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Press photos: <https://dancemissiontheater.org/press/> and by request

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Pictured: Arenas Dance Company (Susana Arenas Pedroso, center); Brooke Anderson, photographer

**Dance Mission Theater, in partnership with Eastside Arts Alliance, presents
ARENAS DANCE COMPANY in**

¡Eso sí!

Más que bailar en Cuba bailaremos por Cuba

One thing's for sure: We don't just dance in Cuba, we dance for Cuba

A new dance work by the celebrated AfroCuban company, Arenas Dance Company, that looks at immigration, Cuba, and Afro-Latinidad, and celebrates the 20th anniversary of award-winning director Susana Arenas Pedroso's arrival in the United States.

**October 6, 2019 – EastSide Arts Alliance, Oakland
October 11-13, 2019 – Dance Mission Theater, San Francisco**

For tickets and information: <https://dancemissiontheater.org/> or 415-826-4441
Tickets: \$18-\$27

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (August 1, 2019) - *Eso sí*, Arenas Dance Company's latest work, celebrates the 20th anniversary of choreographer and director Susana Arenas Pedroso's arrival in the United States and her contributions to the Bay Area as a lead artist and cultural bearer of Afro-Cuban dance, rhythms, songs, and stories. The evening-length work, performed to both live drumming and recorded music, features Afro-Cuban folkloric and popular dance, incorporates movement and text, and integrates the sacred and the profane in Cuban culture.

Eso sí, which loosely translates to "that's it!" or "one thing's for sure!", tells the story of a dancer in Havana who is preparing to go on tour to the United States with her dance company. We watch as she rehearses, packs luggage, and says her goodbyes. After giving oftrendas or offerings by Havana's Malecón to Yemaya (the orisha or deity of the sea) so that the journey is blessed, she arrives in San Francisco, where there is temptation to defect.

Pedroso collaborates with storytellers and percussionists weaving together text, movement, and song with 12 dancers and five additional musicians. She calls on the strength of the *mujer*, flipping stereotypical images frequently seen in Cuban popular dances (e.g. the gossip, the flirt) and reclaims them. She calls on her own Lucumí spiritual practice, using its cultural legacies and mythologies to ground the piece. And, she calls on her ancestors, and all those that have crossed seas before her. As the subtitle suggests, *más que bailar en Cuba bailaremos por Cuba*, this work goes beyond just dancing in Cuba. Instead, we dance for Cuba. You can leave a country, but it never leaves your heart.

Says Pedroso: "*As this current administration is actively undoing much of what we worked so hard to achieve, I can't help but wonder, as an Afro-Latina, how my immigration story would be different if it happened today vs 20 years ago.*"

The performance will be held over two weeks at Eastside Arts Alliance (October 6, Sunday at 6pm) in Oakland and also Dance Mission Theater (October 11-13, Friday-Saturday at 8pm and Sunday at 6pm) in San Francisco.

ABOUT ARENAS DANCE COMPANY AND SUSANA ARENAS PEDROSO

Founded and directed by Susana Arenas Pedroso, Arenas Dance Company's mission is to preserve and promote the rich and diverse Cuban folkloric and popular (i.e. social) dance traditions – from the percussive Arará to the sensual Rumba to the energetic Palo – making it accessible to wide audiences via performances and classes. Born from a commitment to educate and enrich the communities in which Ms. Pedroso lives, Arenas Dance Company inspires the hearts and minds of its audiences in the way it brings the history of Cuban dance, music, and culture to life.

Pedroso is an internationally recognized Cuban Folkloric and popular dancer. Born in Havana, Cuba, Pedroso began her career in dance at age twelve, studying at La Casa de Cultura de Matanzas and at Conjunto Folklorico Nacional in Havana. She danced professionally for 17 years in Cuba with popular, folkloric and theatrical performing groups, including the famed Raíces Profundas. Since her arrival in the United States in 1998, Pedroso has performed and choreographed numerous pieces that have been exhibited throughout the USA, Mexico, Cuba and Hong Kong with a number of companies. She starred in the show, *Jarocho*, which toured throughout Mexico in 2007.

Pedroso formed her own dance company, Arenas Dance Company in 2004, a company that has expertise in both folkloric and popular Cuban dance traditions and has performed at venues such as War Memorial Opera House, Dance Mission, ODC, Palace of Fine Arts, Chico State, Yerba Buena, Herbst, Laney, Great American Music Hall, MACLA, MOAD, and La Peña Cultural Center, to name a few. The company frequently performs in the Black Choreographers, CubaCaribe, Salsa/Rueda, Stanford Jazz, and SF Ethnic Dance Festivals. Pedroso was awarded “Best Choreography” from World Arts West for her piece, Dos Aguas. Arenas Dance Company’s first evening length show, Yo Soy Cuba (I am Cuba) was enthusiastically received in San Francisco and sold-out all four performances. By the request of the community, the music and dance extravaganza was remounted the following year for four encore performances and won an “Izzie” for best individual performance. Pedroso was recently awarded a competitive Gerbode Award for a piece that will debut in 2020.

Arenas Dance Company is celebrated for the way it tells story through choreography and plays with rhythm, using poetry, song, and movement in new and exciting and contemporary ways - even when working in an ancient (but still very much living) form.

ABOUT ELIZABETH SAYRE (musical director / lead drummer)

Elizabeth Sayre (musical director / lead drummer) is a local artist. She has been playing Afro-Cuban bata (a drumming form traditionally played by men) since 1994, and has studied with many masters of the form in the US and Cuba—her primary teachers were/are John Amira, Orlando Fiol, Lazaro Pedroso, and Amelia Pedroso. She has been accompanying Afro-Cuban folkloric dance class with master Cuban dancer-choreographers since 1999, and has worked in this capacity with former members of Yoruba Andabo, the Conjunto Folklorico Nacional de Cuba, Cutumba, Afro-Cuba de Matanzas, and Raices Profundas. She currently accompanies class and performs with Susana Arenas Pedroso in the Bay Area, and is a key force among women students and players of the Cuban bata drums in the U.S. In addition to the bata, she also plays congas and Brazilian percussion, Elizabeth has studied, played, taught, documented, written about, organized events around, and successfully sought funding for traditional arts and artists since 1997.

ABOUT DANCE MISSION

Dance Mission connects and empowers diverse Bay Area communities and artists through dance and dance theater, including the production of new works, instruction, and performance. Dance Mission is an artist-driven, feminist organization dedicated to building community, exploring issues of social justice and cultural identity, promoting inclusivity and fairness and creating a more peaceful world through collective action inspired by dance.

CREDITS

Eso sí is made possible with support from the Zellerbach Family Foundation, California Arts Council, CA\$H Grant: a project of Dancer’s Group, and Dance Mission Theater and Eastside Arts Alliance.

Tickets are priced at \$18-\$27 and are available online at <https://dancemissiontheater.org/>

Video: <http://bit.ly/dirt2019>

Hi-Res Photos are available for download at: <https://dancemissiontheater.org/press/>

Website: <https://dancemissiontheater.org/> or <https://arenasdancecompany.com/>

CALENDAR LISTING

“But if you had to choose one unforgettable number, it would be Arenas Dance Company — an all-female Afro-Cuban troupe working strongly from Yoruba spiritual traditions.... I have never seen dancing more fearsomely beautiful.” – Rachel Howard, SF CHRONICLE

DANCE, THEATER, MUSIC, PERFORMING ARTS

WHAT:

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Eso sí!

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WHO:

Arenas Dance Company

WHEN / WHERE:

Oct 6-13, 2019

EastSide Arts Alliance:

October 6: Sunday at 6pm

2277 International Blvd, Oakland, CA

Dance Mission Theater

October 11-13: Friday-Saturday at 8pm, Sunday at 6pm

3316 24th Street, San Francisco, CA 94110

TICKETS:

\$18-\$27

BOX OFFICE:

<https://dancemissiontheater.org> or 415-826-4441

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Stella Adelman, stella@dancemission.com or 415-826-4441. Please contact for interviews

VIDEO:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9rRXXQJak4&feature=youtu.be>

Hi-Res Photos are available for download at:

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WEBSITE:

<https://dancemissiontheater.org/> or <https://arenasdancecompany.com/>