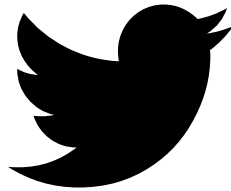


## WBGO

Published January 15, 2018 at 1:48 PM EST



LISTEN • 3:19



Ang Santos / WBGO

Page after page of paperwork is one of many hurdles a non-American recording artist faces coming stateside.

“US immigration law requires that somebody coming to the US to perform have an employment visa,” said Mathew Covey, immigration lawyer and director of Tamizdat, an organization that helps foreign artists address the hurdles presented by US Immigration policy.

“If you had the Rolling Stones come over and say ‘hey, I want a visa, we don’t have anything planned for the US’ that visa will be denied even though it’s the Rolling Stones if they don’t have anything booked. These are notoriously difficult to get. The fact that these are required has a significant impact on arts on the US.”

For that reason, coupled with others, Covey says many great overseas musicians will never get exposure in America.

“The US is not necessarily the easiest market to break into. Often times the tour routings are complex, big distances, and not getting paid very well. Especially if you have a career that’s doing really well in Europe, why even bother.”

Lucia Cadotsch, a Swiss-born singer now based in Germany is taking her first shot at performing for American audiences. It wasn’t long ago she had her reservations.

“It’s a dream for me that I come and play in the states,” said Cadotsch. “The stories I hear from my colleagues in Europe is that it’s so humiliating to do that process even when it works out. But you lose money on touring the states and then you ask yourself if that’s worth it.”

For Mexican percussionist Antonio Sanchez, coming to America has been a career long struggle, even now as a green card holder.

“It’s so troubling and enraging for me to talk about this. I was one of the lucky ones. I was a lucky one that got through and now I’m able to live here. I became a citizen. I was lucky to be in a family that had resources to send me here. But millions of people that would like to

try their hand just at coming and checking it out, not even staying, just coming to hear some jazz can't."

It's only gotten more difficult and expensive for international musicians to tour in America. It could cost up to 8,000 dollars to obtain a three-year visa.

Immigration lawyer Mathew Covey speaks for the musicians he works with.

"Visas are needed to perform in the US by foreign artists and they suck. We're trying to figure out how to deal with that system."