

# Yellow Barn

2014 SUMMER SEASON



June 14, 2014 | 3:00 + 8:00  
Next Stage, Putney, VT

# The Sarajevo Haggadah: Music of the Book

For Tamara Brooks

June 14, 2014 | 3:00 + 8:00

Next Stage, Putney, VT

**Merima Ključo**, composer and accordion

**Seth Knopp**, piano

**Bart Woodstrup**, artist

## PROGRAM

[La Bendision de Madre (The Mother's Prayer)  
found in a Sarajevo synagogue]

The Creation

La Convivencia

Al Mora

Alhambra Decree

Exodus

In Silenzio

Stampita Italkim

The Inquisitor

Sarajevo 1941

Derviš Korkut

The Siege of Sarajevo

La Bendision de Madre

*The program is approximately one hour in length without an intermission.*

*Please join us after the performance for a discussion with the artists.*

## PROGRAM NOTES

*The Sarajevo Haggadah: Music of the Book* is in twelve movements, which together tell the story of the Haggadah's journey from its birth in 14th-century Spain through five centuries of near-destruction and survival at the hands of many peoples and cultures, from the "Edict of Expulsion" of 1492 to the siege of Sarajevo that took place in 1992. Today the Haggadah is included in the collection of the National Museum of Bosnia Herzegovina.

*Haggadah* is the Hebrew word for "telling" and refers to the text recited on the first nights of the Jewish Passover, including the story of the Exodus.

### THE CREATION

**LA CONVIVENCIA (THE COEXISTENCE)** Now considered to be an idealized recasting of history, "La Convivencia" spanned four centuries in a Medieval Spain under Moorish rule, where peace and cultural interaction existed between Jews, Muslims, and Christians.

**AL MORA** A special place in the Sarajevo Haggadah's depiction of the Seder table is reserved for a Moorish woman, who appears seated in a saffron-colored robe. She seems to represent a cultural interaction that certainly existed in 14th-century Spanish Catalonia, at the time the Sarajevo Haggadah was created.

**ALHAMBRA DECREE** Also known as "The Edict of Expulsion", the Alhambra Decree was issued in 1492 by the Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabelle and ordered "Jews and Jewesses of our kingdoms to depart and never to return or come back to them or to any of them...and they shall not dare to return to those places, nor to reside in them, nor to live in any part of them, neither temporarily on the way to somewhere else nor in any other manner, under pain that if they do not perform and comply with this command and should be found in our said kingdom and lordships and should in any manner live in them, they incur the penalty of death and the confiscation of all their possessions by our Chamber of Finance, incurring these penalties by the act

itself, without further trial, sentence, or declaration.” The decree was not revoked until 1968.

## **EXODUS**

### **IN SILENZIO**

**STAMPITA ITALKIM** “Stampita” is a medieval dance and musical form. “Italkim” is the Hebrew word for “Italians” and refers to a specific community of Jews (also known as “Bené Roma”, or “Children of Rome”) that have lived in Rome for over 2000 years. Thus, this movement is a tipsy Stampita shared by two Italkim.

**THE INQUISITOR** Most likely smuggled out of Spain after the Alhambra Decree of 1492, the Sarajevo Haggadah resurfaces in 1609 in Venice. Here, Jews are allowed to live but confined to the ghetto of Cannaregio and prohibited from printing books. Indeed, all books are subject to inspection by the Inquisition and those considered a threat to the teachings of the Church, burned. This movement is devoted to the priest for the Inquisition who evidently allowed the Sarajevo Haggadah to be spared. His notation appears inside the Haggadah: “Revisto per me”, or “Revised by me”, and signed Giovanni Dom. Vistorini.

### **SARAJEVO 1941**

**DERVIŠ KORKUT** Hitler wished to establish a “museum of an extinct race” that would house artifacts like the Sarajevo Haggadah. Derviš Korkut, the chief librarian at the Bosnian National Museum, had the foresight to understand that the Haggadah was threatened and when the Nazi commander Johann Fortner arrived at the museum to claim the Haggadah, Korkut hid it underneath his coat so that it would not be found when the museum was searched. Quietly leaving the museum, Korkut entrusted the Haggadah to a Muslim imam who hid it in his mosque’s library until after the war.

**SIEGE OF SARAJEVO** The “Siege of Sarajevo” began on April 6, 1992. Under constant fire, the inhabitants of the Bosnian capital were cut off from food, medicine, water and electricity. Thousands were killed and wounded. The Siege lasted for nearly four years. It became one of the most dramatic and emblematic events of the violent breakup of the former Yugoslavia and left an estimated 200,000 people killed and 2.7 million displaced

as refugees—the largest displacement in Europe since the Second World War. The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina were witness to almost unimaginable violations of human rights and abuse in the name of ethnic cleansing, ranging from rape to mass executions and starvation.

**LA BENDISION DE MADRE (THE MOTHER’S PRAYER)** This prayer was especially intended to be used by elderly Jewish women who never had the opportunity to study Hebrew, and who considered Ladino (a language derived from Old Spanish and spoken predominantly by Sephardic minorities) to be their Jewish language.

## **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 in its journey 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

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

**Merima Ključo**, composer and accordion, imbues a dizzying variety of music with playing that moves with its depth of understanding and experience. Whether performing in recital, with ensembles such as Serendipity 4 (with Theodore Bikel), MusikFabrik, and the Asko/Schönberg Ensemble, or as guest soloist with orchestras such as the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, the soulful traditions of her instrument are not only given a unique voice, but they are given new life and meaning.

Merima's love of world music, and the music of Bosnia in particular, is something she seeks to share with audiences everywhere. In commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the Siege of Sarajevo in 2012, the East West Theater Company and

renowned Bosnian theater director Haris Pasovic invited Merima as musical director to compose, arrange, and perform a music poem "Sarajevo Red Line" ("Sarajevska Crvena Linija"). The piece, which incorporated traditional and pop songs, as well as classical music—music with deep cultural significance, was performed on April 6, 2012 to an audience of 11, 541 empty red chairs lining the main boulevard in Sarajevo, with one chair for every life lost in the siege. On that day, thousands of people from all walks of life congregated to witness and remember. *Yellow Barn musician (2010, 2011)*

**Seth Knopp**, piano, is Artistic Director of Yellow Barn. He serves as Artistic Director of Soundings: New Music at the Nasher, a concert series at the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, Texas. He is a founding member of the Naumburg Award-winning Peabody Trio, Ensemble-in-Residence at the Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University where he serves as a member of the piano and chamber music faculties. He has performed throughout Europe, the Far East, the Middle East, and Japan. Seth has recorded on the CRI, Analekta, New World Records, and Artek labels. *Yellow Barn musician (1998–2013)*

**Bart Woodstrup**, artist, seeks to understand and manipulate the aesthetics, semiotics, and narratives of various time-based media. His work often takes the form of traditional musical composition, real-time interactive audio/video performance, multimedia installation and networked experience. Using custom software that is capable of rendering sound and visuals in real-time, Bart explores the creation of Live Cinema experiences. Through the use of digital effects and editing techniques these performances often subvert traditional narratives by enveloping them in irony, metaphor, and abstraction. His work is shown regularly throughout the U.S. and abroad, and has been included at Siggraph, Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts, SEAMUS, Spark Festival of Electronic Music and Arts, Not Still Art Festival, Version>03, and the Chicago Underground Film Festival. *Yellow Barn musician (The Crumb Madrigals Project Artist Residency at Yellow Barn, 2012)*





מל אהד כוסו ויעשה הסדר נ  
 כאשר כתוב " **וְשׂוּתָהּ**  
 ומברכין פני אמה אב  
 קדישנו במצותו וזענו יעד **נְטִילַת יָדַיִם**  
 נטילת ידים"  
 יקח אחת מטות המצות השל  
 ויבדד עליה כֹּאֵ אִמָּה הַמּוֹצֵ **הַמוֹצֵא**

FOUNDATION FOR JEWISH CULTURE

NEW JEWISH CULTURE NETWORK

The Sarajevo Haggadah: Music of the Book was commissioned by the Foundation for Jewish Culture's New Jewish Culture Network, a league of North American performing arts presenters committed to the creation and touring of innovative projects. The New Jewish Culture Network has received major support from the Howard and Geraldine Polinger Family Foundation. Additional support is provided by the Anne Abramson Foundation and other donors.