



For Immediate Release

April 15, 2009

Gaon Books & The Santa Fe Art Institute Present

Memory Preserved: The Crypto-Jewish Roots of New Mexico

featuring:

Author **Isabelle Medina-Sandoval**

Singer **Vanessa Paloma**

Author **Mario X. Martinez**

What: Concert, Readings & Panel Discussion

Where: Tipton Hall

When: May 14, 2009 @ 6pm

How Much: \$5 General Public, \$2.50 students/seniors/SFAI members

The Santa Fe Art Institute in conjunction with Gaon Books presents an event remembering the Sephardic and crypto-Jewish experience of New Mexico, featuring a concert by Vanessa Paloma with music from the Spanish colonial period and the launching of two books by New Mexico authors on the same period.

Vanessa Paloma specializes in the traditional performance of Andalusian songs of southern Spain and Morocco, which was the music brought to the Americas by the Spanish settlers. She trained at the Early Music Institute at Indiana University and is a Research Associate at the Hadassah Brandeis Institute, Brandeis University. She has performed extensively throughout the United States, Europe, North Africa, and Asia. She currently lives in Casablanca but will be in the Americas on a concert tour that stretches from New York to Mexico City. She would discuss how traditional music is memory of a people and how it relates to the crypto-Jewish experience.

Gaon Books is launching a new series of books on the crypto-Jewish experience in the formation of the history of New Mexico. The authors of the first two historical novels in that series will give readings from their books and do signings. The authors and their titles are:

Isabelle Medina-Sandoval. *Conversa Custom Keepers.* This is the story of the various generations of a family from Toledo, Spain to their settling in New Mexico. It is told through the women of the family, their marriages and children, their thoughts and dreams, and their preservation of the memory of Jewish heritage. It is an incredible story of how a religious and cultural tradition was secretly preserved through generations from Spain to New Mexico, in part based on the

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The Santa Fe Art Institute, an independent educational non-profit organization founded in 1985, is committed to programs that nurture artists and enhance and promote the arts as an essential element of American culture and society.

SFAI funding provided in part by The Burnett Foundation, The McCune Charitable Foundation, The Lannan Foundation, The Warhol Foundation, The Joan Mitchell Foundation, The Brindle Foundation, the City of Santa Fe Arts Commission and the 1% Lodgers' Tax and by New Mexico Arts, a Division of the Department of Cultural Affairs.

experiences of her ancestors. Dr. Medina-Sandoval is a celebrated poet and educator in New Mexico.

Mario X. Martinez. *Converso.* Drawing from the time period of Archbishop Lamy, Mario Martinez has created a compelling historical novel about life in small town New Mexico drawing from experiences of his own family. There are powerful Dons, dashing young men, beautiful women, crypto-Jews, conflicts, and murder, all wrapped within memory and family traditions in historical New Mexico. After graduate work at Harvard University Mario X. Martinez returned to his native New Mexico where he writes and teaches.

The program will consist of an initial 10-15 minute reading by one of the authors, 30 to 40 minutes of music performance, and a 10-15 minute reading by the second author. Following that, the three performers will act as a panel, taking questions about the Sephardic/Crypto-Jewish experience and memory and we will conclude with a book signing.

For more information, images, or interview requests, please contact Michelle Laflamme-Childs at mchilds@sfai.org or call (505) 424-5050.

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