

# Sandra Bessis

Born in Tunisia, where she spent part of her childhood, Sandra Bessis has lived in several countries before settling in Paris at age 18. Her university studies were simultaneously focused on literature and singing.

Since the late 80s, she has been exploring Sephardic music, has created several shows and participated in numerous cultural events and festivals. She is regularly invited to perform all over France, as well as abroad (Spain, Italy, Greece, Tunisia, Morocco, Switzerland, Germany, Croatia, the U.S...) and performs in a wide variety of venues to bring her chosen repertoire to life.

Sandra Bessis is also a guest performer in various music festivals, and actively performs in concerts with an array of musicians, whose backgrounds span Middle-eastern music traditions from Jewish to Muslim, the sacred to the secular.

Her first CD, *D'une lointaine Espagne*, was released in 1992.

Her fourth CD, *Entre deux rives*, released in October 2005, brings together Sephardic songs and other songs of the Mediterranean, including Arab-Andalusian traditions, with Rachid Brahim-Djelloul and Anello Capuano.

Accompanying herself on percussion, Sandra Bessis often sings intimate concerts joined by two or three musicians, or in larger group formations, venue-permitting.

Over the last several years, Sandra Bessis has dedicated herself to performing in a wide variety of festivals, and nurturing new works with other notable artists, in a program designed to share and explore Mediterranean musical traditions and cultures.

*Cordoba 21 - In the Footsteps of Sefarad*, released in 2013, is her fifth CD devoted to these repertoires. She brings together around her Rachid Brahim-Djelloul on violin and voice, Nouredine Aliane on oud and mandole, 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 around Mediterranean Sea.

Hailed by critics and the public, *Cordoba 21* was welcomed on many stages and festivals.

In 2013, she also created, at the Cartoucherie de Vincennes, with Mireille Diaz-Florian and Jasko Ramic, a musical reading, selection of poems by Aimé Césaire, Mahmoud Darwich and Saint John Perse, and texts by Sophie Bessis, Nancy Huston, Leïla Sebbar, Anna Seghers and Catherine Simon.

In 2015, she wrote and created the musical show *Mare Nostrum*, traveling stories and songs. A woman who lets traces, shadows and perfumes of Mare Nostrum, echoes and romances of the exiles, and some female portraits. Since then, this show, playing on intimacy with the public, has been hosted many times in France and Italy.

In 2021, she returned to musical reading and created, again at the Théâtre de l'Épée de Bois, at the Cartoucherie, the reading *What the angels tell them*, based on texts by Annette Schwarzenbach and Patti Smith, with Fatima Soualhia Manet and Marius Pibarot.

In 2023, she took over the direction of the Sephardic songs course at the International Institute of World Music (IIWM), in Aubagne.