

## **Bobby Sanabria** **Miguel Algarín was the Ultimate Elegua**



A genius wrapped in the mind of a trickster, a leprechaun of the highest order. Some of the funniest things I've ever heard came out of his mouth. Particularly when he would be commenting in real time from the bar on the musical performances at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe or the poets who would recite on its sacred stage. Tinged with sarcasm, wit, and yes like Elegua, he was not shy about revealing his/the truth. The greatest gift he gave us was a platform to express our creativity when no platforms were available to us to express our own truths through the arts. The Nuyorican Poets Cafe is his legacy, it is our church, our mecca – it is the physical embodiment of the Nuyorican/African

American experience.

I remember one such occasion when he gave me the opportunity to express that truth as I put on a performance of what could best be described as an avant garde work that I created called, “Move Meets, Meets Move.” It involved a complex mix of multimedia – film projection and slide projection, poetry, dance, and of course a live performance of music. In this case my nonet Ascensión performing a Latin jazz score with the musicians also taking part as actors. It was successful from an audience standpoint as the NYRPC was packed. Miguel liked it, saw some potential, and called me the next day to discuss possibly taking the production to the next level. So he invited me to lunch at a high level Italian restaurant in Loisaida.

After a few pleasantries about the play, Miguel looked straight into my eyes and said, “I just want to know one thing. Have you ever had a homosexual experience before?” I said, “I see, this is the interview portion of the lunch.” I then laughed and said, “No, but that was a good try Miguel.”

Elegua had no finer a son.

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Bobby Sanabria is a 7-time Grammy-nominee as a leader. He is a master drummer, percussionist, composer, arranger, conductor, producer, educator, documentary filmmaker, and bandleader. He holds a BM from the Berklee College of Music and is on the faculty of the New School University where he has taught Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestras, passing on the tradition. He is the Co-Artistic Director of the Bronx Music Heritage Center and is part of Jazz at Lincoln Center’s Jazz Academy as well as The Weill Music Institute at Carnegie Hall. His latest

recording released in July 2018 is a monumental Latin jazz reworking of the entire score of West Side Story entitled, West Side Story Reimagined, on the Jazzheads label in celebration of the shows recent 60th anniversary (2017) and its composer, Maestro Leonard Bernstein's centennial (2018).