

## Albey Balgochian



I met Miguel at the Local 269 on E. Houston St. I was performing with Jane SpokenWord, and in the audience, there was this cat sitting at the bar who was digging it. He testified all night in his passionate poet voice... "Speak on Bass, Yes Poet," and towards the end of our set, I saw him heading to the stage, calling me "Bass... Bass... I want to do a piece with you!" He began to spit before he even reached the mic as I accompanied him with improvisations on bass. When he was done, he left the stage, walked by his bench, grabbed his jacket, and left. It would be several weeks before I saw him again. As it happens, I was walking home, and there in front of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe was

Miguel. I introduced myself and asked him if he wanted to hear the recording of what we did that night. Yes, he did want to hear it, but not before hustling me to buy his book. He listened intently to our piece; he turned and looked at me and said with wonder in his voice, "I let my breath go like that with you?!" We both laughed, and that was the beginning of our friendship. We talked about doing a project together, "so how are we going to do it?" he asked. I answered, "just like we did it that night at the club." I have accompanied many poets and spoken word artists on bass, and it is always a give and take of energy and emotion. We spoke on the phone nearly every day, it took a great many calls to finally arrive at the day that his "voice was right." I went to his apartment to escort him to my crib. We spent hours at my kitchen table, drinking wine, smoking, telling stories, and recording. He was elated with our project 'Soul to Sol,' and he arranged for us to do a cd release party at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe. His passion and artistic intensity, along with my bass improvisations, was pure synergy, a night among others of pure magic that I will never forget. His voice was lyrical, his poetry inspiring, engaging, and emotional. I am grateful for my friendship with the legendary Nuyorican Poet El Maestro Miguel Algarín. Knowing Miguel and sharing time with him was a gift from the Universe; the brilliance of his poetry, the man, the activist, professor, and advocate for the literary and performing arts enriched my life. His kindness, his inspiration, his sharing of spirit, and his volume of work will live on in all of our hearts. Rest in Poetry Miguel Algarín.

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**Albey Balgochian** has earned the reputation of respected bassist, improviser, and leader. He was house bassist for the original "House of Blues" and a longtime member of the 2-time Handy Award winner "Paul Rishell Band." A free-funk improviser he has performed and recorded with Miguel Algarín, Steve Dalachinsky, Yuko Otomo, Beat Poet John Sinclair, Min Tanaka,

Marshall Allen (Sun Ra,) Darryl Jones (Miles Davis, Rolling Stones) and Cecil Taylor's Trio & Big Band, which received All About Jazz Best Performances in '05, '09, and the Whitney Museum Retrospective of '2016. In addition to recording and producing a copious library of musical works, he has co-authored two books of poetry with Jane SpokenWord. His extensive body of work and his current projects are available on his website: <https://albeybalgochian.com>

"Be prepared to be touched in your soul" JazzdaGama