

# EPK

**Gulaza**

SECRET WOMEN SONGS FROM YEMEN

## The story of Gulaza

*Four distinct artists come together to revive the natural evolution of Yemenite women's songs.*

**Igal Gulaza Mizrachi**, whose father is of Yemenite origin, grew up in a neighbourhood inhabited by Yemenite immigrants. He was thus exposed from a very young age to the Yemenite traditions, cradled in the fascinating world of Yemenite women. Drawn to this legacy, he studied their traditional songs and texts which describe their marginalised life in Yemenite society; collecting songs and tales from his childhood memories, personal encounters or from major life cycle events he attended, such as the *Hena* ceremony.

This sparked a creative need to restore the Yemenite Jewish musical tradition, hushed up for far too long, to its former status onto the world. At first, to keep the songs' authenticity, he only sang, even chanted, and used percussion but soon after felt that, if he wanted to expand this rich heritage beyond its cultural and aural boundaries, he needed to incorporate more instruments. This is where the other band members came in.

The n'goni introduces new rhythms and sounds from the West African desert to the ancient Yemenite repertoire. The guitar develops the harmonic part and enhances the natural connection between the vocals and the percussions. And finally, the cello adds bass and injects warmth and tenderness into the music of "Gulaza". All together, the combination of instruments bring the audience onto a spiritual journey, which tickles the imagination.

But Gulaza isn't just about heartrending music or melodies — it carries a strong universal message which needs to be addressed.

Each song is a story in itself and narrates the life of young Jewish Yemenite girls, who are often coerced into child marriages, and the revolt they express towards it. Gulaza weaves their stories into a powerful tapestry of sounds and dance and through it, raises awareness to women's status and hints at what should be their rightful place in society, often overlooked by century-old traditions, whether it be in Yemen or across the world.

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Gulaza offers a production which is absolutely spellbinding, and which awakens all the senses. The connection between what happens on stage and the viewers is instant, and magical. The melodies, together with Igal's ardent vocals and theatrical performance, deeply touch the audience's soul. Having toured in countries as different as Norway or China with such resounding success, it is obvious that no-one, regardless of their musical familiarity or cultural identity, leaves a Gulaza concert, untouched. Igal's torrid rendition of these mystical texts and the specific combination of instruments abound in beauty. The audience, men and women alike, is left with a profound impression, thrown back in time, unconsciously reminded of the universality of human nature. Gulaza transcends all boundaries as it unifies cultures under a profoundly spiritual canopy.

Gulaza triumphed in Europe and Asia and was invited to perform in prominent World Music Festivals. The ensemble toured extensively in: Spain, Austria, Germany, Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Sweden, Norway, Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Serbia as well as South Korea and China.

Today they are among the selected to attend and perform at the prestigious WOMEX 2018 Festival.