

DATEBOOK

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Rashaad Newsome: "Bay Area arts in 2022 promise thrills, even with asterisks"

By Lily Janiak

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Sean San José during construction of Magic Theatre's new lobby in San Francisco. San José is the theater's new artistic director. The lobby features murals by the artist Mister Bouncer. Photo: Santiago Mejia / The Chronicle

As arts critics look ahead to 2022, the omicron variant has radically changed the picture.

A year ago, when The Chronicle's Datebook staff discussed how to write about the arts in the new year, we quickly realized that we were putting a lot of unfair pressure on 2021. We tried to write with self-awareness, but even so, it was hard not to hope, however foolishly, that something magical would happen at midnight on New Year's Eve and that the coming year's plays, concerts, movies and exhibitions would catch that spell.

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This time around, it's not that we're pessimistic, but we carry many dashed hopes with us. Just in the week between reflecting on the [past year](#) and now, as we look ahead to 2022, the omicron variant has radically changed the picture. A spate of canceled shows in New York City put us on the alert, and sure enough, a few companies — Berkeley Playhouse, Mark Morris Dance Group at Cal Performances, [Broadway SF](#) — soon truncated [Bay Area runs](#) of December shows or canceled productions altogether.



Rashaad Newsome displays his exhibition "To Be Real" at Fort Mason in San Francisco. Photo: Liz Hafalia / The Chronicle
2020

But if planned 2022 offerings from galleries, orchestras, music festivals and theaters all have additional asterisks affixed to their show schedules now, that doesn't make the plans themselves any less thrilling.

The electric performer Yuja Wang is slated to rejoin forces with [Michael Tilson Thomas](#) at the San Francisco Symphony (Jan. 27-29). Magic Theatre's [Sean San José](#) is poised to radically reimagine what a major local theater institution looks like. The Minnesota Street Project is beginning the fourth installment of its California Black Voices Project, this one focused on Rashaad Newsome (Jan. 15-Feb. 26). Noise Pop Festival (Feb. 21-27) once again will not be contained to one side of the Bay Bridge, with more than 100 acts at a range of venues.

Here's hoping 2022 can be a year of no artistic containment, in every respect.

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