



# YERBA BUENA GARDENS FESTIVAL 2025 SEASON REPORT

*“Long before San Francisco city officials looked to the arts to revitalize downtown and other neighborhoods, the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival emerged as a model for activating urban space with creative pursuits.”*

San Francisco Chronicle  
April 30, 2025



# ABOUT YERBA BUENA GARDENS FESTIVAL



Season Kick-Off w/ La Santa Cecilia, May 10

## Yerba Buena Gardens is located on traditional, unceded Ramaytush Ohlone land.

Yerba Buena Gardens Festival presents classical, world, and jazz music, contemporary and traditional dance, theater, children's and family programs, and cultural events reflecting the rich cultures and creativity of the region. Artistic excellence, inclusion, diversity and innovation are at the heart of our mission. As the only curated arts park fully dedicated to the long-term presentation of free arts and cultural programs, Yerba Buena Gardens has a unique place in the cultural landscape of San Francisco.

Cover photos from YBG Festival programs: La Santa Cecilia, Joe Bataan, Vân-Ánh Võ, Marcus Shelby and Orchestra Gold. Photos by Nix Guirre unless otherwise noted.

## WELCOME LETTER

Dear Friends of the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival,

*In 2025 we celebrated a quarter century of presenting admission-free performing arts in San Francisco's Yerba Buena Gardens for everyone!*

*In our 25th year we presented brilliant world premieres and legendary artists while forging exciting new partnerships to support vital artistic voices in the Gardens. We commissioned Bay Area artists to create new dance, music and poetry. In concert with the Association of Professional Arts Presenters' Outdoor Arts Working Group and Yerba Buena Gardens Conservancy, we helped bring the Alebríjes y Nahuáles installation to Yerba Buena Gardens, an important international exchange with Mexico. We managed a robust year of private rentals as economic vitality returned to Downtown San Francisco. And we launched a successful individual donor campaign.*

*We are deeply grateful to everyone who made 2025 possible: artists, audiences, YBGF's Board of Directors, advisors, staff, community and civic partners, funders and individual donors, and the diverse communities of the San Francisco Bay Area.*

*In the face of current heartbreaking challenges and uncertainty, we join our community of artists to continue to speak out against the forces of oppression, erasure and discrimination. YBG Festival is steadfast in supporting bold artistic voices just as our audiences continue to show up in joyful solidarity by the tens of thousands.*

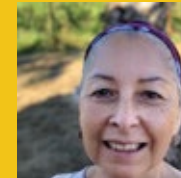
*Yerba Buena Gardens Festival remains committed to creating spaces in Yerba Buena Gardens where people from all walks of life – regardless of circumstance, identity, or ability to pay – feel welcome, valued, and celebrated.*

*With hope in our hearts, we look forward to celebrating another quarter century together!*

*In gratitude,*



Aaron Grizzell  
Board President



Linda Lucero  
Executive/Artistic Director

# 25TH ANNIVERSARY

2025 marked the 25th season of Yerba Buena Gardens Festival bringing free, outdoor performances to the beautiful spaces of Yerba Buena Gardens. The anniversary season brought many reasons to celebrate, including the stunning Alebrijes y Nahuáles partnership installation, our first Movie Night events, our first Pride Month program and the 25th season of our incredible Events Director Steve Cho. From May-October, this milestone season celebrated the role YBG Festival has played in bringing arts and culture to the Bay Area for 25 years and our role in helping make downtown San Francisco a culturally vibrant place for everyone.



Season Kick-Off w/ La Santa Cecilia, May 10



Yerba Buena Movie Night: "Wicked," June 6



Audiences at Season Kick-Off, May 10

*"For over two decades the San Francisco Arts Commission has been proud to support Yerba Buena Gardens and the Festival, which has grown into a powerful model for how performing arts can activate public space and San Francisco's downtown core."*

- Ralph Remington  
Director of Cultural Affairs,  
San Francisco Arts Commission

# SPECIAL PROJECTS



SAMMAY: "the way home is an upward spiral," Aug 23

## COMMISSIONED ARTISTS

Patrick Makuakāne for Nā Lei Hulu I Ka Wēkiu: "Aloha 'Āina"  
 SAMMAY Peñafior Dizon for SAMMAY: "the way home is an upwards spiral"  
 YBG ChoreoFest: Charya Burt, David Herrera Performance Company,  
 Dragons Dance, In'Lakech, Kyle Limin, PUSH Dance Company,  
 REYES Dance, SNJV

## SEED COMMISSION ARTISTS

PHER  
 SNJV  
 Joshua Icban  
 Destiny Muhammad  
 Nadhi Thekkek

## PREMIERES

Vân-Ánh Võ's Blood Moon Orchestra: "Road to Hidden Home"  
 Alebríjes y Nahuáles: Fantastic Animals from Mexico

Through a flourishing commissioning program, Yerba Buena Gardens Festival supports the creation of extraordinary new work and special projects.

In 2025, eight dance companies premiered new works as part of YBG ChoreoFest. In addition, YBG Festival commissioned works from choreographer SAMMAY Peñafior Dizon and choreographer/director Patrick Makuakāne of Nā Lei Hulu I Ka Wēkiu. YBG Festival also continued its Seed Commissions program, selecting five Bay Area artists to receive development funds as "seeds" for the creative process.

Since its inception in 2000, Yerba Buena Gardens Festival is proud to have supported over 90+ commissioned works and world premieres from brilliant artists at all stages of their careers.



Nā Lei Hulu I Ka Wēkiu: "Aloha 'Āina," June 14

# PARTNERSHIPS

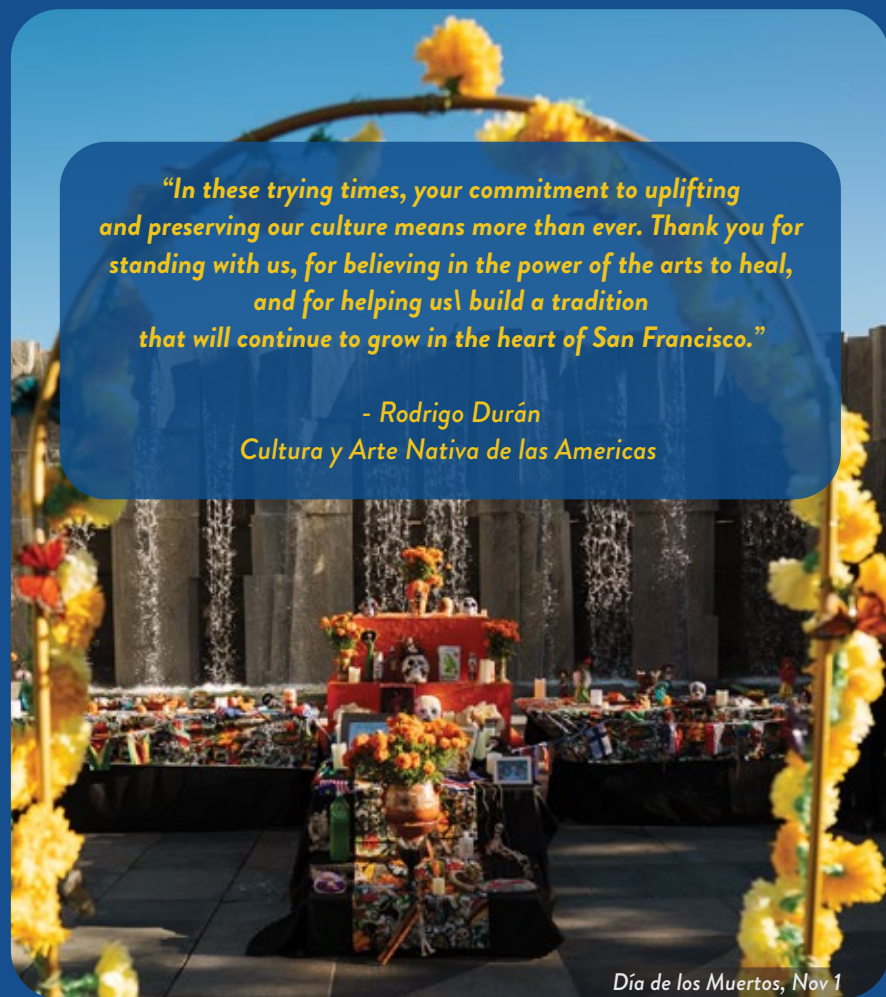
Partnerships add a diversity of curatorial voices as well as audiences to Yerba Buena Gardens as we enliven downtown San Francisco with arts, culture and community.

YBG Festival works with over 25 partners annually, providing space, equipment, event planning expertise and more to many organizations who would otherwise be priced out of downtown San Francisco venues.

In 2025, YBG Festival provided nearly \$140,000 in-kind to partners in space, equipment, staffing, and production services.

*“In these trying times, your commitment to uplifting and preserving our culture means more than ever. Thank you for standing with us, for believing in the power of the arts to heal, and for helping us build a tradition that will continue to grow in the heart of San Francisco.”*

*- Rodrigo Durán  
Cultura y Arte Nativa de las Americas*



*Día de los Muertos, Nov 1*

## PARTNERS (partial list)

111 Minna Gallery  
826 Valencia  
AfroSolo Arts Festival  
American Indian Contemporary Arts  
California Brazil Camp  
Children’s Creativity Museum  
Community Music Center  
Consul General of Japan  
Cultura y Arte Nativa de las Americas  
El Consulado de México  
Enterprise for Youth  
EPIC Church  
Filipino American Arts Exposition  
Funflicks  
Gardeners’ Guild  
Indigenous Justice  
International Indian Treaty Council  
KALW  
Litquake  
Marriott Marquis  
The Mexican Museum  
Millenium Partners  
Museum of the African Diaspora  
NorCal MLK Community Foundation  
Rhythm & Motion  
Romain Greco  
San Francisco Mime Troupe  
San Francisco Uke Jam  
SF Department of Environment  
SF Interfaith Council  
SFJAZZ  
SOMA Pilipinas  
Sunset Sound System  
Women’s Audio Mission  
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts  
Yerba Buena Gardens Conservancy  
Yerba Buena Partnership

## MEMBERSHIPS

Americans for the Arts  
California Presenters  
Western Arts Alliance  
Theatre Bay Area  
Association of Performing Arts Professionals  
Yerba Buena Neighborhood Meet Up  
Nat’l Outdoor Arts Working Group



*Alebríjes y Nahuáles*

# 2025 SEASON BY THE NUMBERS

62,516 Attendees

1,311 Artists

8,134 Children's Garden Series Attendees

106 Programs

## PROGRAM RATING

95% very good ★★★★★

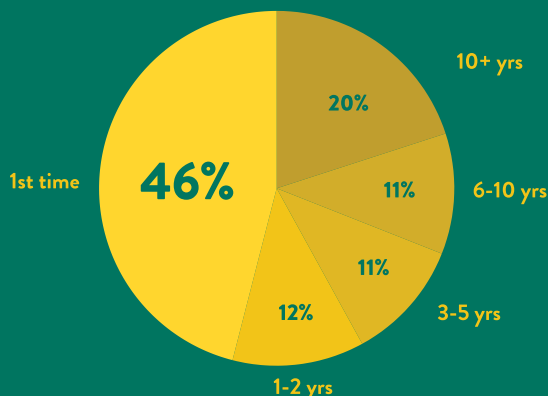
4% good ★★★★

0% neutral ★★★

0% poor ★★

0% very poor ★

## REPEAT ATTENDANCE



## HOUSEHOLD INCOME



## AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

*"Love YBGF! The best lineups every summer."*

*"Great exposure to world music, beautiful setting, near BART. Free!"*

*"This made me so happy especially in this political climate. It was amazing seeing the community all together on such a beautiful day."*



La Santa Cecilia, May 10

## FREE ADMISSION

95% very important

13% important

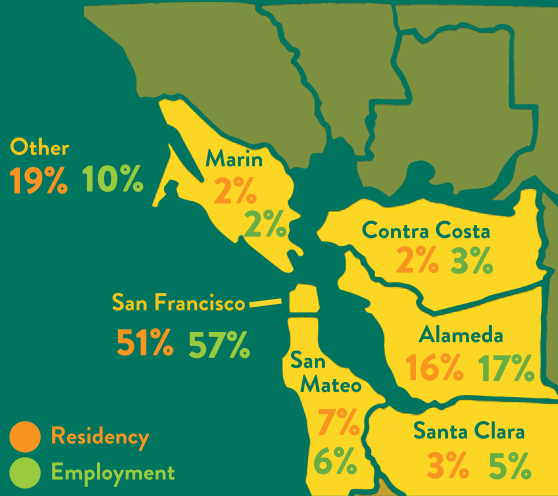
8% neutral

1% not important

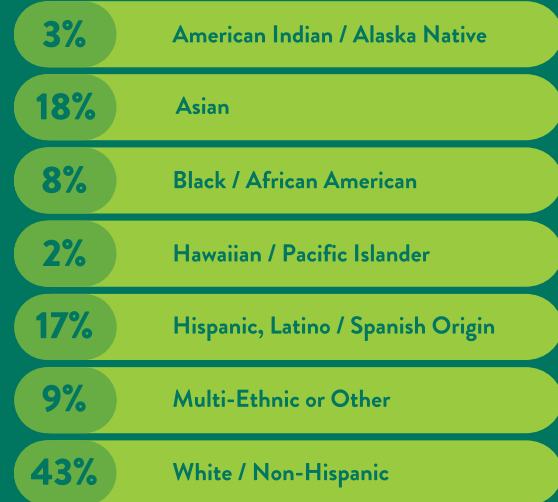
2% not at all important

Data based on 2025 Audience Surveys.

## COUNTY OF RESIDENCE/ EMPLOYMENT



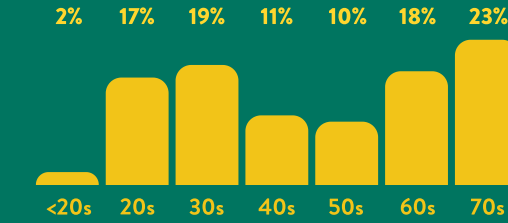
## AUDIENCE IDENTIFIES AS



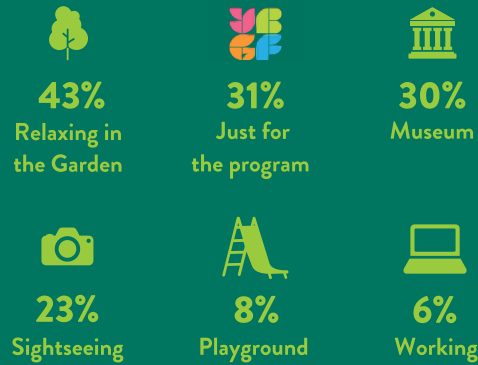
## DISABILITY



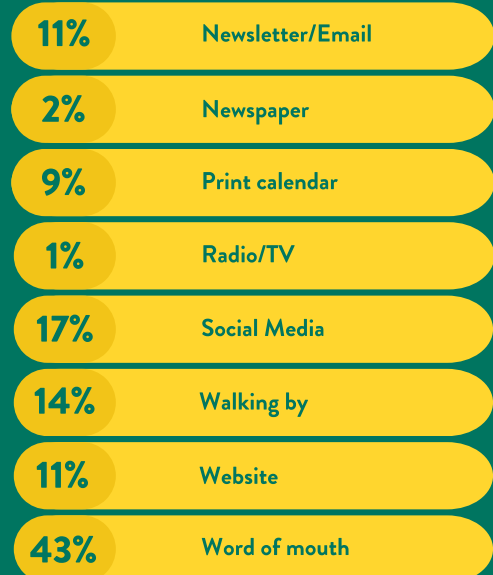
## AGE



## DAY'S OTHER ACTIVITIES



## REFERRED BY



## GENDER



## ECONOMIC IMPACT



## AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

*"It was so much fun dancing in a non-judgemental zone."*

*"Helps to revive downtown. Fosters a sense of community... Happy to donate to keep YBG Festival going."*

# 2025 SEASON ARTISTS

826 Valencia Students  
Aideed Medina  
Aleah Bradshaw  
All Nations Dance and Drum  
Aroma  
Arriane Del  
Arun Ramamurthy Trio  
Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center  
B DeVeaux  
Bateria Batuki  
Bay Area Tumbao All Stars led by John Calloway  
Bean Tupou  
Bia Ferreira  
Blood Moon Orchestra  
Cael Dueñas-Lara  
Calvin Kai Ku  
Camellia Boutros  
Camilo Garzón  
Caterpillar Puppets  
Celeste Aguilar  
Charles Orgbon III  
Charya Burt  
Chocolate Platinum  
Cianga  
Circus Bella  
Circus Bella All-Star Band  
Combo Chimbata  
Community Music Center Neighborhood Choirs  
Cuicacalli Ballet Folklórico  
Cynthia Lin  
D. Kaur  
D'mani Thomas  
Dani Offline  
Darnel Alexander  
David Herrera Performance Company  
David Le  
Dee Dee Simon  
Del Sol Quartet

Desirae Harp  
Destiny Muhammad  
Dholrhythms Dance Company  
Diego Plascencia-Vega  
Dillon Vado  
DJ Charlotte K  
DJ Eryka  
DJ ET IV  
DJ Marcus Rosario  
DJ Margarita Azucar  
DJ Wonway Posibul  
Do What I Want  
Dos Pogi Boys  
Dragons Dance  
Eddie Madril  
Emaye  
Ernesto Olmos  
Gamelan Sekar Jaya  
Giovanna Lomanto  
Helixir  
I Remember that Song! Team  
In'Lakech  
Jamey Williams  
Jeremy Landicho  
Jess Bozzo  
Joe Bataan  
John Calloway  
Johnny Nguyen  
Josh Marquina  
Juliano Wade  
Ka-Hon  
Kaisahan of San Jose  
Kariktan Dance Company  
Kaylan Black  
Kev Choice  
Kevin Madrigal Galindo  
Khalewasn  
Kūpaoa and Mark Yamanaka

Kurt Tijamo  
Kyle Limin  
L. Frank  
La Doña  
La Santa Cecilia  
Lady Bianca  
Latin Jazz Youth Ensemble of San Francisco  
Laurel Chen  
Lavay Smith & Her Red Hot Skillet Lickers

*"It is such a blessing to be able to bring this beautiful group of humans together to share a vision and a collective sound together with the community. And I thought the logistics went so smoothly too...we're grateful!!!!"*

- Meklit Hadero  
Movement Immigrant Orchestra

*"We had a great time, performing my own project at the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival with all those great musicians is definitely the highlight of my career."*

- Saúl Sierra

*“Thank you for providing us a platform to uplift indigenous voices, practices and inspirations. It’s been a pleasure co-dreaming these past couple of years. We did it!”*

- Eric Solano  
Parangal Dance Company

*“Event team was amazing and so friendly and patient. Everyone and everything was top notch! ... No room to walk between the colorful blankets, everyone sitting next to one another –a huge giant patchwork blanket of joy and aloha covering the garden lawn—simply wonderful!”*

- Kumu Hula Patrick Makuakāne  
Nā Lei Hulu I Ka Wēkiu

Parangal Dance Company, Oct 4

LeGiana  
Lucía  
Mabuhay Folkloric Society  
Madam Z  
Madison Lauren  
Madison McFerrin  
Mahsa Vahdat & Marjan Vahdat  
Malvika Raj  
Manilatown Ancestral Ensemble  
Marcus Shelby Orchestra  
Mare  
Mariachi Feminil Orgullo Mexicano  
Marina Hernandez  
Maurissa Brown  
Menat  
Michela Marino Lerman  
Miss Viva La Glam  
Monica Ascencio  
Movement Immigrant Orchestra  
Mukethe Kawinzi  
Mykah Montgomery  
Nā Lei Hulu I Ka Wēkiu  
Naima Shalhoub  
Nia McAllister  
Nia Politan  
Orchestra Gold  
Orquesta Akokán  
Paloma Flores  
PUSH Dance Company  
Quinn Edlin  
Rahni NothingMore  
Raye Zaragoza  
Red Panda Acrobats  
REYES Dance  
Rhythm & Motion  
Rhythm Monsters  
RhythmALlogy  
Risa Padilla  
Saúl Sierra  
SF Mime Troupe  
SF Salsa Academy

Sheena Lokelani  
Shirely Kazuyo Muramoto  
shivani narang  
Snaxx  
SNJV  
SOL Development  
St. Bede Catholic Music Ministry  
Starya  
Stephanie Reese  
Steven Espaniola  
Stoneface  
Sundra Manning  
Tall Tee  
Tamaka Bailey  
The Nit Pickers  
The Osada 3  
The Seshen  
Tiffany Austin  
Tila Pia  
Tom Rigney & Flambeau  
Toninho Horta  
Top Shelf Classics  
Trio Guadalevin  
Tyson Check-In  
Ukulenny  
Unique Derique  
Vân-Ánh Võ  
VEN Trio  
Vietnamese Educational & Cultural Association  
Vina Morales  
West Coast Caravan of Allstars  
Winnama Ba-Kay Yachma Pomo Dancers  
Xiao Zhang  
Xiuhcoatl Danza Azteca  
Rolando André López Torres  
Román Luján  
Roselía Valentine  
SAMMAY Peñaflor Dizon  
Samora Pinderhughes  
Sarah O’Neal  
Sassi Fran

# RENTALS PROGRAM



In addition to our artistic programs, YBG Festival manages some of the largest and most complex private rentals that use outdoor public space in San Francisco. From global conferences drawing tens of thousands of attendees, to small film shoots, each event brings vital economic activity to downtown. In 2025 our experienced team managed:

- 19 private rental events,
- Drawing over 136,000 attendees, with
- Clients ranging from local arts nonprofits to Fortune 500 companies.

The income from private rentals at Yerba Buena Gardens is reinvested directly back into free arts programming and contributes to Gardens maintenance, safety, beautification and capital improvements, thus ensuring that the vision of the activists who fought for a beautiful arts park for all in the heart of San Francisco continues to be realized.

*“Team, thank you soooooo much for such an amazing event! I’ve gotten nothing but great feedback and the client was happy so we did what we were supposed to do! From Day 1 you all have been amazing partners to work with and I couldn’t have asked for a better team.”*

- Loryn Wellman  
Senior Event Manager, EEG

*“As we tend to specialize in large scale events we particularly appreciate their organizational skills, level headedness and partnership in all aspects of event execution. Feeding 15,000 guests in an hour presents its own challenges and the Yerba Buena Arts & Events team makes it possible for us to do our jobs well. We cannot wait to work with your fantastic team again soon!”*

- Global Gourmet



Photo by Nix Guirre

# FUNDERS & SPONSORS

We are grateful to the generous funders and donors who support our programs!



Adam Keats  
 Alan Crockett  
 Alleluia Panis  
 Alma Kamal  
 Anand Swaminathan  
 Andrew Klutey  
 Borenstein-Strauss Family Fund  
 Angelo Granadeno  
 Anne French  
 April Hamilton  
 Atambir Rao  
 Ava Tong  
 Barbara Jue  
 Ben Pimentel  
 Benita Benavides  
 Benita Finley Purifoy  
 Doris Flaherty & Jennifer Norris  
 Catherine Cusic  
 Chi-Hsin Shao  
 Choon-mun Hooi  
 Cornelius Moore  
 Elizabeth Biasca  
 Daniel Kline  
 Darlene Tong  
 David De la Torre  
 Debbie Sommer

Deborah Badhia  
 Destiny Muhammad  
 Diana Dorinson  
 Diana Gonzalez-Morett  
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 Noel Voskuil  
 Paci Hammond  
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 Pamela Kramer  
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 Robert Fitch  
 Robert Kim

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 Rosemary Jarrett  
 Sandra Gonzalez-Morett  
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 Terezita Romo  
 Tessa Weston  
 Thomas Eusterbrock  
 Thomas McAninley  
 Thomas Simpson  
 Walter Panzar  
 William Carney  
 William Magid

# 2025 FESTIVAL TEAM

*\*Affiliations for identification purposes only*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Aaron Grizzell (President)  
*NorCal Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr  
Community Foundation*

David de la Torre  
*Arts Consultant*

Elaine Elinson  
*Educator/Writer*

Elizabeth Gessel  
*Museum of the African Diaspora*

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Al Levitt  
*Manatt, Phelps & Phillips LLC*

Jennifer Norris  
*Arts Advocate*

Julie Pollock  
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*CHS Consulting Group*

Sylvia Sherman  
*SF Community Music Center*

Judy Tsang  
*Independent Television Service (ITVS)*

Helen Sause  
*(Emeritus in Memoriam)  
Retired SFRA*

## ARTS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Renée Baldocci  
*Producer, Arts Consultant*

Peter Bratt  
*San Francisco Native Village Project*

Mario Garcia Durham  
*Arts Advocate*

Greg Landau  
*Music Producer, Educator*

Chelis Lopez  
*KPOO-FM*

Bill Martinez  
*Attorney, Producer*

Alleluia Panis  
*KulArts*

Anastasia Powers Cuellar  
*Brava Theater Center*

John Santos  
*Musician, Producer, Historian*

Cynthia Taylor  
*Educator, Vocalist*

Roberto Gutiérrez Varea  
*USF Perf. Arts & Social Justice Dept.*

Dina Zarif  
*Artist & Red Poppy Art House*

## CURATORS & CONSULTANTS

Marcus Shelby  
*Resident Composer*

David Herrera, Raissa Simpson, Ashley Gayle  
*YBG ChoreoFest Curators*

Nia McAllister  
*Poet-in-Residence*

Del Arts Consulting  
*Grantwriter*

Marshall Lamm  
*Promotions & Public Relations*

Crosby & Kaneda CPA

Michelle Markey  
*Accountant*

Creative:MINT  
*2025 Campaign Design*

Jim Watkins  
*Photographer*

Tom Ehrlich  
*Photographer*

RAPT Productions  
*Videographer*

Audio Production Group  
*Sound Engineering*

Bill Martinez  
*Stage Management*

## STAFF

Linda Lucero | *Executive/Artistic Director*

Cristina Ibarra | *Managing Director*

Steve Cho | *Events Director*

Marcelo Avilés | *Director of Programming*

Laura Paule | *Communications Director*

Mari Garcia | *Office Manager*

Preston Justice | *Senior Events Manager*

Crystal Watts | *Special Events Coordinator*

Nix Guirre | *Marketing Coordinator*

## EVENT STAFF

Brett Abramson      Aracely Lopez

Rafael Sarria      Karina Lopez

Jason Del Rosario      Carlo Ricafort

Linda Fung      Tatianna Steiner

Lily Gee      Robin Silver

Elena Kobylina      Conrad Talamantes

Cindy Kuang      Christopher Wise

Mika Lemoine      Hannah Woolfenden

Michael Leo      Roger Young


Zel Farrell-Alvarado      Vicky Bhundhumani

Dominic Cheng

# NOTED BY THE 2025 PRESS

San Francisco Chronicle

## Why Yerba Buena Gardens Festival's 25th season provides S.F.'s best blueprint for downtown revitalization



EAST BAY TIMES

## El Cerrito's Vanessa Vo awarded Taproot Fellowship for traditional music

Emmy-winning performer of 16-string Vietnamese zither to play Aug. 2 in concert at S.F. Yerba Buena Gardens Festival



1 of 2  
El Cerrito's Vietnamese musician and composer Van Anh Vanessa Vo has worked with the Kronos Quartet, Yo Yo Ma, Oakland Symphony, numerous jazz artists, pop artists and others. Vo was recently honored by the Alliance for California Traditional Arts with a 2025 Taproot Fellowship, which she is using to help fund an upcoming "Viet Day" concert at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Gardens Festival.

KQED

## 15 of the Best Outdoor Festivals in the Bay Area This Fall



Performances at the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival are always free. (Courtesy: Yerba Buena Gardens Festival)

### Yerba Buena Gardens Festival

Through Nov. 1  
Yerba Buena Gardens, San Francisco

This series of live shows has a little bit of something for everyone, including poetry with *Nia Pearl*, a performance by the *Pirangal Dance Company*, puppet shows by *Joe Lovin* and music from the likes of *Samara Finberg-Gibson* and *The Marcus Shelby Orchestra*. Held in the open grounds between the Metreon and SFMOMA, the series concludes with a "Halloween Hoopla" event.

SFGATE

## BCNARTS: Best Bets: Movement Immigration Orchestra Plays Free Yerba Buena Gardens Festival Concert



Movement Immigrant Orchestra plays a free Yerba Buena Gardens Festival concert on Sept. 27, 2025 in San Francisco, Calif (Movement Immigrant Orchestra via Bay City News)

Matthew Murphy/Movement Immigrant Orchestra

TimeOut SAN FRANCISCO

## These are the 57 best things to do in San Francisco

The city of San Francisco has much to offer every kind of visitor (or resident!), so plan your adventure now.


### 2. Yerba Buena Gardens Festival



What is it? A festival with more than 100 free performances from May to October, held at Yerba Buena Gardens.

Why go: There's a great time brewing in downtown San Francisco, with outdoor music, theater, dance, poetry, circus feats and children's programs. This month, check out:

48hills  
Independent San Francisco news + culture



## Under the Stars: Madison McFerrin brings free soul back to SF, alongside The Seshen

### MADISON MCFERRIN AND THE SESHEN AT YERBA BUENA GARDENS FESTIVAL, SAT/24

We want to inform everyone that some free live music concerts taking place this summer in downtown San Francisco do not feature EDM DJs. Unusual, right? Many thanks to YBGF for bringing no-cost soul music back to Cloud City.

San Francisco Chronicle

## Día de los Muertos: Spiritual reunion of the living and the dead marks a first in S.F.

By Warren Pederson, Staff Writer  
Updated Nov 2, 2025 12:00 a.m.



SECRET SAN FRANCISCO

## This Popular SF Park is Hosting a Free Screening Of Hit Musical "Wicked" Next Month

San Franciscans can enjoy an outdoor screening of the hit musical this June in San Francisco. Here's what to know about the exciting event.

By Dana Klym - Staff Writer | May 23, 2022



Yerba Buena Gardens Festival is in full swing with a packed calendar full of dance classes, free performances, and many more exciting community events. This year, the festival is hosting a special outdoor movie screening of the hit musical *Wicked* for free.

50 Exciting Things To Make The Most Of San Francisco With Kids



SF Uke Jam, Aug 3



Giulio Xavier Cetto, Sep 18



Samora Pinderhughes, Sep 20



In'Lakech Dance at YBG ChoreoFest, July 19



Joe Bataan, May 17



Combo Chimbita, Aug 7



Halloween Hoopla, Nov 1



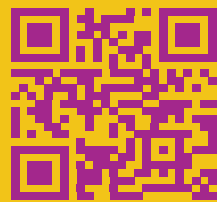
Lucía, Oct 2



Bia Ferreira, Sep 25



Pride in Yerba Buena!, June 28



ybgfestival.org