

saraharoeste

(Aroeste Music)

**SARAH AROESTE**

*Gracia*

Available May 22, 2012



**Sarah Aroeste Unleashes Ladino's Feminist Rock Power in Original Songs on *Gracia***

That's right: Feminist rock in Ladino. The Judeo-Spanish language born in the Middle Ages is the perfect vehicle for articulating an utterly contemporary sensuality, defiance, wisdom, and love. It's a living language, a lively tradition heard in a generation of new voices from New York to Jerusalem.

One voice leads them: American-born Ladino singer and songwriter **Sarah Aroeste**, who has spent a decade expanding the possibilities of

contemporary Ladino song. The classically trained, pop-savvy vocalist channels generations of poets and wild women in slow-burning, passionately produced original works on ***Gracia*** (Aroeste Music; Street Date - May 22, 2012). Backed by flickers of flamenco and gorgeous pan-Mediterranean melodies, by lush strings and purring guitars, Aroeste's airy, potent voice and intense engagement with her lyrics invigorate age-old wedding songs, hot love ballads, and tributes to history's unsung heroines.

***Gracia*** is Sarah Aroeste's third album in Ladino, and includes many of her own original Ladino songs. In the title track ("Gracia"), Aroeste tells the neglected story of Dona Gracia Naci, a 15<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish answer to Harriet Tubman, who boldly saved Jewish families from the Inquisition and who epitomizes the strength and courage of our foremothers. In another song, Aroeste reimagines the wanderings of her Sephardic ancestors through the eyes of the traditional figure of the *morena*, the dark-eyed nomad girl, traveling for centuries and drained of her beauty by a harsh world ("Chika Morena"). Using a variety of eclectic source material throughout the album, Aroeste writes a song encouraging one to harness strength in the face of all odds ("El

Leon Ferido”), which takes its inspiration from Samuel Ha-Nagid, an 11<sup>th</sup> Century Judeo-Spanish poet who was facing adversity in his own time.

And yet another song is based on a contemporary feminist hip-hop poem, *Wild Women*, and calls out to the world to embrace women in all their wonderful complexity (“La Comida La Manana”). Complementing these songs are others of universal themes such as family, marriage, loss, facing demons, holding on to hope and more.



Produced with Shai Bachar (Ishtar Alabina, Omar Faruk Tekbilek, Sheila Jordan), and recorded in NY and Tel Aviv, the 11 songs on ***Gracia*** (both the original ones and a few radically reinterpreted classic Ladino folksongs as well), are a mix of feminist, experimental, raw, rock-beat, energetic, empowering, electronic, retro-chic, Mediterranean-infused and fine-crafted, detailed sounds. In addition to a 16-piece string ensemble highlighted on many of the tracks, there are also special guest voices and featured artists including Vanessa Hidary (the Hebrew Mamita), Amos Hoffman (Avishai Cohen band), Roni Ivrin and Mark Kakon (Idan Raichel Band), Nir Graf (Noa, Rita, Shalom Hanoch), Oz Noy (Cyndi Lauper, Phoebe Snow, Bill Evans), Samuel Torres (Lila Downs, Arturo Sandoval) and many more. Altogether, ***Gracia*** is Aroeste’s most daring album yet and brings Ladino music one more step forward from the past into today. Determined to prove that Ladino is not a dead language, Aroeste shows through ***Gracia*** that Ladino is, indeed, very much still alive.

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