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## Demetrios Kastaris Merges Latin Jazz with Christian Music

Written by Robert Waddell

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To hear musician Demetrios Kastaris's playing, a listener is enveloped by a well tempered, controlled and powerfully graceful trombone punctuated with intense intelligence and playful sensuality. To be sure, Kastaris is a master musical dynamo who gives performances of clarity, originality and artistic beauty. Now, Kastaris merges his love for Salsa and Gospel music to create a new musical group.

Kastaris, who was born in Thessaloniki, Greece, moved to the United States when was 2- years-old. Living in Lorain, Ohio and St. Louis Missouri, Kastaris began taking trombone lessons and studied different musical styles while attending Affton High School. He went on to major in music education at the University of Missouri, St. Louis. After two years, Kastaris earned a scholarship to study at New York University, his bio reads.

He went on to earn a masters degree in Jazz performance at the Manhattan School of Music. Kastaris would go on to teach in New York City public schools. Developing an appreciation of Latin music and Jazz, Kastaris performed in concerts with Jimmy Heath, Slide Hampton, Phil Woods, Jon Faddis, and Red Rodney.

"Demetrios fell in love with Latin music when he heard Charlie Palmieri," said percussionist Angel Rodriguez, who was honored this year by Bronx Borough President Reuben Diaz, Jr. during Puerto Rican Heritage Month.

"He has mastered arranging, composing and playing in Latin music with some of the most outstanding musical arrangements," said Rodriguez.



## Video



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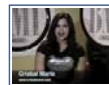
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"He studied at the best schools...His talent comes from years of studying, hard work and struggle in a world not his own. But love has a bigger plan for us. There is no tearing him apart from continuing to give to the world through his music."

In 1986, Kastaris formed "The Latin-Jazz Coalition" that continues a long line of big band and salsa orchestras that can swing. Like Larry Harlow, Kastaris is a non-Latino who has found his musical home and excelled as a master rumbero salsero. It was once said of late trumpeter Bix Beiderbeck that his music sounded like a woman saying "yes," and the same can be said of Kastaris's fine trombone virtuosity. Kastaris would become known amongst other Latin-Jazz musicians as "El Griego Rumbero."

On December 10<sup>th</sup> at Flushing Town Hall in New York City, Kastaris will unveil a new group Conjunto Kathari, which marries gospel and salsa music, at the concert "Afro-Cuban Fire, Spiritual Oil, and Greek Cookin'."

"We're excited," said Kastaris. "This is happy, lively music and the message in the gospel...spiritually uplifting with rhythm."

Kastaris sees no contradiction between merging sensual Latin beats with traditional liturgical Christian music. The word Kathari in Greek means pure and clean, which is the type of uplifting music Conjunto Kathari hopes to perform for audiences, said Kastaris. After 24 years of "The Latin-Jazz Coalition," Kastaris said that forming this new band is an organic development in his career.

Today, Latin Jazz and Salsa bands continue to be the places where the big band style of a large group still thrives. When Kastaris was a student at N.Y.U., someone noticed his trombone case and invited him to jam with their band. He became hooked to Salsa then Kastaris attended Salsa concerts to study how musicians like Tito Puente made their music sizzle so he could eventually do the same with his own music.

Kastaris called Salsa and Gospel both joyous forms that combined send a powerful musical message.

"There's nothing wrong with the Gospel wrapped in a package of happy music," he said. "This is not old fashioned music we bring. Music and every thing beautiful comes from the creator."

For more information about "The Latin -Jazz Coalition" and "Conjunto Kathari" concert, contact the Flushing Town Hall Box office at 718-463-7700 or log onto [www.flushingtownhall.org](http://www.flushingtownhall.org).

Hispanicize 2011

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**Bobby Sanabria** the son of Puerto Rican parents, was born and raised in the "Fort Apache" section of New York City's South Bronx.

Drummer, percussionist, composer, arranger, recording artist, producer, filmmaker, conductor, educator, multi-cultural warrior and multiple Grammy nominee – Sanabria has performed with a veritable Who's Who in the world of jazz and Latin music, as well as with his own critically acclaimed ensembles.

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## Spanglish

### Hangoteo

Hanging out, from "hangear," to relax with friends. "Me encanta el hangoteo en Nueva York."

### Mapo

From "mop," instead of trapo de limpiar, bayeta. "Dame el mapo para limpiar este fango."

### Frikiar

To freak out, alarm or amaze. "Me frikió esa película."

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