

San Francisco Chronicle

Musician's life brings more than passing interest in passing

By Leah Garchik
July 28, 2015



As colleagues at KGO-TV, Eric Christensen and John Turner — Eric was a sports producer, John a news editor/arts producer — shared a passion for exotic cultural phenomena. Retired, they've combined know-how with that passion to make the doc "Korla, the Movie," about organist Korla Pandit.

Turban-wearing Pandit, who said he was born in India, had his own TV show in the late '40s and early '50s. He was known for playing exotic "foreign" music. He was living in Petaluma when he died, in 1998. A subsequent magazine profile revealed that he was African American, born in Missouri.

A documentary about Pandit as an exotic performer — the likes of Yma Sumac — would be interesting at any time. But now, in the midst of a national discussion about identity

that intensified with the recent revelation that Rachel Dolezal had chosen to identify as black, the movie's tale of "passing" seems particularly relevant. It will be shown Aug. 20 at the Museum of the African Diaspora.

<http://www.sfchronicle.com/entertainment/garchik/article/Musician-s-life-brings-more-than-passing-6408502.php?t=0d56387a927bf3eaf9&cmpid=twitter-premium>