

April 2, 2019  
For immediate release

Contact: Andrew Wood 415-399-9554 (o)  
415-305-1102 (c)  
[andrew@sfiarf.org](mailto:andrew@sfiarf.org)

# San Francisco International Arts Festival Presents an African Diaspora Perspective on ***THE PATH TO DEMOCRACY***

## Calendar Editors Please Note

### SFIARF 2019 Calendar Listings

**Who:** Jessica La Rel, *Us in the U.S.*, Brian Copeland, Abdul Kenyatta, ABADA Capoeira SF

**What:** San Francisco International Arts Festival

**Where:** Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture

**When:** Thursday May 23 – Sunday June 2, 2019

**Tickets:** \$15 - \$38

**Box Office and Information:** [www.sfiarf.org](http://www.sfiarf.org) or 415-399-9554

## Photo Images Available On Request

**San Francisco April 2, 2019:** The theme for this year's San Francisco International Arts Festival (SFIARF) is ***The Path to Democracy***. Artists from the Bay Area and 12 countries will gather at the **Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture** to present work that speaks to issues of democracy and the incremental steps of getting there...including in the United States.

The 2019 program includes five projects led by artists representing the African Diaspora in the disciplines of dance, music, theatre and spoken word. Festival director Andrew Wood commented on the African perspectives being offered as part of this year's program. "What is really special," he noted, "is the diversity from within the African American community. Not just in terms of the types of work they represent, but also in age, gender, interests and subject matter they cover and their respective world views--that show myriad angles and approaches to the concept of democracy."

One of the Festival's opening concerts on Thursday May 23 is singer and songwriter **Jessica Lá Rel** who combines storytelling and "cinematic soul" to talk about life, love, and justice. Jessica will present a powerful program from her newly released album *War Love*. Still a young woman, La Rel is already a seasoned industry professional—singing since she was 10 years old and with a recent degree from Stanford University.

Another recent group of graduates this time from CSU East Bay is **Us in the U.S.** a performing arts ensemble who will present a world premiere of a piece titled ***Shifts in Consciousness*** that comments and reflects on the issues that confront a new generation of Americans.

A much loved mainstay of the African American theatre and comedy scene, **Brian**

**Copeland** returns with his powerful work *The Waiting Period* a solo theatre piece that examines issues of depression in Brian's own inimitable on-stage rapid-fire way.

And (even senior to Brian!) the irrepressible and brilliant **Abdul Kenyatta** will launch the San Francisco manifestation of the *Speakeasy Spoken Word Series* featuring 10 poets and spoken word artists from the length and breadth of the Bay Area.

Finally, still acknowledging the pride and ferocity of the *quilombos* and Maroon cultures throughout the Americas, artistic director **Marcia Treidler** leads the organization she founded—**ABADA Capoeira San Francisco**—back to SFIAF with *Spirit of Brazil 2019* – a full 13 years after the company first made its Festival debut way back in 2006.

**The full list of artists from the Diaspora presenting work at the Festival this year (with links to their respective web pages for more information) is as follows:**

### **Jessica LÃ Rel**

***We Are (A Live Recording) (60 minutes, no intermission)***

**Gallery 308. Thursday May 23, 8:30pm. Tickets: \$21 - \$28.**

Join Jessica LÃ Rel and a full band for a live recording & concert of new music from her latest album, *War Love*. Weaving together music and storytelling, Jessica will be sharing music and stories about life, love and justice.

### **Us in the U.S.**

***Shifts in Consciousness (World Premiere) (75 minutes, no intermission)***

**Southside Theater. Friday May 24, 7:00pm; Sunday May 26, 6:30pm. Tickets: \$21 - \$28**

*Shifts in Consciousness* embarks on the creative journey of altering mainstream perceptions of oppressed people. The hope of this production is to enable viewers to think more critically and empathetically about injustice and the sufferings of an emerging generation. Love, power and healing will take place in this space.

### **Brian Copeland**

***THE WAITING PERIOD (2010) (75 minutes, no intermission)***

**Southside Theater. Saturday May 25, 8:30pm. Tickets: \$21 - \$28**

Brian Copeland has taken the personal struggles of depression and channeled them into *The Waiting Period*, a powerful solo show chronicling the 10 days he spent waiting for the permit to get the gun he needed to kill himself. With intense honesty and unrelenting humor, Copeland shares his insider's perspective on the deepest wells of depression.

### **Abdul Kenyatta**

***The Speakeasy Storyteller Series (120 minutes plus intermission)***

**Chapel. Friday May 31, 9:00pm. Tickets: \$13 - \$20**

The Speakeasy Storyteller Series is a new program founded by poet and storyteller Abdul Kenyatta as a forum for storytellers celebrating the art and craft of story-making. The Series promotes and encourages participation in storytelling and storytellers in the Bay Area- in a supportive atmosphere. The performance at the Festival on Friday May 31 will mark the Series inaugural San Francisco event.

~more~

**ABADÃ Capoeira San Francisco**

***Spirit of Brazil 2019 (2019, World Premiere) (60 minutes, no intermission)***

**Gallery 308. Friday May 31, 7:00pm; Sunday June 2, 2:00pm. Tickets: \$21 - \$38**

ABADÃ Capoeira San Francisco's Spirit of Brazil 2019 presents the artistic elements of Capoeira through a fusion of contemporary and traditional music, dance, and martial arts from Brazil. Presented by an international cast, the dynamic acrobatic and athletic movements, history and tradition, and heart-thumping rhythms will leave you inspired!

**The 2019 San Francisco International Arts Festival is funded in part by:** Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation, Trust for Mutual Understanding, WESTAF, Bernard Osher Foundation, Koret Foundation, Taube Philanthropies, Goethe Institute, Sam Mazza Foundation, Taiwan Academy, National Endowment for the Arts, Taiwan Ministry of Culture, Hong Kong Arts Development Fund, Canada Council for the Arts, Global Affairs Canada, Czech Ministry of Culture and Kulturstiftung des Bundes.

**~XXX~**