de Cuba at age eleven. In 1990 he earned a masters degree in contemporary and folkloric dance and dance education from the Havana's National School of Art. A graduate of Havana's National School of Art, specializing in folkloric and contemporary dance. He was a principal dancer with several prominent Cuban dance companies, including Danza del Caribe, Narcisco Medina Contemporary Dance Company, touring throughout Europe, Belize, and Canada. His success continued after relocating to the U.S. in 1997; he has performed as a dancer with numerous outstanding companies, including Robert Henry Johnson, Kim Epifano, Sara Shelton Mann, Zaccho Dance Theatre and Robert Moses' Kin. Ramon currently teaches Cuban popular dance, Afro-Cuban modern dance and children's movement at several local dance studios and schools. His work is an innovative fusion of Afro-Cuban modern, folkloric and popular Cuban Dance, having choreographed and produced fourteen full length dance performances. He has received the prestigious Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation Emerging Choreographer's Award, was recognized as "Best Dance Dynamo" by the SF Bay Guardian, was the recipient of a SF Bay Guardian Goldie Award, and has been hailed by dance critic Rita Felciano as "the best Afro-Cuban dancer whose choreography stands well beyond traditional modes." He was an Isadora Duncan Dance Award Nominee, 2006, 2009, 2019, 2023. His piece Goodbye was named one of the best premieres in 2016 in Dance Europe Magazine. He is a dancer, teacher, choreographer, founder and artistic director.

Los Lupeños de San José / Samuel Cortez Balderas Established in 1969, is a trailblazer among Mexican folk dance companies in the U.S., committed to preserving and enriching the vibrant tapestry of Mexican culture through the art of dance. Guided by core values of artistry, education, and performance, Los Lupeños not only showcases the captivating beauty of traditional dances but also empowers individuals through accessible educational opportunities, nurturing a profound understanding and pride in Mexican heritage. Their vision is to inspire audiences worldwide, celebrating the dynamic and evolving spirit of Mexican folk culture.

Artistic Director **Samuel Cortez** is a prominent Mexican dance artist known for his contributions to folklórico dance in the U.S. He is an immigrant born in Guanajuato, México, where he started dancing as a child. Cortez has led and mentored several dance companies across the United States over the past three decades and his dedication to the arts has been recognized with numerous awards, including a recent Izzie Award for his remarkable work with Los Lupeños de San José.

Alafia Dance Ensemble/Mariella Morales was founded in 1993 by Valerie Watson, ADE was based out of the City College of San Francisco (CCSF) dance program. Watson was affiliated with CCSF for over 45 years, where she studied Haitian dance as a student. This is the company's 8th appearance in the CubaCaribe Festival. We are thrilled to participate in the 20th celebration.

Artistic Director **Mariella Morales** is a San Francisco native began her love for dances of the African Diaspora due to her attendance at San Francisco School of the Arts (SOTA), where she was introduced to Dunham Technique and African Haitian dance. Ms. Morales' academic credentials are: a B.A. in Dance from San Francisco State University (SFSU) in 2007; and an M.S. in Kinesiology from SFSU in 2012. Mariella became a Certified Dunham Technique Instructor in 2013. Ms. Morales has studied directly with Miss Katherine Dunham. She attended the annual Katherine Dunham Seminar in East St. Louis from 1999-2011. In 2000 & 2002, she was awarded scholarships to participate in the New York City Board Of Education Dance Institute, based on the Katherine Dunham Model. She also studied with Jean Leon Destine, a great dancer, choreographer, and historian, who was also considered as a national treasure of Haitian culture and the "father" of professional Haitian dance. In 2004, Mariella received a full scholarship to

attend the Cultural Traditions Program at Jacob's Pillow under the direction of Jean Leon Destine. In 2010 and 2011, Ms. Morales traveled to Salvador, Bahia, Brazil for a month-long dance intensive with Rosangela Sylvestre, choreographer, dancer, instructor and creator of the Sylvestre Dance Technique and Augusto Omolu, master of Orixa dances from the African Brazilian traditions of Condomble. Her teaching credits are: City College of San Francisco, Chabot College Hayward, Destiny Arts, San Francisco Arts Education Project, Marsh Theater, University of San Francisco, San Francisco Unified School District. During a visit to Brazil in 2010, the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) and Escola de Danca da Fundacao Cultural do Estado de Bahia invited Ms. Morales, as a guest instructor in Dunham Technique.

Arenas Dance Company/Susana Arenas Pedroso was started in 2004 as an all-female ensemble that has developed an expertise in folkloric and popular Cuban rhythms and traditions. Their mission is to promote the rich and diverse Cuban folkloric and popular dance traditions from the percussive Arara, to the sensual Rumba, to the energetic Palo making it accessible to wide audiences via performances and classes. Arenas has performed at venues such as Dance Mission Theater, the Palace of Fine Arts, Yerba Buena, Herbst Theater, Stanford University, the University of California at Berkeley and Davis, Chico State, Laney College Theater, The Great American Music Hall, and La Peña Cultural Center. Performances to note are: Yo Soy Cuba (2005,2006); Dos Aguas, which received an award for Best Choreography from the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival; A Night in Havana (2013); She Who Is Queen / Ada Ara (2022); Raices et Resistance (2024) and Mis Raices Profundas (2025). Arenas Dance Company has also participated in the Black Choreographer's Festival, the CubaCaribe Festival, Salsa Rueda Festival, Yemanja Festival, Collages de Africaines, Stanford Jazz Festival and San José Jazz Festival.

Artistic director **Susana Arenas Pedroso** was born and raised in Havana, Cuba. Pedroso began her career in dance at age twelve, studying at La Casa de Cultura de Matanzas and at Cojunto Folklorico Nacional in Havana. She danced professionally for seventeen years in Cuba with popular, folkloric and theatrical performing groups, including Tierra Virgen, Alafia Ire, Oche Olorun, Oriki, Clave y Guaguancó, Oba Wemilere, Rumberos de Cuba, and Raíces Profundas. Since her arrival in the United States in 1998, Ms Pedroso has performed and choreographed numerous pieces that have been exhibited throughout the United States, Austria, Mexico, Morocco, Martinique, Cuba and Hong Kong with companies such as Omo Ache, Omo Oddara, Ban Rarrá, Ire Ile, Alayo Dance Company, Las Que Son Son

and Obini Ashe. She has also taught both Afro-Cuban folklore and Cuban popular dances in regular classes, workshops and lecture demonstrations in dance schools and cultural institutions such as Dance Mission, Brasarte, The Beat Berkeley Performing Arts, the Music and Dance departments at the University of California in Berkeley and Davis, California State University at Hayward and Chico, and in Santa Cruz. In 1999 Ms Pedroso founded her own dance companies, Sandunga Cubana, which specialized in Cuban Popular dance, and Olorun, which specialized in Cuban Folkloric dance. In 2004 Ms Pedroso decided to join the two troupes, establishing Arenas Dance Company, an all-female ensemble that has developed an expertise in folkloric and popular Cuban rhythms and traditions.

Cunamacué/Carmen Roman is an Oakland-based Afro-Peruvian performing arts organization founded in 2010 to produce, present, and preserve Afro-Peruvian cultural traditions as living, evolving art forms. Through original choreography, live music, festivals, film, and community-based education, Cunamacué amplifies the history, cultural knowledge, and contemporary voices of African descendants from Peru. Rooted in Afro-Peruvian dance, Cunamacué's movement vocabulary draws from modern dance and other African Diasporic forms to explore themes of ancestry, resilience, and belonging. We are committed to equitable access to high-quality arts experiences and provide free or low cost programs for communities of color, youth, and adults, across the San Francisco Bay Area.

Artistic director **Carmen Roman** is a dancer, choreographer, educator, filmmaker, scholar, and the founding artistic director of Cunamacué, a dance company which promotes the continuity of Afro-Peruvian culture. Raised both in Lima, Peru, and in the San Francisco Bay Area her work is deeply rooted in Afro-Peruvian dance vocabulary and also uses movements inspired by other dances of the African Diaspora and modern dance. Her article, "The Danced Spirituality of African Descendants in Peru", was published in a special edition of the African Performance Review (2013). In 2015-2016 Carmen was awarded a U.S. Fulbright Fellowship in Dance to Peru to research Afro-Peruvian dance through practice, performance, and observation. Her dance documentary "Herencia de Un Pueblo (Inheriting a Legacy)" shot in El Carmen, Peru, was awarded Best Documentary and Best Cinematography at the San Francisco Dance Film Festival (2016) and has screened in various cities across the U.S. and internationally in England, Tanzania, and Canada. In 2018 she was part of NYFA's Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program. In 2019 she was awarded the Mythili Kumar Emerging Artist Award and was commissioned to create new work for the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival. Carmen has been teaching dance for over

ten years to children and adults in the Bay Area and in rural communities in El Salvador and Peru. She holds a B.A. in Dance from San Francisco State University and an MFA in Dance from Mills College.

Juntos is a Cuban youth ensemble that originated from CubaCaribe's Moving Juntos class series that integrates various forms of Cuban dance, music, history and storytelling. Year round classes are taught by local artists with expertise in Afro-Cuban dance and music forms and traditions. The classes are a way for master artists and elders to pass down cultural traditions, knowledge and connections through dance, movement, music, and oral history and strengthen cultural communications between generations. Teachers/choreographers include Susana Arenas Pedroso, Ramón Ramos Alayo, Denmis Bain Savigne, Javier Navarrette, Yoel Mulen, Kelly Takunda Orphan and more. Juntos has performed at Carnaval SF, The 2nd Annual San Lazaro Festival and The CubaCaribe Festival.

DANCE COMPANY BIOS : WEEKEND 2

Aguacero/ Shefali Shah is a Bay Area–based artistic and cultural collective dedicated to the traditions of Puerto Rican Bomba music and dance. Named after the sudden tropical downpour that refreshes and transforms the landscape, Aguacero reflects the powerful and healing spirit of Bomba. Founded in 2006, the collective brings together dancers, musicians, poets, and songwriters who study, perform, and create original work rooted in Puerto Rican and Caribbean folkloric traditions and the teachings of their maestros and ancestors. Aguacero has performed widely throughout California at festivals, universities, and cultural institutions including the Oakland Museum of California, UC Berkeley, Sonoma State University, and Humboldt State University, and was featured at the BomPlenazo Festival in New York in 2016.

Artistic director **Shefali Shah** is a dance instructor, singer, songwriter, choreographer, and education consultant. She is the co-director of the Bay Area Bomba y Plena Workshop at La Peña Cultural Center. She is the founder and artistic director of performance ensemble Aguacero, the youth ensemble Quenepas and is a principal dancer with La Mixta Criolla. For over 25 years Shefali has dedicated herself to the study, practice, and education of Puerto Rican Bomba music and dance. She has taught at universities in Northern and Southern California, New York and Puerto Rico. She trained extensively and performed with members of the legendary Cepeda Family

at “Maestros de Bomba en la Bahía,” an event that she co-founded and co-produced, featuring master drummers and dancers from Puerto Rico. She has performed at the SF Ethnic Festival Dance, the Annual Cuba Caribe Festival (2013, 2015, 2016) , the 2016 BomPlenazo in NYC, and West Wave Dance Festival. She co-produced “Maestros de Plena y Bomba en la Bahia,” featuring Los Pleneros de la 21 and Alma Moyo. In 2017 Shefali was Awarded the Alliance for California Traditional Arts Master Apprentice grant to mentor and teach apprentice Melody Gonzalez from Los Angeles California. Under her and Hector Lugo’s direction, the Quenepas Youth Ensemble opened for La Santa Cecilia at the Brava Theatre in San Francisco in 2011. In 2017, Quenepas’ Puerto Rico educational tour culminated in a performance at the world renown “Fiestas de la Calle San Sebastian” where they opened for La Sonora Ponceña. Shefali, was one of four leaders of the 2019 9th annual “Encuentro de Tambores” in Cataño, Puerto Rico, dancing and singing with the Diaspora Delegation. In December 2023, Shefali was invited as a guest artist to sing and dance at Tamboricua’s 25th anniversary in Puerto Rico. Through her teaching, music, dance and education, Shefali supports community healing and creativity to give way to cultural work that resists socio-political barriers and oppression.

Musical director **Ayla Dávila** is a bassist, composer, and multi-instrumentalist from Berkeley, California. Raised in a musical household, Ayla started playing traditional Guatemalan and folkloric Mexican music as a young child. Around age 11, Ayla found her voice in the bass, which remains her primary instrument. She graduated from the Berklee College of Music with a degree in Film Scoring and Bass Performance. She returned to the SF Bay Area in 2002, where she has had the opportunity to work with many of the area’s most talented and distinguished musicians in a variety of musical styles, with an emphasis on Latin music. Ayla has worked with many notable artists, including Omar Sosa, Alex Cuba, Jerry Rivera, Los Pleneros de la 21, Albita, Jimmy Bosch, Alfredo de la Fé, Ricardo Lemvo, Maldita Vecindad, Mono Blanco, and locals Jesus Diaz y su QBA, Bobi Cespedes, Anthony Blea, Dr. Loco, La Doña, and many others. She is currently a member of La Mixta Criolla, Aguacero, Bululú, Team Bahia, The Pedro Pastrana Trio and La Moderna Tradición, among others. Ayla has worked as musical director for dance productions with La Mezcla and Davalos Dance Company, and is thrilled to bring over 30 years of experience as a performer, composer, arranger, teacher, studio musician, and musical director to this production

Héctor Lugo is a percussionist, singer, songwriter, and educator. Born in Puerto Rico, he grew up immersed in the creole musical culture of the Island. He has recorded with a wide range of artists and performed nationally and internationally with numerous Latin, jazz, and Afro-

Caribbean music ensembles. He is the founder and director of Latin Roots band La Mixta Criolla. His compositions and arrangements are featured in the acclaimed compilation Salsa de La Bahía (vol. 2), in the documentary film Dolores about the life and work of Dolores Huertas, and in La Mixta Criolla's album AfroTaino. One of the pioneers of the Bomba movement in California, Héctor co-founded The Bay Area Bomba y Plena Workshop in 2000, and is a founding member of Bomba ensembles Cacike y Kongo and Aguacero. He has collaborated in the design and implementation of music and arts integration programs with SFJAZZ, the San Francisco Symphony, Oakland Public Conservatory of Music, San Francisco Community Music Center, Oakland Youth Chorus, and several other arts organizations. Presently he is a teaching-artist with Sfjazz and Living Jazz. Héctor is also a youth baseball coach and a passionate cook specializing in, of course, comida criolla puertorriqueña!

Enraizar Crew:

Serafina Morales Mackintosh is a mixed Puerto Rican Junior at Maybeck High School, who has been studying Bomba since she was eight years old. Serafina, a three time Oakland Youth Poet Laureate finalist and a competitive rower, is so honored to be in Enraizar. She has learned so much and has found a deep confidence in herself through working with Shefali and doing Bomba with other passionate young women.

Dulari de León-McCalla is a mixed Afro Puerto Rican and Caribbean sophomore in high school. She has been dancing Bomba since she was 8. She enjoys sports like surfing, soccer, and basketball. She also loves dogs. Through the process of Enraizar, she has learned to let her potential shine through.

Iselah Pabón Ramos is a determined and ambitious Boricua from Oakland, CA. She is a sophomore at De Anza High who has been dancing Bomba since before she could walk. As well as being a proud member of Enraizar, Iselah is in her 3rd year of dancing with Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company. Being a part of Enraizar has deepened her connection with her island, her people, and her ancestors. This project has made her grow as a dancer, person, and as a true Boricua.

Ximena Montes is a Mexican Iranian Junior who attends Berkeley High. She started her Bomba journey at 2 years old with Shefali Shah and Hector Lugo in a youth group called Quenepas. When she's not dancing, she enjoys playing trumpet in the jazz program at her school and watching terrible TV. Through Enraizar, she has found deep friendships and is so thankful to be a part of this production.

Naya Julimar Pedelaborde Hernández is a biracial Nicaragüense and European American artist raised in the Bay Area and a graduate of El Cerrito High School. She danced Bomba as a young child and returned to the Afro-Puerto Rican drum and dance tradition this past year through Enraizar, deepening her connection to culture, rhythm, and community. She has trained and performed for four years with Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company and is honored to grow alongside such powerful young women.

Liris Robles is an artist, musician, and actress rooted in Puerto Rican and Jewish heritage. She is currently a student at Laney Community College, an acrobatics teacher, and a world traveler, most recently spending two months volunteering on organic farms in New Zealand. Since the age of eight, Liris has studied and practiced Bomba under the mentorship of Shefali Shah, visionary and lead director of Enraizando. In 2017, she had the privilege of performing at the Festival de la Calle San Sebastián in Puerto Rico with the Bomba group Quenepas under the guidance and direction of Shefali Shah and Hector Lugo. In 2018, she was invited as an individual artist to perform and create an original piece for "Yo Cantaré" at La Peña Cultural Center. Liris is deeply grateful to have been invited to participate in the beautiful project of Enraizar. Creating, dancing, singing, and playing Bomba with this incredible group of artists and humans has been an honor and a joy.

Nayeli Corado Seda is a Puerto Rican-Salvadoran attending UC Berkeley with a double major in Psychology and Music. In her free time she enjoys crocheting, playing electric bass, singing with her competitive acapella group, and going to concerts. She grew up singing and playing bomba but never learned how to dance which is a skill she's always wanted to work on. This project has taught her the importance of putting yourself out there no matter how embarrassed you feel in order to create a safe space for others.

SHEFALI ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: I walk on the footprints of my ancestors y todos los que caminaron antes que nosotros. I dedicate Enraizando to my late father Dilip J Shah who rooted himself in Puerto Rico in the 60's and called no other place home. To my mother Purnima, who with Dilip, built our home in Borikén. My birthplace and ancestry became one in me and your migration story carries my song and dance. Saleem, my partner in love and life. You have believed in me and worked with me from day one and continue to encourage my dreams and fuel my creative spirit. Thank you for walking this path with us. Amari, my biggest love and motivation, you are powerful and your dreams guide me to stay focused on what matters. Yaira, gracias por siempre creer en mí. Tu brillante y excepcional trabajo nutre mi fuego creativo. Infinitamente agradecida por todo lo que has dado. Eli, you are a magician behind that lens and have brought so much beauty and heart to this project. I am eternally grateful for all that you have created and given to Enraizar. Ayla and Hector, thank you for consistently leveling up the quality of our music. Your creativity, skill, work and vision continues to challenge and inspire me.

Ito, maestro querido. Tu constante apoyo, presencia, maestría y dedicación siguen guiando mi camino. No hay suficientes. Mi familia de Aguacero, thank you for dancing this path with me. I love us, our team work and what we create together. Sigamos creando conciencia con nuestro canto. Jade y Maritxell grandiosas mujeres, que honor colaborar con ustedes. Gracias por crear conmigo y dar tanto a Enraizar. Sus piezas son huellas y legado. Jamaica, thank you for believing in me, adding fuel to my fire and creating a space for Enraizando. Working with you has been truly a privilege. My Enraizar Crew, you mean the world to me. The last 2 years with you have fed my creative spirit and soul. You continue to teach me resilience, joy, connection, determination, and discipline. Your smiles and laughter in our space is life. I feel whole around you. Thank you for trusting me. Sigamos caminando y enraizando confiando que nos tenemos.

SPECIAL EVENT ARTIST BIOS

John Santos is a master percussionist, internationally renowned seven-time Grammy nominee, composer, producer, bandleader, educator and cultural activist. He is a keeper of the Afro-Caribbean flame steeped in Cuban and Puerto Rican folkloric traditions as well as salsa and Latin jazz. A 2012 San Francisco Latino Heritage Arts Awardee, born and raised in San Francisco's Mission District amidst an extended family of Puerto Rican musicians, he's been at the center of the Bay Area's Latin music scene for over five decades. He has written, recorded and published well over 100 original compositions. He served on the Smithsonian Institution's Latin Jazz Advisory Committee, was SFJAZZ Resident Artistic Director (2013 and 2014) and has played an essential role in expanding Latin jazz's rhythmic lexicon beyond the foundational Cuban grooves. He has produced a steady stream of critically acclaimed, peer-respected recordings on his Machete Records label since 1984 and has traveled the world as a performer, teacher and lecturer since the mid-eighties. He was founder and director (1985-2006) of the internationally renowned, Grammy-nominated Machete Ensemble, and currently directs the Cubadisco-nominated, John Santos Sextet. The documentary film, Santos: Skin to Skin about his life's work, premiered at SFJAZZ, the Mill Valley Film Festival, and Cinefest in Puerto Rico in the Fall of 2023.

Francy Ramos is a dancer and teacher who was born in Havana, Cuba, to a family of inspirational artists. She was trained by her father, Juan de Dios Ramos, and Concepcion Delgado (concha), both founders of the Conjunto Folklorico Nacional de Cuba. She began working at the company Raíces Profundas at the age of 13, where she trained as a dancer, a soloist, and was also the company's assistant director. Francys was also part of major rumba groups in Cuba such as Yoruba Andabo and Rumberos de Cuba. In her role as a teacher, she strives to convey a legible dance style and traditionalism.

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 Nuñes, Jacob Jonas, Pontus Lidberg, Micaela Taylor, Javier de Frutos, Norge Cedeño, Jorge Cresis, 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 and teaching in the festival.

Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi is an internationally-recognized and award-winning filmmaker. He is the founder of FistUpTv, a non-extractive media platform uplifting and telling stories from underrepresented communities worldwide. His work has circulated through National Broadcast: Free Speech TV, Teaching Channel, and PBS. Online he has created content for remezcla, okayafrica, TIDAL, and VIBE. Known for the award-winning documentaries, We Still Here / Nos Tenemos and Bakosó Afrobeats of Cuba, Eli is currently curating his 17th Annual Fist Up Film Festival. His dedication to his craft is deeply connected to his commitment to social justice and the belief in the transformative power of storytelling.

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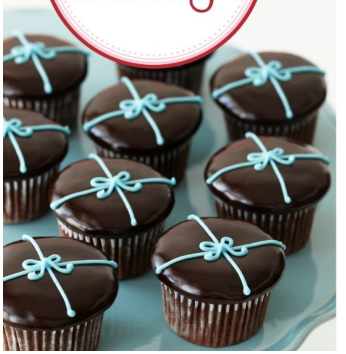



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