



Professional Bio
www.deborahmagdalena.com

Deborah Magdalena was born into a very talented musical family. As the sister of Latin Grammy winner Nestor Torres and grandniece of legendary Puerto Rican singer Ruth Fernandez, it was in her blood to entertain friends and family from an early age with her spontaneous comedic sketches and dance numbers.

In the early nineties Deborah enjoyed a three-year stint as a student and apprentice for renowned actor and mentor Michael Beckett, under Uta Hagan's direction at Herbert Bergdorf Studios in New York City. Immediately after, she quickly accumulated TV and film credits, including *Sesame Street* (CTW), *Apollo Comedy Hour* (Tribune Entertainment), *The Newz* (Columbia-Tri-Star), *Safe Harbor* (Warner Brothers), *Striptease* (Castle Rock), *Holyman* (Caravan), *For Love or Country* (HBO) and *Billboard Latino* (Azteca America).

Hollywood was at her doorstep literally and figuratively on September 11, 2001, when a phone call from her best friend Tanya drastically changed the course of Deborah's life. She felt like her spirit was about to jump out of her body when she learned that Tanya's firefighter fiancé, Sergio Gabriel Villanueva, was down at the South Tower of the World Trade Center. During the yearlong journey of yearning to heal while learning to accept her family's loss, Deborah turned to writing poetry and launched a new career of performing her spoken word with vigor and pain at open mics across the country.

The process proved to be cathartic as she was reminded of how much she enjoyed the immediate audience response and impact, and subsequently, Deborah released two spoken word CDs- *Spoken Soul: A Survival Kit of Poetry* and *Deborah Magdalena LIVE*. In 2010 she released her first chapbook, *Heartbreak Haiku* to rave reviews.

In 2007, Deborah combined her bilingual hosting style with comedic and musical skills alongside DJ / Producer The Brass King, created a unique poetic cabaret show called *The Alma Lounge* which had a SOLD OUT six-month run at the notorious Miami Beach hotel, The Raleigh.

Understanding the power of the written and spoken word, Deborah's goal became to not only entertain but inspire others' self-healing through poetry with a comedic twist, and South Florida's arts community welcomed Deborah with open arms. In between her busy shooting and performing schedule she stayed true to her goal and found a deep passion for working with kids and women artists. With poetry in one hand and music in the other, Deborah set out to work with kids in after school programs funded by *Arts For Learning*, and personally authored an original poetic program called *After School Zen*, which she taught in front of 200 kids from first thru sixth grades.

In the spring of 2009, *The Dranoff 2 Piano Foundation* commissioned Deborah to workshop and produce *Piano Slam 2009 & 2010*, one of the *Adrienne Arsht Center's* community signature outreach programs. Piano Slam brings classical music and a poetry contest to inner-city middle and high school kids across Miami Dade County. The program culminates with a performance by poetry contest finalists accompanied by renowned pianists such as the internationally renowned piano duo Jeroen & Maarten Van Veen and the Wang sisters at the John S. and James L. Knight Music Hall in Miami, FL.

Continuing her work with high school students, in 2010 Deborah was commissioned by *National YoungArts Foundation*, the sole nominating organization for the *U.S. Presidential Scholar in the Arts*, to be one of their in-school presenters and programs assistant for their core program *YoungArts*. Since then she has inspired more than 2000 young artists and helped supervise various master classes led by the likes of Bill T. Jones and Robert Redford. In the summer of 2013 & 2014 Deborah was commissioned to work at the Creative Communications Instructor for Ailey Summer Camp Miami by The Alvin Ailey Foundation and the Arsht Center. There she taught underserved middle school students how to find their life's purpose through the art form of Spoken Word.

With a continued poetic force, Deborah was inspired by the healing power of the arts in women's lives and founded Spoken Soul Festival in 2008, an annual three day festival that supports women artists by helping them move from novice to professional artists. SSF coincides with *WomenArts'* international holiday SWAN Day (Support Women Artists Now Day). *WomenArts* has recognized the *Spoken Soul Festival - SWAN Day Miami* as one of the top five SWAN events worldwide because the festival is one of the largest SWAN events and one of the most effective in training and supporting the participating women artists. Since its launch in March 2008, the festival has been awarded proclamations from the City of Miami Beach, Miami Dade County and the City of Miami as well as a City Of Miami special City Seal. Featured artists have been commissioned or featured for shows during Art Basel - Miami, Gibson Guitar Showroom, New York Fashion Week, and Gen Art's Fresh Faces Miami.

Deborah was awarded the prestigious TAFARI Award 2013 for her work with women artists alongside the Mayor of Miami Beach Matti Herrera Bower and Founder of the First Modeling Agency in Miami Michele Pommier. In 2014 she was nominated for the Troy Poet Lewis Community Outreach Award by the National Poetry Awards.

Wanting to lead by example, Deborah still continues to create and bare her poetic soul. Inspired by theological experiences, love addiction, redemption from an emotional suicide, and 70's Latin Soul music, Miami-based Puerto Rican actress/poet Deborah Magdalena gave birth to **FUNKdalena**, her first album in 10 years:

"This is the first time I've written pretty poetry, funky poetry-- the kind of poetry that makes you want to dance and make the ugly FUNK face", proclaims Deborah.

Originally setting out to complete just an album, **FUNKdalena** organically evolved into a trilogy of works consisting of a short play *"LOVE ADDICT"*, one-act play *"FUNKdalena – The Goddess of FUNK"*, and *"DIOSA"* a musical.

Deborah's short play *"LOVE ADDICT"*, **FUNKdalena's** prequel, premiered to rave reviews during MICROTheater Miami Season 3 – fall 2012. Her one-act play **FUNKdalena** was awarded The Jenny Duany Light Bulb Fund Award from The Miami Light Project 2012.

Nominated by the Poetry National Awards 2013 as best album of the year, **FUNKdalena** is not just a mix of poetry and FUNK music-- **FUNKdalena** sets out to poetically inspire positive growth and change in the human soul, the stage, and dance floor.