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CUBA CARIBE FESTIVAL

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Pictured: Arenas Dance Company; Photo by Tom Erlich

16th Annual CubaCaribe Festival of Dance & Music
featuring the World Premiere of *She Who Is Queen/Ada Ara*
Directed and choreographed by Susana Arenas Pedroso
Featuring Arenas Dance Company and live music by TeamBahia
ZSpace Theater in San Francisco, June 8-12, 2022
For tickets and information: <https://www.cubacaribe.org/upcoming-festivals>

April 12, 2022- SAN FRANCISCO - CubaCaribe today announced its 16th Annual Festival of Dance & Music featuring a world premiere work choreographed and directed by Susana Arenas Pedroso and performed by Arenas Dance Company, entitled *She Who is Queen/Ada Ara*, focussing on the complex role of women in society and especially the role of Cuban women. The piece explores, through dance, music and spoken word that the world cannot be without women, their work, wisdom and hearts. It will pay homage to women ancestors who have fought for Cuba on different fronts and to the female orishas who offer rich visions of womanhood in Cuba. **Performances are Friday, June 10 and Saturday, June 11 at 8pm, and Sunday, June 12 at 2pm, at Z Space Theater in San Francisco. Tickets, \$30, are available at <https://www.cubacaribe.org/2022> For more information, <https://www.cubacaribe.org/>.**

VIDEO TEASER

She Who Is Queen/Ada Ara is inspired by the tale Ada Ara (which translates to “she who is queen” in Yoruba from Nigeria) in which Ochún, the youngest of the Yoruba deities and the goddess of female sexuality and sensuality, takes away the crown of King Changó, god of male sexuality, after he dismisses her. Her conditions for returning his crown are his respect, admiration and equality.

“*She Who is Queen/Ada Ara* delves into the complex role of Cuban women today in both Cuba and in the United States, underlining the physical, artistic and intellectual contributions they make to society,” explains Executive Director and Co-Founder, Jamaica Itule Simmons. “Although much of their work is not recognized, women often carry the weight—literally and metaphorically—of their communities and their countries.”

“There are strong gender stereotypes embedded in Cuban culture and it can be difficult for women to break away from their expected roles of mothers, sisters, daughters, wives, lovers, and caretakers,” says Pedroso, who draws from her specialty in Afro-Cuban folkloric sacred dance, ceremonial and folklore Yoruba traditions brought by West African enslaved men and women to Cuba and other countries during the Spanish Empire. These traditions are part of the religious practice Regla de Ochá or Santería, which is melded with Roman Catholicism. The form combines Spanish and African folk dance traditions in ritualistic performances that convey the cultural deities of Cuba’s rich mythological history. *She Who is Queen* will also include secular Cuban popular dance forms such as the rumba, which grew out of urban Havana in the late 1800s as an expression of the underclass.

The dancers of Arenas Dance Company are Diana Aburto, Stella Adelman, Ilana Andujar, Brisa Camacho-Lovell, Jessica Decker, Mysha Harden, Tiffani Jarnigan, Casey Kettering, Sriba Kwadjovie, Clara Martínez, Luz Mena, Juliana Romano, Tola Williams, Mitzi Ulloa, and Deborah Valoma, with featured soloists Susana Arenas Pedroso, Joshua Barbosa and Isabel Estrada-Jamison.

Live music is will be performed by Michaelle Goerlitz, Jules Hilson, Mena Ramos and Elizabeth Sayre (music director) on baterías and percussion; singers (coro) Wanda Kruda, Ambar McZeal, Karen Smith; Amikaeyla Gaston on arpon; and vocal soloists Christelle Durandy and Sulkary Valverde.

LINK TO ARTIST BIOS: <https://www.cubacaribe.org/2022>

SPECIAL EVENT: VOZ FEMININA

June 8 at 6:00pm

Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD)

685 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94105

Tickets and more information, <https://www.cubacaribe.org/2022>

A reception, talk, and musical celebration featuring Yenisel Valdés and Suklary Valverde and members of TeamBahia. These two incredibly talented Cuban women vocalists will use their powerful voices to both speak and sing. They will share their experiences as Cuban women living in Cuba and the U.S. and sing with six members of the talented musical group TeamBahia. There will be space for dancing and cocktails will be served.

ABOUT CUBACARIBE

CubaCaribe was co-founded in 2003 by visual artist/dancer Jamaica Itule and dancer/choreographer Ramón Ramos Alayo on the principle that dance, music and visual art have the power to unite people of diverse perspectives, and in order to tap into the large talent pool represented by the significant community of Cuban and Caribbean artists who live and practice in the Bay Area. CubaCaribe fosters greater understanding and appreciation of Caribbean arts and culture.

Since its inception, the organization has become widely known for the diversity and quality of its programming, and its deep roots in the Diasporic community under Artistic Director Ramos's leadership.

CubaCaribe projects include: The Annual CubaCaribe Festival of Dance and Music; resident dance company, Alayo Dance Company (featuring Ramos Alayo's innovative fusion of Afro-Cuban modern, folkloric and popular Cuba dance); CubaCamp, offering adult campers an intensive four days of Caribbean dance and music classes; Dance intensive trips to Cuba and Explosión Cubana Una Noche Tropical (Cuban cabaret dinner show).

ABOUT SUSANA ARENAS PEDROSO AND ARENAS DANCE COMPANY

Choreographer and Director Susana Arenas Pedroso was born and raised in Havana, Cuba and began her career in dance at age twelve, studying at La Casa de Cultura de Matanzas and at Conjunto Folklórico 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, 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 Pedroso founded her own dance companies, Sandunga Cubana, which specialized in Cuban Popular dance, and Olorun, which specialized in Cuban Folkloric dance. In 2004 she joined the two troupes, establishing Arenas Dance Company, an all-female ensemble that has developed an expertise in folkloric and popular Cuban rhythms and traditions. Arenas Dance

Company 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.

In 2005 Arenas Dance Company produced the evening length show *Yo Soy Cuba (I am Cuba)* in San Francisco, which was sold-out at all four performances. By popular demand the music and dance extravaganza was remounted in 2006 for four encore performances. One of the show's featured dancers, José Barroso, received an Isadora Duncan Dance Award for his performance in the 2006 production. Other celebrated works include *Dos Aguas*, which received an award for Best Choreography from the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, and *A Night in Havana*, a sold-out performance presented to an audience of 5000 in Modesto, California in 2013.

Arenas Dance Company has been an enthusiastic participant in regular community events such as the Black Choreographers Festival, the CubaCaribe Festival, Salsa Rueda Festival, Yemanjá Festival, Stanford Jazz Festival and San José Jazz Festival.

ABOUT TEAMBAHIA

Singer Yeni Valdés is from Pinar del Rio, Cuba. At age four she had already started in the amateur movement and was almost always awarded at provincial festivals. Valdés graduated in 1990 from the (EPIA) Provincial School of Arts Instructors in the specialty of choral conducting. Her inclination for music was always within the variants of the song. She became part of the Sello LA orchestra and the PG Group, formed by the maestro José Luis Cortés. She was the first woman vocalist member of two of the most famous and longest-running bands in Cuba, first with NG La Banda and later with Los Van Van 2001-2017. She has been nominated for six Latin and one American Grammys. Valdés currently lives and works in the San Francisco Bay area.

Musical Director Erick Barberia is a Cuban dancer, singer and percussionist. He graduated from the Escuela Nacional de Artes (ENA) in Havana, Cuba in 1999. He began his professional career in the Artistic Community Company, Korimakao as a dancer, drummer and actor. He also became a master teacher of dancing, singing and Afro-Cuban percussion in both the ENA and the Escuela Internacional de las Artes (CENCEA) in Havana.

Barberia has been influenced by his father Luis Barberia, current singer of the famous orchestra Jorrin Creators of Rhythm Cha Cha Cha. In the U.S. Barberia has had the pleasure of playing and recording music with many musical greats, such as El gran Sonero Fito Reinoso y su Ritmo y Armonía, master guitarist Freddy Clarke and his Wobbly World, bassist Victor Little, master percussionist John Santos, Latin Jazz master Art Jackson, P23, former percussionist of the group Afrocuban de Matanzas Sandy Perez, master flutist John Calloway, and Lazaro Pedroso, scholar of the song and elder of the Yoruba-Lukumí tradition in Havana, Cuba. In 2006, Barberia recorded with the great Chucho Valdes, creator of Irakere, and with Chucho's sister, Mayra Caridad Valdes. He teaches classes in local dance studios, schools and gives private classes.

In his spiritual practice, Barberia is crowned Omo Eleggua, Awo Orunmila, and Olubata. He comes from the Afro-Cuban Yoruba family of the highly respected and wise Babalawo Papo Angarica Oshelogbe (Awo Ifanire), son of the late Chief Nicolas Valentín Angarica (Oba Tola). Barberia is Omo Ala Aña (Son of the Drums secrets), consecrated in the tambor Bata Fundamento (Aña Bi) on one of the oldest sets of Tambores Bata (Bata drums) that exists today in Cuba.

This project is funded in part by the Gerbode Foundation Dance Composition Award.
CubaCaribe is funded in part by the San Francisco Grants for The Arts, California Arts Council,
The Fleishhacker Foundation, The Walter & Elise Haas Fund, Zellerbach Family Foundation,
Alliance for California Traditional Arts

TICKETS: <https://www.cubacaribe.org/2022>

MORE INFORMATION: <https://www.cubacaribe.org/>

CUBA CARIBE FESTIVAL

“The annual CubaCaribe Festival...has long served as an essential showcase for Cuban culture, advancing the always cogent argument that music and dance are often inextricably linked. Rather than seeing Cuba in isolation, the festival takes a wide-angle view, presenting the nation as the linchpin of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora via presentations exploring religion, history, politics and cultural expression.” - *San Jose Mercury News*

CALENDAR LISTING

Dance, Theater, Music, Performing Arts

- WHAT:** **16th Annual CubaCaribe Festival of Dance & Music featuring *She Who is Queen/Ada Ara* (World Premiere)**
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Arenas Dance Company: Diana Aburto, Stella Adelman, Ilana Andujar, Brisa Camacho-Lovell, Jessica Decker, Mysha Harden, Tiffani Jarnigan, Casey Kettering, Sriba Kwadjovie, Clara Martínez, Luz Mena, Juliana Romano, Tola Williams, Mitzi Ulloa, and Deborah Valoma
Featured soloists: Susana Arenas Pedroso, Joshua Barbosa and Isabel Estrada-Jamison
Live Music Performed by Michaelle Goerlitz, Jules Hilson, Mena Ramos, and Elizabeth Sayre (music director) on batallas and percussion; singers (coro) Wanda Kruda, Ambar McZeal, Karen Smith; Amikaeyla Gaston on arpon; and vocal soloists Christelle Durandy and Sulkary Valverde
- WHERE:** Z Space
450 Florida Street (at 17th Street), San Francisco, CA 94110
- WHEN:** Friday, June 10 at 8pm
Saturday, June 11 at 8pm
Sunday, June 12 at 2pm
- HOW MUCH:** \$30
- TICKETS:** <https://www.cubacaribe.org/2022>
- SPECIAL EVENT:** Voz Feminina
A reception, talk, and musical celebration featuring Yenisel Valdés and Sulkary Valverde and members of TeamBahia.
Wednesday June 8 at 6pm
Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD), 685 Mission St, SF, CA 94105
Tickets, \$30, available at <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/5418983>
- MORE:** <https://www.cubacaribe.org/>

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