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## The Development of Polyphonic Music That Started During the Early Years of Republic of Turkey

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### ABSTRACT

The interaction between Turkish Music and western music goes back to the Ottoman period. The artistic trading between these two cultures had started with the Janissary Band, which was an important formation of Ottoman period musical culture. The music in the Ottoman period was lead with a central approach. Changes in values, life styles, and social and economical system, which came with the declaration of republic, had also affected music. As a result, the idea that art is the most important step in changing social life was adopted. Along with these improvements, Turkish composers who were proficient in their areas and foreign composers coming from different countries had immensely contributed to this formation. In this study, the development of the conservatories, which had begun to be institutionalized under leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk during the republic period and brought polyphony to our country, during their formation process is examined. It is aimed for the study to be limited in the light of this information, to be transferred to contemporary musicians and to contribute their professional lives.

**Key words:** Conservator, Music, Republic, Turkey, Turkish Fives.

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## 1.0 Introduction

The classical music, which originated in Europe, has been a music genre including the culture of various nations. Additionally, this polyphony helped the mental development of human experiences and feeling, and it shed light on them. From the perspective of Turkey, the first foundations of the interaction between Turkish and Western music are based on 17th century. Especially, the percussive character of Mehter music influenced the Western musicians during this period and artistic change between two cultures started. The Turkish impact on Western music significantly manifested itself in a rhythmic structure. *Kettledrum* (see Figure 1), *big drum* (see Fig. 2), *triangle* (see Fig. 3), *cymbal* (see Fig. 4), *soapworts* (see Fig. 5) which are percussive instruments and have an important place in today's Western music, are among significant instruments of Turkish Mehter music.

Figure 1. Kettledrum: One of the important instruments of sacred music. It is also known as Kudüm.



Figure 2. Big drum: One of the large percussion instruments of the janissary band.



Figure 3. Triangle: A triangle shaped instrument, which has three sides of equal length.



Figure 4. Cymbal: A percussion instrument that is used in Turkish music, as well as music of many other Middle Eastern Countries.



Figure 5. Soapworts: One of the important percussion instruments of the janissary band.



Also, in this period, several operas based on important sultans of the Ottoman period, Beyazid, Timur, Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror, Suleiman the Magnificent and Abraham, were written. For example, Daniel Purcell's *13th Abraham Opera*, was written for the 13th emperor of the Turks (1696). Likewise, Reinhard Keiser's *The Second Mehmed Opera* (1696) is among the Turk themed operas (İlyasoğlu, 1994, p. 277). Main change started with the second Mahmod's desire to change the empire by modelling the Western system. The first step in this innovative approach caused the abolition of Mehter band which had a 500-year history, including the Janissary army. However, it was needed a band to accompany the army's march in review and this started with a horn band. This small band was named after *Musika-i Humayun* which was aimed to be developed in the future. By bringing Giuseppe Donizetti who was a

conductor and educator, to İstanbul, it led to the conversion of the Musika-i Humayun as a Western orchestra and it gave it an opportunity to convert into the chamber orchestra in a short time.

In 1924, later on, Musika-i Humayun which was transferred from İstanbul to Ankara in the name of the *Riyaseti Reisicumhur Music Committee* and which had nearly a 100-year history, was transformed into the *Presentidial Symphony Orchestra*. Some members of this orchestra were given coaching job and in the year 1924, the school of music teachers (*Musiki Muallim Mektebi*) was opened. The director of this school which started the training with six students at an old hotel building in Cebeci, was Zeki Üngör (1880-1958) who was also the conductor of the orchestra. These developments provided training teachers who would give the education of polyphonic music at secondary education. In 1927, city band which was founded by the Municipality of Istanbul, was a model and gained admiration of people. Besides, these developments giving musical education in community homes which were founded all over the country in 1932 supported the artistic formation of the period.

In Ottoman period, the music directed with the central approach has been one of the most discussed subject after the proclamation of the republic. The focus of debates is because there are disagreements about whether polyphonic music or homophonic music not. However, in the leadership of Atatürk, the renewal of the cultural policy of the young republic surviving from tiring wars and taking steps to improve the social aspects of public were the beginning of radical changes on the behalf of Turkey in the field of art, as in all areas.

After the declaration of Republic, *Dar-ül Elhan (House of Melodies)*, which was originally established in 1917 with the purpose of giving music education, was renamed as *İstanbul Municipality Conservatory*. The training of Western instruments such as violin and cello was started to give to the students there. Value judgments, way of life, social and political system changing with the republic also influenced the music and highly developed Turkish music culture. Developments in this period can be listed in starting to officialize of art which were taken among government tasks with the schools opened, being sent abroad of talented students for education and being invited of important composers of the period to Turkey. Atatürk used the following words in his speech at the opening of the National Congress in 1934:

“Friends, I know how you would like the nation youth to be improved in all of the fine arts. This is being done. However, I think what needs to be most important, and what needs to lead the way is the Turkish music. The criterion of change for the new in a nation lies in its ability for taking and comprehending the change in music.”

“Today, the music they attempt to make us listen is not ours, and it is far from proud value. We need to know this clearly. It is necessary to compile high idioms and sayings which reflect national subtle feelings and thoughts, and to process them in accordance with modern rules of music. This is the only way Turkish music can improve and take its part in universal music...”  
(Gökçe, 1990).

These applications started to be performed by the government in accordance with Atatürk's instructions showed a considerable improvement in a short time. Even, the place of the first national opera house was localized at the first city plan drawn by German architect Hermann Jansen (1869-1945). During the republic period, the polyphonic music in Turkey as Atatürk's remark stated above, tremendously covered a distance in accordance with innovatory and creative approaches.

## **2.0 The foundation of Ankara state conservatory and the contributions Made by Paul Hindemith and Bela Bartok**

The most important step, which was taken as a result of the developments in Turkey, was the establishment of *Ankara State Conservatory*. In 1936, with Atatürk's orders, the School of Music Teachers (*Musiki Muallim Mektebi*) was turned into the *Ankara State Conservatory (Ankara Devlet Konservatuarı)*. Starting its education with department of music during its process of foundation,

Ankara State Conservatory added performing arts after a couple of years. This foundation's prior aim is to train musicians and composers having international quality. The most important contribution was supported by German composer and educator Paul Hindemith (1895-1963). By coming to Turkey four times, Paul Hindemith conducted studies for the foundation of Ankara State Conservatory and for the basic principles of the process of education. The connection of the old school of music teachers (Musiki Muallim Mektebi) to Gazi Training Institute by reforming and after departing presidential orchestra from National Music and Representation Academy, it became a foundation in itself, followed these developments.

Later, upon the invitation of Ankara Folk House, Hungarian composer and pianist Bela Bartok (1881-1945) came to Turkey for a compilation study. Bartok did many studies in Anadolu and gave talks on music folklorism. Two teachers from the Ankara State Conservatory accompanied Bartok in his work. One of these teachers was Ahmet Adnan Saygun, a member of the Turkish Five. He helped Bartok in every manner. He worked as a translator for Bartok and recorded the lyrics of the folk songs for him. Bartok explained her thoughts about the melodies of folk music composers should benefit from it in these ways:

Benefiting from the materials provided by folk music is not, with either as they are or by analogy, randomly spitting in the works having a universal and foreign tendency. The aim is to combine the quintessence and statement of these materials with personal style of the composer. For this reason, the composer needs to get familiar with folk music and get the ability to use its statement and language of this music as if they were his mother language or statement (Palisca, 1998, p. 862).

As a result of Bartok's works, in 1937, the most comprehensive compilation work of folk melodies gone through with investigative methods was done and the archive of Turkish folk melodies was founded.

### **3.0 The visitation of Russian artists in Turkey and their impressions**

In 1935, with the invitation of Atatürk, the most elite artists of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975), David Oistrakh (1908-1974), Valeria Barsova (1892-1967) and other important masters of the period came to Turkey. The aim of this visitation was gaining appreciation of public with concerts held and making the first impressions positive related to polyphonic music in these important tour, along with the arranged concerts in Turkey, the exhibition of picture and plastic works of art was held in Ankara and Istanbul, During this period. "About this important visitation, violinist David Oistrakh stated in his letters which he wrote from Ankara in April, 1935:

"...The road and travel are supremely beautiful... The day I came here, I played alone at the concert organized for soldiers. Yesterday, I played with Shostakovich and Oborin at the conservatory. The prom started in Ministry of Turkey, Atatürk (the ancestor of Turks) joined here. The prom ended up at 7 a.m. between the two works that I performed, Atatürk loudly said these: "Our revolution has not been over yet. It has not started yet in field of fine arts and music. Listen and learn!..." The president of the republic jokingly said that you were sent to Turkey as a gift and I have a right not sending you back. " And I will not already send you!..." (Tahirova, 2010, p. 20).

Besides, these visitors generated excitement in terms of both their composition and political personality between contemporary practitioners of Turkish music art.

### **4.0 Turkish fives**

Apart from Ankara State Conservatory, the foundations of *Izmir Music School* in 1954 and *Istanbul State Conservatory* in 1969, led to the training creative and performer artists in Turkey. Our composers whom Atatürk sent to various countries in Europe and who had important contributions to this constitution with their works during the period of the foundation of Turkish Republic and who are also known as *Turks Fives*, Ahmet Saygun (1907-1991), Ulvi Cemal Erkin (1906-1972), Cemal Reşit Rey (1904-1985), Hasan Ferit Alnar (1906-1978), and Necil Kazım Akses (1908-1999) shed light on the contemporary music movement of Turkish Republic.

Common features of these artists are being born in 1900's namely during Ottoman period. Another common feature of the *Fives* who started out nationalist movement is that they benefited from the colors of the folk music. With these features, these five composers who are resembled to the *Russians Fives* who was founded with the purpose of creating an original national music, rearranged *Turks folk songs* and each of them expressed their distinctive perceptions and opinions in their works by getting further away from traditional melodies in time. *Turks Fives* that both a music composer and educator Halil Bedi Yönetken (1899-1968) thought as a name were composers having important contributions to the formation of the contemporary Turkish music beginning during republic period.

During this period, *Inönü Award* was put in order to increase the interest towards the polyphonic music and award firstly was given to Hasan Ferit Alnar, Ulvi Cemal Erkin and Ahmet Adnan Saygun in 1942 (Örünk, 2010).

In the artistic field, one of the most striking examples of government support was also "*Wonderful Children's Law*" which was released in 1948. The purpose of sending exceptionally talented children to abroad for education, Idil Biret and Suna Kan who have important places in today's music life were benefited from this law. Many activities were organized with the purpose of spreading of polyphonic music in the country. Artists coming from many countries such as Germany, Austria, and Italy, gave various concerts. These activities performed by artists specializing in their fields contributed to the spread of polyphonic music.

#### 4.01 Cemal Reşit Rey (1904-1985)

Cemal Reşit Rey, who revealed his tendency to music in his early childhood, took lessons from his mother. His father was an important diplomat and writer of the Ottoman period. Rey was born in Jerusalem where his father went for his job and continued his music training which began there, in Paris and Geneva. Rey returning to home after the proclamation of the republic, started to give lectures in *Istanbul Conservatory*. Rey's first composition trials began with *12 Anatolian Folk Songs* which he wrote by benefiting from the Turkish folk music melodies in 1926 (Say, 1994: p. 518). Rey wrote to a journal:

"Every work of art must revive from a movement that spreads from our land and become the timeless expression of emotions that belong to the Turkish nation. Once this goal is attained, Turkish music can be considered to be born. If this manner of thinking is correct, where else can we find the basis of our future music other than folk songs? They are the spirit of our country, our nation, our homeland. *Anadolu Folk Songs* are a treasure..." (Aktüze, 2007: p. 1860).

The composer who benefited from the folk music melodies with the aim of the acceptance of the polyphonic Turkish music by public, composed works which gained great appreciation from public such as *Lüküs Hayat* (1933), *Deli Dolu* (1934), *Saz Caz* (1935), *Hava Civa* (1937). Rey who had produced during his life time constantly, made works in different types and forms. Rey who had concertos, symphonic poems, chamber music works and many orchestra works, has an important place in our music history as a pianist, an orchestrator, a composer and an educator. Also, he was the composer of the *10th year march* which was written for the 10th anniversary of the republic.

#### 4.02 Ulvi Cemal Erkin (1906- 1972)

Ulvi Cemal Erkin, who has an important place in contemporary Turkish music, began his training with the piano at seven-year-old. Erkin sent to Paris for education in 1925 by the Ministry of Education came back to the country in 1930, and continued his works at the School of Music Teachers (Musiki Muallim Mektebi).

Erkin, who was continuously composing, conducted the world premiere of his *Köçekçeler Suite*, *Piano Concerto*, and *Symphony No. 1* with the Presidential Symphony Orchestra, in 24 April 1946, at the Ankara State Conservatory Hall.

The composer, who brought the charm of traditional melodies forward with a heuristic comprehension in his works, successfully used impressive melodic and rhythmic construction with a new and filled harmony against the tendency of neo-classicist, and gave the perfect samples of orchestration (Say, 1994: p.519).

The works which obviously reflect these features are *İki Dans for orchestra*, *Ninni for piano and violin*, *Emprovizasyon* and *Zeybek Türküsü*. *Piano concerto*, which he wrote for his wife Ferhunde in 1942 and 1943, *Köçekçe* as a dance rhapsody for orchestra, are among his major works.

#### 4.03 Hasan Ferit Alnar (1906-1978)

Hasan Ferit Alnar began to music with the zither by the guidance of his mother, became professional in this field and started to appear in concerts as a zither player at the age of 12. He, who completed his education in the Vienna State Music Academy, worked on the composition and conductorship there. Returning to home in 1932, Alnar starting to give composition lectures in Ankara State Conservatory, notably benefited from the style features of Turkish classic music in his concerto which he wrote for the orchestra consisting of the zither and stringed instruments between 1944 and 1951. Also, the composer's cello concerto which he wrote in 1943, is highly important in terms of being the first Turkish concerto written for the cello. The same year, this work was performed by cellist David Zirkin (1906-49) and the Presidential Orchestra, under the baton of the composer. Besides, Alnar's orchestra concerto, chamber music works, he had also stage musics and film musics.

#### 4.04 Ahmet Adnan Saygun (1907-1991)

Ahmet Adnan Saygun who made important contributions to contemporary Turkish music started his training at 13-year-old. Saygun, who went to Paris for education with the support of the government in 1928, studied at harmony and composition with Eugene Borrel. When he returned to Turkey, he began to his training. He conducted Riyaseticumhur Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1936, he worked as a lecturer of harmony and composition at Istanbul State Conservatory. Saygun, who adroitly used public melodies, conducted studies on folk music with Bela Bartok in Anatolia. These studies enabled many folk melodies to transfer into notes.

One of the most important works made by Saygun is *Özsoy Opera* which he wrote upon Atatürk's request in 1934. The things making this opera important were that Atatürk made contributions on its drafts and it symbolizes Turkish-Iranian brotherhood of people. Firstly, the opera was exhibited in Ankara public house in the name of Atatürk and Sah Rıza Pehlevi. Additionally, *Yunus Emre Oratorio* is significant in terms of both setting an example of the works in the first period and being first Turkish oratorio. Apart from these, Saygun has an important place in the history of Turkish music with his operas, orchestral works, concertos Works, of chamber music and piano works.

#### 4.05 Necil Kazim Akses (1908-1999)

Necil Kazım Akses who started his music education with violin and cello was born as a child of an art lover family. Akses who began to his education as a composition student of Joseph Marx in Vienna State Music and Representation Academy, in 1931, continued his education with Joseph Suk and Alois Haba in Prag State Conservatory later on. Returning to the home in 1934, Akses started to work as a lecturer in the School of Music Teachers (Musiki Muallim Mektebi). Akses has helped Paul Hindemith, who contributed greatly to the establishment of Ankara State Conservatory in 1936.

After Ankara State Conservatory was opened, Akses started to work as a composition teacher there. Preferring innovative approaches in his works, he expressed traditional lines indirectly. Especially, his symphonic poem named as Ankara Castle, is of the most significant works of the composer with its sense of harmony approaching the music out of tone. He has piano works, works for solo instrument and orchestra, voice-piano, voice-orchestra and coro-pieces.

## 5.0 Conclusion

From the beginning of the 20th century to the present day, a process to do important works began on behalf of the contemporary Turkish music. In the leadership of Atatürk, art schools beginning to institutionalize in Turkey of the republic area, formed with master artists from their countries and began to lay a variety of foundations of art education. In 1926, national television channels starting to broadcast supported the adoption to this new type of music by people with distinguished music programmers made. In Turkish art history, important composers known as the Turks Fives are Ahmet Adnan Saygun, Ulvi Cemal Erkin, Cemal Reşit Rey and Necil Kazım Akses and they contributed significantly contributed both as a composer and instructor, synthesizing of folk melodies with Western music style features.

New arrangements primarily related to the educational topics, were made to actualize the concept of modernization, which was stated in accordance with the goals Atatürk pointed, during the republic period. Besides, the schools opened in Turkey sending talented teens to the abroad for training, increased the quality of education. In 1948, with the contributions of İsmet İnönü and minister of education Hasan Ali Yücel, named as "geniuses" Suna Kan (violin), İdil Biret (piano) were sent abroad. In 1956, this law, which was rearranged and extended, also enabled other talented children to go abroad for education. Named as "*Wonderful Children's Law*" and important artist who were sent abroad within the scope of this Law No. 6660, are Verda Erman, Ateş Pars, Fuat Kant, Selman Ada, İsmail Aşan and Tunç Ünver.

In every period of human history, there has been the art having the power of intense emotional and intellectual influence and has been an important phenomenon appealing to humanity voicing their aspirations and their secrets. The fact that a society is in a constantly evolving direction is related to training individuals who are free-thinking and able to express their thoughts. Taking these features, which people in 20th century should have, into account is that there is no doubt that the art has a very important place in these principles. During this development process, the conservatories giving shape and direction of art education in Turkey, always protect its importance through a variety of innovative approaches.

In this study, the interaction between polyphonic western music and Turkish music, which had started in the Ottoman period, and institutionalization phase after the declaration of republic are examined. Information about composers, who had contributed institutionalization of western music education in Turkish Republic, is given. With this study, it is aimed to generate a resource for future studies by transferring this knowledge to contemporary musicians and informing them about polyphonic music culture of the Turkish Republic.

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