



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Presents the Premiere of Paul S. Flores's *We Have Iré*

A new and timely multidisciplinary bilingual performance celebrating the lives of Afro-Cuban artists in the United States, featuring Grammy-nominated artist Yosvany Terry; DJ Leydis, the first Afro-Cuban female DJ to play at the White House; and award-winning dancer and choreographer Ramón Ramos Alayo



Playwright Paul S. Flores (left) with hip-hop artist DJ Leydis (center), and dancer and choreographer Ramón Ramos Alayo (right).
Photo courtesy Tommy Lau

**Friday and Saturday, May 10–11, 2019 | 7:30pm
Sunday, May 12, 2019 | 2pm matinee
YBCA Forum, 701 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA**

SAN FRANCISCO (March 21, 2019)—[Yerba Buena Center for the Arts \(YBCA\)](#) is pleased to present the world premiere of [We Have Iré](#), a multidisciplinary theater work created by award-winning poet, performance artist, and playwright **Paul S. Flores**. In this bilingual performance combining spoken word, dance, and live music, Grammy-nominated artist **Yosvany Terry**; award-winning dancer and choreographer **Ramón Ramos Alayo**; DJ **Leydis**, the first Afro-Cuban female DJ to play at the White House; and Youth Speaks cofounder **Flores** use their respective art forms to tell their real-life stories of finding success in the United States through hard work and *iré*, the Lucumí condition of being blessed with positive energy.

Directed by **Rosalba Rolón** of Pregones Theater and commissioned by YBCA, *We Have Iré* speaks to the challenges of being an immigrant artist and celebrates the triumph of establishing one's voice in a new country. *We Have Iré* is performed in English and Spanish, and debuts on **Friday and Saturday, May 10–11, 2019, at 7:30pm, with a 2pm matinee on Sunday, May 12, 2019**, as part of YBCA's spring performances.

"*We Have Iré* celebrates Cuban immigrants, giving them space to tell their stories on their own terms through dance, music and theater," remarks **Flores**. "I chose to set the play in a club called Que Rico, Aseré! (meaning 'It's good to be Cuban, my friend') to highlight the joy Cubans bring to all whenever they get together to share their talents. *We Have Iré* also focuses on the nuances of Latinx identity, including Afro-Cuban, by breaking down stereotypes and revealing the complexities of being Black, immigrant, female, and bilingual. The artists in *We Have Iré* are well known in the Bay Area and have accomplished a high level of excellence in the United States, Cuba, and abroad. This is a chance to know their personal stories of how they became who they are today, what they risked, and how they are inspired to stay connected to their homeland while living between two countries."

Shaped by Flores's research into his own roots and interviews with collaborators, the performance profiles Terry, whose unique confluence of Cuban roots music and jazz "has helped redefine Latin jazz as a complex new idiom" (*New York Times*); DJ Leydis, who helped establish a thriving scene in Havana's spoken-word and hip-hop underground and garnered U.S. attention long before she arrived stateside in 2006; and dancer, teacher, and choreographer Ramos Alayo, who founded the Alayo Dance Company and CubaCaribe and has performed with some of the most respected choreographers in the Bay Area, including Robert Henry Johnson, Kim Epifano, Sara Shelton Mann, Joanna Haigood/Zaccho Dance, and Robert Moses' Kin. The play also features video footage from filmmaker **Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi**, who documented Flores's research process throughout.

In *We Have Iré*, the cast of characters gather to party, dance, and play music while sharing stories about their traditions, their lives in Cuba, and their individual journeys from Cuba to the United States and back. Flores's deeply personal dive into themes of transnationality and citizenship is supplemented by traditional Yoruba songs and dance from Alayo, live Cuban jazz from Terry, Latinx hip-hop and timba beats from DJ Leydis, and bilingual spoken word to underscore the virtuosity of Afro-Cuban and Cuban American artists.

TICKET INFORMATION

General Admission: \$25 advance, \$30 at the door

Military, Senior, Student, and/or Teacher: \$22.50 advance, \$27 at the door

YBCA members at Individual level and above: \$20 advance, \$24 at the door

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Thursday, May 2, 6–8:30pm, at YBCA Forum

Cuban Happy Hour Social Mixer & Meet the Cast | Free with RSVP

Join us as we kick off *We Have Iré* with Paul S. Flores and his upcoming world premiere with a fun evening of music, conversation, and cocktails with cast members and Afro-Cuban artists, educators, and performers active in the Bay Area performance scene. Facilitated by award-winning filmmaker Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi and co-hosted by CubaCaribe, the evening will feature a conversation with renowned dancer and choreographer Ramón Ramos Alayo, Cuban folkloric and popular dancer Susana Arenas, and prolific DJ in the clubs and onstage DJ Leydis. Come early for happy hour music with DJ Jigüe, direct from Cuba, starting at 6pm, and specialty Cuban cocktails.

Saturday, May 11, 11am–2pm, at YBCA Forum

50 Cent Tabernacle | Free

Co-hosted by CubaCaribe, 50 Cent Tabernacle is a series of open, mixed-level dance classes led by some of the Bay Area's foremost masters of the craft. They believe in making art accessible, and for just 50 cents, participants can attend as many classes as they like. Each Tabernacle is shaped around different types of dance and movement, so there's something for everybody. This tabernacle will explore the depths of Cuba's diverse dance styles with three one-hour dance classes taught by Ramón Ramos Alayo (rueda/casino/modern), Susana Arenas (Afro-Cuban folkloric), and Yismari Ramos (salsa), with music by DJ Leydis and DJ Jigüe. Come ready to move on the dance floor!

Saturday, May 11, 3:30pm, at YBCA Forum

Celebrating *We Have Iré*: Conversation with Yosvany Terry | Free

Grammy-nominated jazz musician and composer Yosvany Terry discusses his process of composing dynamic jazz music for theater projects, including *We Have Iré*. Terry comes from a gifted musical family in Cuba, and his musical range spans Latin jazz, Afro-Cuban folkloric, classical, post bebop, and more. Find out how he integrates these musical languages with performed narratives for the stage.

Saturday, May 11, 5:30pm, at YBCA Screening Room

Visual Expressions of Afro-Cuban Culture with Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi | Free with RSVP

Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi presents excerpts from his new film *Bakosó: AfroBeats of Cuba* as well as short documentaries and music videos he created in Cuba. This exploration of digital storytelling and Afro-Cuban musical traditions in a contemporary context will open up to broader conversations on transnational solidarity, race, technology, religion, and media.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Paul S. Flores's deep dive into themes of transnationality and citizenship comes at a crucial time in contemporary history. Flores creates plays and oral narratives that spur and support

societal movements that lead to change. Flores's last play, *On the Hill: I Am Alex Nieto* brought together San Francisco communities divided by gentrification and police violence. Flores's ability to paint a vivid picture of bicultural Latino experience is shaped by his personal background growing up near the Mexican border. He began presenting spoken word as a founding member of Youth Speaks and Los Delicados in 1996. He performed for the first time in Cuba in 2001 while working at La Peña Cultural Center, and has since presented multiple times in Havana, Mexico, and El Salvador. His comprehensive body of work touches on the immigrant story in all its complexities, from the violent—forced migration, gang life, war, incarceration, separated families—to intergenerational relationships and the struggle to preserve cultural values. Flores's newest play, *Pilgrim Street*, premiered in 2018 at Z Space in San Francisco. Flores is an adjunct professor of theater at the University of San Francisco.

Rosalba Rolón is artistic director of Pregones + Puerto Rican Traveling Theater in New York, a company focused on the creation and performance of original musical theater and plays rooted in Puerto Rican and Latino cultures. She is a director and dramaturg and favors the art of stage adaptation in ensemble settings, working from non-dramatic texts. With Pregones Theater she has toured more than five hundred U.S. cities and eighteen countries. Her work includes *The Harlem Hellfighters on a Latin Beat*, *Dancing in My Cockroach Killers*, and *The Red Rose*, among numerous others. Rolón received the prestigious Doris Duke Artist Award in 2018 and a Creative Capital Award in 2019, and was recently appointed to serve on the Tony Awards nominating committee. In 2015 she received the Teer Pioneer Award from National Black Theatre. She is a United States Artists Fellow and board member, a board member of the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures, and a member of the advisory committee of the NYC Cultural Affairs Cultural Plan.

Since his arrival in New York in 1999, Cuban saxophonist, percussionist, and composer **Yosvany Terry** has been making a difference in contemporary music. His innovative work, a unique confluence of Cuban roots music and jazz, "has helped redefine Latin jazz as a complex new idiom" (*New York Times*). Among the recent commissions he has received as a composer are the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival commission for the suite *Noches de Parranda* for twelve-piece ensemble with the support of MAP Fund, and the Harlem Stage commission to write the music for the opera *Makandal*. Yosvany received the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors/New York State Music Fund's grant for *Yedégbé*, a suite of Arará music.

Ramón Ramos Alayo is a dancer, teacher, choreographer, and the founder and artistic director of the Alayo Dance Company and CubaCaribe. He was selected by the Cuban government to study dance in Santiago de Cuba at age eleven, which led him to earn a master's degree in contemporary and folkloric dance and dance education from Havana's National School of Art. He was the principal dancer with Danza del Caribe, Narciso Medina Contemporary Dance Company, and has performed in Cuba, Europe, Canada, Belize, and the United States. Since moving to California he has performed with some of the most respected choreographers in the Bay Area, including Robert Henry Johnson, Kim Epifano, Sara Shelton Mann, Joanna Haigood/Zaccho Dance, and Robert Moses' Kin. Ramos currently teaches Cuban popular dance, Afro-Cuban modern dance, and children's movement at several local dance studios and schools.

Born and raised in Cuba, **DJ Leydis** combines contemporary hits with a distinct fusion of Latin flavors, R&B classics, and roots-reggae blends. Involved in the Cuban hip-hop movement since

its inception, DJ Leydis helped organize some of the country's most respected and well-attended events and community programs. In 2005, she cofounded Omegas Kilay, a hip-hop theater collective in Havana focused on presenting the poetry, music, experiences, and perspectives of artists such as DJ Yari, Danay Suarez, Nono, La LLave De IPG, La Negra, and Las Krudas. DJ Leydis co-created the first all-female DJ mixtape in Cuba, contributing a special blend of new flavor and spirit to the international community. In 2006, DJ Leydis migrated to United States and has since worked with Erykah Badu, Quest Love of the Roots, and other iconic U.S.-based artists.

Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi is graduate of UC Berkeley and holds an MA degree from NYU Tisch School of the Arts. He 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 issues of social responsibility and cultural identity. His work has circulated through Free Speech TV, the Teaching Channel, PBS, and *Vibe* magazine. He is a cofounder of Defend Puerto Rico, a multimedia project designed to document and celebrate Puerto Rican creativity, resilience, and resistance. He curates the Annual Fist Up Film Festival in the Bay Area. His dedication to his craft is deeply connected to his commitment to social justice and belief in the transformative power of film.

ABOUT THE CURATORS

Isabel T. Yrigoyen is director of programming at YBCA. She produces its annual performing arts season, which in recent editions has showcased ten to fifteen theater, dance, music, and interdisciplinary performances by local, national, and international artists. In her previous role as associate director of performing arts, she co-designed and implemented Transform, YBCA's signature performance festival, a two-week celebration of the power of ideas through transformative performance. Yrigoyen has acted as a contributing music curator for YBCA's Performing Arts department, curating creative music and innovative groundbreaking artists in all genres. Her curatorial practice is driven by an interest in bridging musical traditions with contemporary performance practice, with an emphasis on women composers, experimentalists, and artists in social practice. In addition, Yrigoyen oversees and directs the Community Performance Rental program as a YBCA representative, booking and overseeing more than 160 contracted performances for a wide array of Bay Area nonprofit arts organizations who present dance, theater, and music on YBCA's stages. She currently serves on the board of directors of California Presenters, a statewide organization committed to advancing professional touring and presenting performing arts for all the people of California.

Marc Bamuthi Joseph is vice president and artistic director of social impact at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, a 2017 TED Global Fellow, an inaugural recipient of the Guggenheim Social Practice initiative, and an honoree of the United States Artists Rockefeller Fellowship. He is also the winner of the 2011 Herb Alpert Award in Theatre and an inaugural recipient of the Doris Duke Performing Artist Award. In pursuit of affirmations of black life in the public realm, he cofounded the Life Is Living Festival for Youth Speaks, and created the installation *Black Joy in the Hour of Chaos* for Creative Time. Joseph's opera libretto *We Shall Not Be Moved* was named one of 2017's Best Classical Music Performances by the *New York Times*. His evening-length work */peh-LO-tah/* was commissioned by the Kennedy Center, and was presented at BAM's Harvey Theater as a part

of the 2017 Next Wave Festival. His latest piece, *The Just and the Blind*, investigates the crisis of over-sentencing in the prison industrial complex, and will premiere at Carnegie Hall in March 2019. He lives with his wife and two teenagers in Oakland, and formerly served as YBCA's chief of program and pedagogy.

CREDITS

We Have Iré is coproduced by Pregones Theater in New York, and presented in collaboration with CubaCaribe.

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ABOUT YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA) is one of the nation's most innovative contemporary arts centers. Founded in 1993, YBCA's mission is to generate culture that moves people. Through powerful art experiences, thoughtful and provocative content, and deep opportunities for participation, YBCA is committed to creating an inclusive culture that awakens personal and societal transformation. YBCA presents a wide variety of programming year-round, including performing arts, visual arts, and civic engagement. For tickets and information, call 415.978.ARTS (2787). For more information, visit ybca.org.

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