



Brief biographies of the musicians

Swami Jr (guitar and musical director)

Swami Jr first began guitar studies under the direction of Alfredo Scupinari at 12 years of age in São Paulo, Brazil. In the early eighties he formed the groups Purple Xoro and It Moves with Everything, with whom he achieved popularity in Europe that same decade. Swami Jr has worked alongside many Brazilian artists including Daniela Mercury, Elba Ramalho, Virginia Rosa, Tom Zé, and he has been a member of Chico César's group for a number of years. His first solo release was in 2000 with *Imã*, an instrumental record on which he performs with the saxophonist Mané Silveira. In 2006 he was nominated for the Latin Grammy Awards in the sound engineer category for *De uns Tempos pra Cá*, by the composer Chico César. Swami Jr began working alongside Omara Portuondo on *Flor de Amor* and since then the guitarist and musical director has become a key member in the singer's group. In 2007 he released his second solo album *Outra Praia*.

Swami Jr is the co-producer of Omara Portuondo's new album *Gracias*.

Harold López Nussa (piano)

Harold was born to a family of musicians in Cuba. His uncle is the renowned pianist Ernán López Nussa and his father is the drummer Ruy López Nussa.

As with all members of his family, there is Cuban and French ancestry in this young 24-year-old pianist's blood. Having trained in classical piano at the Amadeo Roldán academy, Harold followed modern music studies at the Instituto Superior de Arte. After displaying his skills in many classical piano contests, in which he received a number of awards, he began performing solo in various theatres in Cuba before achieving fame as a Cuban folk music and jazz performer alongside some of the island's best musicians.

In 2005, Harold won the piano contest in the prestigious Montreux Jazz Festival, heralding him as one of the latest up-and-coming stars in Cuban music and ensuring he would be called upon to perform in the jazz clubs in Havana and also at a variety of prominent festivals.

On his solo album *Sobre el Atelier*, which received a distinction in the Swiss piano festival contest, Harold presents a repertoire including his own compositions, Cuban folk music and standard American jazz tunes.

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Felipe Cabrera (double bass)

Felipe Cabrera is part of a generation of revolutionary composers and musicians who ventured for the creative freedom afforded by jazz as an artistic means of expression. His early experiences in the academic sphere focussed on classical music; however, it was discovering Orlando “Cachaíto” López and his flair for the double bass that led Felipe Cabrera to become partial to Cuban folklore and jazz. He went to great lengths to learn how to play the double bass on account of his longing to broaden his musical horizons. A chance encounter led Cabrera to cross paths with a talented pianist in 1984. He proposed that Cabrera join his group Proyecto, which subsequently achieved renown as the Cuarteto Cubano. The pianist was Gonzalo Rubalcaba. Cabrera played alongside the pianist, Horacio “El Negro” Hernández and Julio Barreto for some 14 years. During this same period he also came to share the stage with other musicians such as Tata Güines, Changuito Quintana, Sergio Vitier, Santiago Feliu, Frank Emilio Flynn, Roberto Fonseca, Roberto Caracés and Daphnis Prieto.

In 1999, Felipe went to live in Paris, one of Europe’s jazz capitals. There he had the opportunity to play alongside top artists including the Cuban pianist Alfredo Rodríguez and the percussionist Miguel “Angá” Díaz. His studio collaborations include his contribution to the first album from the group Orishas. Over the course of his career, Felipe Cabrera has played the double bass for a number of prominent figures including Patato Valdés, Jimmy Sabater, José Mangual Jr, Eddy Palmieri, Chico Freeman, Chano Domínguez, German pianist Sebastian Schunke and the African salsa group Africando.

Andrés Coayo (percussion)

Percussionist Andrés Coayo adopts a subtle touch that has turned him into one of the most sought after musicians among his country’s musical circles. Coayo joined Omara Portuondo’s group in 2003 having been a member of Roberto Faz’s orchestra, the Conjunto Casino, Yumurí y Hermanos, the group Mezcla and the band of the salsa star Isaac Delgado, with whom he recorded the album *Versos en el cielo*. Since then he has never been apart from the singer, who he has accompanied on stages the world over, earning him praise in international reviews. As a studio artist, the pianist has contributed to countless projects, many of which are part of the Buena Vista Social Club™ series.

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Rodney Yllarza Barreto (percussion)

Rodney Barreto began studying music at 9 years of age in the Guillermo Tomas School and for years he was a member of the Charanga de Guanabacoa children's orchestra, more popularly known as Los Arangoncitos.

The Canadian Jeff Goodspeed afforded him the chance to take part in the LOS PRIMOS project, with which several students from the Amadeo Roldán Academy were involved. Despite being very young, Rodney has performed with jazz groups such as Alexis Boch's Pasaje Abierto, pianist Rolando Luna's Nueva Luna Tropical Band and Bobby Carcacés' group, and he has likewise played with Conexión Salsera, Top Secret, Jorge Luis Chicoy, El Greco, and the singer and bass player Yussa. Between 2003 and 2006 he was also a member of Isaac Delgado's orchestra, performing on stages in some of the foremost cities in Europe and Latin America.

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