PAUL S. FLORES
WE HAVE IRÉ
Our organization was founded in 1993 as a citizen institution that would be home to the diverse local arts community while serving to connect the Bay Area to the world. YBCA’s mission is to generate culture that moves people. We believe that culture—a collection of art, traditions, values, human experiences, and stories—is what enables us to act with imagination and creativity, to act socially, politically, and with conviction. Culture instigates change in the world.

We believe that more and different kinds of people need to be defining culture today and that more people need to have access to cultural experiences that are relevant to their lives and their communities. We need new definitions and new experiences that bring people together regardless of their differences in order to make the inclusive and equitable culture we need today. We believe that the arts should be on the front line of change and that cultural institutions exist to spur and support big societal movements. Through powerful art experiences, thoughtful and provocative content, and deep opportunities for participation, we are committed to kindling inclusive culture that cultivates empathy, awakens personal and societal transformation, and reaches for a world fueled by inspiration. The need has never been stronger than now, and there is no better place than YBCA to answer the call. We are so glad that you are here. We are grateful for your cultural participation, and we hope you will come back and enjoy all that YBCA has to offer.

Warmly,

DEBORAH CULLINAN
CEO of YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS
Artistic Statement by Paul S. Flores

Iré is Lucumí (Yoruba) for the good fortune we experience when our lives are in balance. We are blessed with positive energy when we are in tune with nature, when we are fulfilling our purpose, when we are spiritually in line with our destiny. This takes practice and work to maintain. The opposite of iré is osogbo, or the difficulty one encounters when life is unbalanced and off track with one’s destiny.

Lucumí is the practice of Yoruban (African) language and spiritual traditions in Cuba. If you spend time in the Cuban community in the San Francisco Bay Area, you will undoubtedly hear songs celebrating Yoruban orishas like Yemayá (goddess of the ocean) and Oshun (goddess of fertility and the river). Some of the most talented Cuban musicians and dancers in the world live, practice, and perform in San Francisco. Yet many have never publicly told their stories of how they became artists, or how they arrived in the United States. I wanted to tell true stories of Afro-Cuban immigrant artists and celebrate their lives. With the support of Marc Bamuthi Joseph, former Chief of Program and Pedagogy at YBCA, I invited talented Cuban musicians and dancers to create a musical theater project in San Francisco. Yet many have never publicly told their stories of how they became artists, or how they arrived in the United States. I wanted to tell true stories of Afro-Cuban immigrant artists and celebrate their lives. With the support of Marc Bamuthi Joseph, former Chief of Program and Pedagogy at YBCA, I invited talented Cuban musicians and dancers to create a musical theater project in San Francisco. Yet many have never publicly told their stories of how they became artists, or how they arrived in the United States. I wanted to tell true stories of Afro-Cuban immigrant artists and celebrate their lives. With the support of Marc Bamuthi Joseph, former Chief of Program and Pedagogy at YBCA, I invited talented Cuban musicians and dancers to create a musical theater project exploring transnational Cuban artists.

We Have Iré is also my personal story about my connection to Cuba, where my family is from. On my research trips there, I collaborated with documentary filmmaker Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi to record our interviews and adventures in Santiago, Camaguey, and La Habana. We Have Iré is a multimedia musical theater project that benefits from the expertise, accomplishment, and iré of all the collaborators. The strength of the work stems from this unique ensemble of artists from different disciplines.

Latinx theater is growing in the United States. However, Black Latínx experiences are still not represented equally on stage. It’s true there are not many Afro-Latínx actors and playwrights living in the Bay Area, and even fewer who act, sing, and dance. So I invited dancer Ramón Ramos to tell his own story. He has never acted before. Now his premiere performance will be acting out his own life on stage.

In fact, all the characters you see tonight represent the four principal artists, including myself. You will be witnessing our true stories. We have brought in two actors to play DJ Leydis and Yosvany as alter egos Nené and Jony. Lucky for us, we are being directed by the best. Rosalba Rolón of Pregones Theater has been directing successful bilingual musical theater in New York, Puerto Rico, and all over the world for forty years. There was no one else I could work with to achieve this experimental bilingual combination of theater, spoken word, live jazz, hip-hop, dance, and film.

We are blessed in the Bay Area to be surrounded by so many Cuban artists and experience the joy that reverberates when they share their rich traditions. ¡Aché! to all the ancestors who walk with us and continue to bless us with iré.
RAMÓN RAMOS ALAYO

Ramón Ramos Alayo (Monchi) is a dancer, teacher, and choreographer, and the founder and artistic director of Alayo Dance Company and CubaCaribe. As the principal dancer with Danza del Caribe and Narciso Medina Contemporary Dance Company, he has performed in Cuba, Europe, Canada, Belize, and the United States. Since moving to California he has performed with Robert Henry Johnson, Kim Epifano, Sara Shelton Mann, Joanna Haigood/Zaccho Dance, and Robert Moses’ Kin.

DENNIS BAIN SAVIGNE

Dennis Bain Savigne (Jony) is originally from Santiago de Cuba. He has expertise in Afro-Cuban dance, folklore, ballet, jazz, modern dance, contemporary ballet, hip-hop, and singing. He is a principal dancer for Havana Nights Dance Company, and has choreographed for Kenny Ortega, Siegfried and Roy, Emilio Estefan, Manuel Mendive, Havana Nights Dance Company, and the Latin Grammys. He owns the Cuban Rhythm and Rumba dance studio in Vallejo, California.

YOSVANY TERRY

Since his arrival in New York in 1999, Cuban saxophonist, percussionist, and composer Yosvany Terry has been making a difference in contemporary music with his innovative work, a unique confluence of Cuban roots music and jazz. He recently received the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival commission for the suite Noches de Parranda and the Harlem Stage commission to write the music for the opera Makandal.

ROSA ROLÓN

Rosalba Rolón is artistic director at Pregones + Puerto Rican Traveling Theater, a New York company focused on original musical theater and plays rooted in Puerto Rican/Latino cultures. With Pregones she has toured to more than five hundred US cities and eighteen countries. Favoring the art of stage adaptation in ensemble settings, her work includes Harlem Hellsfighters on a Latin Beat, Dancing in My Cockroach Killers, and The Red Rose, among others.

ELI JACOBS-FANTAUZZI

Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi is an award-winning filmmaker and currently directs FistUp TV, a production company that documents people’s stories from around the world as a way to expand community awareness around social responsibility and cultural identity. His work has circulated through Free Speech TV, the Teaching Channel, PBS, and Vibe magazine. His dedication to his craft is deeply connected to his commitment to social justice and belief in the transformative power of film.

DJ LEYDIS

Born and raised in Cuba, DJ Leydis combines contemporary hits with a distinct fusion of Latin flavors, R&B classics, and roots reggae. She was involved in the inception of the Cuban hip-hop movement, and has organized some of Cuba’s most respected events and programs. She co-founded Omegas Kilay, a Havana-based hip-hop theater collective, and co-created Cuba’s first all-female DJ mixtape. She has worked with Erykah Badu, Questlove of the Roots, and other iconic US artists.

CHRISTIN EVE CATO

Christin Eve Cato (Nené) is a native New Yorker with a background in performing arts and production. Currently pursuing an MFA in playwriting at Indiana University, she is a graduate of Fordham University and Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and the Performing Arts. Cato is affiliated with the New York theater companies Pregones/PRTT (ensemble member), INTAR Theatre (UNIT 52 ensemble member), and the hip-hop theater company Rhymes Over Beats (producing member).

PAUL S. FLORES

Shaped by his experiences growing up near the Mexican border, Paul S. Flores (Christian) creates plays and oral narratives that touch on the complexities of the immigrant story and spur societal movements. Flores’ last play, On the Hill: I Am Alex Nieto, brought together San Francisco communities divided by gentrification and police violence. He performed for the first time in Cuba in 2001, and has presented multiple times in Havana, Mexico, and El Salvador.

ARTIST PROFILES
THANK YOU TO YBCA CONTRIBUTORS!
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