

Press notes, Spain and Israel, 2006

Excerpts of articles and critiques from the Spanish and Israeli press on Mashalá!

(Translations of the following articles in their entirety available upon request)

“Diversions: CaixaForum, 10th Festival of World Music, Barcelona October 2005

“...In 1998, the versatile Canadian writer, singer/actress and artistic director Ellen Gould Ventura returned to Spain in search of her Sefardi roots which inspired the greater part of her libretto and musical work. (Blood Circus). With objective of recuperating judaic culture of the diaspora in Spain, Ellen Gould created the Sefardi Mizrahi band, Mashalá! accompanied by a group of excepcional international musicians ‘ all very well known in our country, where they have all been residing for years. Her proposal lets us in on a repetoire of works primarily transmitted via oral traditions, originating in Sefardi communities based in Turkey, Greece, Morroco, Algeria, Bosnia, Bulgaria and Romania, which they perform with a great spirit of festive celebration - true to their very name, Mashalá! (Congratulations!) – all with the enchantment of their music, originating from from the very co-existence between cultures, making them (Mashalá!) all the more universal...”

« Músicas de Bagaje » (*Music with a background*)

by Eva Vila, La Vanguardia, (Nacional Newspaper & the Spanish equivalent to the New York Times or the Toronto Globe and Mail)

Magazine supplement «Culturas», 1 March 2006

«...The five members of Mashalá! perform and practice co-existence by playing Sefardi Mizrahi music. In their rehearsals, in the laughs which are apparent on their recording (on their 2 nd CD Atornada) and within their customs, they find a taste for diversity. Singing in ladino (Judeo-Spanish), Hebrew, Rachi, Arabic and French they recuperate ancient diasporic melodies, reinterpreting them adding their own contemporary influences. For Ellen, born in Canada of Sefardi origin, to sing these ancient tunes is a way of expressing and channeling her own culture and living back to Spain the music which belongs as well to this land. The group came about, originating from the need to share and comunicate what they themselves call a sort of virtual and multi-cultural sound country, a portal where distinctive religions and countries co-exist far from politics....”

*Diario Sur, Algeciras, May 26, 2006,
Critique, Part 1, by Sandra Balvín, Culture and Music Critic, Andalucía*

“Mashalá! seduces Algeciran Audiences with music of Sefardi inspiration”

Performing in Diversons, a music cycle dedicated to World Music, the concert forms a part of the hundredth anniversary celebrations of the Port of Algeciras.

«...Some initial notes emanating from the stand-up bass of Franco Molinari was the first course on the menú of Mashalá!, the Sefardi music group directed by the versatile Ellen Gould Ventura. The musicians performed last wednesday night at Maria Cristina Park in a part of the cycle of concerts, Diversons, organized by the the Caixa foundation under the auspices of the hundredth anniversary of the Port of Algeciras.

«...Mashalá!, (Congratulations! in Ladino Turkish and Arabic) doesn't need special effects or huge presentations to convince the public, who upon arriving didn't know exactly what to expect, but by the end of the concert found itself on its feet in standing ovation for the band.

Travelling with music.

«...The artists came on one by one towards Molinari (off the top of the concert) , with a a repetoire of the Sefardi songs of exile, making their audience travel to places such as Turkey, Egypt, Morrocco, and Tunis. Gould Ventura, similar on ocasión to the virtuosity and wide range of Lisa Gerrard (member of Dead Can Dance and composer of famous sound tracks), was captivating from the beginning. The singer proved especially communicative drawing out various members of the audience who had abandoned any chances of reticence that may have existed at the beginning.

«...The musicians have come with with an impressive musical background. Their versatility and varied education have allowed them to navégate easily in many different waters. Khodari became the perfect and balanced male counterpart singer to the vocalist (E. Gould) in a number of the of the tunes played. Rosas, Briceño and Molinari combined their knowledge of technique and tradicional scores with an innovative spirit, which was made obvious without a doubt in one of the last pieces placed by the Italian bass player (Molinari).

«...In the end, the public didn't want to let them leave. They stood up to ask for encores which the musicians gave willingly. Many of them stayed on, wanting more music...”

Diario Sur, Excerpt of Part 2 of the article by Sandra Balvina, Music and culture Critic of “Diario Sur” Newspaper (the main newspaper of Andalucía) and Mashalá!’s principal singer and cofounder, Ellen Gould Ventura:

“Singing this music is how I live and celebrate my culture”.

The Sefardi Group (Mashalá!) premiers, Atornada, their second CD, as they set out on the tour they are doing with the bands who form “Diversons”

Mashalá! describes their music as Sefardi, Mizrahi and World Groove. It's only just the first inkling as to what comprises their sound which last week made up the concert they gave, forming a part of ‘Diversons’ (2006 Tour of world music in Spain). With exceptional musicians and Canadian singer, Ellen Gould (Ventura) they created a night of celebration in which almost 2 hours (of music), time and distance, removed any possible obstacles between the various cultures present.

“Diverse cultures for a common language”

The Caixa Foundation will bring several groups to Girona with four free concerts which will take place at 8 p.m. at night, the 1st, 5th, 6th and 8th of July in Jurats Square in Girona in the old Gothic district, featuring the sounds of every continent.

«...The ones chosen for the concert series are Kavocheva (The Ivory Coast) Mashalá!, Amataña and Los Moussakis.... A Canadian singer (Ellen Gould Ventura), a Venezuelan violinist (Ernesto Briceño), A Chilean Lautista, (Lautaro Rosas) a Moroccan percussionist (Aziz Khodari) and an Italian Bass player (Franco Molinari) form the group Mashalá! to show that Sefardi Music is a universal legacy and that Barcelona is the fertile land for all forms of musical encounters.

*Culture and Tourism Section, Y'Net, (Israel) By Maya Mahler, Barcelona Foreign Correspondent, June 2006 (Equivalent to the NY Times in Israel)
(Original language: Hebrew)*

“From Gospel to Kleyzmer, 10 days of Religious World music in Catalonia, Spain”

“...At the end of the month, in the old quarter of the city of Gerona in Catalonia, the Seventh annual Festival of Religious World Music will open. Between the picturesque narrow passageways and breathtaking stone buildings, the sound of music of various religious streams will be heard for 10 days....

“...The band Mashalá! will play Sefardi- Mizrahi music from various countries such as Turkey, Greece Morocco, Algeria and Bulgaria. If there is one music ensemble that represent this cultural mix - it is the band Mashalá!, which includes a Canadian Sefardi singer and four musicians from different places in the world - Morocco, Venezuela, Italy and Chile. For Ellen Gould Ventura, the lead singer in the band, to sing in Ladino in Spain symbolizes the resuscitation of her Spanish-Judaic roots. For those who miss these melodies and songs in Ladino, Hebrew-Rashi, Arabic or French, it's highly recommended to follow the work of this band who have been very successful in the last few years in Spain.

El Mundo, "Tendencias" (Fridays' Culture Supplement), 20 October 2006, Barcelona (Catalunya Edition), Music Section, Sounds of the World By Ana María Dávila

"...THE PROJECT, DIVERSONS, WHICH THE CAIXA FOUNDATION PROMOTES, PROPOSES SERVING THE PLATFORM OF DISSEMINATION FOR ARTISTS OF DISTINCT PARTS OF THE WORLD WHO TODAY LIVE IN SPAIN AND THROUGH MUSIC, FOMENT THE DIALOGUE AND INTEGRATION OF DIFFERENT CULTURES...."

«...They come from all over the World. From the high planes of the Andes to the warm lands of Africa or the tumult of the East. But all of them have something in common, something that brings them together and makes them family: It's called "Music" and the universal language that knows no wars or borders.

«...Ellen (Gould Ventura) heads a project which investigates her roots in Judeo Arabic music.

«...In 1998, Ellen Gould (Ventura), the Canadian singer, actress and writer came to Spain in search of her Sefardi roots. Some time after, in Barcelona, she formed Mashalá! a group that does Sefardi Mizrahi repertoire and who enlists a Moroccan, (Aziz Khodari, percussion and vocals) and Italian (Franco Molinari, acoustic bass, supplementary percussion and vocals) a Venezuelan (Ernesto Briceño, violin and vocals), and the otherwise well-known Chilean Multi-instrumentalist, Lautaro Rosas (Arabic Oud).

«...For her, the word that best describes Diversons is "Hope". Professional hope for the groups involved and hope as well to transmit a message of peace to face the future through music. "Music is a key that opens hearts and one which has something in common for everyone,.»