

## Cuban Artists Return To U.S.

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Queen of Carribean vocalists [Omara Portuondo](#) has been granted a visa by the Obama administration, making her one of the first Cuban artists to perform in the U.S. in six years.

Portuondo, who is most familiar to Stateside audiences as part of Cuban musical collective [Buena Vista Social Club](#), is scheduled to perform Oct. 20 at San Francisco's Palace of Fine Arts Theatre and on the campus of UCLA in Los Angeles Sept. 23.



The shows are in support of the singer's 2008 album, *Gracias*, which just picked up a Latin Grammy nomination for Best Contemporary Tropical Album.

The granting of a visa to Portuondo for the purpose of performing in the States is further evidence of efforts by the Obama administration to improve political and cultural relations between the U.S. and Cuba after more than 40 years of tension.

"José Martí, our great Cuban poet, once said that 'music is the soul of the people,'" the singer said. "Music is at the heart of every culture, something to be shared among all people, regardless of borders and politics. It has always been a universal language for people who might not otherwise understand each other. Perhaps, through these performances, I could be a goodwill ambassador between these two countries."



Portuondo's six-decade-plus career includes such highlights as dancing at Havana's Tropicana cabaret as a teenager, singing with her sister Haydee in Los Loquibambla and Quarteto Las d'Aida, recording and touring with Orchestra Aragón and of course participating in [Ry Cooder's](#) Buena Vista Social Club project, which propelled her to new heights of fame around the world.

The Latin Grammy Awards ceremony will take place Nov. 5 at Mandalay Bay Events Center in Las Vegas.

--Jim Otey

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