



American Sephardi Federation

Sephardic House

Preserving and supporting the rich cultural traditions, spirit and history of all Sephardic communities as an integral part of Jewish experience and heritage

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American Sephardi Federation Launches New Program

Young Artists Exploring Our Heritage: A Journey Where Art Meets History

May 15, 2008 at 7pm
Center for Jewish History
15 West 16th Street, NYC

The American Sephardi Federation/Sephardic House is pleased to announce the start of a new series, **Young Artists Exploring Our Heritage: A Journey Where Art Meets History**. Our goal is to explore the “re-connection” by a younger generation of artists, writers, musicians to their Sephardic heritage.

Our first program, on May 15, 2008 at 7 p.m., will feature panelists **Michael Jay Cohen, Michelle Ishay-Cohen, Vanessa Hidary and Galeet Dardashti**, with moderator, **Alana Newhouse**.

Michael Jay Cohen and **Michelle Ishay-Cohen** combined their talents to create *Aromas of Aleppo: The Legendary Cuisine of Syrian Jews*, this year’s winner of the National Jewish Book Award for Sephardic Culture. *Aromas of Aleppo* documents the history of the Jews of Aleppo and their distinctive cuisine and traditions, which have persisted until today.

Michelle Ishay-Cohen, an award-winning art-director, transformed a community cookbook into a stunning and much-lauded visual work. She was involved from the very beginning of the process, having acquired, developed and produced it for HarperCollins. Taking seven years to create and complete the project led Michelle to reconnect to her community through her professional life and via the subject of food, a central part of the Syrian-Jewish culture.

Michael Jay Cohen, currently a practicing attorney, will discuss how his role in the project – researching, structuring and writing about the history of the Aleppian-Jewish community and their food, culture, and practices – has brought him a true appreciation of the community’s legacy and affirmed his understanding of the rich but often undocumented history of Sephardic communities.

Vanessa Hidary, Actress/Poet/Playwright/Native New Yorker, Vanessa grew up on Manhattan's culturally diverse Upper West Side, graduating from LaGuardia High School of the Arts and Hunter College. Her experiences as a Sephardic Jew with close friends from different ethnic and religious backgrounds inspired her to write "Culture Bandit," a solo show that chronicles Vanessa's coming of age during the golden age of Hip-Hop and her dedication to fostering understanding and friendship between all people.

Galeet Dardashti is the vocalist for the all female Mizrahi/Sephardi band, Divahn. She is working on a project, *Voices of our Mothers; a Middle Eastern Musical Midrash for Today* as well as pursuing a Ph.D. in anthropology on Mizrahi/Arab music in Israel.

Alana Newhouse, Arts and Culture Editor of the *Forward* is the granddaughter of Ladino-speaking Sephardic immigrants. She will moderate the panel, sharing her own experiences from the editing of her book “**A Living Lens: Photographs of Jewish Life from the Pages of the Forward.**”

Lynne Winters, ASF Director of Programming, states, “This program grew out of a conversation with Michael and Michelle, when we realized that their experience was not unique to them, but represented a process that many artists of their generation were, and are, experiencing. A valuable message to share re-connecting and developing pride in our roots.”

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets \$10 / \$5 ASF members and students

Purchase tickets online at www.smartix.com or call 212-868-4444

Venue

American Sephardi Federation/Sephardic House
at the Center for Jewish History
15 West 16th Street (between Fifth and Sixth Avenues), NYC

For further information, visit our website at: <http://www.americansephardifederation.org>

American Sephardi Federation/Sephardic House

ASF/SH is a national organization whose mission is to preserve and support the rich cultural traditions, spirit and history of all Sephardic communities as an integral part of Jewish experience and heritage. In addition to the *NY Sephardic Jewish Film Festival*, ASF's activities include maintaining the only public Sephardic Library and Archives in the U.S., rich educational and cultural public programs, publishing books on Sephardic history and culture, *The Sephardi Report*, a journal featuring content from scholarly events, lectures and exhibitions, and the Broome and Allen Scholarship Fund for Sephardic studies and scholars.