

## Esos Huesos (Them Bones)

Horatio “El Negro” Hernandez, growing up in Havana, would cadge old x-rays from hospitals and use them to replace broken drum heads.

- The Boston Globe

He would play differently beating on a hip than he would on a knee, the former deep and visceral, the latter light

and flexible. Ribs would bring to mind his grandfather who'd broken six in a bar room brawl at seventy. When

rib x-rays began to crack beneath his pounding, he'd feel the old man's pain. His sticks would run up and down

the length of foot bones—on those nights his playing would devolve into a marathon where all he could do was put

one stick in front of the other until the club closed down. Shoulder blades would make his drum sound like castanets,

fingers like the clatter of bamboo chimes. Skulls brought out the best in him, made him play with intelligence and style

that complemented the balls of fire that were his hands. On other nights he responded to the names on the x-rays.

Silvana Fernandez's long, slim femur infused his playing with passion. Romario Diaz's dislocated shoulder

made his gestures loose and rubbery. The shattered skull of Ernesto Lopez led him on wild, uncontrollable solos.

Later, when he was famous and could afford real drumheads he missed the hundreds of companions who had accompanied

him to dim, dirty clubs, lent their bones to his music, felt the rhythms of his heart's soft tissue down to the marrow.

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