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**LEGENDARY CUBAN VOCALIST AND LATIN GRAMMY WINNER
OMARA PORTUONDO TO PERFORM IN THE U.S.A**

**CUBAN PIANIST ROBERTO FONSECA TO OPEN
IN SUPPORT OF NEW RELEASE, *AKOKAN***

New York, Washington, DC, Boston, Philadelphia, Miami

NEW YORK - Cuban vocalist Omara Portuondo, who scored a Latin Grammy Award for her 2008 recording, *Gracias* (World Village / Montuno) – and a Grammy nomination for the same recording, announced in early December – will bring her rich, soulful brand of jazz and balladry to live audiences in the United States as she embarks on a five-city tour in late February and early March 2010. Portuondo, an original member of the celebrated Buena Vista Social Club® – a group whose roots date back to the Cuban club scene of the 1940s before it gained international acclaim in the late '90s. She was the first Cuban artist in six years to be granted a visa to perform in the United States.

Pianist Roberto Fonseca, a rising star in the Cuban jazz scene, will open for Portuondo throughout the tour. Fonseca, whose musicianship has been heralded by the UK's *Evening Standard* as “muscular...percussively rhythmic and floatingly melodic,” is touring in support of his new recording, *Akokan*, scheduled for U.S. release on February 16th, 2010.

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The tour stops in five cities over eight days:

**2/23 Keswick Theater - Philadelphia 2/24 Lisner Auditorium - Washington,
DC
2/26 Sanders Theater - Boston 2/27 Town Hall - New York
3/2 Filmore Theater - Miami**

The travel visa granted to Portuondo – for the 2010 dates as well as earlier U.S. performances in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Las Vegas, where she became the first Cuban resident to appear on the Latin GRAMMYS – are an example of the Obama administration’s efforts to improve political and cultural relations between the U.S. and Cuba, which have been strained for several decades. The reviews of the fall shows were very positive:

“Portuondo’s most recent solo set ‘Gracias’ was one of last year’s best records and her 100 minute set in San Francisco showed that she’s an even bigger talent on stage.”

- Oakland Tribune, 23rd Oct 2009

“Portuondo’s contralto still registers as a formidably potent and emotionally limber instrument, telegraphing ruefulness or parental tenderness or swooning romantic fatalism.”

- Los Angeles Times, 25th Oct 2009

Born in Havana in 1930, raised on the rich sounds of North, Central and South American jazz and dance music, and seasoned by the often volatile political and social forces that have shaped her homeland over the past half-century, Portuondo has ascended to iconic status around the world. The *New York Times* review of *Gracias* noted that the years have done nothing to mitigate her vocal prowess: “Her voice...is rich, shapely, dynamic and still sultry.”

Initially a dancer during her teen years at the famous Tropicana cabaret, she launched a singing career with a group called Los Loquibambla, a combo that merged the sounds of bossa nova and American jazz. She later joined the Quarteto d’Aida, with whom she recorded and toured for 15 years before recording her first solo album in 1959. Later, despite the upheaval of the Cuban revolution in the late ‘60s and its aftermath in the ‘70s and ‘80s, she continued to forge a career as a member of Cuba’s high-profile Orchestra Aragón.

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Her career reached a new pinnacle in the late '90s via her impassioned performances on the Grammy-winning 1997 recording, *Buena Vista Social Club*. Propelled by this success, she has spent the past decade piling up awards and accolades from either side of the equator for a series of finely crafted recordings.

“It is the simple and profound things – life, love – that inspire me most,” she says. “Singing energizes me, and with this energy, I can introduce my culture and my roots to the world. Music is a part of nature, and a huge part of my life.”

Born in 1975 (also in Havana), Roberta Fonseca has been recording as a solo artist since 1998, and has toured with Portuondo numerous times over the past decade. The UK's *Independent* has praised his “elegant line and unhurried feel for time and space,” while *The Guardian* heralded him as “a fabulously gifted pianist, composer and bandleader.” In the span of a dozen years, he has crafted six albums and performed with numerous high-profile Latin and American jazz artists, including Herbie Hancock, Ibrahim Ferrer, Michael Brecker, Cachaito López, Wayne Shorter and many others.

Fonseca's new album, *Akokan* (the title means “heart”), showcases the percussive style that has become his trademark, and brings the energy, magic and improvisational prowess of his live show to the studio setting. In addition to the band that has accompanied him for twelve years, the album also features Cape Verdean vocalist Mayra Andrade and American guitarist Raul Midon.

Despite the breadth and depth of his resume, Fonseca manages to capture the scope of his musical vision in just a few words: “I'm enthusiastic to share this journey with my audience, wherever they welcome me.”

For more information regarding set times and ticket pricing:

www.ticketmaster.com/search?tm_link=tm_header_search&q=omara+portuondo

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