

## **Together/Endjuntos Song Descriptions**

### **Music and Lyrics by Sarah Aroeste**

The album begins with a song for Havdallah, the holiday that marks the start of each week. I wanted the album to start with a song that symbolized something new, a fresh beginning. Then the record continues with the first holidays according to the Gregorian calendar (i.e. Jan/Feb) and therein follows the holidays according to the Hebrew calendar cycle. In other words, Tu B'shvat (which normally falls in February) is followed by Purim (which tends to fall in March) which is followed by Passover (April) and so on... The album ends with the celebratory Shabbat, the holiday that comes at the end of every week and is representative of coming together as a family and as a community. The last line of the song includes the album title of "Together/Endjuntos."

#### **Track 1. Buena Semana**

I wanted this song for Havdallah to be meditative and "niggun"-like, and to combine English, Ladino and parts of the well-known Hebrew blessings (with Ladino pronunciation). Havdallah to me is about the actions- the blessing, the smelling, the seeing the light. It's a beautiful goodbye to the Sabbath, and a hello and blessing for the new week. I also wanted to set the tone for the album that it is a deep and layered one, and to feature the beautiful string quartet right from the start.

#### **Track 2. Thank You for the Trees**

I wanted this Tu B'Shvat song to have a grounded, earthy feeling (via the melody and fiddle instrumentation), as the holiday pays homage to trees! The chorus is based on a Ladino proverb: the trees married and the first flowers started to appear. I loved that image and thought it was beautiful to keep that in Ladino, while having the playful down-to-earth verses in English.

#### **Track 3. El Dia De Purim**

This song for Purim (the holiday that celebrates the Jewish escape from annihilation from the evil villain Haman), is based on a traditional "copla" which is a specific style of writing poetry in ladino. The last words of the first three lines are supposed to rhyme. In this case, I took the traditional chorus and kept it in Ladino, while I wrote my original coplas in English. We wanted to rock it out a bit, and my producer helped give it a bit of a Peruvian feel. I remember hiking in Peru many years back and stumbling by a falafel restaurant in the middle of nowhere. Jewish culture is everywhere! Thus the Peruvian feel, amplified by the charango and cavaquinho, felt right to us, especially with the last English line being "Now that we the Jews are free!"...

#### **Track 4. 8 Days Sephardic**

This song is tongue-in-cheek, as each spring I have the experience of friends telling me that during Passover they wish they were Sephardic! The thought of eating matzah for 8 days is too much for them, when we Sephardim get to eat rice, beans, and more. Of course, I always tell people that there's more to being Sephardic than eating rice and beans, so I wanted to play that up in this song. It's a bit of a Broadway feel at the start,

then the voice of God suggests that the way to survive Passover is to just pretend to be Sephardic, and then the song leads into to an electro French cabaret style (think Triplets of Belleville) with the pronouncement that we can all be Sephardic during Passover to get through the 8 days.

### **Track 5. La Ketubá De La Ley**

This is the only song that's almost entirely in Ladino (save for 2 lines in English in the chorus). I wanted this to have heft for Shavuot, when Jews received the 10 commandments. In Sephardic tradition, the traditional marriage contract, the ketubah, is also used in association with Shavuot—meaning it's a marriage contract to the torah, to the commandments (Ley means “law”). It's a respectful, baroque-feeling song with the beautiful string quartet and Spanish guitar. We wanted to convey a bit of a marriage ceremony feel. I think the baroque feel also has some reverential, Christian-sounding overtones, as it's a holiday that is often associated with conversion. Ruth, after all, goes along with the Israelites by saying: “Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.” In my bridge, I fashioned those famous lines to be a bit more universal, and wrote “WE will go wherever you go,” meaning we will follow where God takes us.

### **Track 6. Anyada Buena**

This is my song for Rosh Hashana – it is meant to be a sweet, intimate, introspective ballad of good wishes for a new year. It is simple and direct, weaving Ladino and English together side by side during the verses, with the chorus in Ladino wishing you a blessed and contented year ahead.

### **Track 7. Come Step In My Sukkah**

This song is for Sukkot, otherwise known as the feast of tabernacles. It commemorates the temporary sheltering of the Israelites after they wandered in the desert following their exodus from Egypt. It also celebrates the end of the harvest! The sukkah is a homemade booth with three temporary walls and loosely thatched roof (one must be able to see the stars) that are supposed to be decorated and made inviting like a house, so that people share feasts and songs with friends and neighbors together inside. The design here was to keep the lyrics simple while the sukkah is musically “built” around them. The percussion is like the hammering and the building, and it leads up to the strings, which invites visitors to enter and makes it warm and nurturing inside. This is entirely in English, and the only Sephardic mention is about the eating of “biscochos” a traditional Sephardic cookie. As sukkot is such a little-understood holiday, I wanted to keep it in English and make it accessible and inviting, as a home should be!

### **Track 8. Baylamos**

When I think of the holiday of Simchat Torah, the joyous celebration of the completion of the torah cycle, I just think of dancing round and round and round and having an almost hypnotic, mystical, frenzied time. I wanted the melody and lyrics to sound circular and repetitive (the Ladino repeats the English lines) like the holiday's dances and prayers, and for some reason the Bollywood bhangra sound just matched! Of course, we Jews are everywhere (including India) and this song style just made sense for me given the holiday's spirit.

**Track 9. Bimuelo**

My Hannukah rap featuring Jewish rapper, Kosha Dillz! Most people have never heard of bimuelos, the Sephardic fried treat traditionally eaten during the holiday. Most likely think of (Ashkenazi) fried food like doughnuts (sufganiyot in Hebrew), or latkes for hannukah. This song, entirely in English, was meant to be cheeky but cool and to espouse the deliciousness of bimuelos and Sephardic culture in general...

**Track 10. Buen Shabat**

I wanted this Shabbat song to be joyous and energetic, and to show the universalism of the Sabbath by having very simple words translated between the English and Ladino. By giving it a merengue rhythm, we wanted to show some Latin flair and to show the connection with Hispanic culture. We also wanted to give this holiday, which marks the end of the week, a bit of a party vibe – and to end the album with something uplifting and joyous, just like Sephardic culture!