

# *Cuban entertainment legends: Rosita Fornés*

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Rosita Fornés was born in New York, USA, on February 11, 1923. She was brought to Cuba by her Catalan-born parents when she was 2. Her true name is Rosalia Palet Bonavia.. Rosita first won critical acclaim as a singer after winning the best prize at a widely-known Cuban talent contest, The Supreme Court of the Arts or *La Corte Suprema del Arte* in 1938. Rosita Fornés then became her artistic name.

From that moment on she became Cuba's most prolific, admired and maligned performer. She has been, throughout her brilliantly long career, the center of personal and political controversies. Her visit to the US in May to September of 1996, for instance, generated in Miami the largest and most politically heated press coverage that any performer (foreign or national) had produced.

Rosita was, in her younger years and well into her sixties, regarded as a sex symbol, as the unchallenged blonde goddess of Cuban show business, although her true weapons in this field have been her spell-binding stage presence, her unbending professionalism and a beautifully melodious singing voice. In fact her stage repertoire has included numerous full-length operettas and operatic arias.

In her twenties, already famous in Cuba, she traveled to Mexico where she became an overnight and lasting sensation. To this day, Rosita Fornes is received in Mexico as The Number One Show-Girl of the Americas or *La Primera Vedette de America*. In the forties and fifties she toured extensively throughout

Latin America, the US and Europe. In the latter part of the 1950's she became Spain's most popular stage diva, rivaling Spanish stars such as the younger Sarita Montiel.

In Cuba, her sold-out theater performances and countless TV appearances made Rosita the country's top female superstar for many years. She is a warm, witty, caring and very refined woman who, at the peak of the AIDS crisis, she would visit the sick and perform for them freely.

Asked today whether age worries her, her response is always the same: "Age is a state of mind". And she has proven it.

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