

Carnaval San Francisco Names Local Music Icon John Santos and Brazilian Powerhouse Dandha Da Hora as Grand Marshals for 2025 Parade Celebrating AfroMundo: African Diaspora in the Americas

With over 500,000 attendees, Carnaval San Francisco is the largest celebration of its kind on the West Coast

San Francisco, CA – April 21, 2025 – [Carnaval San Francisco](#) is bringing the soul, rhythm, and legacy of the African Diaspora to the forefront once again as it prepares to ignite the streets of the Mission District with talent, food, and fun this Memorial Day Weekend, May 24–25, 2025. This year's theme, "*AfroMundo: African Diaspora in the Americas*," celebrates cultural brilliance rooted in heritage across the Americas. At the heart of this year's celebration are two extraordinary cultural ambassadors: **seven-time Grammy-nominated Bay Area musician [John Santos](#)** and **renowned Brazilian dancer and vocalist [Dandha Da Hora](#)**, who will serve as Grand Marshals of the 47th Annual Carnaval San Francisco Grand Parade.

Each year, Carnaval San Francisco transforms 20 city blocks into a treasure trove of culture, music, dance, and unity — 2025 promises to be no exception. With over **70 dynamic contingents, thousands of artists**, and an audience of more than **500,000 revelers**, the event stands as the largest multicultural celebration on the West Coast, drawing visitors from around the world to experience the rich heritage rooted in the African Diaspora and expressed through the Americas.

"AfroMundo is a celebration of the heartbeat that connects continents," said **Rodrigo Durán**, Executive Director of Carnaval San Francisco. "In John Santos and Dandha Da Hora, we have two artists whose lives and legacies embody this very rhythm — local and global, historic and contemporary, spiritual and joyful."

About the Grand Marshals

A beloved San Francisco native and internationally acclaimed percussionist, **John Santos** has spent five decades preserving and innovating Afro-Latin music. Raised in a family of Puerto Rican and Cape Verdean roots, Santos' music is steeped in tradition yet speaks to the present. A respected educator, cultural scholar, and performer, he has graced stages with legends such as Tito Puente, Cachao, Dizzy Gillespie, and Carlos Santana.

"As an eternal student of life and music, it's an honor to be part of Carnaval San Francisco," said Santos. "This tradition honors the roots of Carnaval in the Americas by celebrating and empowering the community with creativity, resilience, inclusion, solidarity, and music that moves the world."

It should also be noted, Santos is a pioneer of Carnaval San Francisco, being one of the original organizing committee members in 1978 for the first parade around Precita Park that grew into the awesome current cultural spectacle it has become. He has performed in the Festival and Parade countless times over the decades.

Dandha Da Hora was born and raised in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, and brings with her the sacred and joyful spirit of **Ilê Aiyê**, one of Brazil's most important Afro-Brazilian cultural institutions. A master dancer, vocalist, and percussionist, Da Hora has dedicated her life to sharing the cultural brilliance of Bahia through performance and education.

"Being among thousands of performers, leading the parade is symbolic of my philosophy in life — to 'keep it moving' with joy and resilience," she said. "I'm grateful to Carnaval San Francisco for honoring this journey."

Parade & Festival Details

The **Grand Parade**, led by **John Santos** and **Dandha Da Hora**, will take place on **Sunday, May 25 from 10 AM to 2 PM**. The procession begins at the corner of **24th and Bryant streets**, moves west to **Mission Street**, continues north on Mission to **15th Street**, turns east on 15th, and concludes at **South Van Ness Avenue**. This spectacular parade is the culmination of Carnaval San Francisco's two-day celebration, bringing more than **3,000 dancers, musicians, and artists** representing the diverse cultures from **Brazil, Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panama, Colombia, Bolivia, Trinidad & Tobago, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador**, and more.

With dazzling floats, vibrant costumes, and non-stop movement, it is a living exhibition of unity, cultural memory, and African Diaspora influence. The recently crowned King and Queen of Carnaval, **Germán Tike** and **Zoel Esperanza** will also have a special float celebrating their artistry and spirit that won them this year's crown.

Festival on Harrison Street – Saturday, May 24 (11 AM – 6 PM)

The festivities begin the day before the parade. On Saturday, May 24, the FREE Carnaval Festival transforms Harrison Street (16th to 24th Streets) into a bustling outdoor celebration featuring: live music, DJ block parties, food vendors, artisan booths, and cultural activities.

Festival Highlights Include:

- [Wampi](#), Coming straight from Cuba – performing at **17th & Harrison Stage at 5 PM**
- [Camilo Lara's Mexican Institute of Sound](#) – rocking the **22nd & Harrison Stage at 5PM**

Carnaval is **free and open to the public**, welcoming all ages and backgrounds — from youth drummers to seasoned samba queens. But beyond the festivities, **Carnaval is more than a party**: it's a powerful economic engine, generating an estimated over **\$16 million** for local small businesses in San Francisco each year.

Parade Grandstand Tickets

To experience the parade up close, **Grandstand seating** is available along **Mission Street between 22nd and 23rd** for **just \$40**.

Purchase tickets online [here](#).

Note: Seating is limited. Free viewing is available along the entire route.

Support Carnaval

This iconic event is made possible through community support. Organizers encourage attendees to contribute:

“A simple \$5 donation from each Carnaval-goer would cover most of the costs of this spectacular event.”

Donate here: <https://givebutter.com/CasadeCarnaval>

A Home for Culture: Casa de Carnaval

2025 also marks the **first anniversary** of the **Casa de Carnaval** at **683 Florida Street** in the Mission District — Carnaval’s permanent home for year-round cultural programming, education, and community-building.

About John Santos

One of the world’s foremost exponents of Afro-Latin music, [John Santos](#) is a prolific composer, percussionist, and educator who has received accolades from institutions ranging from the **Smithsonian** to the **U.S. Congress**. He is featured in the PBS *American Masters* series and the documentary *Santos: Skin to Skin*. A former SFJAZZ Resident Artistic Director and U.S. Artists Fontanals Fellow, Santos continues to shape the musical landscape locally and globally.

About Dandha Da Hora

A native of Bahia, Brazil, [Dandha Da Hora](#) is a lifelong member of Ilê Aiyê and an acclaimed performer, educator, and cultural ambassador. Based in Santa Cruz, CA, she is the lead singer of the band SambaDá and has also shared the stage with musical icons such as Gilberto Gil, Angelique Kidjo, and Caetano Veloso. Her work bridges continents and generations, preserving Afro-Brazilian traditions while inspiring new audiences around the world.

Note to Editors:

[Dandha Da Hora Image](#) Photo Credit: Devi Pride

[John Santos Image](#)

2025 Carnaval Image Poster, [See and Download Image](#). Please credit Artist: Vanessa “Agana” Espinoza

For more information, visit www.carnavalsanfrancisco.org and follow Carnaval San Francisco on [Instagram](#); [Facebook](#); [YouTube](#).

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