



## **WALKING WITH ÇELEBI**

- a contemporary sound travel to *A Balkan Tale*

*A sound walk by Geert Vermeire (musical scenario), Enrique Tomás and Stefaan Van Biesen (sound artists). A production of the Milena principle in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut.*

Take part in a contemporary sound walk inspired by the world traveler, Evliya Çelebi, an Ottoman Turkish gentleman adventurer who travelled far and wide for over 40 years, visiting over 250 cities. He described everything he saw on his journeys, and left a record of his wanderings in 10 large volumes, the *Seyahatname*, or *Book of Travels*, “the longest and fullest travel account in Islamic literature, perhaps in world literature.”

His book is full of fantasy, imaginary landscapes and invented itineraries in a world where travelling was still magical and mysterious. On the other hand Çelebi is a great geographer in the tradition of Strabo and Ptolemy. Historians have cross-referenced his descriptions of Balkan mosques, public baths and Sufi lodges with the actual sites that still stand today, and found Evliya Çelebi to be highly accurate.

This sound walk refers to the magical and to the documentary side of Evliya Çelebi’s travels, situated within the Balkan of today. An atmosphere of past wonder blends with the sounds of contemporary Balkan. Poetic soundscapes, composed for this sound walk, and field recordings of street music, city life and nature, made on location in the Balkan, go along with the themes and photographs of the exhibition. The five themes of *a Balkan Tale* are evoked in soundscapes and five musical promenades, guiding you from one theme to the other. Next to this flux of music and sounds during your walk around the exhibition, you can listen as well to intimate sound portraits of seven photographs.

Another aspect of the traveler Çelebi that inspired us to follow Çelebi’s footsteps in this journey of sound is his usually friendly attitude towards non-Muslims. Meetings with many persons are an essential part of his *Book of Travels*. As Çelebi said many times when he was far from his home, he was perfectly happy to be a *nedim* (intimate fellow) to strangers, a *musahib* (boon companion) to other travelers and “a friend of all mankind.” Sounds of human presence and sounds of life are the thread of our sound walk, always in the light of the joy of living together. As Çelebi wrote from his heart, “Most important is the companion, then the road.”

