

31st Loisaida Festival Shines In Tribute To Puerto Rican & Lower East Side Resilience and Resurgence



[New York, NY] Rain or shine, the show must go on! And it did! Thousands came to Loisaida Avenue, in the Lower Manhattan's East Village to participate in the 31st Loisaida Festival this past Memorial Day weekend, on Sunday, May 27. The Festival was a resounding success, staying true to this year's theme "Bridging Resurgence: From Sandy to María." (To see a full photo recap of the day, [click here](#)). The opening Community Parade, the Theatre Lab, and the Main Stage musical line-up, emceed by Puerto Rican sonero and poet Flaco Navaja, and the vivacious singer and comedian, Jeannie Sol.

The Loisaida Inc. Theater Lab At La Plaza Cultural sponsored the New York City premiere of *¡Ay María!*, a play that offers a glimpse of the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, originally performed in all 78 of the island's municipalities. **Mezcolanza**, a cultural platform organized in 2013, co-produced the Theater Lab extravaganza. *¡Aye María!* was the centerpiece of a series of performances that explored the Puerto Rican experience post-Maria that culminated with the traditional **Cabezudo Pageant**, and a special tribute to the late Adela Fargas, a Puerto Rican Icon and creator of Casa Adela, a local eatery that has served the Loisaida community authentic Puerto Rican cuisine and culture for over 40 years.

The **2018 Loisaida Festival Main Stage**, co-hosts **Flaco Navaja and Jeannie Sol**, kept the crowd jumping to the rhythms of a Latin lineup that included the sounds of Plena (**Kinto Zonó**), Salsa (**Flaco Navaja & The Razorblades**), Cabaret (**Eduardo Alegría**), and Immigrant

Beat (M.A.K.U. Soundsystem), as well as a **special tribute to the Queen of Salsa, Celia Cruz, by the Palladium Mambo All-Stars.**

The Annual Community Victory Parade kicked-off the Festival as the rain came down on streets of Loisaida. **The Brazilian all-women Samba drum-line, Fogo Azul** (Blue Flame) led the parade of amazing creations of butterflies and other fantastical figures beating their drums to alert the neighborhood that the festivities were starting. East Village blog EV Grieve shared [photos of the parade](#), which left from Dry Dock Park at 11am. The whimsical procession made its way to the main stage, where **Jeannie Sol delivered a powerful rendition of the Puerto Rican national anthem, “La Borinqueña” and the Dorill Initiative, a group of local youth performed acapella, and danced to these voices of our future.**

Dozens of vendors lined Loisaida Avenue, among them, artisans, community organizations, a Healthy Living Zone, Eco Zones, Puerto Rican, Latin American and other ethnic cuisine, as well as the return of the BioBus, a mobile laboratory that gives children and adults alike the opportunity to learn about science in a fun and engaging environment.



"The Loisaida Inc. Center team continues to masterfully curate and produce this iconic Festival, which consolidates the loyalty that our local audiences, and visiting participants have towards it, as well as the pride, joy, and support they exhibit for this important annual cultural event and the quality and depth of the Loisaida programming—from the Community Parade, to the Main Stage, to the Theater lab—that is evident every single year, rain or shine."

—Libertad Guerra, Director & Chief Curator of Loisaida Inc.

Thank you Loisaida Inc. for celebrating nuestra cultura rain or shine today! The Loisaida Festival brought out our community and we are so proud to stand together today and everyday.

-Carlina Rivera, NYC Council Member District 2

“It’s just a historical context of the people who came here. Here, they [Puerto Ricans and Latinos] can play their music, they can eat their food, they can talk to their brothers and sisters and friends. It was like being back home at least for a little while.”

-Raul Russi, CEO of the Acacia Network, Inc.

The 2018 VIVA! Loisaida awardees were again recognized during the festival. Dr. Manuel Moran, Founder and Artistic Director of Teatro SEA; Aixa O. Torres, President of the Alfred E. Smith Houses Residents Council; the Rivera-Fargas family, owners of Casa Adela; and Damaris Reyes, Executive Director of G.O.L.E.S. (Good Old Lower East Side) were also honored earlier in the week at the Loisaida Festival opening reception, with the Office of Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez adding the Loisaida Festival and the VIVA! awardees into the Congressional Record.

Several elected officials were in attendance as well, including Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, New York State Assemblyman Harvey Epstein, and New York City Councilwoman Carlina Rivera. Former New York City Councilmembers Maria del Carmen Arroyo, and Melissa Mark-Viverito were also seen enjoying the festivities, along with Assemblywoman Carmen Arroyo, and Loisaida native and acclaimed actor/comedian, Luis Guzmán.

This year’s presenting sponsors for the Festival were Banco Popular and Acacia Network. Additional sponsors include: ConEdison, Matthijssen Business Systems, Lower East Side Housing Development Coalition, Unitedhealth, Wellcare, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

*Photographs by Melvin Audaz.

About the Loisaida Festival: Founded in 1987, the Loisaida Festival is the largest ethnic community pride festival in the Lower East Side, attracting over 25,000 visitors in 2017. The event takes place on the Sunday before Memorial Day, and has been featured in the New York Times, TimeOut New York, El Diario La Prensa, DNAInfo, New York Magazine, and Manhattan Times, among others.

About Loisaida Inc.: Founded in 1978, the mission of Loisaida Inc. is to address the serious economic and social disenfranchisement of Puerto Rican/Latinx residents while offering multi-generational programming that appeals to the social and cultural sensibilities of the Lower East Side. At the Loisaida Center, we build connections between members of the

community, learners, artists and scholars through original productions and exhibits, idea activation space for creative cross-training, community collaboration, artistic residency program, and the historic Loisaida Festival.

About Acacia Network: Acacia Network, the leading Latino integrated care nonprofit in the nation offers children to seniors, a pathway to behavioral and primary healthcare, housing and empowerment. Acacia Network's extensive array of community-based services is fully integrated, ensures easy access, is bilingual, and actively incorporates consumer and community level input. Our mission is to partner with our communities, lead change, and promote healthy and prosperous individuals and families.

#LoisaidaFest2018

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