

**Asian Arts & Culture Program at the Fine Arts Center
University of Massachusetts Amherst**

For Immediate Release

CONTACT: Sue McFarland, 413-577-2486 aacp@acad.umass.edu
WHAT: **Divahn: Jewish Songs of the Middle East**
WHEN: **Thursday, March 24 at 7:30PM**
WHERE: **Bowker Auditorium, UMass Amherst**
TICKETS: **Fine Arts Center Box Office 545-2511/ 1-800-999-UMAS**
 www.umasstix.com

Dardashti's "sultry delivery spans international styles and clings to listeners long after the last round of applause." - Jerusalem Report

Klezmer It's Not!

While most people can readily identify Klezmer as a Jewish musical tradition from Eastern Europe, the band Divahn highlights another rich Jewish musical culture with roots that developed in the Middle East, the Iberian Peninsula and in North Africa. The UMass Fine Arts Center Asian Arts & Culture Program is thrilled to present the incredible vocalist and anthropologist Galeet Dardashti and her edgy all female ensemble in concert. **Divahn: Jewish Songs of the Middle East** will take place on **Thursday, March 24 at 7:30PM in Bowker Auditorium**. Tickets are \$15 for the general public and \$10 for students. Please call the box office at 413-545-2511 or 1-800-999-UMAS. Online at: **www.umasstix.com**

Iranian-descended Jewish singer Galeet Dardashti leads Divahn's power-house ensemble. The group has engendered an international following performing in venues ranging from European concert halls to the most prestigious clubs in NYC. Infusing traditional and original Middle Eastern Jewish songs with sophisticated harmonies, entrancing improvisations, and funky arrangements, Divahn's thrilling live shows feature lush string arrangements, eclectic Indian, Middle Eastern, and Latin percussion, and vocals spanning Hebrew, Judeo-Spanish, Persian, Arabic, and Aramaic. "Divahn," a word common to Hebrew,

Persian, and Arabic, means a collection of songs or poetry. Through their music, the group creatively underscores common ground between diverse Middle Eastern cultures and religion.

Galeet Dardashti (vocals, guitar, percussion) is the granddaughter of Yona Dardashti, one of the most renowned singers of Persian classical music in Iran and is the daughter of the highly esteemed cantor Farid Dardashti, Middle Eastern vocal innovator. Galeet is the first woman in her family to continue her family's tradition of distinguished musicianship dating back to 19th-century Persia. The recipient of a Six Points Fellowship/ Hadassah-Brandeis Institute Fellowship for *The Naming*, her multi-disciplinary project on the women of the Bible was reviewed by Time Out, NY as "urgent, heartfelt and hypnotic." A new commission from the Foundation for Jewish Culture will reimagine the Mizrahi music and ritual of "Selichot." Dardashti holds a Ph.D. in anthropology. Her dissertations was on the cultural politics of contemporary Middle Eastern music in Israel. She offers lectures and artist/scholar-in-residencies throughout the country.

Rebecca Cherry (violin and vocals) records, performs and tours extensively with many top international musicians and orchestras, including the Bergen Philharmonic in Norway, the London Philharmonic, Baltimore Symphony and Vancouver Symphony.

Eleanor Norton (cello)- whose music career started in Amherst, Massachusetts- has performed, recorded, and toured with significant musicians and ensembles. They include the folk music legend Arlo Guthrie, The Vermont Symphony Orchestra, Little Women, Broadway Musical, Beyonce, Moby, The Princeton Symphony Orchestra and TV on the Radio. Most recently Eleanor performed for President Barack Obama at a state dinner honoring the President and First Lady of Mexico.

Sejal Kukadia (tabla and vocals) is one of the few female classical tabla players in the US. She teaches at Taalim Music school in NY and performs with her own group. She is the author of the guidebook, *Rhythms of Tabla*.

Elizabeth Pupo-Walker (percussion) is from New York by way of from Nashville and is an Afro-Cuban percussionist with an emphasis on congas and bongos. She has studied in Cuba with the master drummers of Los Munequitos de Matanzas, and has also studied with Senegalese Griot, Mapate Diop and the Brazilian drummer Jorge Alabe.

Divahn will be a unique powerful concert for the valley audiences. Get your tickets now.

The Jewish Community of Amherst in partnership with the Asian Arts & Culture Program will host a free and open to the public interactive talk called "Piyutim: The Poetry of Middle Eastern Prayer". Led by music scholar Galeet Daradashti, the lecture will focus on the Iraqi, Sephardii-Yerushalmi, Moroccan and Iranian Jewish Piyut tradition and poets. The lecture will take place on Friday, March 25 at 8PM at 742 Main Street, Amherst, MA.

Funded in part by the Massachusetts Cultural Council and Harold Grinspoon Foundation. Sponsored by Baystate Medical Center Heart & Vascular Program.

Please see our website at www.fineartscenter.com/asian for additional information. Tickets available online: www.fineartscenter.com or by calling 1-800-999-UMAS or 413-545-2511. Downloadable high resolution photos and electronic versions of press releases for performance events are available at: <http://www.umass.edu/fac/asian/press.html>.

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