

A Film by Roy Sher



Opening night Film 2011

# The Queen Of Rebetiko My Sweet Canary

A journey through the life and music of **Roza Eskenazi**

Sher Film and Music Productions presents 'My Sweet Canary' a production of Sher Film and Music in Co-production with IBA, ARTE, ERT and TAU with Haris Alexiou, Yasmin Levy, Mehtap Demir, Martha D. Lewis, Tomer Katz Live music recording Gidon Lev-Eli Music mix by Seslerrecords - Mmin Sesler and Nikos Tatasopoulos research and A&R consultant Takis Geros Soundtrack designer Ronen Nagel Editor Avishay John Cinematographer Daniel Bar Commissioning editors Itay Landsberg-Nevo, Madeleine Avramoussis, Iliia Papaspyrou Executive Producers Philippa Kowarsky, Elpida Markianidou, Assaf Mor Produced and Directed by Roy Sher

In Coproduction with



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My Sweet Canary // Presskit

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Opening Night Film 2011

# My Sweet Canary

Directed and Produced by **Roy Sher A Sher Music and Film production**  
In Coproduction with: **IBA, ARTE, ERT, TAU**

90' English, Greek, Turkish, Hebrew, Ladino with English subtitles,  
Israel / Greece / France 2011



**Roza Eskenazi** sang the way she lived, with passion, fire and love. This is the story of three young musicians from Greece, Turkey, and Israel, who embark on an exciting musical journey, to tell the story of Greece's best-known and best-loved rebetiko singer for the first time on film.

It's a journey that will take them from Istanbul to Thessaloniki and to Athens, following the musical trail she left behind. Most of all, it's a journey into a world that has largely vanished, but whose sounds continue to echo throughout the Mediterranean Basin.



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**Synopsis / My Sweet Canary** (A film by Roy Sher)  
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She was the most famous singer of the '30s in Greece and Turkey, the Diva of Rebetiko. With her posters displayed in every gramophone store, her Bohemian looks would drive even the toughest men crazy. (From the short story Roza, by Dinos Christianopoulos)

My Sweet Canary is an exuberant musical and cinematic journey across Greece, and Turkey in search of Roza Eskenazi, an artist whose music shaped the soundtrack of the region for almost a century. Three artists still devoted to her legacy will retrace her steps and perform her songs, as they delve into why Roza's music is still so relevant to them today.

Tomer Katz is an Israeli oud and bouzouki player. Martha D Lewis is a British-born Greek-Cypriot singer and composer. Mehtap Demir is a Turkish singer and musician. Together they will guide us through Roza's life story, which spanned most of the twentieth century. Her saga will be reflected in their own musical journey throughout the thriving rebetiko music scenes in Turkey and Greece. In each country they will meet with local musicians and give new relevance to Roza's songs, which can still be heard in the clubs and on the dance floors of Athens, Istanbul, Thessaloniki, and around the world. After all, this is music that transcends time, just as it transcends boundaries.

Along the way, we will uncover the story of a Sephardic Jew who was born in Istanbul, but went on to conquer Thessaloniki and Athens by the late 1920s. She was the first true star of rebetiko, and certainly the first and most frequently recorded. She leaves us a legacy of over 500 tracks, in Greek, Turkish, Armenian and Ladino. Her tragic story will be told by friends and family, by the musicians who accompanied her, and for the first time on camera, the biographer who wrote the only portrait of this artist, as a young woman and as a star.

Rebetiko, or "Greek Blues" as it is sometimes called, is a musical genre that lies at the crossroads of East and West, an apt reflection of the region in which it was born. It first emerged in the hash dens and prisons of Greece in the early years of the twentieth century, and went on to give voice to the common folk, caught up in the whirlwind of social and political changes that marked the era.

By telling the story of Roza Eskenazi, we will introduce the audience to a world that may have vanished but will not be silenced. By joining the three musicians in their quest for Roza's legacy, we will share in a bond that can only be possible through the medium of Roza's timeless music.

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## About Roza Eskenazi

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Roza Eskenazi, who was renowned as Greece's greatest Rebetiko singer, was an Istanbul born Jew, who immigrated to Greece, and, during the 1920's, was already recognized as a very talented performer of Rebetiko music. This was the beginning of a career lasting for half a century, during which, Roza sang and recorded hundreds of songs, in Turkish, Greek, Armenian and Ladino.

Roza Eskenazi was born in late 19th century Istanbul, as Sara Skinazi, to a Jewish family, originated from Spain. At a young age, Roza has emigrated from Istanbul to Thessaloniki, which was occupied by the Ottoman Empire, and started performing as a dancer in local clubs and cafés.

Roza's rise to fame began at the late 1920's, after she was discovered at a club in Piraeus by composer, and director of Columbia records in Greece, Panagiotis Toundas.

At the height of her career, during the 1930's Roza recorded 40 songs, in different musical styles (Rebetiko, Greek and Turkish folk songs, Island songs, etc.) each year, and performed not only in Greece, but in Turkey, Albania, Egypt, and the Balkan nations.

During the German and Italian occupation of Greece, Roza kept performing in Athens, while using her connections to assist the Greek resistance, as well as the Jewish community of Athens. She was eventually exposed and arrested by the Germans, but avoided being sent north to the concentration camps, thanks to her relationship with a senior German officer.

After World War II, during the 1950's, due to the declining of classic Rebetiko (Smyrneiko - "the song of Smyrna") in Greece, Roza embarked on tours both in Turkey and in the U.S.

Later, during the 1960's, Roza made new recordings of several of her old songs, and in the 1970's, after the fall of the colonels' regime in Greece, and the following increase in >>



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## About Roza Eskenazi

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Rebetiko's popularity amongst Greek youths, her career regained momentum - mostly thanks to new performances of her songs by young popular Greek artists, such as Haris Alexiou and George Dalaras.

Roza gave her last performance in September 1977, when she was about 80 years old. In the twilight of her days she suffered from Alzheimer's disease, before her death on 2/12/1980, at a private clinic in Athens. She left after her, a son and 3 grandchildren, and was buried in a cemetery at the village of Stomio, in the gulf of Corinth.

Roza Eskenazi will be remembered for posterity for the unique interpretations she gave to her songs, greatly influenced by her multi-cultural background.

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**Director's Statement**  
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It all began at a small club in Jerusalem. That's where I first fell in love with the sounds of rebetiko, the music that exemplifies the culture of urban Greece. And yet, it was an Israeli group that was playing, and the lyrics were in Hebrew. In 2004, I discovered the Queen of Rebetiko, Roza Eskenazi, while attending a tribute concert in her memory at the Jerusalem Oud Festival. A singer, Hadas Pal Yarden, performed a selection of Roza's best-loved songs and shared the story of her remarkable life.

The first song I heard was "Smyrneiko Minore," and I couldn't understand a word she sang. Yet still, the tremor in her voice as she sang "Aman, Aman" reminded me of Lady Day, whose music had been the soundtrack for all the most intimate, lonely moments of my life. The soulfulness that marked Billie Holiday's music echoed a life where profound sadness and unprecedented success were ultimately inseparable. As I listened more carefully, I found that rare combination of emotions in Roza's music too. I was determined to unravel the saga of her life.

It was no easy task. Eighty years after her flirtation with stardom, Roza has practically disappeared from the cultural canon of the region in which she saw her glory days. Few people today remember the name of Roza Eskenazi. And yet ... and yet so many young people in so many countries continue to dance to the sounds of her music, unaware of the artist herself and the life she poured into that music.

As my film began to unfold before me, I realized that it was inevitable that the songs would be more than just a soundtrack. They would form an integral part of the story that I wanted to tell.

I wanted to reflect the personal touch that Roza gave to her music back then with the personal touch that modern musicians give to her music today. In the eighteen months that I researched the film in Greece, Turkey, and the U.S., I met with Roza's surviving family and fellow musicians, with historians and musicologists, and with fans of all ages who shared my >>



enthusiasm for Roza and her work. It was the music that spoke the most to them, as it did to me. They understood Roza in ways that transcended the lyrics, whether they were sung in Greek, Turkish, or Ladino. It was as if they communed with Roza through the very timbre of her voice. Her music had become an international language that transcends all boundaries whether real or imagined.

It was then that I decided to tell Roza's story through the journey of three very different artists—from Greece, Turkey, and Israel—whom I met over the course of my own quest. The biographical portrait I had originally planned would be balanced and harmonized with a distinct musical path, sometimes playing in the background, sometimes surging to the forefront, but constantly present throughout the film.

I set off in search of Roza and believe that I have found her, but what I also found was a little piece of myself that sometimes seems to have gotten lost in the hubbub of daily life. I reconnected with the sights and sounds of the Mediterranean region that I call home, and most of all with the people of that region, diverse in their languages and their beliefs but united in their appreciation for the musical culture of the region, exemplified by Roza's music. Their goodwill and devotion to music has made this adventure possible for me, and I cannot adequately express my gratitude to them.

I encourage everyone to come see this film, to enjoy its music, and to attend the tribute concerts to Roza Eskenazi that will be launched around the world in 2011. I have just returned from a remarkable journey, and it is now my dream to share its sights, sounds, and scents with you.

Last but not least, thank you Roza. I know that you are still singing, wherever you may be.

Roy Sher  
November 2010

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**Curriculum Vitae**  
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**Roy Sher**  
Producer and Director

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Roy Sher is a producer and director of Fiction and Documentaries films.  
Born in 1977 in the city of Haifa, Israel, Roy studied at the Tel Aviv University film and TV department, in which he had directed a number of short Fiction and Documentary films.

Roy is operating from the Mediterranean city of Haifa, in which he had produced and directed the award winning short fiction film 'MAZAL', starring the acclaimed actress and winner of the best

actress award at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival, Hana Laszlo, which have won 5 international award for best short film and has participated in over 40 international film festivals.

Roy Sher is a member of the Israeli Director's union and the Israeli Documentary Filmmakers' Forum, the film 'My Sweet Canary' is his debut Feature film.

**FILMOGRAPHY**  
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**STATUE GARDEN**, Video, 18 min., 2006  
**MAZAL**, Video, 18 min. 2008, Screened at:

**AWARDS**  
.....

**24th International Haifa film festival**  
the JACK NAYLOR award for best short film

**7th Open St. Petersburg student film festival Beginning 2008**  
Grand Prize winner

**FIKE 2008 - Évora International Short Film Festival**  
International Federation of Film Societies:  
Don Quijote Award

**Oskariada film festival 2008, Warsaw, Poland**  
third prize winner

**2annas film festival 2008, riga, Latvia**  
Appreciation of creativity diploma

**30e Festival international**  
**Cinéma Méditerranéen Montpellier 2008**  
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**Curriculum Vitae**  
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**Philippa Kowarsky**  
Managing Director  
Cinephil Distribution & Co Productions  
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Philippa Kowarsky graduated with an M.A. in Communication Policy Studies, at City University of London. From 1993 she has been working in the Film & TV industry in various fields such as production, development and sales.

In 1997 Philippa established Cinephil, a sales and co-productions company. Today, Cinephil is a home to independent international productions, a contact for co-productions, introducing partners

from all fields in the industry and following through projects to their completion.

**Documentary films co-produced by Cinephil include:**  
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'**The Gatekeepers**' by Dror Moreh (in production) with Films du Poisson/Paris Cinema Jenin (in production) with Boomtown Media/Berlin, '**Women of Hamas**' by Suha Arraf, '**Defamation**' by Yoav Shamir, '**Flipping Out**' by Yoav Shamir '**Watermarks**' by Yaron Zilberman, '**Trembling Before G-d**' by Sandi Dubowski.

**Films distributed by Cinephil:**  
.....

'**Precious Life**' by Shlomi Eldar, '**A Film Unfinished**' by Yael Hersonski, '**Ingrid Betancourt Six Years in the Jungle**', by Angus Macqueen, '**Budrus**' by Julia Bacha, '**Thieves by Law**' by Alexander Gentlev, '**My Neighbor My Killer**' by Anne Aghion, '**Years of Blood**' by Dan Setton, '**Miss Gulag**' by Maria Yatzkova, '**Souvenirs**' by Shahar Cohen and Halil Efrat, '**9 Star Hotel**' by Ido Har, '**Cocalero**' by Alejandro Landes, '**No. 17**' by David Ofek, Ford Transit by Hany Abu-Assad and more.

**Cinephil exclusively represents documentaries by Amos Gitai**  
.....

Cinephil also makes feature films - co-producing and distributing them.  
Films co-produced by Cinephil:

'**Sweet Mud**' by Dror Shaul which won the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival 2007, the Crystal Bear at the Berlin Film Festival 2007, the Audience Award at the Miami Film Festival and Israeli Academy Award for Best Film 2007.

'**Someone to Run With**' based on the novel by David Grossman, by Oded Davidoff opening night film Jerusalem Film Festival.

**More information // [www.cinephil.co.il](http://www.cinephil.co.il)**



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**Curriculum Vitae**  
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**Elpida Markianidou**  
Executive producer  
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Graduated with a degree in Philosophy from the University of Ioannina. She furthered her studies, earning another two degrees in Person-Centered Approach Psychotherapy and an MA in European studies in Cultural Project Management. From 2000, she has been working in the entertainment and music industry in various fields such as production, production management, public relations and music consultancy. She had worked with leading Greek artists such as: Maria Farandouri, Dionisis Savvopoulos, Martha

Frintzila, Manolis Mitsias, Vassilis Papakonstantinou, Locomondo and Mode Plagal.

In 2009 Elpida established In Productions, a production company aiming to create a home for creative independent Film and music projects, developing and leading them to their successful completion.

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**My Sweet Canary** is Elpida's first feature film project as an executive producer. In addition to managing the film's production in Greece, Elpida has also taken part in the research that was conducted for the Film. Through In Productions, Elpida is currently managing the '**My Sweet Canary - world tour**' concerts that will take place during 2011 and 2012.



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**My Sweet Canary main credits**  
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**Director and Producer**  
Roy Sher

**Executive producers**  
Philippa Kowarsky,  
Elpida Markianidou,  
Assaf Mor

**Cinematographer**  
Daniel Bar

**Editor**  
Avishay John

**Live Music Recording**  
Gidon Lev Eli

**Soundtrack designer**  
Ronen Nagel

**Research and  
A&R consultant**  
Takis Geros

**Commissioning editors**  
Itay Landsber-Nevo, Madeleine  
Avramoussis, Iiia Papaspyrou

A production of  
**Sher Film and Music Productions**

**Co-produced with**  
IBA/ARTE/ERT/TAU

**Supported by**  
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The yehoshua rabinowitz tel aviv  
foundation for the arts- Cinema  
project, The Geshar multicultural Film  
Fund, The Misgav Yerushalayim Center,  
The Suleiman Demirel Foundation, The  
National Authority of Ladino, Movie-  
mobile, The Fini Runes Foundation, The  
Anna Havas scholarship Fund, The David  
Perlov Foundation. Developed in StoryDoc  
workshops 2010  
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**World sales:**  
Cinephil, [www.Cinephil.co.il](http://www.Cinephil.co.il)



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**Visit us at:** [www.mysweetcanary.com](http://www.mysweetcanary.com)  
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My Sweet Canary // Presskit

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**Festivals and awards**  
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**World Premiere**

Thessaloniki Documentary Film Festival- Opening Night Film 2011



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**My Sweet Canary on the Net**

**facebook**

[www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/My-Sweet-Canary-The-story-of-Roza-Eskenazi/151718158202278](http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/My-Sweet-Canary-The-story-of-Roza-Eskenazi/151718158202278)



[www.youtube.com/user/MySweetCanaryFilm?feature=mhum](http://www.youtube.com/user/MySweetCanaryFilm?feature=mhum)



[www.myspace.com/553427198](http://www.myspace.com/553427198)



[www.twitter.com/MySweetCanary](http://www.twitter.com/MySweetCanary)



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From the Press  
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# My Sweet Canary // Presskit

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## Concert Tour

- 1 To kanarini (Instrumental version)
- 2 Rambi / Mehtap Demir
- 3 Smyrneiko minore / Mehtap Demir
- 4 Jaco / Yasmin Levy
- 5 Evga psichi ap' to kormi / Mehtap Demir
- 6 Ime prezakias / Martha D. Lewis & Evelina Aggelou
- 7 Ginomai andras / Maria Koti
- 8 Hthes se ida methusmeno / Laterna & Martha D. Lewis
- 9 Aeroplano tha paro / Tatavla Keifl & Mehtap Demir
- 10 Ela na se kano makia / Maria Koti & Dimitris Mistakidis
- 11 Horepse mou tsifteteli / Mehtap Demir & Katerina Tsiridou
- 12 Elenitsa / Sotiris Papatragiannis
- 13 Pasatempos / Martha D. Lewis & Tomer Katz
- 14 Una Pastora / Yasmin Levy



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A Film by Roy Sher



The original live recordings soundtrack from the motion picture

# My Sweet Canary

A journey through the life and music of Roza Eskenazi



A Film by Roy Sher

The original live recordings from the motion picture

# My Sweet Canary

A journey through the life and music of Roza Eskenazi

[www.mysweetcanary.com](http://www.mysweetcanary.com)

Sher Film and Music  
productions





**My Sweet Canary //**  
**Concert Tour Press Kit**

'My Sweet Canary'// Concert Tour Press Kit

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**The 'My Sweet Canary' concert ensemble was established during the years 2009 and 2010 during the production of the Musical Documentary Film 'My Sweet Canary', a musical and cinematic journey through the life and music of the queen of the Rebetiko music, Roza Eskenazi, directed and produced by Roy Sher.**

The film follows three young musicians from Israel, Turkey and Greece, on a journey motivated by the influence of Roza Eskenazi's life, as an artist and as a woman, an influence that drew each one of them, for his own reasons, to play her music in his native country today.

In their musical journey throughout today's exotic Rebetiko scenes of Turkey and Greece, they met and played with acclaimed musicians and together performed in live and staged performances, new interpretations to Roza's borderless songs in exciting and colorful locations.

The My Sweet Canary tribute concert to Roza Eskenazi was born as the musical climax of the film and was based on a very simple idea: Gathering the best Greek, Turkish and Jewish musicians who are featured in the Film, and represent Roza Eskenazy's multicultural biography and repertoire for a special tribute concert to the music of Roza Eskenazi.

The original Concert premiered on March 16th, 2010 in the 'Stage', Thessaloniki, and is partly documented in the film. The original ensemble that played it consisted of the following musicians:





**My Sweet Canary //**  
**Concert Tour Press Kit**

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**Yasmin Levy //** Vocals  
**Mehtap Demir //** Vocals and Kemane  
**Martha D. Lewis //** Vocals  
**Maria Koti //** Vocals  
**Tomer Katz //** Oud and Baglama  
**Nikos Tatasopoulos //** Bouzouki  
**Dimitris Mistakidis //** Guitar  
**Ektoras Kosmas //** Violin  
**Hasan Sesler //** Percussion  
**Omer Raslan //** Percussion  
**Ramazan Sesler //** Clarinet  
**And Mumin Sesler //** Kanun and musical Director  
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The Film My Sweet Canary will be released world wide in spring and summer 2011. Along with the film's release, we will launch the 'My Sweet Canary' concert tour, with the musicians featured in the film, as well as other Musicians who will join the ensemble.

The My Sweet Canary ensemble consists of 13 acclaimed musicians from Greece, Turkey, Israel and the UK, including the great female voices from Greece, Israel and Turkey that will sing the greatest songs from the Roza Eskenazy's repertoire in Greek, Turkish and Ladino. The concert lasts around 2 hours, without intermission, and includes rare and archive footage of Roza Eskenazi, as well as scenes taken from the documentary Film.

2011 marks the 30th year to Roza Eskenazi's death. Her music still lives on and will always will. For Greek and Turkish music lovers, Rebetiko music lovers and of course- world music lovers, the 'My Sweet Canary' concert will be an amazing musical and sensual experience with the spirit of Roza Eskenazi.



My Sweet Canary //  
Concert Tour Press Kit



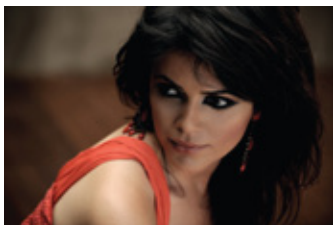


My Sweet Canary //  
Concert Tour Press Kit

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My Sweet Canary'- Roza Eskenazy tribute concert musicians'



**The fabulous Ladino singer Yasmin**

**Levy:** Born in Jerusalem in 1975, Yasmin Levy was introduced to Ladino singing and culture from a very young age. Her father was the leading figure in the world of

research into and preservation of the Judeo-Spanish culture, dating back to the 15th century in Spain. Today, it remains one of the most moving and romantic musical traditions of all times. [www.yasminlevy.net](http://www.yasminlevy.net)



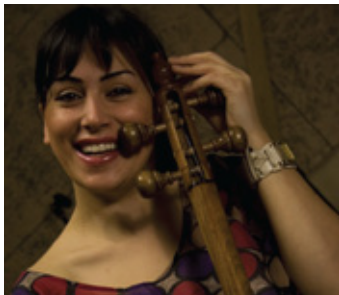
My Sweet Canary //  
Concert Tour Press Kit



**Greek singer and actor Martha Frintzila:** Martha was born Born in Eleusis, Greece (1972). She studied acting and singing and graduated from Veaki Drama School (1993). Since 1999 she is the director of "Dromos me dendra" theatre group. She collaborated with many

composers and artists such as Haris Alexiou, Maria Farandouri, Thanasis Papakonstantinou, Nikos Xydakis, Foivos Delivorias, Mode Plagal, Tania Tsanaklidou, Michalis Grigoriou, Lena Platonos, Stamatis Kraounakis, Alkinoos Ioannidis, Argyris Bakirtzis, Takis Farazis, Giannis Agelakas, Yorgos Christianakis, Vaggelis Fabas and others. [www.marthaf.eu](http://www.marthaf.eu)

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**Mehtap Demir** was born in Ardahan, east Turkey in 1978. She plays a Turkish music folk violin called Kemane, gourd violin, Bağlama (Saz), Rebab and Kemanche. She also sings all styles of Turkish maqam and folk music professionally.

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**Tomer Katz** is a graduate of the Rubin Academy for Music and Dance in Jerusalem and the founder of the 'Perach Adom' (Red Flower) band. The band has six members - a singer and five instrumentalists, who play authentic Rebetiko music, in a moving manner, only on acoustic instruments.



**My Sweet Canary //**  
**Concert Tour Press Kit**



**Martha D. Lewis** is a London based British Born Cypriot composer, musician performing and recording artist whose musical journey began on guitar at the age of 8. Significant landmarks in her early journey were leading her first semi-pro band at 14 and completing a B.A.(Hons) in Performing Arts at University. Martha went on to begin a career as a live session musician and vocalist in London.

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**Also featured in the concert are the following musicians**  
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Turkish Roman Clarinet **master Selim Sesler**  
Greek Bouzouki **master Nikos Tatasopoulos**  
Greek Guitar **master Dimitris Mistakidis**  
The concert is musically directed by the  
Turkish-Roman Kanun **Master Mumin Sesler**

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International sales and booking information:  
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**IN PRODUCTIONS**

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