

# The Sarajevo Haggadah: Music of the Book

## Composer's Note

I am fascinated by the Sarajevo Haggadah not only because of its amazing and fascinating history, but also because it reminds me of my own life and the “Exodus” I had to experience. I was forced to leave my own country, under the strangest and heaviest circumstances.

In its journey the Haggadah suffered transformations which make it even more special by giving it a richer history that reflects its passage through different cultures.

I also travel around the world and with every journey I get a new “scar”, positive or negative, but I keep my dignity and get richer by travelling through different circumstances, and sharing my culture with others through my music.

My composition *The Sarajevo Haggadah: Music of the Book* is based on the Sephardic traditions of different countries that the Haggadah visited as it traveled through history. Sephardic Jews observed the traditions of their home countries, and infused Jewish culture into the music of their adopted lands. This resulted in musical similarities. For example, Bosnians and Sephardic Jews use the same scales and rhythms. They share the same emotion in their songs, the same pleasures, and the same pain. In the end they share the same country, the same customs, and the same food. They learn from each other. And an interesting note: many Sephardic songs from Bosnia are about celebrating Passover.

I have learned most of these songs from my dear friend Flory Jagoda, the Bosnian expert in the field of Sephardic music. Flory is a Sephardic Jew who left Bosnia during the Second World War and is now living in Washington, DC. We understand each other on many levels as we share a very similar destiny, with a difference of just a few decades.

One of the important aspects of the Sarajevo Haggadah is its illustrations. In the historical novel *The People of the Book*, author Geraldine Brooks relates the story that the Haggadah was beautifully illustrated in order for a deaf child to follow and understand it.

Next to the musical journey of the Haggadah, video artist Bart Woodstrup created a visual backdrop to the music that subtly interweaves the imagery of the Sarajevo Haggadah with elements of the book's history. Inspired by the textures found in the illustrations, as well as the stains and signs of aging found in the book, Bart literally “illuminates” and animates those elements with a variety of digital software techniques. His animations are almost entirely composed of imagery from the book, yet arranged in an abstract way that blend with the musical composition to make a unified aural-visual experience.

—Merima Ključo