

Press Kit

MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY

32 minute magical realism documentary



A mysterious box launches a journey that uncovers stories of miracles and murder, love and loss, and prophecies that come true.



PROVIDENCE PICTURES

MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY

DESCRIPTION

My Ioannina Odyssey starts like many Greek stories—with FATE, this time with the delivery of a mysterious box. As I opened it I realized it's a box I packed at my parent's behest nearly forty years ago. It hadn't been opened since.

Inside is a treasure trove of objects, documents, and family photos. Ottoman era travel permits, a ship manifest of my grandfather's voyage as a twelve-year-old boy coming to America from Greece alone, and hundreds of photographs.

Many faces I know – parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts and uncles—others clearly family members from Greece—everyone now long gone. Surely, all are in that box for a reason.



As a filmmaker, I've built a career telling other people's stories. But opening that box I realize there's so much I don't know about my own family.

Guided by these photos, documents, and stories passed down to me, and with the help of my wife—a scholar and art historian—and my daughter—also a filmmaker—we're voyaging to Ioannina, Greece, my family's ancestral home.

We're searching for stories of lives long gone—some known, some yet to be discovered, all in danger of being forgotten.

The film begins with evoking the Muse of Homer's Odyssey. The journey ends with the fulfillment of a Jewish prayer, a prophecy of sorts—May their memories be a blessing.



MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY

LOGLINE

A mysterious box launches a journey that uncovers stories of miracles and murder, love and loss, and prophecies that come true.

SHORT DESCRIPTION

When a mysterious box arrives on my doorstep, its century-old ship manifests, family photos and crumbling documents launch an odyssey to Ioannina – a medieval walled city in the mountains of northern Greece. Home to the Romaniotes, an ancient Greek Jewish people, Ioannina is where history and myth merge in my family lore. There, with my wife and daughter, we uncover a story of miracles and murder, love and loss, and prophecies that come true.

(74 words)



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MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY



As a filmmaker, I've built a career telling other people's stories. But opening that box I realized there's so much I don't know about my own family. Now, guided by these photos, documents, and stories passed down to me, and with the help of my wife—an art historian—and my daughter—also a filmmaker—we're voyaging to Ioannina, Greece, my family's ancestral home. I'm searching for stories of lives long gone—some known, some yet to be discovered, all in danger of being forgotten.



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MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY

Ioannina is where history and myth merge in my family lore – a place of miracle births and mass murder, of tragic loss and redemptive love, and a place where prophecies come true. It's where my mother longed to go as her dying wish. Now Ioannina is calling me.



My family traces our ancestry to Ioannina to the first century and the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. A group of Israelites were being taken as slaves back to Rome when the ship wrecked. They escaped and found their way to the shores of a lake in the mountains of northern Greece to what is now Ioannina. They became known as Romaniote—a blend of Greek and Jewish cultures with unique traditions practiced to this day.



MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY

In the walled city of the Ottoman Pasha we find a 16th century stone house, the home where my grandfather grew up. His house is now a very nice restaurant. It was delicious and a moving experience to eat there with my wife and daughter.



My grandfather, Abraham Mioni, left Ioannina for America when he was twelve years old. His brother, Isaak, stayed behind with their mother and father. I often wondered what would life had been like had my grandfather never left Ioannina? As we discover the parallel fates of brothers Abraham and Isaak, I begin to learn the answer.



MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY

With the help of two new Romaniote friends, we trace what happens to the Mioni family house and my grandfather's brother Isaak. It leads us to an intersection of family history with world history and one of humanity's darkest descents into barbarity—the Holocaust.



Hidden within Ioannina's lively outdoor cafés and restaurants we discover the place of deportation. It's from there the entire population of Romaniotes are sent to the death camps at Auschwitz. Through personal accounts, archival research and photos, we learn of the murder of Isaak's wife and two children and the near total extermination of the Jews of Ioannina.



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Isaak is one of only 144 survivors. Another survivor is the sister of his murdered wife. On their return to Ioannina, Isaak and Sarika marry and move into the Mioni family house. They never had children for Sarika and her sister Esther were twins and while in Auschwitz, they were experimented on by the notorious Nazi “doctor”, Josef Mengele. The experiments killed Esther and left Sarika sterile.



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The place of deportation has disappeared into everyday life. But the names of those murdered, including my family, are inscribed on the walls of the beautiful Byzantine era Ioannina synagogue.



There we learn more about the history of Ioannina and the fate of Isaak and Sarika Mioni from our other new Romaniote friend who knew them. She also gives us the name of a young man who may be related to them and me. He owns a watch shop nearby.



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MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY



In Aki's watch shop we discover that Aki's father and uncle were raised by Isaak and Sarika in the Mioni family home. The two brothers and their widowed mother had been abandoned by their mother's Christian family because she had married a Jew. Isaak and Sarika, childless because of the Holocaust, were able to raise two other boys, Aki's father and uncle—a blessing for all. It turns out that Aki, a nickname for Isaak, is named after my uncle Isaak Mioni.



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MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY



Ioannina has always had an aura of magic in my family.

After my grandfather Abraham Mioni came to America he married a cousin, Anna Pitsrillo, my grandmother.



My grandmother enchanted me with stories of gypsy prophecies and miracle births and taught me to read the future in the thick dark grounds of Greek coffee.

Prophecy, destiny, and miracles are powerful forces in both Greek and Jewish traditions. Combined and distilled into Romaniote Greek Judaism, those forces prove to be even more potent.



In fact, my family bears witness to the power of prophecy, and without it, I might never have been born.



MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY



SING IN ME, MUSE,
AND THROUGH ME
TELL THE STORY OF THE WANDERER.

EVEN HIS GRIEFS ARE A JOY LONG AFTER,
TO ONE THAT REMEMBERS.

HOMER - THE ODYSSEY

My Ioannina Odyssey begins with evoking the Muse of Homer's Odyssey.

Fate in the form of a mysterious box launches a search for lives long gone and a quest to keep their memories alive.

The journey ends with the fulfillment of a Jewish prayer, a prophecy of sorts—May their memories be a blessing.



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MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY

PRINCIPAL CREATIVES



Producer, writer, director, cinematographer, editor

Gary Glassman is a seasoned veteran of the entertainment industry with nearly four decades of experience. His films have won and been honored with nominations for the industry's most prestigious awards including seven Emmys and two Writers Guild Awards.

Glassman follows an inclusive storytelling approach that is born of his unique entry point into the film industry – through the world of street and circus performing. His experience connecting with people while clowning, fire-eating, and stilt walking inspired an ongoing dedication to both subjects and audiences. This quest inspired him to explore the accessibility of VHS as a medium to democratize storytelling with prisoners, hospitalized children, and developmentally challenged adults. Films from this era include Prisoners, his first documentary, now in the permanent collections of MoMA and the Pompidou in Paris.

Inspired by the connective and personal power of television, Glassman founded Providence Pictures in 1996. Under the Providence Pictures banner, he has made over 60 films for the world's leading broadcasters. My Ioannina Odyssey represents a return to his roots in both content and production.



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MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY

PRINCIPAL CREATIVES



Director, cinematographer

Manya Glassman received her MFA in Film Directing from the NYU Tisch School of Arts in 2024. She uses visual imagery to explore love, family, mortality and what makes us human. Manya's short film, *How I Learned to Die*, Executive Produced by Spike Lee, had its world premiere at the Tribeca Festival in June 2025. She's currently developed short into a feature length film, and the script was selected for NYU's Purple List—a competition for top production ready scripts.

Manya's films have won awards, including New England Best Director (2022) and Audience Pick (2021) at the Oscar qualifying Rhode Island International Film Festival. She has received the Spike Lee / Sandra Ifraimova Film Production Grant, Willard T.C. Johnson Fellowship, Rolly Bester Scholarship, and Antonio Cirino Memorial Scholarship, Rhode Island Foundation.

My Ioannina Odyssey is her first formal collaboration with Gary Glassman, her Dad.



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MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY

PRINCIPAL CREATIVES



Editor

Rob Tinworth is an award-winning editor with over 20 years of experience in independent film and broadcast television, including documentaries for PBS, NOVA and Frontline. In 2012 he travelled through Sichuan documenting life in China's leprosy villages. That experience inspired *The Life Equation*, about impossible choices in global health. Other notable credits include *Broadway Idiot*, which followed Green Day's foray into musical theater, and most recently, *Taking Venice*. He and Glassman have collaborated on over a dozen films.

Rob began his career in Hong Kong, worked in London and Singapore, and now calls Boston home. He continues to craft films that explain our world and explore our place within it. But now he also makes stop motion lego movies with his boys.



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MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY

PRINCIPAL CREATIVES



Art Historian, Scholar

Joan Branham is Professor of Art History and Associate Provost at Providence College where she teaches courses in late-antique and medieval art and architectural history. She has been a visiting professor at Harvard University and Brown University, and Chair of the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem.

Joan obtained her PhD from Emory University in 1993 and conducted her doctoral work at the Institute of Archaeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and received postdoctoral fellowships from the Women's Studies in Religion Program at Harvard Divinity School, Chateaubriand Foundation at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, the Sorbonne, Paris, and Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities.

Professor Branham's research interests include theories of sacred space, the relationship of gender, blood, and sacrifice in ancient Judaism and Christianity, the iconography of late-antique synagogues and churches, and textual and visual strategies—ancient and modern—to emulate the ancient Jerusalem Temple. She has participated as a scholarly consultant on documentary film projects for PBS, NOVA, History Channel, and Discovery.



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MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY

COMPLETE CREDITS

A Film by Gary Glassman

Production

Directed and Filmed by - Gary Glassman and Manya Glassman

Edited by - Gary Glassman and Rob Tinworth

Road Scholar – Joan Branham

Location Sound – Victor Pigasse

Post Sound Design and Mix – Greg McLeary, Heartpunch

Narration Record – David Porter

Archival Research and Licensing – Ben Sweeney

Cultural Consultants

Odyssey Text and Greek Language – Lena Georgas

Museum Director, Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue, New York –

Marcia Haddad Ikonomopoulos

Hebrew Prayer and Text – Paul Stouber

Featuring

Ioannina Romaniote Historian – Isaak Dostis

Vice President of the Jewish Community of Ioannina –
Allegra Matsa

Watch Repair and Relative – Isaak “Aki” Pitsrillos

Creative Support

Jeffrey Dobereiner

Andrew Lund

Chiara Messineo

Zeke Piestrup

Nelson Walker III



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MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY

Music

Featuring Savina Yannatou

“Yati Pouli Dhen Kelaidhis”

Traditional song

Performed by Savina Yannatou

Rights Holder to be confirmed

“Evga Mana Moui”

Traditional song

Performed by Savina Yannatou

& Primavera En Salonico

Rights Holder to be confirmed

“Sumiglia”

Performed by Savina Yannatou

& Primavera En Salonico

Publishing C.C. Acquaviva, M.

Acquaviva

“I”

Performed by Savina Yannatou

& Joana Sá

Rights Holder to be confirmed

“Lament”

By Eleni Karaindro

Performed by Savina Yannatou

Publishing Eleni Karaindro

“Separation”

By Eleni Karaindro

Performed by Savina Yannatou

Publishing Eleni Karaindro

“Mitra's Theme”

Performed by Eleni Karaindrou

Publishing Eleni Karaindrou

“Shalom Aleichem”

Traditional song

Performed by

Andy Statman & David Grisman

“Taxim – Zembekiko”

Performed by Markos Vamvakaris

Publishing Markos Vamvakaris

“Opios Orfanepse Mikros (Orphaned)”

Performed by Stratos Payioumidzis

Rights Holder to be confirmed

Greek Jewish Songs From Ioannina featuring

Mrs. Anna Raphael

From recording at National Sound Archive,

Israel

Courtesy United States Holocaust Memorial

Museum

Kina Glossa" (Purim Song of Ioannina)

performed by Ninetta Matsa Feldman

Field recording in USA, 2014

Courtesy United States Holocaust Memorial

Museum

“Tora Ta Pulia” - A Wedding Song in Greek

Traditional song

Courtesy Smithsonian Folkways

“Reconciliation Theme”

Performed by Eleni Karaindrou

Publishing Eleni Karaindrou



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MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY

Archival

Map - Atlantic Ocean: Its islands
and coasts
Courtesy David Rumsey
Historical Map Collection

Destruction of Jerusalem Temple
Animated Stills
Arch of Titus
Statue of Liberty
Courtesy of Providence Pictures

Ioannina Landscapes from
1833 Prints

Deportation of the Jews of
Ioannina, Greece
Multiple Photos
Bundesarchiv, Bild
183-1990-0518-028 /
photographer: Bernd Settnik

The Feast of the Rejoicing of the
Law at the Synagogue in Leghorn,
Italy
Solomon Alexander Hart

List of twins experimented on by
Josef Mengele
Courtesy United States Holocaust
Memorial Museum

Greek Orthodox Family with Priest,
1908
Antonis Lagadas

Ottoman Muslims, Greece, 1900

Group photograph of students and
teachers of the 6th grade
elementary school at Alliance
school of Ioannina
© Photographic Collection -
The Jewish Museum of Greece

Byzantine Greek Jews from
the Alexander Manuscript

Ulysses and the Sirens
Herbert James Draper

Oedipus and the Sphinx
Francois-Xavier Fabre

Graves of Sarika and Isaak Mioni
Photos courtesy of Isaak "Aki" Pitsrillos

Jewish cemetery in Ioannina
Courtesy of Christian Herrman

Gypsies in the United States,
Photograph by de Wendler Funaro
National Museum of American History,
Smithsonian Institution



MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY



Special Thanks

To My Brother and Sister - Stephen Glassman and Marci Gollis

My Ioannina Odyssey was filmed entirely on a Leica Q3



My Ioannina Odyssey
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MY IOANNINA ODYSSEY

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Duration: 33:20

Format: 4K 4096x2160, 23.976p

Screening Formats: DCP, Mp4, ProRes

Audio: Stereo and 5.1 Surround

Aspect Ratio: 1:90:1

CONTACT DETAILS

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