

## Carlos Manuel Rivera

### Two Poets, Many Adventures



In the 90s, in my back-and-forth years to New York, I met Miguel Algarín at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe where I went to see the play directed by him, *Shango de Ima* by Pepe Carril. Years later, when I finally established myself in the city, I began a big friendship with Miguel. I would say that it has been more than a friendship. Miguel became for me, a teacher, a mentor, a colleague, and a father. Since this reencounter until his death, we shared many adventures of life and art. First, he mentored and taught me about theater, poetry and the spoken word. We participated in many different events including poetry, theater, music, visual art exhibitions, and performance art shows. Because I am a performer, writer, and a professor like Miguel, we had many great conversations in many bars, restaurants, museums, theaters, parks, and beaches around the city: east side, west side, uptown, midtown, and downtown, Manhattan, Jackson Heights, Queens, Williamsburg and Fort Greene, Brooklyn, the Bronx, New Brunswick,

New Jersey at Rutgers University where he worked for more than 30 years. This made us flâneurs, bohemian artists and intellectuals around the city. More than that, around the nation! Our favorite bar in his last years was Karma. There we met almost daily for several years.

Miguel was in many different performances in which we performed together and which he supported. At other times we were spectators, whether he was working on stage or me. I remember many events at the Nuyorican Poet Cafe, the United Solo Performance Festival, the summer events at Orchard Beach by Lisa Centeno, events at the Latin American Poetry Festival, the Poetry Marathon by Colectivo Poetas de Nueva York, the exhibitions of El Museo del Barrio, exhibitions at El Taller Boricua, events in the Bronx Museum, plays at the Puerto Rican Traveling Theater and Pregones, poetry and musical events at Hostos Community College, the artistic and cultural events by Capicu Culture, and his visits to my Puerto Rican literature and Latino poetry courses at Bronx Community College, CUNY, just to name some.

I would have to say that Miguel Algarín was more than a writer and poetry movement founder of Nuyorican Art established by the Nuyorican Poet Cafe. Miguel, the poet, was a scholar, an intellectual thinker, and a professor. For these reasons, we had long conversations about Spanish, Latin American, and Caribbean literature. His vast knowledge amazed me with all of our discussions about a wide range of authors and artistic literary movements. He was passionate about Ancient Classic and Golden Age literature; discussing Homer, Virgil, Dante, Cervantes, Góngora, Quevedo, Lope de Vega, or Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. He also spoke with passion about the Latin American poets: Rubén Darío, Neruda, Vallejo. As he did about British and American writers, classical, modern, and contemporary. I would dare to say that Miguel Algarín

was one of the most erudite persons I have known within the Nuyorican Poetry Movement. The most significant aspect of this is that it makes him the father and founder of the Nuyorican Poetry Movement through the history of the Caribbean, Spanish, Latin American, and US Latin@ Nuyorican literature or, as I term it, the “Hispanic-Anglo literature” of the world.

Throughout all of these years, close friends who accompanied Miguel and me on these life and art adventures included: Nancy Mercado, Lois Elaine Griffith, Anita, Elizabeth Atnafu, Ra Anaya, Danny Shot, and Manny Lezcano. All of the artists and intellectuals in their own right. All of the mentees who Miguel supported in their artwork, scholarship, creative writing, and performances be they poetry, theater, dance, performance art, visual arts, literature, or costume design.

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**Carlos Manuel Rivera** is a Puerto Rican poet-performer, actor, Full Professor of Spanish at Bronx Community College, CUNY, and researcher. He won the First Prize in the International Contest of the Puerto Rican Institute of Culture, 2013 in the Essay category with the book *Para que no se nos olvide. Ensayos de interpretación sobre un teatro puertorriqueño marginal* (So we don't forget: Essays of interpretation of Puerto Rican marginal theater). Among his book's publications are, *Popular Theater: The New Poor Theater of America* by Pedro Santaliz. (Gestos, 2005) and *Soplo mágicos disparates. (Magical Non-Senses)* (Orbis Press, 2003). In addition, he recorded a CD of his Spoken Words *ASI MI NATION* (2010). Recently, he published the book *Bululú. Perfume y veneno* (Bululu. Parfum and Poison) (2020).