

# THE PEOPLE'S PALACE

A PERFORMANCE INSTALLATION



**Thursday, Friday & Sunday  
May 9, 10 & 12, 2024  
8:00 - 10:30 PM**

**San Francisco City Hall  
1 Dr Carlton B Goodlett Pl.**



**dancersgroup**

**ZACCHO**  
DANCE THEATRE



# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that we occupy the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone peoples, who are the original inhabitants of the San Francisco Peninsula. As the indigenous protectors of this land and in accordance with their traditions, the Ramaytush Ohlone have never ceded, lost, nor forgotten their responsibilities as the caretakers of this place, as well as for all peoples who reside in their traditional territory. We recognize our duty to honor the Ramaytush Ohlone through thoughtful and informed stewardship of ancestral land and as uninvited guests, we affirm their sovereign rights as First Peoples and pay our respects to the Ancestors, Elders, and Relatives of the Ramaytush Ohlone Community.





Presented by Dancers' Group  
& Zaccho Dance Theatre

# THE PEOPLE'S PALACE

A PERFORMANCE INSTALLATION

This performance is dedicated to Robert Henry Johnson, the visionary and bright star. We are grateful for the gifts he's left us and for the presence of his guiding spirit during this process.

**Conceived & Directed by** Joanna Haigood  
In collaboration with

**Composer:** Marcus Shelby

**Visual Artist:** Mildred Howard

**Scenic Designer:** Sean Riley

**Rigging Designer/Lead Rigger:** David Freitag

**Design Consultant & Fabricator:** Wayne Campbell

**Lighting Designer:** Krissy Kenny

**Projection Designer:** Aron Altmark

**Costume Designer:** Dana Kawano

**Indigenous Culture Bearers:** Gregg Castro & Jonathan Cordero

**Assistant to Artistic Director:** Afiya "Fi." Shani Williams

## **Performing Artists:**

Veronica Blair

Tristan Ching Hartmann

Ciarra D'Onofrio

William Brewton Fowler, Jr.

Jocelyn Reyes

Nina Sawant

Saharla Vetsch

**The Skywatchers Ensemble:** Joel Yates, Anne Bluethenthal, Shavonne Allen, Nazelah Jamison, Shakiri, Sarah Morrisette, Shanan Noya Liu, Chassity Gantt, Dot Com, Lauren Swiger, Noelle Castro, Maurice Hudson, Regi Meadows

## **Marcus Shelby Quartet:**

Darren Johnston (trumpet/vocal)

Destiny Muhammad (harp/vocal)

Marcus Shelby (bass/kalimba)

Phil Vieux (alto saxophone/flute)

**Production Manager:** Krystal Harfert

**Stage Manager:** Slater Penney

**Rehearsal Assistant:** Clare Whistler

**Rigging Crew:** Andrew Castle, Benaiah Seilen

**Stagehands:** Scott Cameron, Caelan Barbour,

Jennings McKown

**Lighting Programmer:** Mitchell Jakubka



**Projection Team:** James Bong, Ryan Luse, Cody Samson

**Videographer:** Bryan Gibel

**Publicist:** Mary Carbonara

**Haptic Access Tour and Audio Description:**  
Chibueze Crouch of Gravity Access Services

The Cameo images seen in this performance are sourced from the Opulence Portraits photographed by Deidre Visser, Nano Visser, and the Skywatchers Ensemble; redesigned by Mildred Howard; and rendered by Magnolia Editions of Oakland.





# FUNDERS

**HEWLETT 50**  
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*The People's Palace* has also been generously supported by our individual community of donors, including:

Afiya Williams, Amanda Moran,  
Amy Wyatt, Anonymous, Catharine Simmons,  
Diane Corsick, Eva Paterson,  
Frances N Phillips,  
Gaby Herrera Stern, Janet Visick,  
Jen Norris, Karen Schiller,  
Liz Zivic, Mercy Sidbury

# HEWLETT 50 ARTS COMMISSION

Dancers' Group and Joanna Haigood are a recipient of the [Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions](https://www.hewlett.org/50Commissions), launched in 2017 to celebrate the foundation's 50th anniversary. It is a five-year, \$8 million initiative supporting the creation and premiere of 50 new works from outstanding artists working in five performing arts disciplines. The largest commissioning effort of its kind in the country, the initiative is a symbol of the Hewlett Foundation's longstanding commitment to supporting art that matters to the people and communities of the San Francisco Bay Area. The Hewlett Foundation has supported the arts in the region for more than 50 years, and currently makes grants of roughly \$20 million per year to more than 200 nonprofit arts organizations, mostly in the form of long-term general operating support. More information about the Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions can be found at: [hewlett.org/50Commissions](https://www.hewlett.org/50Commissions).



## WITH GRATITUDE

Mayor London Breed, Tyra Fennell, Ralph Remington, San Francisco Arts Commission, Samantha Carroll, Rob Reiter, Masoud Vafaei, John C. Sprinkle, Burt Hirshfeld, Matt Hansen, Jennifer Johnston, Douglas Legg, Andrico Panick, Tyler Lawson and Morris Shaffer, Engineering, Tallulah Terryll, Magnolia Editions of Oakland, Ellen Shumer, Dr. Robert Cherney, Dr. Jeffrey Tillman, Brad Coley, Wendy Vanden Heuvel, Melorra Green, Walter Kitundu, Irene Gustafson, Charlie Formenty, Maurya Kerr, Ellen Sebastian Chang, Shakiri, Aimée Ts'ao, Dazaun Soleyn, Colin Creveling, Lizzy Spicuzza, XYZ Summit of 2017, 4Wall Entertainment, Josh Duthie (Chairtastic), Caleb Norton, our recently departed brother Jess Curtis, Gravity Access Services, BANDALOOP, Lightswitch, Wayne Campell, the Zaccho and Dancers' Group board members, and our extraordinary Artistic Team for realizing the impossible yet again.



## ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S NOTES:

It is a great privilege to share this work, *The People's Palace*, with you. The process for getting here has been extremely complex and challenging, but with the creative brilliance of an exceptional artistic team and the gracious support of City Hall staff, we have finally brought this installation to life. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my dear friend Wayne Hazzard, whose 40-year loving friendship and unwavering belief in this project provided the wind under my sails.

*“...we have to understand that imagination shapes the world and so those of us who have been oppressed by how others imagine the world, the supremacists, the patriarchs, the war mongers, the capitalists, we have to imagine something so compelling that it moves us beyond and out of the compliance with our own entrapment in these systems that do not love us.”*

adrienne maree brown

The phrase *The People's Palace* was coined by Mayor “Sunny Jim” Rolph who, in the aftermath of the 1906 earthquake, envisioned a magnificent new building that would restore a sense of



renewal and hope to San Francisco. As part of his economic strategy for the city's recovery, he pushed to have the new building completed in time for the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition. In 1912 he selected Arthur Brown, Jr. of Bakewell & Brown as the principal architect for the project.

Like many architects of his era, Brown studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, one of the most influential art schools specializing in classical architecture, painting, sculpture, and decorative arts. This training would greatly influence many of his future civic designs. Brown was also deeply influenced by the City Beautiful movement. The City Beautiful movement, which emerged during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, advocated for the use of classical architectural elements in urban planning and design. Incorporating the aesthetics of classical architecture would not only provide grandeur, beauty, and order to urban design, it would also position America as rightful inheritors of Greco-Roman culture.

Both the World Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893 and San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915 were important events for promoting these ideas. However, while elevating the importance of



classical architecture, African and Indigenous architecture and culture were depicted as primitive, unevolved, and uncivilized as compared to Euro-American culture. The exhibits openly reinforced stereotypes and perpetuated Eurocentric narratives of racial and cultural superiority. These assertions became foundational in the promotion of neoclassical and Beaux Arts design across America, particularly in the design of civic buildings and monuments during the 19th and 20th centuries.

In 2010, Dancers' Group presented my work "Sailing Away" as part of its inaugural Rotunda Dance Series at City Hall. This performance featured the lives of notable Black San Franciscans from the 1850s who lived and worked downtown. It was an honor to invoke the spirits of such figures as Mifflin Gibbs, Mary Ellen Pleasant, and Grafton Tyler Brown in this building. Yet, seeing them roam amongst the Roman and Greek figures and juxtaposed to modern statues predominantly depicting white men, evoked a feeling of disconnectedness, a lack of belonging. There was nothing in this public building, the People's Palace, that honors the land where we all reside or speaks to the histories, culture, or aspirations of people of color and other historically marginalized communities here.



For this performance installation, I chose to explore this idea as an artistic intervention with the intention to insert narratives that are implicitly and explicitly excluded from representation in the architecture. I wanted to provide a more accurate picture of who and what defines San Francisco. I don't, however, intend the piece to be a dismissal of the integrity or value of this historical architecture; it is a brilliant example of the Beaux Arts style and an engineering marvel. It is also deeply admired and cherished by the people of San Francisco. I want this performance to feel more like a celebration of the City's diverse and vibrant community and its legacy of and commitment to thriving together in this extraordinary place. I hope it will be a catalyst for reimagining our public spaces in a way that truly reflects our collective identity.



“Sailing Away” with Robert Henry Johnson, Matthew Wickett, Byb Chanel (l-r)



The piece draws from the concepts of the four *Civic Virtues* located in the medallions at the base of the dome: *Learning, Liberty, Strength, and Equality*. In this performance, these virtues are reimagined from a new perspective.

## LEARNING

“Learning is facilitated by listening from a position of humility. Our humility springs from the recognition that all beings and elements of the natural world are a part of an interconnected and interdependent whole. By listening to our relatives in the natural world we can be more in tune with what is needed to restore and retain balance and harmony.”

*Jonathan Cordero*

## LIBERTY

this cold surrounds giving space to proof  
even in lack of warmth something can be felt.

Naked.

Becoming unafraid.

Opposition melts in the fading of fear.

Through the fade a voice in solidarity moves  
through telling the heart to rise.

It says to come up and join them.



With wobbled knees and courageous step  
a portion of it “it is well with my soul” is  
stumbled upon.

A story that might be ours is raised up in your  
eyes.

It is passed down by hands that beckon for  
communion.

It is a message extending through and beyond.  
We turn and say come out and join us.

We go up.

The walls have crumbled.

That which stood before us now flies with us.

*Joël Yates*

## STRENGTH

“A strong community comes from allowing  
ourselves to be more accepting and curious about  
our neighbors instead of creating barriers to keep  
us apart. It comes from living with the intention  
to love our neighbor as ourselves. Learning from  
one another helps us to find our true selves.  
This knowledge, care and respect is where our  
strength lies. If we put our minds together, we  
would be much further than we are now.”

*William Brewton Fowler, Jr.*



# EQUALITY

“Equality can’t exist without equity, a journey that requires commitment, consistency, and, most importantly, patience. Equity entails a dedicated acknowledgment of the divisions and injustices prevalent in society, and a joint effort to dismantle these barriers and foster a world that genuinely respects the inherent humanity of every individual. Equity demands grace; it calls for the qualities we often struggle with within ourselves: self-love, compassion, and understanding. It also necessitates trust. By trusting ourselves to make the right decisions, we find equity within ourselves. This personal equity then ripples out into society, helping us see each individual as a reflection of ourselves. This, in turn, paves the way for true unity.”

*Veronica Blair and Ciarra D’Onofrio*





# ABOUT DANCERS' GROUP

## PRESENTER

Dancers' Group serves artists, the dance community and audiences via programs and services that are as collaborative and innovative as the creative process itself. We lead as both a service organization and a presenter of performance opportunities. This hybrid engagement maximizes our impact in San Francisco and beyond and supports a vision of the region's dance community as diverse, resilient, resourced and artistically vibrant.

Dancers' Group's strategic plan articulates that dance programming in publicly-accessible spaces, both indoors or outdoors, plays a pivotal role in stimulating public interest in dance and in positioning dance at the center of civic life. Consequently, supporting the creation and presentation of public dance programming is a top priority for Dancers' Group. Helping artists make work is Dancers' Group's number one guiding principle, intimately connected to the organization's audience engagement goals.

[dancersgroup.org](http://dancersgroup.org)

[Instagram](#)

[Facebook](#)

[YouTube](#)



# ABOUT ZACCHO DANCE THEATRE

## PRODUCER

Founded in 1980, Zaccho Dance Theatre is an innovative force in both the world of dance and our home community of Bayview Hunters Point. Zaccho Dance Theatre advances the aerial arts and site-specific dance through arts education, youth programming, and the creation of innovative performance works which explore history and the concept of place. Artistic Director Joanna Haigood and collaborators pursue unique and challenging visions of dance, including spectacular aerial choreography, evocative site-specific performances and culturally significant subject matter. Zaccho collaborates with an extraordinary group of diverse artists to create unique and innovative performances and elevate the work to international acclaim.

Zaccho Dance Theatre draws inspiration from social histories and racial justice themes, and returns it to the community through [youth arts education](#), adult classes, and [artists in residency programs](#), many at low or no-cost to participants. Zaccho also produces the biennial [San Francisco Aerial Arts Festival](#). As a longstanding nonprofit program, we pride ourselves on maintaining our artistic integrity, social consciousness, and



community involvement, and invite you to attend, participate, educate, and donate however you can.

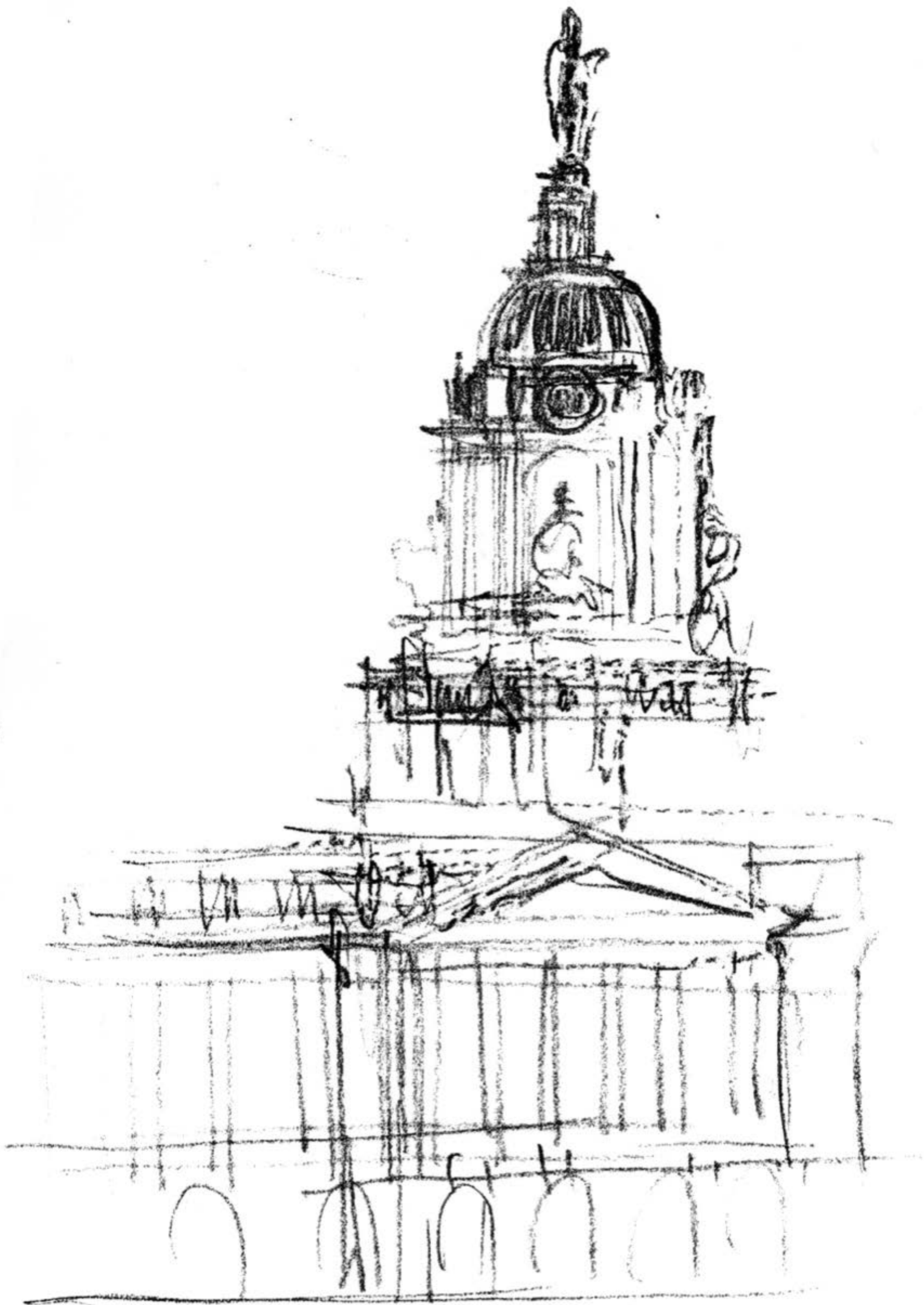
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Original drawings by architect Arthur Brown Jr.



# ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO CITY HALL

Known as the People's Palace, San Francisco City Hall is the seat of government for the City and County of San Francisco. It is also a destination historic landmark, frequently visited by tourists and photographers. Themed colored LEDs light up the building at night.

The City Hall you see today took nearly three years to build. Steel, granite, and four floors of white marble interiors makeup San Francisco's symbol of resilience, built after the previous City Hall was destroyed in the Great Earthquake and Fire of April 18, 1906.

Civic leaders were determined to demonstrate the city's rebirth in time for the start of the World's Fair of 1915. Designed by architect Arthur Brown, Jr. and begun in 1913, natives and the world were suitably awed by the gilt exterior detailing, the sweeping grand staircase, and the massive dome. At 307 feet in height, the dome is a full 42 feet taller than the dome of the nation's capital.

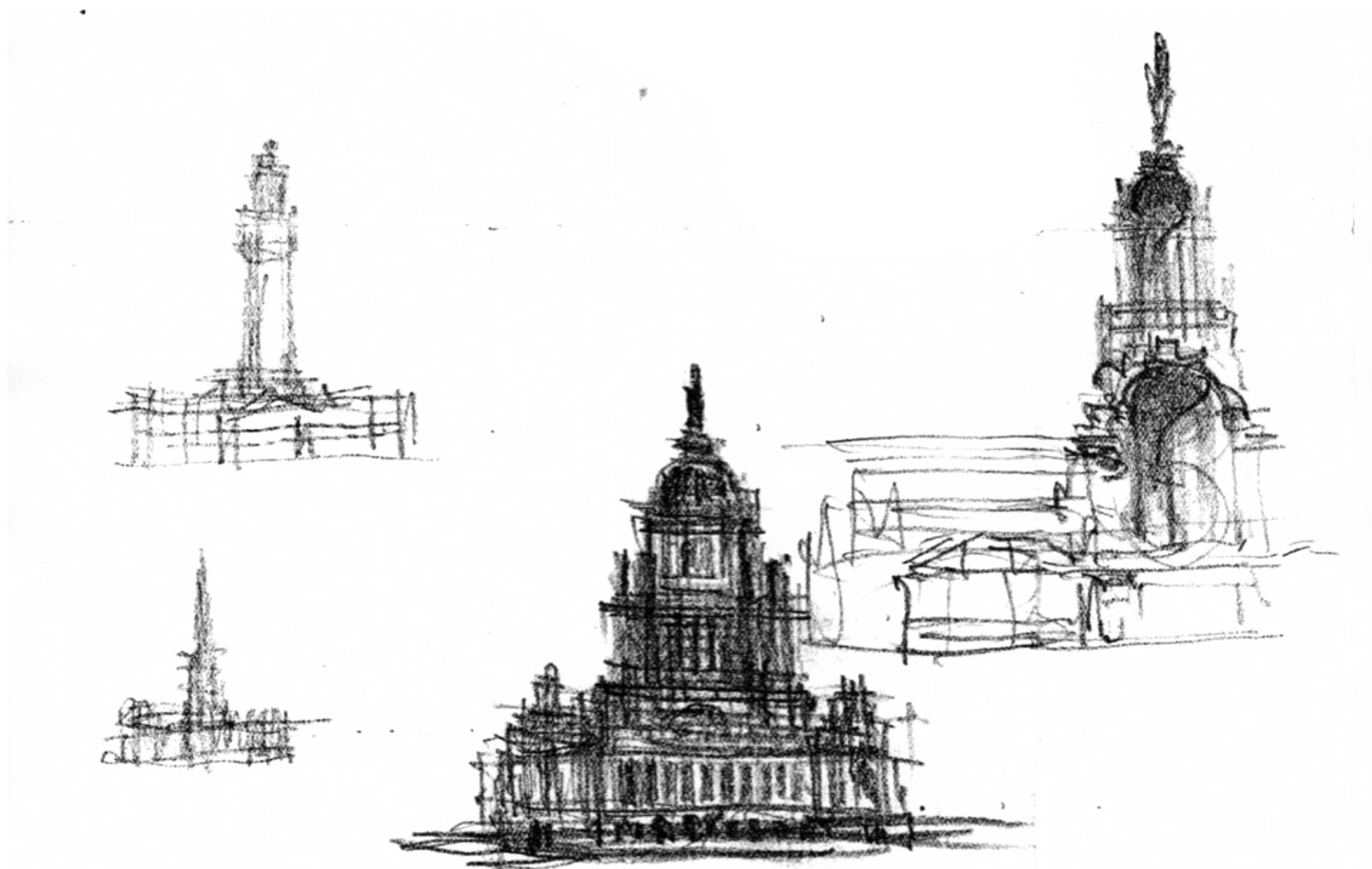
During the past century, the building has seen major political upheavals and demographic shifts in the makeup of its legislators. City Hall is often a focus of drama: the tragic assassinations of



1979; and jubilation, when same-sex marriages were first performed in 2004. Once the repository of records and a site for smaller courts, current debates and decisions about labor, land use, and public policy issues take place inside on a regular basis. City Hall has been a location for movies from Dirty Harry and Indiana Jones to Invasion of the Body Snatchers.

An earthquake of 7.1 magnitude struck on October 17, 1989 and damaged City Hall severely enough that the dome itself moved four full inches. Repair and restoration, completed in 1999, included an earthquake safety enhancement called a base isolator system. This absorbs shocks and movement at the foundation, protecting the structure above.

City Hall is still a favorite site for weddings, and cheers regularly echo through the rotunda. For more information about City Hall architecture, visit their self guided tour page.





# COLLABORATOR BIOS

**Joanna Haigood**

**DIRECTOR**



Since 1980 Joanna has been creating work that uses natural, architectural, and cultural environments as points of departure for movement exploration and narrative. Her stages have included grain terminals, a clock tower, the pope's palace, military forts, and a mile of urban neighborhood streets in the South Bronx. Her work has been commissioned by many arts institutions, including Dancing in the Streets, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Walker Arts Center, the SF Exploratorium Museum, the National Black Arts Festival, and Festival d'Avignon. She has also been honored with the Guggenheim Fellowship, the Herb Alpert Award in the Arts, the United States Artist Fellowship, and a New York Bessie Award. Haigood is also a recipient of the esteemed Doris Duke Artist Award. Joanna has had the privilege to mentor many extraordinary young artists internationally at the National École des Arts du Cirque in France, the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in England, Spelman College, the Institute for Diversity in the Arts at Stanford University, the San Francisco Circus Center, and at Zaccho Studio.



# Marcus Shelby

## COMPOSER

Marcus Shelby is a composer, bassist, bandleader, and educator who currently lives in San Francisco. His



work focuses on the history, present, and future of African American lives, social movements, and music education. In 1990 he received the Charles Mingus Scholarship to attend Cal Arts and study composition with James Newton and bass with Charlie Haden. Currently, Shelby is the Artistic Director of Healdsburg Jazz, an artist in residence with the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival, and a past resident artist with the San Francisco Jazz Festival and the Healdsburg Jazz Festival. Shelby has composed several oratorios, suites, and a children's opera. Shelby also composed the score and performed in Anna Deavere Smith's Off-Broadway Play and HBO feature film "Notes from the Field" (2019). He is the voice of Ray Gardener in the 2020 Oscar-Winning Disney Pixar film "SOUL." He has worked with Angela Y. Davis, Joanna Haigood, Margo Hall, Oakland Ballet, The SF Girl Choir, The Oakland Youth Chorus, and many others over the past 23 years. He has served on the San Francisco Arts Commission since 2013 and has worked with the Equal Justice Society for over 20 years. The Marcus Shelby Orchestra has released 5 CDs.



# Mildred Howard

## VISUAL ARTIST

Mildred Howard is best known for her multimedia assemblage work and installations. She completed her Associates of Arts Degree & Certificate in Fashion Art at the College of Alameda, and received her M.F.A. from Fiberworks Center for the Textile Arts at John F. Kennedy University in Berkeley in 1985. In 2015, she received the Lee Krasner Award in recognition of a lifetime of artistic achievement and has been the recipient of the Nancy Graves Grant for Visual Artists (2017), the Joan Mitchell Foundation Award (2004/5), a fellowship from the California Arts Council (2003), the Adaline Kent Award from San Francisco Art Institute (1991), and the Douglas G. MacAgy Distinguished Achievement Award at San Francisco Art Institute (2018). Her large-scale installations have been mounted at Creative Time in New York, InSITE in San Diego, Museum of Glass in Tacoma, National Museum of Women in the Arts, New Museum in New York, City of Oakland, San Francisco Arts Commission, and the San Francisco International Airport. Her works reside in the permanent collections of Berkeley Art Museum, de Young Museum, Los Angeles County Museum





of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, Museum of Glass and Contemporary Art, Tacoma, WA, Oakland Museum, SFMOMA, and the San Jose Museum of Art, among others.

**Sean Riley**

**SCENIC DESIGNER**



Sean Riley creates performance combining suspension, kinetics, architecture and narrative sculpture. Through production design, rigging design, and mechanical design, often in concert with each other, he creates unique striking environments and apparatus for time based art. Riley's work has spanned a wide spectrum of genres including Theater, Circus, Dance, Opera, Television, as well as outdoor and gallery installations around the world. Riley is a founding member and co-director of Cirque Mechanics, the host of two television series Worlds Toughest Fixes and Speed, and a longtime collaborator on the construction of the Long Now Foundation's 10,000 year clock. Riley is also the production designer and a producer of the Panto in the Presidio annual holiday show. Awards and nominations in design include: 6 Izzies, TBA awards, Bay Area Critics Circle, and an Isadora Duncan Sustained Achievement



Award in scenic design. Riley studied Theater at UCSC and lives in British Columbia. Further information at [visiblegravity.com](http://visiblegravity.com).

## David Freitag RIGGING DESIGNER

David Freitag is an aerial rigging designer based in San Francisco with 20 years of striving to perfect his craft as a rigger. He has been one of the lead riggers on a wide range of site-specific dance productions performing on walls and theaters both internationally and across the Bay Area, including with Sens Productions, Zaccho Dance Theatre, Capacitor, Flyaway Productions, and Printz Dance Project. Freitag spent 8 years touring internationally as lead rigger for Cirque Mechanics USA, and currently bides his time between aerial gigs as the house rigger at the Masonic Auditorium on Nob Hill. A master's graduate of UC Santa Barbara and SFSU, he holds rigging certifications in SPRAT, ETCP, and is a journeyman member of IATSE Local 16.





## **Wayne Campbell**

**DESIGN CONSULTANT AND  
FABRICATOR**



Wayne Campbell has provided scenic design, props and aerial rigging for Zaccho Dance Theatre since 1998, participating in such projects as Invisible Wings (1998) at Jacobs' Pillow; Departure and Arrival (2007) at San Francisco International Airport; Ghost Architecture (2004) at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Al Pozzo Di Sogno (2011) at Oliver Ranch, and Love, a state of grace (2022) at Grace Cathedral, among many others. He spends most of his time in his studio in West Marin making furniture and art.

## **Krissy Kenny**

**SENIOR LIGHTING  
DESIGNER AT LIGHTSWITCH**



Krissy Kenny began her lighting career as a union stagehand and designer for educational and professional companies throughout Vermont. Since moving to San Francisco in 2013, she has served as Lighting Director for vertical dance company Bandaloop, Head Electrician for the Curran Theater's Curran



Under Construction series, Lighting Consultant for several schools, non-profits, and a wine cave in Croatia. She has been Head Electrician on numerous corporate event keynotes and product launches, concerts, and has toured circus and dance shows to Mexico, St. John (USVI), Hungary, Canada, and across the US. Since joining Lightswitch in 2019, she has taken on architectural lighting and project management. She relies on her collegiate background in anthropology, archaeology, and history, as well as activities that draw her into nature, to help clients tell their stories with exacting detail and boundless creativity. [lightswitch.net](http://lightswitch.net)

## **Aron Altmark**

### **PROJECTION DESIGNER**

Aron Altmark (he/him) is a lighting and media artist based in Santa Cruz. He utilizes light, projection, and interactive technologies to create conversations between performers and audiences, or between a viewer and digital media. Growing up in Birmingham, Alabama, he first found his passion for theater and dance lighting in the Alabama School of Fine Arts before graduating from the California Institute of the Arts with a degree in Lighting Design and Digital Media. Since 2014,





he has helmed Visual Endeavors -- a design and creative solutions company operating across genres, from live concerts to broadcast to art installations. [visualendeavors.com](http://visualendeavors.com)

## **Dana Kawano** **COSTUME DESIGNER**

Dana Kawano is a multifaceted artist known for her transformative work as a costume designer, scenic installation, and visual artist. She weaves textiles and objects into captivating wearable and scenic art, infusing cultural and ritual elements to convey compelling narratives. Collaborating predominantly with ritual performance creators, Dana merges ancient spiritual traditions with contemporary storytelling to address pertinent issues such as justice, identity, and the environment. Notably, she has received Izzie awards, including Outstanding Achievement in Visual Design.





**Jonathan Cordero**  
**INDIGENOUS**  
**CULTURE BEARER**



Dr. Jonathan Cordero  
(Ramaytush Ohlone, Bay  
Miwok, Chumash, Cochimi)

is the Executive Director of the Association of Ramaytush Ohlone. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of California at Berkeley and a doctorate from the University of California, Santa Barbara. He has written several articles on California Indians during the Mission Period. Dr. Cordero works as a consultant in both the public and private sectors, especially in the arts, and he serves as a leader, speaker, and activist in the broader Ohlone and Chumash communities.

His affiliations also include: Metush (Chair) of the Ramaytush Ohlone peoples; Executive Director, Association of Ramaytush Ohlone; Visiting Scholar in the Spatial Sciences Institute at USC; and Steering Committee member, Regional Watershed Management Program.



**Gregg Castro**  
**INDIGENOUS**  
**CULTURE BEARER**



Gregg Castro (t'rowt'raahl Salinan/rumsien-ramaytush Ohlone) is the Culture

Director of the Association of Ramaytush Ohlone. He has been involved in preservation of his cultural heritage for nearly three decades, for both his late Mother's rumsien Ohlone heritage and, on his late Father's side, the since ended 'Salinan Nation Tribal Council' (serving two terms as Tribal Chair) and currently the non-profit organization, Salinan T'rowt'raahl.

He is a member of the Society for California Archaeology (SCA). Gregg is a Co-Facilitator for the annual California Indian Conference, a 30+ year gathering about California Indigenous heritage. Gregg is a writer and activist within the California indigenous community on issues regarding cultural preservation, protection, education, and traditional practices.



**Afiya “Fi” Shani Williams**  
**ASSISTANT TO THE**  
**DIRECTOR**



Afiya “Fi.” Williams is a renaissance woman -- producer, educator, and artist working for racial and social justice at the intersection of art, education, and community. She has over fifteen years of experience working for social change in non-profit arts and education, nurturing community, and producing programs, events, and films. A world traveler, Fi has built connections and community around the world, working to understand and minimize the barriers and divisiveness caused by perceived differences. Fi believes art, joy, rest, and storytelling have vital and irreplaceable roles within activism, and through these, she seeks to fuel the movements for racial justice by fostering ways of thinking and being that create healthy lifestyles and thriving communities.

**Clare Whistler**  
**REHEARSAL ASSISTANT**

Clare Whistler makes work in performance, site work in landscape, poetry, music, and visual art. Ongoing





collaborations include kind & kind a composite eco poet with writer Kay Syrad, Waterweek and Watercycle with visual artist Charlotte Still, in the sculpture of Nicola Turner as Turner & Whistler, and Elephant Press with designer Raphael Whittle. Clare has been working with Joanna Haigood for over 30 years.

## **Ryan Luse**

### **PROJECTION TEAM**

Ryan is a motion designer with a foundation in graphic design. For the last 15 years he has been working in ad agencies, design studios & in house design teams in tech companies around the Bay Area including 4 years at Apple working on retail marketing where he created dozens of animations and brand campaigns that lived on Video Walls in Apple stores around the world.



## **Cody Samson**

### **PROJECTION TEAM**

Cody Samson is an audio-visual artist and designer based in San Francisco. With a focus on experimental animation, motion graphics and sound design for events and installations, his works explore the organic in an increasingly





digital world. From video installations and projection art, to animations for touring musicians like Beyonce, Halsey, Usher and more, Samson's work has been shown across Europe, Japan, and the US.

## PERFORMERS

### **Veronica Blair**

Veronica Blair has emerged as one of the top Black aerialists in the country, and has taken her high-flying talents all around the world. A Bay Area native, she began her career at the age of 14 at the former San Francisco School of Circus Arts, now known as the San Francisco Circus Center. Shortly after making her debut at 17, she was noticed by Cedric Walker, the founder of the Universoul Circus. Walker named Blair as a solo trapeze artist, and she was Universoul's Resident Aerialist for over five years. Blair has performed in "Afrika! Afrika!," Germany's largest circus event, and with Universal Studios Japan. She continues to work with SF Circus Center, and has put on shows featuring other Black aerialists and circus performers for themed events, such as a tribute to recording artist Prince in 2014. Black





circus performers are rarely recognized and Blair has taken on the task of filming a documentary that puts a new light on those who work in the industry. Blair's The Uncle Junior Project came about after the death of little-known Black circus animal trainer of the same name. In an attempt to uphold Junior's legacy and that of the Black circus, Blair has the ambitious aim of bringing those unknown entertainers to the forefront.

### **Ciarra D'Onofrio**

Ciarra D'Onofrio (they/them) is a queer dancer, aerialist, and educator with a passion for using dance as a means of storytelling, social analysis, and community



building. They specialize in vertical dance, dance trapeze, and contemporary dance. They have performed in redwood forests, cathedrals, and on trampoline walls. They are a company member of Zaccho Dance Theatre, and have also recently danced with Epiphany Dance Theater, Olallie Lackler, and Helen Wicks Works. They studied dance and choreography at Lewis & Clark College where they received the Distinction in Dance Choreography Award. They then expanded their training in the circus arts as a member of the Circus Project's Training and Performance Company. They are a head of



the aerial department at Camp Winnarainbow and run their own aerial dance program here in the Bay Area. Their current choreographic work explores grief, the co-creation of queer identity, and how gender lives in the body and in physical space. Recently their work has been presented in the San Francisco Aerial Arts Festival, the Tenderloin Arts Festival, and the CounterPulse Festival. They recently were a member of Bandaloop's Training Group and a Shawl Anderson Dance Center Artist in Residency.

## **Nina Sawant**

Nina Sawant is a multidisciplinary circus artist with a fascination for visual storytelling. Nina began her career as a dancer at Busch Gardens Tampa in 2006,



where she discovered circus through fellow cast mate Vitaliy Krymskyi. She went on to tour with Vitaliy and his family in the Ukraine, and has since performed across the US and Europe. She is a founding member of The Dahlias, a woman of color led circus ensemble, and performs locally for Vespertine Circus, Sweet Can Productions, and Misfit Cabaret. When she's not on stage, Nina can be found making costumes, short films, and more for her Patreon.



## William Brewton Fowler Jr.

William Brewton Fowler Jr. is a Christian dancer and emerging choreographer from Augusta, GA, who studied contemporary dance at the University of North



Carolina School of the Arts. In New York, he worked with Gallim Dance under the direction of Andrea Miller and performed with Stephanie Batten Bland's Company, SBB. As a Christian artist, William freelanced in Missouri with Dramatic Truth Ballet Theatre, performing the roles of ArchAngel Michael and God, The Father, which furthered his journey with his faith. In the Bay Area, while a member of the Oakland Ballet Company, he choreographed I'll love you from here for OBC's 2023 Rainbow Dances. He also participated in a BAMPFA installation for TinyPistol under the direction of Maurya Kerr. He regularly works for Gregory Dawson's company, DawsonDanceSF, and had the opportunity to co-choreograph a duet with Frankie Peterson for the Black Choreographers Festival. He has also worked with SFBATCO for the musical "Sign My Name to Freedom." While there he started his journey into aerial work led by Joanna Haigood. He is very excited to continue under her tutelage at Zaccho Dance Theatre!



## Tristan Ching Hartmann

Tristan Ching Hartmann has been living, dancing, and learning in the Bay Area since 1991. After receiving her early training at the Westside School of Ballet and the San Francisco Ballet School, she began studying modern dance with Diane Frank and Robert Moses at Stanford University where she received her B.A. in English and her M.A. in Education. She is grateful to have danced with Robert Moses' Kin for 11 years before retiring from the company to pursue a range of performance experiences, including work with the 2009 BRIT Awards, Tango Fatale, RAWdance, Project B, and Sharp and Fine. Tristan was on faculty at the San Francisco Conservatory of Dance -- teaching technique classes, leading creative writing sessions, and making work -- until the school's closing in 2018. Tristan continues to present work, often collaborating with the fabulous writers of Red Light Lit as well as her dance heroes/friends. Tristan currently dances with the Margaret Jenkins Dance Company and is moved by the generous opportunities she has been given to explore how an aging body experiences dance, art, life, and love. Tristan would like to thank her family and communities for their relentless love and support.





## Saharla Vetsch

Saharla Vetsch (she/her) is a Somali American independent dance/drag artist born and raised in Minnesota. Now residing in the Bay Area, Saharla



has earned a degree in Performing Arts and Social Justice with a concentration in dance from the University of San Francisco. Her work centers around questions and curiosities about individuals' intersecting identities and how they relate to one another. Her drag persona Major Hammy seeks to spread joy and love by being the life of the party, and bringing the freedom of self expression he experiences through dance to others. Saharla was recently a collaborating artist in Detour Dance's "WORK MORE! 9" and participated in other pieces as part of their "Up On High" film series. She has also performed with Joe Goode Performance Group in "Time of Change" and is currently a RAWdance Radiate fellow.



## Jocelyn Reyes

Jocelyn Reyes (she/her) is a Latin American contemporary choreographer, self-producer, and dancer based in San Francisco. A first generation LA native, Reyes holds a B.S. in Cognitive Science and B.A. in Dance from UCLA, and is the Artistic Director of REYES Dance. Reyes' movement practice includes contemporary dance, improvisation, and Latin social dances. Her choreographic work blends everyday gestures, athleticism, humor, abstraction, and storytelling to question toxic behavioral patterns, heal, and reimagine healthier ways of relating to ourselves and others. Reyes has produced three evening length works, presented choreography in many festivals/curated events, and received support from the San Francisco Arts Commission, CA\$H Dance, Berkeley Ballet Theater Residency, and the Paul Dresher Ensemble Residency Program.



**The Skywatchers Ensemble**  
Founded in 2011, The Skywatchers Ensemble brings artists into durational collaboration with residents of San Francisco's Tenderloin



neighborhood. We believe that relationship is the first site of social change. Centering resident lives and experiences, the multi-disciplinary, mixed-ability ensemble creates art works that amplify neighborhood stories, interrogating the poverty industrial complex, and illuminating narratives too often invisible in our collective cultural production. The Skywatchers Ensemble of Tenderloin residents and artists co-create multi-disciplinary art works that range from formal and site-specific performance, to intervention, ritual, visual art, and multi-media works as part of a long-term community-embedded social practice. Our work has been recognized recently with an Isadora Duncan Dance Award, Guggenheim Fellowship, and the NEA Our Town Award. In addition to our core ensemble, our programs include workshops in SROs, a youth partnership with Larkin Street Youth Services, a health equity collaboration with Faithful Fools and UCSF, as well as partnerships with over a dozen Tenderloin non-profits and community groups. To learn more, visit [abdproductions.org](http://abdproductions.org).

## THE SKYWATCHERS ENSEMBLE MEMBERS

**Joel Yates**

**LEAD ARTIST**

Joel Yates (he/him) was raised here on Ohlone Land (San Francisco). He has witnessed loss and



the fight to breathe. A Skywatchers member since 2019, Joel has become a lead creative voice in the performance collective. He quickly gained respect as a spoken word artist and an eloquent spokesperson for the power of art to catalyze community. As a writer and community leader sharing his experience and art continuously in the Tenderloin, he hopes that his words help to demolish obstacles and broaden the sights of those they touch.

## **Anne Bluethenthal**

### **LEAD ARTIST**

Anne Bluethenthal (she/her) is the Founder/Artistic Director of ABD Productions, a performing arts company committed to inspiring social change through the arts. Her work grows from the belief that relationship is the first site of social change. In 2011, Bluethenthal initiated the Skywatchers program, rooted in SF's Tenderloin neighborhood. A multi-ethnic mixed-ability, cross-generational community-based performing arts ensemble of Bay Area artists and Tenderloin residents committed to leveraging arts for justice and equity. Among Bluethenthal's honors are the Guggenheim Fellowship, Isadora Duncan Dance Award, SF Arts Commission's Artist Legacy Award, YBCA 100, SF Chronicle's Best of 2001, and SF Bay Guardian's Goldie Award for Achievement in Dance.

## **Shavonne Allen**

### **LEAD ARTIST**

Shavonne Allen (she/her) is a San Francisco native and has been a key performer with Skywatchers since 2019. Formerly homeless and a recovering addict, today she is a community activist, artist, and health worker. Becoming a performing artist with Skywatchers has been a vehicle for healing and reinvention as well as for nourishing strong relationships. Through her community work, Shavonne has become a resource, advocate, and leader throughout the neighborhood.

## **Nazelah Jamison**

### **LEAD ARTIST**

Nazelah Jamison (she/hers) is a Bay Area-based performance poet, author, actor, vocalist, and emcee. She has been working with Skywatchers since 2023. Her first book of poetry, *Evolutionary Heart*, was released on Nomadic Press in 2016. Nazelah's work can also be found in *The Racket Journal: Culture Counts Magazine* (2021), *La Raiz Magazine* (2022), and others. When she's not writing, performing, and facilitating with Skywatchers, Nazelah enjoys writing horror screenplays and saving the day. She also gives the best hugs in the Bay Area.



## **Shakiri**

### **LEAD ARTIST**

Shakiri (she/hers) is a Goldie and Isadora Duncan Dance Award winner who has been a performer, choreographer, and arts educator in the Bay Area for over thirty years. A company member of the internationally acclaimed Zaccho Dance Theater, she has choreographed for Berkeley Rep, danced with Dance Brigade and her own company Shakiri/Rootworkers, among others. Integral to Skywatchers for more than seven years, she is a vibrant choreographer and co-director with broad and deep personal, familial, and creative Bay Area roots.

## **Sarah Morrisette**

### **LEAD ARTIST**

Sarah Morrisette (she/hers) is a theater artist, music maker, educator, and social worker who recently relocated to the Bay Area to join the Skywatchers team. Through creative arts, she aims to dismantle barriers, build empathy, and create networks of care and belonging in order to build equitable, sustainable communities. She is a facilitator of the methods of Augusto Boal and has designed and facilitated workshops in Chile, Brazil, Pakistan, India, Mozambique, and throughout the US. As co-founder of Backyard Youth Theatre, she is frequently called to a

backyard to co-create new worlds with young people.

## **Shanan Noya Liu**

### **ENSEMBLE**

Shanan Noya Liu (she/hers) is a seeker of freedom, beauty, and wisdom. She is currently pursuing a college degree in science. Outside of school, she worked in theaters and produced her solo show, dedicated to people she has loved and will love. In the next few years, she will travel to different parts of the world. In her journey through world and life, she hopes to witness, absorb, and reflect back the vast scope of beauty she experienced. Through theater, music, dance, poetry...to provide comfort, delight, to bond with others sharing this world.

## **Chassity Gantt**

### **ENSEMBLE**

Chassity (she/hers), a vibrant 24-year-old poet, actress, and model, is fueled by a hunger for knowledge and a commitment to community activism. Guided by kindness, she advocates for social justice and dreams of supporting others in their mental health journeys through higher education. Despite challenges like social anxiety, Chassity shows resilience, embracing new experiences with courage. Her journey is about making a positive impact and learning along the way.



## **Dot Com**

### **ENSEMBLE**

Dot Com (he/him) is a neo soul jazz enthusiast and risk taker. He has been performing with the Skywatchers ensemble for three years. As a child, he sang before he spoke and danced before he walked. He is most comfortable closing his eyes and singing from the heart. He is a force of love.

## **Lauren Swiger**

### **ENSEMBLE**

Lauren (she/hers), aka Montana, is an activist, percussionist, and painter who is in love with dance and movement. She has practiced massage therapy and energy medicine for 28 years and enjoys building community and singing in the shower. She has been a Skywatcher ensemble member since 2023.

## **Noelle Castro**

### **ENSEMBLE**

Noelle (she/hers) is an artist who works in many mediums; each medium a different voice, speaking the same language. She has been a Skywatcher ensemble member since 2023.

## **Maurice Hudson**

### **ENSEMBLE**

Maurice (he/him) is a native San Franciscan who feels it is his mission to help others. Maurice has been a member of Skywatchers for four years.

## **Regi Meadows**

### **ENSEMBLE**

Regi (he/him) loves playing and creating music and has been a member of Skywatchers for five years.

## **MARCUS SHELBY QUARTET**

## **Marcus Shelby**

### **BASS / KALIMBA**

Marcus Shelby is a composer, bassist, bandleader, and educator who currently lives in San Francisco. His work focuses on the history,

present, and future of African American lives, social movements, and music education. In 1990 he received the Charles Mingus Scholarship to attend Cal Arts and study composition with James Newton and bass with Charlie Haden.

Currently, Shelby is the Artistic Director of Healdsburg Jazz, an artist in residence with the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival, and a past resident





artist with the San Francisco Jazz Festival and the Healdsburg Jazz Festival. Shelby has composed several oratorios, suites, and a children's opera. Shelby also composed the score and performed in Anna Deavere Smith's Off-Broadway Play and HBO feature film "Notes from the Field" (2019). He is the voice of Ray Gardener in the 2020 Oscar-Winning Disney Pixar film "SOUL." He has worked with Angela Y. Davis, Joanna Haigood, Margo Hall, Oakland Ballet, The SF Girl Choir, The Oakland Youth Chorus, and many others over the past 23 years. He has served on the San Francisco Arts Commission since 2013 and has worked with the Equal Justice Society for over 20 years. The Marcus Shelby Orchestra has released 5 CDs.

## **Destiny Muhammad**

### **HARP / VOCAL**

Destiny Muhammad is a Recording Performing Artist, Band Leader, Composer, and Producer. Her genre

Celtic to Coltraneâ™ is cool

and eclectic with a feel of Jazz & Storytelling to round out the sonic experience. Destiny's collaborations, curations, and commissioning include: Grace Cathedral Christmas Concert Series, SFJAZZ, SF Symphony SOUNDBOX Series, The Healdsburg Jazz Festival 2023,



Black History Month Artist in Residence, a Guest Workshop Presenter for Amateur Music Network, Santa Cruz Symphony, and the San Jose Jazz Fest's Jazz Aid Commissioning Grant.

## Darren Johnston

TRUMPET / VOCAL

Canada-born trumpeter/composer Darren Johnston works primarily within jazz, jazz adjacent, and purely improvised music,



while also studying and performing many other styles, including music of the Balkans, Jamaica (Groundation), contemporary classical, and more. He is particularly drawn to music that defies categorization. After twenty one years in the Bay Area, Johnston relocated to Brooklyn, NY in 2019. In the time since moving there, he has played and/or recorded with Ches Smith, Dayna Stephens, Carmen Staaf, Michael Formanek, Tony Malaby, Michael Attias, Slavic Soul Party!, Raya Brass Band, The Peter Hess Quartet, Michael Vatcher, and many more. He has been commissioned to write for dance, dance film, theater, video games, and museums such as the de young Museum and other presenting organizations such as the Yerba Buena Garden Festival and Intersection For The Arts.



# Phil Vieux

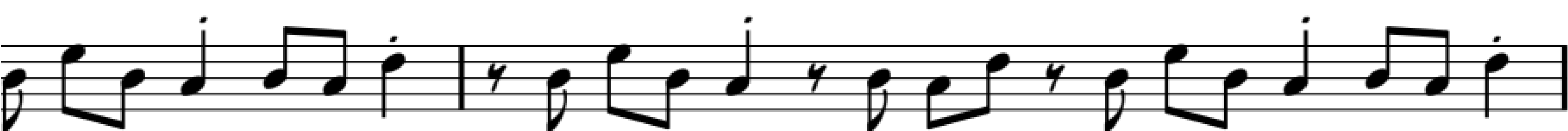
## ALTO SAXOPHONE / FLUTE

Phil Vieux is a multi-instrumentalist (alto, tenor, baritone, flutes), composer, arranger, and producer who has recorded and performed with luminaries such as Tito Puente, Eddie Palmieri, Horace Silver, and many others. Phil Vieux is also a prolific composer who has composed for film and other extra-musical productions.

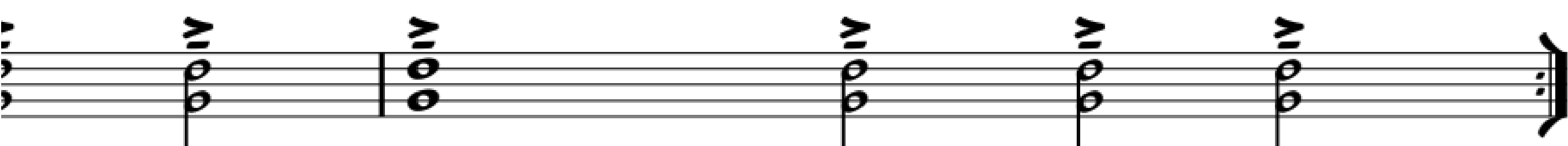
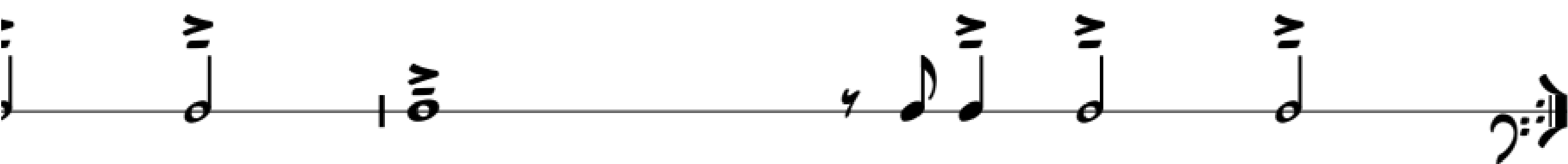


### LIBERTY (PP)

MARCUS SHELBY



REPEAT TIL CUE



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VIEW OF THE RUINS LOOKING TOWARD VAN NESS AVENUE.  
This photograph, taken at Van Ness Avenue, where a mile of magnificent mansions were blown up to stay the progress of the flames, gives an unparalleled picture of desolation. The ruins of the \$7,000,000 City Hall are seen in the distance.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## San Francisco Aerial Arts Festival August 16-18, 2024

Zaccho Dance Theatre's San Francisco Aerial Arts Festival is San Francisco's premiere aerial arts event featuring internationally recognized aerial artists and exciting newcomers breaking into the field. Hosted at the historic Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture, the 2024 festival will feature two evenings of showcase performances, a youth matinee, and a site-specific installation by Flyaway Productions designed for the fire escapes at the Fort Mason Center.

Additional performances by DawsonDanceSF, Aeriosa Dance Society, Corporeal Imago, Veronica Blair, Kelsey na Gealaí, Shannon Gray, Thai Lamb, Megan Lowe & Roel Seeber, Sam Malloy, Joey "The Tiger" Moore, Nina Sawant & David Freitag, Alice Sheppard, Xochilti Sosa, Elise Southwick, Jason Span, Ross Travis, and Helen Wicks & Saharla Vetsch. The youth matinee will feature brilliant young aerialists from the Circus Center's San Francisco Youth Circus, Kinetic Arts Center's Circus Spire, Mendocino Center for Circus Arts' Circus



Mecca, Prince Dance, Ashland Aerial Arts, Zaccho Youth Company, and Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company in collaboration with BANDALOOP.

New in 2024, the San Francisco Aerial Arts Film Festival will showcase a curated selection of films that capture the grace, strength, and imagination of the aerial arts, pushing the boundaries of what's possible. The film festival will screen parallel to the live performances at Fort Mason.

