



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Carnaval San Francisco 2017 Celebrates  
“El Corazon de San Pancho -- The Heart of San Francisco”  
Memorial Day Weekend, May 27 & 28**

**John Santos, Blanche Brown, Jesús "Chuchito" Valdés Cortés, Jr. and More  
Slated to Participate in 39th Annual Festival and Parade**

SAN FRANCISCO (May 8, 2017) – This Memorial Day weekend, Carnaval San Francisco will celebrate “*El Corazon de San Pancho -- The Heart of San Francisco*” at its 39th annual two-day festival and grand parade celebration, May 27 & 28 in San Francisco’s Mission District, promoting diversity, inclusion and love – characteristics of San Francisco that organizers believe are the foundation, or “heart,” of the city.

Throughout the weekend, hundreds of Carnaval San Francisco dancers and musicians will come together to transform the Mission District into an enormous celebration featuring brilliant costumes, delicious food and artistry from Brazil, Mexico, Bolivia, Colombia, Trinidad, Tobago, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Guatemala, Africa, Chile, Haiti and more – mostly created by Mission District residents and Bay Area artists. The event draws a crowd of more than 400,000 attendees each year.

Seven-time Grammy nominated percussionist John Santos and longtime Carnaval San Francisco participant and dancer Blanche Brown will lead the grand parade on Sunday, May 28. Cuban pianist, composer and arranger Jesús "Chuchito" Valdés Cortés, Jr., will headline the two-day festival on Saturday & Sunday, May 27 and 28. Cortés, Jr. is the

third-generation manifestation of a Cuban jazz piano dynasty that includes his father, Chucho Valdés, and grandfather, Ramón “Bebo” Valdés.

Carnaval San Francisco organizers chose this year’s theme, “El Corazon de San Pancho - - The Heart of San Francisco,” to pay homage to San Francisco’s enduring legacy as a place that has always opened its heart to people from around the world. Some of its residents are economic or political refugees who came to San Francisco to find sanctuary. Others, from the hippies of the 1960s to members of the LGBT community, came to the city looking for love, freedom or the right to express themselves.

“San Franciscans built a city that values belonging, diversity, community-building, and multicultural arts,” said Roberto Hernandez, Carnaval San Francisco’s artistic director. “The ‘heart’ of this city is the value we place on culture, community and empathy toward one another.”

Carnaval San Francisco 2017 will take place a month before the city celebrates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its Summer of Love, and in honor of that milestone Carnaval San Francisco organizers plan to pay tribute to musical icons Carlos Santana and Jerry Garcia, both San Francisco natives synonymous with the 1960s counterculture movement.

This year’s theme also draws attention to the bond felt by residents, particularly during times of adversity. “We’re struggling with the city’s rising rents, evictions, displacement and limited access to economic opportunity,” said Hernandez. “An event like Carnaval San Francisco unifies the community and preserves its heart, soul and traditions. We’re recognizing that there’s a common struggle while promoting solidarity, compassion and creativity. We’re acknowledging that culture cures what ails us – ‘la cultura cura.’”

Carnaval San Francisco is organized by just five paid consultants but draws upon more than 500 volunteers passionately dedicated to cultivating and celebrating the Latino and Caribbean roots of the city’s Mission District.

**The Carnaval San Francisco Festival will be held Saturday and Sunday, May 27 and 28** from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Taking place on Harrison Street between 16<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> streets,

the Festival will feature a rich assortment of food, music, dance, arts, crafts and other fun activities and entertainment on several stages for people of all ages to enjoy.

The **Grand Parade** on **Sunday, May 28**, begins at 9:30 a.m. with a brilliant procession of contingents, most of which will feature beautifully adorned floats depicting rich multicultural themes and featuring performers who engage and entertain the crowds. Brazilian-style *escola* samba schools with up to 300 members dance through the streets in fantastic feathered headdresses or sweeping Bahia skirts, while Caribbean contingents perform the music and dance of the Bahamas, Cuba, Jamaica, Puerto Rico and Trinidad. Other parade groups include Mexican Aztec performers, traditional African drummers, Polynesian dancers, Japanese drummers, giant puppets and folkloric groups representing Guatemala, Honduras and Bolivia. **The Grand Parade will start at the corner of 24<sup>th</sup> and Bryant streets, proceed west to Mission Street, head north on Mission to 17<sup>th</sup> Street, turn east on 17th and conclude at South Van Ness.**

Admission to the festival and parade are FREE. Grandstand seating for the parade, located on Mission Street between 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> streets, is available for purchase online at [www.carnavalsanfrancisco.org](http://www.carnavalsanfrancisco.org). For more information and current updates about **Carnaval San Francisco**, please visit [www.carnavalsanfrancisco.org](http://www.carnavalsanfrancisco.org).

### **About Carnaval San Francisco**

Conceived 39 years ago by a group of local musicians, artists and residents eager to bring the spirit of Latin American and Caribbean culture to San Francisco, **Carnaval San Francisco** has grown to become the largest annual multicultural celebration in California. Carnaval San Francisco is supported by Brava! For Women in the Arts and San Francisco Grants for the Arts.

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