

# Las Kazas de la Boda

a Sephardic Jewish wedding song  
for Choir SSAA and instruments ad lib.

arr. Sarah Riskind

## Background Information

The Sephardim are descended from Jews who settled in modern-day Greece and other Balkan countries, Turkey, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt after being expelled from Spain and Portugal in the 1490s. Due to persecution in the 20th century, many Sephardic Jews now live in Israel, France, the Americas, and other parts of the world. The term “Sephardic” is often used to represent all Jews who are not Ashkenazi, or traditionally Yiddish-speaking Jews from German or Eastern European background, but there are also groups that fall into neither category.

Because Sephardic music was not notated until the 20th century, it is difficult to discern the age of most Sephardic melodies. Most Sephardic music reflects the Ottoman and Arabic cultures of the Mediterranean more than the Iberian peninsula, except for influences in the 20th century and beyond. Commercial artists and composers have interpreted Sephardic music in a range of styles, but it is important to understand that the harmonies, vocal timbres, instrumentation, and rhythms usually create more of a reimagining than a literal presentation of tradition.

“Las Kazas de la Boda” is a *cantiga de novia* or wedding song, specifically sung at a wedding feast, and it falls in the larger category of lyric songs that includes the majority of well-known Judeo-Spanish melodies. The main melodic source for this arrangement is a recording on Avner Perez’s Maale Adumim Institute database, accessible at <http://folkmasa.org/avshir/shirp.php?mishtane=39>. The singers are Bulgarian Sephardic women at the Moadon Tiferet club in Jaffa, Israel. Other recordings of this ballad are located in record numbers 423, 505, and 736.

There is significant modal variation between each of these four recordings, but most Sephardic melodies from the Eastern Mediterranean exhibit influence from the Ottoman *makam* modal system, often including microtonal pitches. The metrical grouping of 2+2+2+3 demonstrates a strong connection to non-Jewish Bulgarian music.

### Performance Suggestions:

- Experiment with a Balkan-style belt; the soprano/alto register is intentionally low in order to facilitate this vocal technique
- The ornamentation is based on the source recording, but performers are welcome to add and remove ornaments. Listening to the source recording will provide the best understanding.
- The pitched instrument can be one or more instruments in the written octave or an octave below, playing in unison or heterophony.
  - Traditional instruments: tambura, oud, kanun, kaval, gadulka
  - Effective substitutes could include: violin, rebec, mandolin, dulcimer, zither, harp, recorder, flute, bouzouki, and others
- For the unpitched instruments, a low or medium-pitch drum can be used as the main instrument, with tambourine entering as notated
  - Ideal instruments would be: tupan and tarabuka/dumbek

## Text

The Judeo-Spanish language spoken by the Sephardic Jews is most commonly called Ladino, but other regional names include Spaniol, Djudezmo, Djudeo-spanyol, and haketia (Moroccan Judeo-Spanish). Since it was originally written in the Hebrew Rashi script, there are now many spelling systems and countless dialectic variations in pronunciation and vocabulary. This arrangement primarily uses the source recording's pronunciation, with the spelling system from the Ladino magazine *Aki Yerushalayim* that is used on the popular online discussion group Ladinokomunita (<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Ladinokomunita/info>).

### Pronunciation Guide:

- Vowels: same as Spanish
- Consonants: same as Spanish, except:
  - z is voiced, as in English
  - j is ʒ, as in French “jour”
  - g is a hard g, as in English “gate”
  - s at the end of a word is voiced, as in z

## Translation

Estas kazas tan ermozas x2  
Para ke bailen las novias  
Para bodas,  
Para bodas, la me senyora.  
Esta i otra.  
Lai lai lai

The houses are so beautiful  
For the brides to dance there  
For weddings  
For weddings, my lady,  
This one and another.

Estas mezas tan ermozas x2  
Para ke bailen las novias  
Para bodas,  
Para bodas, la me senyora.  
Esta i otra.  
Lai lai lai

These tables are so beautiful  
For the brides to dance there  
For weddings  
For weddings, my lady,  
This one and another.

Estas kazas tan ermozas x2  
Para ke bailen las novias  
Para bodas,  
Para bodas, la me senyora.  
Esta i otra.  
Lai lai lai

These houses are so beautiful  
For the brides to dance there  
For weddings  
For weddings, my lady,  
This one and another.

Afuera bailan las damas x2  
Alentro bailan las nanas  
Para bodas,  
Para bodas, la me senyora.  
Esta i otra.  
Lai lai lai

Inside the ladies are dancing  
And outside dance the young girls,  
For weddings  
For weddings, my lady,  
This one and another.

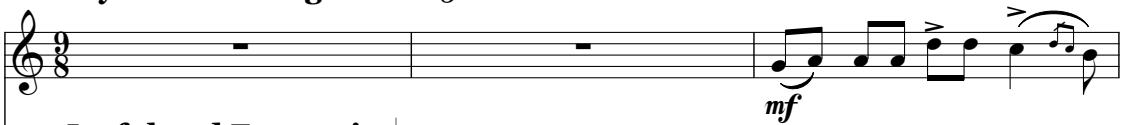
Translation: Susana Weich-Shahak


“The Traditional Performance of Sephardic Songs” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jewish Music*, ed. Joshua S. Walden

# Las Kazas de la Boda

Sephardic Wedding Song from Bulgaria  
arr. Sarah Riskind

Joyful and Energetic ♩ = 136

Pitched Instrument(s) 

Unpitched Percussion 

Pitched 

Unpitched 

**A**

8 *mf* All singers

S1.   
Es - tas ka - zas tan er - mo - zas, ay ke ka - zas tan er - mo - zas\_

**A**

Unpitched 

12

S1.   
pa - ra ke bai - no vias pa - ra bo - das,

Unpitched 

16

S1.   
pa - ra o - das, la me sen - yo - ra. Es - ta i o - tra.

Unpitched 

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**B**

27

S1. *mf*  
Es-tas me zas,

S2. *mf*  
Es-tas me zas,

A1. *mf*  
Es-tas me - zas

A2. *mf*  
Es-tas me-zas tan er - mo - zas,

Pitched

Unpitched

**B**

31

S1. me - zas, pa-ra ke bai - - len

S2. es-tas me - zas pa-ra ke bai - - len

A1. tan er - mo zas, es-tas me - zas tan er - mo - zas, pa-ra ke bai -

A2. es-tas me - zas tan er - mo - zas, pa-ra ke bai - len las no - vias

Unpitched

35

S1. bo - das, pa - ra bo - das.

S2. bo - das, pa - ra bo - das.

A1. len las no - vias pa - ra bo - das, pa - ra bo - das, la

A2. pa - ra bo - das, pa - ra bo - das, la me sen - o - ra.

Unpitched

39

S1. Es ta o - tra.

S2. Es ta i o - tra.

A1. me sen - yo - ra. Es - ta i o - tra.

A2. Es - ta i o - tra. *f* Lai lai lai lai lai lai lai

Unpitched *mf*



42

S1. *f*  
Lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai.

S2. *f*  
Lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai.

A1. *f*  
Lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai.

A2.  
lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai.

Unpitched

45

S1.

S2.

A1. *solo f*  
Es - tas ka - zas tan er - mo - zas, es - tas ka - zas

A2.

Pitched *mf*  
C

Unpitched *mp*

49

S1.

S2.

A1.

tan er - mo - zas solo *f*

A2.

Pa - ra te ba - len las no - vias

Pitched

Unpitched

*mf*

52

S1.

S2.

A1.

*tutti*

pa - ra bo - das, la me sen - yo - ra.

A2.

*tutti*

pa - ra bo - das, pa - ra bo - das, la me sen - yo - ra.

Pitched

Unpitched

*f*

56

S1.

S2.

A1.

A2.

Pitched

Unpitched

*p*

*p*

*p*

*p*

*p*

*p*

Es - ta i o - tra.

Lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai

Lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai

Lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai

Add tambourin

59

S1.

S2.

A1.

A2.

Pitched

Unpitched

*p*

*f*

*f*

*f*

*f*

*f*

*f*

Lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai.

lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai.

lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai.

lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai.

lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai.

lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai.

**D**

62

S1.

S2.

A1.

A2.

Pitched

Unpitched

**D**

66

Pitched

Unpitched

70

Pitched

Unpitched

73

Pitched

Unpitched

77

S1.

Musical staff for S1, mostly rests.

S2.

Musical staff for S2, starting with notes and lyrics.

solo  
mf

A - fue - ra bai - lan las da - mas,

A1.

Musical staff for A1, mostly rests.

A2.

Musical staff for A2, starting with notes and lyrics.

solo  
mf

A - fue - ra bai - lan las da - mas,

Pitched

Pitched accompaniment staff.

Unpitched

Unpitched accompaniment staff.

81

S1.

Musical staff for S1, starting with notes and lyrics.

tutti

a - lien - bai - lan las na - nas

S2.

Musical staff for S2, starting with notes and lyrics.

tutti

a - fue - ra bai - lan las da - mas, a - lien - tro bai - lan las na - nas

A1.

Musical staff for A1, starting with notes and lyrics.

tutti

a - lien - tro bai - lan las na - nas

A2.

Musical staff for A2, starting with notes and lyrics.

tutti

a - fue - ra bai - lan las da - mas, a - lien - tro bai - lan las na - nas

Pitched

Pitched accompaniment staff.

mf

Unpitched

Unpitched accompaniment staff.

mf

85

S1. pa - ra bo - das, pa - ra bo - das, la me sen - yo - ra.

S2. pa - ra bo - das, pa - ra bo - das, la me sen - yo - ra.

A1. pa - ra bo - das, pa - ra bo - das, la me sen - yo - ra.

A2. pa - ra bo - das, pa - ra bo - das, la me sen - yo - ra.

Pitched

Unpitched

89

S1. *p* Lai *mf* Lai

S2. Es - ta i o, Es - ta i o - tra. *mf* Lai lai lai lai lai

A1. *p* Es - ta i o, Es - ta i o - tra. *mf* Lai lai lai lai lai

A2. *p* Es - ta i o - tra. *mf* Lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai

Pitched *mp* *mf*  
Tambourine tacet

Unpitched *mp* *mf*

93

S1. *ff*  
lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai

S2. *ff*  
lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai

A1. *ff*  
lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai

A2. *ff*  
lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai

Pitched *ff*

Unpitched *ff*  
Add Tambourine

96

S1. *mf*  
lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai

S2. *mf*  
lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai

A1. *mf*  
lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai

A2. *mf*  
lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai

Pitched *mf*

Unpitched *mf*