



## Olga Garay Nom to Head L.A. DCA

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by James Sims

Los Angeles' Department of Cultural Affairs might soon have a new General Manager, as Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has nominated Olga Garay to fill the position.

"I am thrilled to put forth such a visionary and inspiring leader as Olga Garay to head up the Department of Cultural Affairs," Mayor Villaraigosa said in a press release. "An internationally recognized dynamo, Olga will bring just the right mix of vision, knowledge and creativity that Los Angeles needs as we reaffirm our commitment to making this the arts and culture capital of the country." "This appointment should send a strong message to all Angelenos that we are ready to move forward quickly to build support around the arts, which are integral to our quality of life in Los Angeles." "With more than 20 years in the field, Garay comes to Los Angeles with a breadth of hands-on experience in the performing and visual arts, as a performing arts curator and grants program officer in the public sector and at a major foundation. As Program Director for the Arts for eight years at the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation – one of the country's largest performing arts donors with \$1.8 billion in assets – Garay planned, designed and managed the foundation's arts program. Working closely with artists and other stakeholders in theatre, jazz, presenting and multi-disciplinary arts-training institutions, she molded the Duke arts portfolio from its inception. Garay's innovative grant programs focused on supporting artists to develop new work, plug into residency programs and work in the community. More than \$145 million in grants were awarded during her tenure. In 1984, Garay was hired by the Miami-Dade Cultural Affairs Council to run an NEA-funded Neighborhood Arts Program and was soon promoted to Assistant Director of the council. In addition to her council duties, Garay was picked to coordinate the administration of a board appointed by the Miami mayor to plan and build what has become a \$400 million performing arts center in downtown Miami. As Director of Cultural Affairs at Miami Dade College from 1990 to 1997, she supervised three art galleries and curated a performing arts presenting program that cemented her reputation internationally. Under her watch, the program grew from an annual budget of \$200,000 to more than \$1.4 million. Her focus throughout her tenure was to incorporate underserved areas of the community into the arts program, while also establishing ties with artists and arts organizations in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. "I believe in infusing the arts throughout the life of every resident," Garay said. "And I think there is enormous potential for the department to galvanize the community, to engage Los Angeles' wealth of working artists, world class arts

institutions and to connect our creative economy with our vibrant neighborhoods." Since leaving the Doris Duke Foundation in 2005, Garay has served as a New York-based independent producer and performing arts consultant and is currently working with the Lincoln Center Festival to present its first major concentration of Spanish language theatre. She is also working in strategic planning for el Museo del Barrio and with several organizations such as the National Performance Network and the Maricopa County Partnership for Arts and Culture, among others. As General Manager, Garay – pending Council confirmation – will be in charge of developing a cultural master plan for the city and overseeing a full-time staff of 64 and an annual operating budget that totaled \$9.9 million in FY07. "Olga has a lively appreciation for the arts and artists. I see her nomination as a window of opportunity for us," Mayor Villaraigosa said. "Her task here is to nurture and develop a healthy arts ecosystem, an inclusive community that recognizes and supports any array of cultures, artists, communities and opportunities in the City."

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James Sims is a freelance writer for The Hollywood Reporter. Born and raised in Los Angeles, he has been a part of the entertainment industry one way or another his entire life. He spent a couple years hosting a morning radio show in South Korea before returning to Los Angeles to pursue a career as an entertainment journalist. James worked for various radio stations around California as well as worked a short while with Entertainment Tonight/The Insider. An avid musical theatre enthusiast, he is constantly traveling to New York to stay caught up with the latest happenings on Broadway. His next goal, to prove to the world that Los Angeles really does have some "high culture" left through shedding light on some of its prime theatre happenings. Although he is still trying to decide if David Zippel's lyrics from "City of Angels" hold any truth, "L.A., truth to tell, is not much different than a pretty girl with the clap."