

# The Key from Spain: Flory Jagoda and Her Music

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{ Which family treasures do you carry with you? }

## A Scattered Culture

Flory Jagoda's family traced its roots to Spain, where for centuries Sephardic Jews (Jews of Spanish descent) lived in harmony with other cultures. When the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, they immigrated to lands around the Mediterranean Sea and beyond. Sephardic Jews built new communities wherever they settled — places like present-day Turkey, the Netherlands, Morocco, and Argentina — but they always remembered “the golden age” of Spanish life long ago. Many hoped, in the words of Flory's *Nona* (Ladino for “grandmother”), to “return to Spain, find the house, open the door — and be home once again!” Flory's family eventually journeyed to the Bosnian mountain village of Vlasenica, where they lived peacefully with the local Muslim and Christian communities. Unfortunately, this period of coexistence did not last forever. Nonetheless, the Sephardic dream of coexistence and the historical connection to Spain are still cherished to this day.

## A Living Language

For centuries, Sephardic Jews have spoken Ladino, or Judeo-Spanish. Ladino has elements of the languages spoken in the different regions where Sephardic Jews lived, such as Arabic, Turkish, Greek, French, Italian, and Portuguese. Today Ladino is still spoken by small groups around the world, but it is in danger of dying out. (Fact: Languages can be considered “endangered” just like animals.) To keep Ladino alive, Sephardic leaders are teaching the language to children through music, games, books, and summer camps. There are also Ladino classes at some universities. Using the latest technology, teachers are building online libraries where you can see digital versions of Ladino texts, like a Passover Haggadah or a child's grammar book written in rhyme. To learn more visit [pjlibrary.org/keyfromspain](http://pjlibrary.org/keyfromspain).

## Making a New Start

Like so many before her, Flory Jagoda made a new start by immigrating to America. This life was very different from the one she left behind in Bosnia and Croatia. Creating music was Flory's way of remembering the places she had come from and the people she had lost. Ladino songs helped to build a bridge “across the ocean and across the years,” back to her Nona and her mountain village. Thanks to Flory, the “Keeper of the Flame,” we have many Ladino songs that otherwise might not have survived the migrations and changes of the Sephardic community over the centuries. Flory has also inspired a new generation of Ladino singers who learn the traditional songs of the past, while also creating their own music for a new audience.

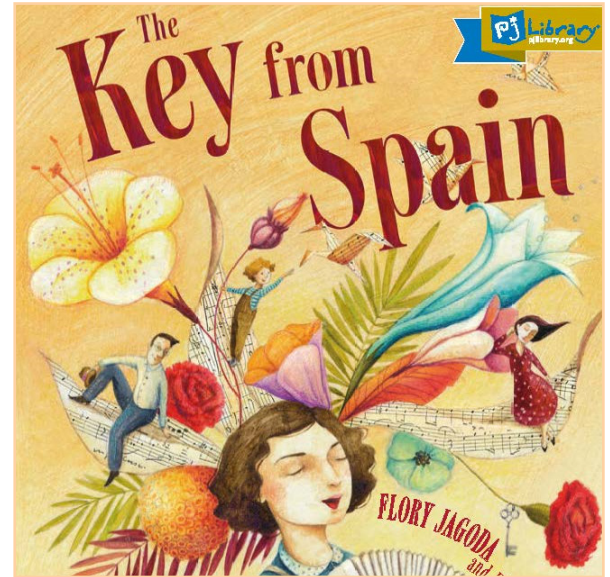
## TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

**F**lory's family had two things that “took up no space at all”: the Ladino language and music. What important things take up no space in your life?

**W**hat are some of the special things that Flory's Nona did in their mountain village? What special things do your grandparents do?

**W**hy did Flory keep making music once she got to America?

**F**lory and her family lived peacefully with people of different faiths in Bosnia, even singing songs in the Bosnian language. How do people of different faiths coexist in your community?



## HANDS ON!

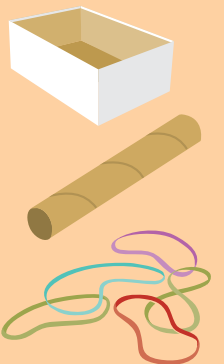
### Make Your Own Tamburitza

When they lived in the mountain village of Vlasenica, the Altaras family sang songs in Bosnian as well as Ladino, the language of Sephardic Jews. Flory's family also learned to play some local musical instruments, such as the *tamburitza*, a long-necked stringed instrument that looks like a mandolin or guitar. Here's how to make your own:



### Supplies

- Small shoebox (bottom only)
- Cardboard tube
- 5-7 large rubber bands
- Scissors
- Masking or duct tape
- Markers, stickers, or ribbons for decorating (optional)



### Instructions

- 1 Cut a hole in one end of the box, just large enough to fit the cardboard tube.
- 2 Wrap the rubber bands around the sides of the shoe box, spacing evenly between the bands.
- 3 Tape the tube onto the end of the box.
- 4 Decorate as you wish, then start strumming!