

BIOGRAPHY



SANDRA BESSIS

[Song of the sephardic judeo-spanish tradition
and associated repertoires]

Born Tunisian, **Sandra Bessis** lived successively in her native country and various countries before settling in France, where she has lived since the age of 18.

Parallel to her literary university studies, she studied singing, first with Suzy Sachs, later with Françoise Semellaz.

For several decades, she has been travelling the territory of Sephardic songs and Mediterranean music, performing on many stages and festivals, both in France and abroad, also working on various creations with other artists, on the theme of the encounter between the musical traditions of the Mediterranean basin.

Her first CD, from distant Spain, was released in 1992. With flutist John Mac Lean, she wanders through the repertoire of Judeo-Spanish songs, giving free rein to creativity and fantasy, playing on timbres and instruments.

Her fourth CD, *Entre deux rives*, is the result of a "live" recording at the Synagogue of Carpentras, with Rachid Brahim-Djelloul and Anello Capuano. Released in 2005, it acts as a kind of return to the roots, crossing Sephardic songs and other songs of the Mediterranean, Arab-Andalusian in particular.

In 2006, she created in Paris, with Rachid Brahim-Djelloul and Nouredine Aliane, a show mixing fragments of tales, Bouqalat, popular poems of the women of Algiers, fragments of stories, history, punctuating romances, kantigas and mouwachahat.

Wandering playing on the registers spoken, sung, played, traveling again the paths of transmission, from one shore to the other of the Mediterranean.

With the ensemble Naguila, she participates in the voyage de Sefarad, a show created in Montpellier in December 2009.

From 2010 to 2013 she was one of the two singers invited to Bratsch's latest creation, *Orient mon Amour*, melodies and poems from the Mediterranean shores. The show, which brings together 17 musicians around the poet Salah el Hamdani, was hosted between 2010 and 2013 by many French national stages.

Inhabited by the taste for words, the unveiling of the intimate word, she co-created in 2013 at the Théâtre de l'Épée de Bois, at the Cartoucherie de Vincennes, with Mireille Diaz-Florian and accordionist Jasko Ramic, the reading in music : *Tout chose au monde m'est nouvelle*, texts and poems by Aimé Césaire, Mahmoud Darwish, Saint John Perse, Anna Seghers, Sophie Bessis, Nancy Huston and Leïla Sebbar, and signs a little later a solo show between words and music, staging, in voice, a woman letting rise in her traces, shadows and perfumes of the Mare Nostrum, echoes and romances of the exiles, and some figures of women. Since 2015, this show, playing on intimacy with the public, has been hosted more than forty times in France and Italy.

Cordoba 21 – In the footsteps of Sefarad , released in 2014, is his fifth CD dedicated to these repertoires.

She brings around her Rachid Brahim-Djelloul on violin and voice, Noureddine Aliane on 'oud, mandola, Jasko Ramic on accordion, Yousef Zayed on percussion and bouzouk, Théo Girard on double bass and Araik Bakhtikian on doudouk ; for a new musical journey, free wandering in the Mediterranean Sea, playing with languages and their respective identities.

In December 2022, still at the Cartoucherie, with actress Fatima Soualhia Manet and musician Marius Pibarot, she staged *Ce que leur dit les anges*, a musical reading she conceived by bringing together the texts of Annemarie Schwartzbach, writer-traveler who died prematurely in 1944, and singer-poet Patti Smith.

Her concerts are an invitation to travel into the musical universe drawing on the sources of medieval Andalusia, then continuing to walk in the East that inherited its decomposition, as it resonates for us, here and now.

"Ample voice, shivering declamation, Sandra Bessis carries, in distant heritage, the Judeo-Spanish song of Muslim Andalusia ... Its song actually embraces the whole Mediterranean, because it is nomadic and ornamented." Liberation