

West Side Story Reimagined in the Bronx: Now With Choreography



Maestro Bobby Sanabria leads the Multiverse Big Band in 'West Side Story Reimagined' at 52 Playground (photo: thisistheBronX)

by Gary Axelbank | June 3, 2019

Over the past 12 months, the Bobby Sanabria Multiverse Big Band has performed their [Grammy-nominated *West Side Story Reimagined*](#) at [Lincoln Center](#) and at the [Kennedy Center](#). But Sunday's showcase at [52 Playground](#) in Longwood that for the first time included choreography by [Danza Fiesta](#), might well have been THE command performance of a remarkable year for this remarkable work.



The Multiverse Big Band in 'West Side Story Reimagined' at 52 Playground (photo: thisistheBronX)

“It’s the best way I know to give thanks to the borough that has given me everything,” Sanabria told [thisistheBronx](#). “It’s my inspiration, my upbringing, my ethos. Every day I walk out on the street and the people of the Bronx inspire me.”



Bronxites enjoy Bobby Sanabria Multiverse Big Band perform ‘West Side Story Reimagined’ at 52 Playground (photo: [thisistheBronX](#))

Put on by [Casita Maria](#) and the [Bronx Music Heritage Center](#) with support from Councilman Rafael Salamanca, Jr., this fourth stop on the 2019 [South Bronx Culture Trail](#) brought out hundreds of Bronxites around an amphitheater in a park that was rebuilt by [52 People for Progress, Inc.](#) on turf that decades ago was [burnt out rubble](#).

“What you see here is what you get,” said James Melendez, who, with other [52 People for Progress, Inc.](#) members built this park. “But if you want me to put it into words, it’s just that people from the community can enjoy the park as well as keep our culture alive.”



James Melendez (C) and his buddies from [52 People for Progress, Inc.](#) who built 52 Playground on Kelly Street (photo: [thisistheBronX](#))

This, of course, is quite appropriate for *West Side Story Reimagined*, which portrays the tale of Puerto Rican migration and their fight for acceptance in New York City. Indeed this helped make it a special presentation for Maestro Sanabria who celebrated his 62nd birthday on stage in his hometown Bronx.

“At this point in my life what I’m doing is make sure that people, not only in the Bronx but all over the world, realize that the borough is really a special place,” he said. “As Dr. Mark Naison of Fordham told me, the borough, and particularly the south Bronx, has nurtured more forms of music than any other place in the United States. This show demonstrates that in full force.”



Danza Fiesta performs in 'West Side Story Reimagined' (photo: thisistheBronX)

Considering the live, intimate nature of the concert performed in a Bronx park, the addition of *Danza Fiesta* was a master stroke. This troupe that Sanabria calls the most accomplished Puerto Rican dancers in new York City, choreographed four of the pieces of *Reimagined* and at one point even brought members of the crowd to join them in a festive merengue.



Danza Fiesta performs in 'West Side Story Reimagined' (photo: thisistheBronX)

As he closed the show, Sanabria’s comments were as much about the people of the south Bronx who were amassed in front of him, as they were about the theme of Leonard Bernstein’s iconic masterpiece.

“We can win the struggle by making more beautiful art, more beautiful music, and more beautiful poetry as in this, our West Side Story,” he proclaimed.

Link: <https://www.thisisthebronx.info/west-side-story-reimagined-in-the-bronx-now-with-choreography/>