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His and hers: John Duykers plays Mordake in Erling Wold's production during the SFIAF. (Photo courtesy SFIAF)

[The List](#)

SF International Arts Festival

By Robert Avila

In addition to bringing a host of worldwide performers to the Bay Area for the first time, the [San Francisco International Arts Festival](#) (May 2-June 8), now in its fifth year, has become an indispensable showcase for collaborative work by leading Bay Area artists and their peers across all manner of geographical, cultural and disciplinary borders. The more than 40 performances in this year's lineup, taking place at 14 separate venues across the city and in Berkeley, span the worlds of dance, music, opera, theater, visual arts and multidisciplinary work. The following four highlights are all hybrid productions with strong film and/or video components.

1. **Mordake** (May 22-June 7, 8 p.m., Shotwell Studios).

Ever since he came across 19th-century medical curiosity Edward Mordake in an issue of RE/Search Magazine, Bay Area composer and multi-instrumentalist Erling Wold has been fascinated with the story of a man whose otherwise normal features were marred by the presence of his "devil twin" on the back of his head. Mordake (who eventually took his own life) claimed the face haunting him so intimately was female and, while mute to the rest of the world, whispered evil words to him at night. A solo chamber piece written specifically for tenor John Duykers, with poet Douglas Kearney contributing the libretto,

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"Mordake" muses on the self-destructive danger arising from an inability to reconcile the various facets of our own psyche or soul. The world premiere of "Mordake" incorporates a synched film as well as an infrared camera attached to special software designed by German engineer Frieder Weiss, which together create an astonishingly lush interactive visual environment to blend with Wold's entirely (and uncharacteristically) electronic score.

2. **The Mapping Project** (June 5-7, 8 p.m., at CounterPULSE).

Created by Navarrete x Kajiyama, Element Dance Theater, visual artist Ilya Noe and animator Chris Lanier, this installation performance blends oral history, dance, theater, sculptural stage design and video projections into an exploration of mapmaking—while charting the alternately pinched and expansive contours such border-drawing lends our perceptions of the world and ourselves.

3. **thirty seven isolated events** (May 22–31, 8 pm, at CounterPULSE).

Just as "The Mapping Project" explores both the peril and potential in our penchant for mapping reality, Bay Area dancer-choreographer paige starling sorvillo collaborates in this world premiere with an international team of dancers and visual and music artists to negotiate the fine line in our image-mediated, globally networked lives between compassion and complicity in systemic violence. The piece, which derives its title from the average temperature (in Celsius) of the human body, makes use of interactive and immersive video imagery developed by Los Angeles-based media artist Lucy HG to produce an at times jarring, at times seamless overlaying of real and virtual bodies and spaces.

4. **The Angels of Sudjerac** (May 29 and 31, June 1, Dance Mission Theater).

Croatian American choreographer and former Bay Area resident Kate Foley, in collaboration with five contemporary dancers from Zagreb, bases this U.S. premiere in part on research into the 17th-century witch trials against the psychedelic shamanism of the cult healers of Janjina. Set to an entrancing score by rock guitarist Adam Semijalac, the piece blends modern dance and freely reconfigured folkloric traditions with filmmaker Tom Rukavina's projected dance footage, shot on location at Sudjerac and edited with jagged reference to both the natural landscape and the unnatural menace of a horror movie.