

FLORY'S FLAME

Feature Film Documentary produced by JEMGLO

Running time: 58:18

Country of Origin: United States of America

Director/DP/Editor: Curt Fissel

Writer/Producer: Ellen Friedland

Distributor: Content Media

SYNOPSIS

20 Word:

A documentary about 90-year old legendary Sephardic musician Flory Jagoda, interweaving her Celebration Concert at the Library of Congress.

50 Word:

Flory Jagoda's perfect, trilling voice invokes the soulful musical Altarac family heritage stretching back to pre-Inquisition Spain. *Flory's Flame* interweaves the life story of this 90-year old legendary Sephardic National Heritage Fellow musician raised in Bosnia and Croatia with her September 2013 Celebration Concert at the US Library of Congress.

100 Word:

Flory's Flame weaves the life story of 90-year old Sephardic US National Heritage Fellow musician Flory Jagoda with her 2013 Celebration Concert at the US Library of Congress. Raised in a musical household in Bosnia, her family roots go back centuries before the Jewish expulsion from Spain in 1492. As the sole surviving family member after World War II, Flory's mission has been to continue her family's cultural legacy through their music. Her strength of spirit shines through her challenging but ultimately triumphant story.

150 Word:

Flory's Flame is a one-hour documentary weaving the life story of 90-year old Sephardic US National Heritage Fellow musician Flory Jagoda with her 2013 Celebration Concert at the US Library of Congress. The combined personal and musical overviews open a

window on pre-Inquisition Spanish Jewish life. Flory's roots go back to that pre-1492 era, then moved to the Balkans, settling in Bosnia and Croatia. As the sole surviving Altarac family member, with most of her family killed during World War II, Flory's life mission has been to continue her family's cultural legacy through their music. Her strength of spirit shines through her challenging but ultimately triumphant story expressed in the context of the impactful music performed by Flory and 25 fellow musicians in the prestigious and inspiring Library of Congress Celebration Concert.

ABOUT FLORY JAGODA

Born in Sarajevo in 1923, international singer and composer Flory Jagoda spent her childhood summers in the Bosnian village of Vlasenica within the rich Sephardic tradition of her extended Altarac family, whose musical prowess and traditions stretched back to the pre-Inquisition Judeo-Spanish community and Ladino language. As a child Flory moved with her parents to Zagreb, where she received her first "harmonika" (accordion), which she learned to play by ear. During World War II and the Holocaust, Flory and her parents escaped by moving first to Split on the Dalmatian Coast, then to the island of Korcula in the Adriatic Sea, and ultimately landing in Bari, Italy, where she met and married US Army Master Sgt. Harry Jagoda. Flory arrived in America as a war bride in 1946.

Tragically, Flory's family in Vlasenica was killed in the Holocaust. In 1978 she began to write, record, teach, and perform the music she had learned from them to ensure its continuity. She has been widely labeled "keeper of the flame" for her significant role in reviving Ladino music.

Flory has recorded five CDs:

- *Kantikas Di Mi Nona*
- *Memories of Sarajevo*
- *La Nona Kanta*
- *Arvoliko*
- *Kantikas de amor i vida: Sephardic Duets* (2006) Duets with Ramón Tasat

For her efforts in passing on the tradition of Ladino music, in 2002 Flory received the National Heritage Fellowship, a lifetime honor presented to master folk and traditional artists by the National Endowment for the Arts. She has also served as a Master Artist in the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities' Virginia Folklife Apprentice Program. In March 2003 she was the soloist in a ceremony at Auschwitz commemorating the Sephardic Jews who perished there during the Holocaust. She is also the proud recipient of the 2003 Immigrant Achievement Award. Several of her songs are widely known and performed by groups ranging from popular musicians to US military bands.

ANECDOTES FROM THE PRODUCTION

Each year in the end of December when holiday music is piped into environments everywhere, one of the familiar tunes that can be heard is “Ocho Kandelikas” (“Eight Little Candles”), representative of the Jewish holiday of Chanukah. The song has been recorded by groups as diverse as the US Army and the rock group Pink Martini, but it was actually composed by Sephardic musician Flory Jagoda. Born in Sarajevo to a musical family whose roots stretched back to Spain prior to the Jewish expulsion in 1492, Flory was raised on melodies that she has spent her career preserving. Over the last half-century, she has performed globally for groups interested in world music generally and the genre of Sephardic music specifically. It was a big surprise for her, however, to get calls from friends during holiday season in the last few years who had turned on their car radios or walked into coffee shops and were greeted with different versions of “Ocho Kandelikas.” Originally composed as a memoir to her Nona (grandmother) and extended family with whom she had been raised, the popularity of the song delighted Flory, whose goal has been to continue the traditions that her family had brought from Spain.

DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT

“Over the years I have attended several concerts of Flory Jagoda because I enjoy world music in general and Flory’s Sephardic compositions in particular. I loved the way Flory’s compelling storytelling narrative would transport the audience into snippets of her life story – which traversed places as diverse as Spain, Bosnia, Croatia, Italy, and the US -- then bring the imagery to life through her beautiful and impactful music. Each time I heard her perform I thought to myself that this amazing and talented artist needed to be captured in a documentary. When the opportunity finally arose in 2012, knowing that she was a year away from her 90th birthday and was still performing worldwide, I jumped at it.

“The production of *Flory’s Flame* gave me an intimate window into this woman I had so admired over the years. We filmed at her home with her husband in the next room, coming in occasionally to entertain us with his sense of humor. We set up the camera amongst her colorful memorabilia, we recorded practice sessions with her accompanists, and we ate Sephardic food that she had prepared for us. We got to know the beautiful human being Flory behind the beautiful stage presence Flory. We formed a friendship that has been very enriching on so many levels.

“The documentary required us to film in the European locations where Flory lived, capturing b-roll to supplement the look and feel that she conveyed in her sound bites. I was both thrilled and taken aback that throughout our travels in Croatia and Bosnia, many people were familiar with Flory’s music; they were hungry to see this documentary that we were producing about someone who they perceived as one of them and who they held in high esteem.

“I am proud and humbled to have had the opportunity to direct this documentary. And I am grateful not only to play an important role in helping Flory preserve the musical traditions of her family, but also to have made a new and very dear, very special friend.”

ABOUT JEMGLO

The documentary was produced by JEMGLO, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit production company based in Montclair, NJ. Since its founding in December 1996, JEMGLO has produced ten documentaries; eight have been or are currently being broadcast on PBS channels across the US, and the ninth was an Official Selection at more than 35 film festivals worldwide, including Santa Barbara, Newport Beach, Vail, and United Nations Association. It was the recipient of numerous festival awards. *Flory's Flame* is the tenth JEMGLO documentary. It is currently on the film festival circuit and has been picked up for international distribution by Content Media, based in NY, LA and London.

Curt Fissel: Formerly the Chief Photographer and Manager of News and Documentary Staff for NJN (NJ's former PBS network), Curt helped co-found and for the past 19 years has served as the director and DP at JEMGLO and at corporate video production company Voices & Visions (V&V) Productions. He has directed and been the DP on over 25 documentaries over the years, almost all of which have been broadcast on PBS and cable channels and many of which have been screened at global film festivals. Curt has received numerous awards, including the Cine Golden Eagle, nominations by NATAS in various EMMY categories including Individual Achievement in Photography and Outstanding Historical Documentary, and Associated Press Outstanding Documentary Awards.

Ellen Friedland: Ellen has written and produced JEMGLO's ten documentaries. Ellen was the co-founder with Curt of JEMGLO and Voices & Visions (V&V) Productions and serves as the president of both. Productions for the two companies have received three silver Tellys, numerous Bronze Tellys, and dozens of additional awards. Ellen was honored as a 2014 recipient of the NJBiz “Best Women in Business” award and was a finalist for the NJ Monthly's “150 Leading Women Entrepreneurs and Business Owners.” She was a winner of the American Express OPEN Without a Box Competition in 2009, a finalist in the Count Me in for Women's Economic Independence competition in 2008, an inductee into the Jericho (New York) Hall of Fame, and an awardee of several journalism competitions. She began her professional career as an attorney then became the founding political correspondent for a NJ weekly newspaper before transitioning into documentary and corporate video production.

SCREENINGS

11 November 2014 / Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina

Offshoot of the Zagreb Jewish Film Festival/Festival of Tolerance (Bosnia premiere)

Sold out screening

15 November 2014 | Belgrade, Serbia

Offshoot of the Zagreb Jewish Film Festival/Festival of Tolerance (Serbia premiere)

Voted best film of festival – Sold out screening

6 December 2014 | Seattle, WA

Joint Program of the Seattle Jewish Film Festival and University of Washington

Sephardic Studies Program at the Stroum JCC (State of Washington premiere)

Sold out screening

23 December 2014 | Jerusalem, Israel

Jerusalem Film Festival (Israel premiere)

21 January 2015 | Washington DC

Library of Congress

Co-sponsored by Embassies of Croatia and Spain (Washington DC premiere)

22 March 2015 | Atlantic City, NJ

Garden State Film Festival (New Jersey premiere)

19-29 March 2015 | Fairfax, VA

Northern Virginia Jewish Film Festival (Virginia premiere)

March 26- April 2, 2015 | Palm Beach, FL

Palm Beach International Film Festival (Florida premiere)

12 April 2015 | Ann Arbor, MI

Ann Arbor Jewish Film Festival (Michigan premiere)

18 April 2015 | Bristol, RI

Roving Eye International Film Festival (Rhode Island premiere)

26, 28 April 2015 | Newport Beach, CA

Newport Beach Film Festival (California premiere)

26 April 2015 | Austin, TX

Cine Las Americas International Film Festival (Texas premiere)

23 June 2015 | Maryland

Coming of Age in Maryland / JCC of Greater Washington

12 July 2015 | Hudson Valley, New York
Zamir Choral: North American Jewish Choral Festival

5 August 2015 | Providence, Rhode Island
Rhode Island International Film Festival

7, 9 August 2015 | Sao Paulo, Brazil
Sao Paulo Jewish Film Festival (Brazil premiere)

5 August 2015 | Providence, Rhode Island
Rhode Island International Film Festival

25 September – 1 October 2015 | Bucharest, Romania
Bucharest Jewish Film Festival, Competitive Section

8 November 2015 | St. Louis, MO
St. Louis International Film Festival (Missouri premiere)

13 November 2015 | Houston, Texas
Houston Jewish Book & Arts Fair

18 November 2015 | Rockleigh, NJ
Jewish Home Federation of North Jersey

10 January 2016 | Boynton Beach, FL
Sephardi Federation of Palm Beach County

26 January – 7 February 2016 | Atlanta, GA
Atlanta Jewish Film Festival (Georgia premiere)

29 January 2016 | Cleveland, OH
Cleveland Jewish Film Festival (Ohio premiere)

31 January 2016 | Dallas, Texas
Southern Methodist University Sephardic Studies Celebration

1 February 2016 | West Valley, AZ
West Valley Arizona Jewish Film Festival (Arizona premiere)

7 and 12 February 2016 | San Diego, CA
San Diego Jewish Film Festival

16 February 2016 | New York, NY
American Jewish Historical Society (New York premiere)

18 February 2016 | Los Angeles, CA

Skirball Museum /Jewish Genealogy Society of LA

12 March 2016 | Carmel, CA

Carmel Jewish Film Festival

14, 17 April 2016 | Pittsburgh, PA

Pittsburgh Jewish Film Festival (Pennsylvania premiere)

17 April 2016 | Montclair, NJ

Montclair Art Museum

30 April 2016 | Santa Cruz, CA

Santa Cruz Jewish Film Festival

29 May-5 June 2016 | Toronto, CANADA

Jewish Music Week in Toronto (Canadian premiere)

2-9 July 2016 | Madrid, SPAIN

International Filmmaker Festival of World Cinema Madrid

ACCOLADES | QUOTES

"She is an artist. A worldly outlet of the divine in us humans." - Josko Paro,
Ambassador Embassy of the Republic of Croatia to the United States of America

*"FLORY'S FLAME takes you on a luminous journey lit by Flory Jagoda's inspired
Sephardic song and story."* - Pamela Levitt, Director of Seattle Jewish Film Festival

"Jagoda's efforts to preserve and pass on Sephardic culture are a lifetime effort for her."
- The Jewish Sound

*"Filmmakers Curt Fissel and Ellen Friedland.. do more than hone in on Jagoda's
fascinating life story... They weave in the history of the Spanish Jews in exile, deepening
the importance of the film as a tool for preserving the many facets of Sephardic Jewish
culture..."* - Washington Jewish Week

PRESS

Mercer Island Reporter

<http://www.mi-reporter.com/community/284542121.html#>

The Jewish Sound

<http://jewishsound.org/sephardic-flory-jagoda-ladino-uw-naar/>

Washington Jewish Week

<http://washingtonjewishweek.com/19346/flora-and-fauna/>

The Montclair Times | [NorthJersey.com](http://www.northjersey.com)

<http://www.northjersey.com/arts-and-entertainment/movies/library-of-congress-hosts-montclair-film-company-1.1267713>

Radio Sefarad

<http://www.radiosefarad.com/la-vida-de-la-compositora-e-interprete-flory-jagoda-narrada-en-un-documental-con-su-directora-ellen-friedland/>

MAIN CAST & CREW

Featured Protagonist: Flory Jagoda

Musicians at Celebration Concert:

Flory Jagoda
Betty Jagoda Murphy
Elliot Jagoda
Lori Jagoda Lowell
Ariel Lowell
Susan Gaeta
Howard Bass
Betsy Cary
Tina Chancey
Alan Oresky
Larry Robinson
Theo Stone
Cantor Ramon Tasat
Janet Dunkelberger
Heather Spence
Martha Halperin
Peggy Finn
Cory Giacobbe
Joel Leonard
Lynn Falk
Margie Jervis
Noah Taylor
Joanne Stefanick
Tiffani Ferrantelli
Zhenya Tochenaya
Aviva Chernick

Director: Curt Fissel

Producer: Ellen Friedland

Director of Photography: Curt Fissel

Writer: Ellen Friedland

Post-Production Editor: Curt Fissel

Color Grader: Gabriel Molton

Motion Graphic Design: Lori Newman

Sound Design:
Sammy's Sound, Inc.

Recording Mixer:
Samuel Aronson

Sound Editors:
Brian Hawk
Gabriel Aronson

Associate Producers:
Lea Craft Spencer
Krystal Larson Sancho

CONTACTS

Ellen Friedland
ellen@jemglo.org
JEMGLO
511 Westbourne Drive
West Hollywood, CA 90048
973.865.1624
JEMGLO | <http://jemglo.org>

FLORY'S FLAME WEBSITE | <http://www.florysflamemovie.com>