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## SF International Arts Fest is back for 2022 with rich lineup

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Kanukai Chigamba/Kiandanda Dance Theater  
Kiandanda Dance Theater will present “Religion  
Kitendi — Dress Code” in July as part of the San  
Francisco International Arts Festival.

By [Aimée Ts'ao, Correspondent](#) |

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There is much to celebrate in terms of local and international music, dance and theater when the San Francisco International Arts Festival presents its 20th season, June 11 through July 2.

The lineup includes Oakland’s Michelle Jacques with CHELLE! and Friends, her New Orleans Big Band, premiering her Daughters of the Delta, a rich musical collection that honors African American women composers and musicians hailing from Louisiana in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The works of these seminal songwriters became part of the backdrop to the Great Migration as Black Americans moved out of the South during the Jim Crow era.



Michelle Jacques and her CHELLE! and Friends  
outfit will perform a new work honoring Black  
women songwriters with “Daughters of the Delta.” (Shelley Ho/courtesy of Michelle Jacques)

Such artists as Becky Elzy and Alberda Bradford, Lil Hardin Armstrong, Lizzie Miles and many more are in danger of being written out of history. The genres of spiritual, gospel, jazz and the blues inspired Daughters of the Delta, which features original compositions and lyrics by Jacques and Cava Menzies, with new arrangements of traditional songs by Brian Dyer. It is meant to celebrate rich African American traditions and innovations.

SFIAF has received one bit of bad news. German multi-discipline performance artist David Brandstätter's appearance at the festival, originally slated for 2021, has been cancelled due to visa issues. He had been scheduled to perform the much-anticipated U.S. premiere of "FRE!HEIT," a dance, theater and music work centered on the theme of freedom.

Also in the festival, Kiandanda Dance Theater is set to perform "Religion Kitendi — Dress Code," a new work by Congolese choreographer (now Bay Area resident), Byb Chanel Bibene and composer Manolo Davila.

Using haute couture fashion to examine the prevailing legacy of the slave trade and European colonization of Africa, the evening-length work invokes the spirit of Congolese *sapeurs*, dandily dressed men and women who endeavor to survive economic hardship and political turmoil by feeling good in their attire, bringing affirmative feelings of prosperity and a sense of healing and belonging.

The San Francisco International Arts Festival is one of the few performing organizations to come through the pandemic without missing a season. Director Andrew Wood reduced the festival size for 2020 and took all the performances outdoors in late October at Fort Mason. The previous average of 50 companies and artists performing 100 concerts and recitals over 18 days, was cut to 19 performers in 16 shows during a single weekend, with full COVID testing and masking in place.

Last year, the festival moved from its usual mid-May slot to late October. Unseasonal rain storms necessitated that the performances move indoors with a short four-day notice. Dance Mission Theater and its nearly completed City Dance Studios came to the rescue with the needed performance space.

SFIAF will move to venues at San Francisco State University in 2023, so this is a transitional year.

"After two years of planning outdoor programs, we are very pleased to be going back into the theatre again," said Wood.

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## **SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL**

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**CHELLE! and Friends:** Presents Daughters of the Delta 8 p.m. June 11 and 2 p.m. June 12 at Plymouth Jazz and Justice Church, 424 Monte Vista Ave, Oakland; \$10-\$25

**Kiandanda Dance Theater:** Presents “Religion Kitendi – Dress Code,” 8 p.m. July 1-2 at ODC Theater, 3153 17th St., San Francisco; \$16-\$20

**Tickets and more information:** [www.sfiaf.org](http://www.sfiaf.org)

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