

## CHRISTMAS EVE SARAJEVO 12-14 SARAJEVO

Transiberian Orchestra issued this release about the inspiration for *Christmas Eve (Sarajevo 12-14)*:

We heard about this cello player born in Sarajevo many years ago who left when he was fairly young to go on to become a well-respected musician. Many decades later, he returned to Sarajevo as an elderly man—at the height of the Bosnian War, only to find his city in complete ruins.

I think what most broke this man's heart was that the destruction was not done by some outside invader or natural disaster—it was done by his own people. At that time, Serbs were shelling Sarajevo every night. Rather than head for the bomb shelters like his family and neighbors, this man went to the town square, climbed onto a pile of rubble, took out his cello, and played as the city was bombed. Since it was December, he soon began playing Christmas carols. It was just such a powerful image—a white-haired man silhouetted against the cannon fire, playing timeless melodies amid the rubble and devastation of the city he loves. When asked why he did this insanely stupid thing, the old man said that it was his way of proving that despite all evidence to the contrary, the spirit of humanity was still alive in that place.

*The cellist that the story refers to is Vedran Smailovic. However, unlike the "white-haired man" referred to in the story, Smailović was in his mid-thirties at the time of the Siege of Sarajevo.*

