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Ensemble Saltiel **Boda: Kantigas de Novia** Sephardic Wedding Songs

Turkish-Austrian native Ladino speaker and singer Aron Saltiel and Ensemble Saltiel will present a program of recently collected and recorded rare Sephardic wedding music, as part of the 26th Jewish Music Festival in Berkeley, California, March 9th, 2011. The group is available for other U.S. performances in March.

This is a unique opportunity to experience the repertoire of a traditional Turkish Sephardic wedding – songs and music from the engagement, the preparation of the dowry and the trading of gifts, to the drawing up of the marriage contract, the ceremony and the subsequent week. The songs themselves were historically sung within the Istanbul-based Saltiel family. As a veteran researcher of this repertoire who grew up in the community, Aron is both an authority on the music and a great performer.

Accompanied by hugely famous Turkish and Roma virtuosos at the forefront of modern Turkish pop and folk music, Ensemble Saltiel recalls the historic collaboration of *a capella* singing combined with instruments such as oud, kanun (harp), zurna (Turkish oboe) kemenche (bowed lyre), clarinet, violin, darabuka (drum) and tambourine. The music is lush, nuanced and intricately interwoven with mesmerizing *taksim* (explorative instrumental improvisations).

Please consider including a performance by Ensemble Saltiel as part of a your congregation or local Jewish organization's special events programming this spring. A performance by Ensemble Saltiel would also make for a uniquely authentic accompaniment to a wedding reception or ceremony.

Please contact Peter Bonos, assistant director of the Jewish Music Festival of the San Francisco Bay Area peterb@jccastbay.org; 510-848-0237, x119 or Alikobeni music in Austria for inquiries or promotional package requests. The music can be seen and heard at www.alिकobeni.com & [Golden Horn Records](#) (for audio content)

Ensemble Saltiel - **Boda: Kantigas de Novia**

A closer look into the music of Turkish Sephardic Wedding ceremonies

Aron Saltiel presents this fantastic new collection of Sephardic wedding songs, recorded by his family in Turkey and to be performed in the USA for select engagements, in the spring of 2011.

Ensemble Saltiel performs traditional songs that were sung and danced during various phases of the wedding – from the engagement, the preparation of the dowry and the trading of gifts, to the drawing up of the marriage contract, the ceremony in the synagogue and finally to the week following the wedding.

The music is unusual in many respects – first, because many of the songs themselves are sung within the Saltiel family and collected by Aron himself; only rarely do we find that the artist is not only a premiere performer, but also the collector and documentarian.

Second, the songs are not sung in the common modern-day accompaniment style, with guitars or lutes in a conjectural revamping of the Renaissance styles of pre-1492 Spain. Instead, they are performed by a stellar cast of Turkish professional musicians, mostly Roma, who have been working intensely at the forefront of both the folk and classical Turkish music scenes for decades. The collaboration occurs in much the same way as it did in previous centuries, whereby the Sephardic vocal tradition of homespun a capella singing is combined for the wedding with the professional folk ensembles (typically performed with tambourine, darabuka, ud, kanun, clarinet and violin) when instruments were needed. The musicians in the Sephardic tradition were typically referred to as *tanyedores*, but this term in no way implied the ethnicity of the musician, as those hired for weddings were not necessarily Jewish, but were just as often Greek, Turkish, Roma or Macedonian. The instrumentalists of Ensemble Saltiel adorn the music with nuanced ornaments and interweave *taksim* (explorative instrumental improvisations) throughout the songs, the result being a concerted whole that gives generous space to the accompanists to present their art in an ever-changing format.

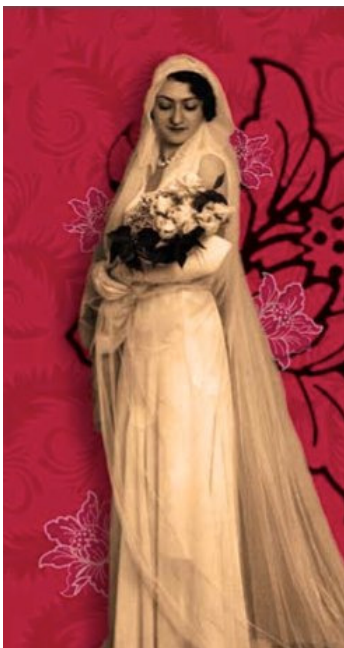
Third, it is the family who are singing the songs (often together), and not simply a wedding crooner. The communal nature of the songs is kept intact, but we are still treated to a lovely variety of solo, duet and group songs whose lyrics range from the salty to the deeply sad. The family includes non-professional and professional alike, a combination which is both artful and charming and which produces moments of intimacy not to be found in your typical productions of contemporary Sephardic music. Saltiel gathered together his daughter Rivka, his sisters Lisa and Flora, and his nephew, Thomas – altogether two

generations of Sephardic family members and recorded the CD, *Boda*, in historic Istanbul (where most of them were born) with its centuries of Sephardic history.

Although documentary anthologies exist today, most emphasize the love songs, with this being the first project to center exclusively on the wedding repertoire. The result is anything but monotonous, and rather than suffering from the theme of the wedding repertoire, this music benefits from it by presenting the sheer depth and variety of the main wellspring of the Sephardic song.

Since the wedding itself lasted many days, the opportunity to include a colorful palette of songs is seized upon on the Saltiel Ensemble's music, such that the repertoire leaves no stone unturned. We're treated to songs of invitations to the wedding, to those that show off the bride's trousseau, her immersion in the ritual bath and the henna night. Some praise the bride's beauty, while others describe her gifts, clothes or the banquet. There are sung dialogues between the bride and her mother, between the in-laws, teasing songs and even erotic songs, all-in-all a vault of treasures burst wide open, revealing the most precious expressions that have kept the Sephardic musical tradition alive in the centuries before this one.

Please do not hesitate to take up the opportunity to host a concert for this amazing ensemble. Ensemble Saltiel seeks performance opportunities in March 2010. Please contact the Jewish Music Festival or Alikobeni Music for inquiries or promotional package requests.



Sephardic Bride (Boda)



Ensemble Saltiel in studio