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Contemporary Turkish composers - Turkish five

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Abstract

Turkish Five is a group name that some authors gave to Necil Kâzım Akses, Hasan Ferit Alnar, Ulvi Cemal Erkin, Cemal Reşit Rey and Ahmet Adnan Saygun. At first, each member of The Turkish Five started out with neo-nationalist perception and benefited the colours of our native music. This is a common aspect. Later on, however, the feature of taking advantage of our traditional music eventually decreased and each of our composers developed their own characteristic way of thinking and hearing, which was their different side. In this declaration, the works of these composers known The Turkish Five which was mentioned above were discussed with examples and their common and different sides were examined and it was aimed to introduce them to the contemporary Turkish music.

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1. Introduction

In 1923, a new political system and social order began in Turkey with the proclamation of republic; thus the development of a culture concordant to this new order was inevitable. The policy that the new Republican administration adopted as its principle was, in Atatürk's words, to reach 'Contemporary Civilization' level, today corresponding to 'become modernized'. It was only natural that this new policy covered the music area. The new Republic, adopting the principles of liberty, justice, equality and solidarity of the French Revolution, and that was obtained as a result of the national will, had culture, arts and education policies had a nationalist approach. The reforms made within this context were realized with 'the Unification of Education Law' which came into force in 1924. With this law, the integrity of education and training was created, and music lesson took its place in the curricula. Reconstructing of Darülelhan with western music departments in 1923 in Istanbul, and establishment of the School of Music Teachers (Musiki Muallim Mektebi) upon the order of Atatürk in 1924 can be counted as the early examples of music institutions in the contemporary sense.

Education and arts institutions of Turkey which adopted universal music came into service during the first 20-25 years of the Republic. In addition to this, the process of generating ideas about the place and function of changing our rich traditional music from being monodic into a modern structure in the development of the country commenced. Republican period was the time when the seeds of contemporary Turkish and musical culture were sown. The environment of intellectual freedom enabled the artists to be creative (İpşiroğlu, 1997, p.29).

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In his book, “Türkçülüğün Esasları” (the Principles of Turkism), written in 1923, Ziya Gökalp said that Traditional Turkish Music was not in accord with the modern life, and that the only thing to be done was to harmonize traditional Turkish tunes in compliance with western technique. Was it possible to create modern and national Turkish music through definitions such as harmonizing National Music in compliance with western technique like harmonizing a folk song in a way Mozart and Beethoven did? The answer to this question required a long challenging work and educating composers well trained in their field (Kütahyalı, 1981, p.102). This opinion was clearly expressed in the paragraph devoted to music in Atatürk’s speech he made in the opening of the Turkish Grand National Assembly on November 1st, 1934.

‘Friends, I know how our young generation is to advance in all kinds of fine arts. This is being done. However, Turkish music has priority and urgency in this respect. The measure of a changing country is the extend to which it grasps the change in music. The music listened to today is far from being something to take pride in. It is necessary to collect the valuable expressions and statements of the nation expressing fine emotions and ideas, and to work on them within the general rules of music; only at this level can Turkish national music can rise and take its place in universal music.’

The decisions Ministry of Education made shortly after this speech can be summarized as follows:

- Turning to the practice of universal and polyphonic music in all schools, and promoting the new sense of music among public through opera, operetta, concert, concert, radio and records.
- Training creative composers and performers and state supporting them.

With these decisions, the importance that the state places on the issue was put into effect (Say, 1992, p.517)

Artists, Composers and Trainers who Studied Music Abroad in the Republican Period between 1925- 1928 (Paçacı, 1999: 15, Say, 1885: 480- 482)

Year	Artist	Host Country	The Schools	The Schools They Worked After Their Return
1924	Ekrem Zeki Ün (1910- 1987)	France	Ecole Normale de Musique, Paris	Instructor for violin in Musiki Muallim Mektebi in 1930 and assistant conductor in Presidential Symphony Orchestra
1925	Ulvi Cemal Erkin (1906- 1973)	France	Paris Conservatoire, France	Musiki Muallim Mektebi in 1930.
1925	Cezmi Rifki Erinoç (1907-)	France	Ecole Normale de Musique , Paris Carl Flesch School of Music, Berlin	In 1935 instructor for violin in Gazi Institution of Education Department of Music
1925	Fuat Koray (1903- 1983)	Hungary	Budapest Conservatoire Department of the Composition	Instructor for harmony and musical form in Gazi Institution of Education Department of Music
1926	Necil Kazım Akses (1908- 1999)	Austria	Vienna Academy of Music Prague Conservatoire	He has helped while Paul Hindemith established to the Ankara Conservatory in 1933 Instructor for composition in Ankara State Conservatoire
1927	Hasan Ferit Alnar (1906- 1978)	Austria	Vienna Academy of Music	Istanbul City Theatre of the conductor in 1932, In 1936 assistant conductor in Presidential Symphony Orchestra, in 1936 Ankara State Conservatoire
1928	Ahmet Adnan Saygun	France	Paris Conservatoire,	Instructor for composition in Musiki Muallim Mektebi,

	(1907- 1991)		Department of the Composition	In 1934 he composed his first opera "Özsoy"
1928	Halil Bedii Yönetken (1899- 1968)	Czechoslovakia	Prague Conservatoire Pedagogical Training	In 1932 Gazi Institution of Education Department of Music In 1936 Ankara State Conservatoire

The first generation of composers, performers, trainers and researchers who studied abroad on behalf of the state formed the core staff in the reviving, directing and improving of musical life in Turkey by reshaping it in line with the objectives set forth by Atatürk (Uçan, 1994).

2. An Overview of Contemporary Turkish Composers

Music revolution in Turkey was undoubtedly realized thanks to the composers and performers who devoted themselves to music and the improvement of Turkish music. It is a must to mention our musicians who, with the republic, laid the cornerstones of our contemporary music as both composers and researchers, before the first generation composers who, with the pieces they wrote as from 1940s, made their name worldwide as 'Turkish Five'. Along with Halil Bedii Yönetken (1899-1968), Mahmut Ragıp Gazimihal (1900-1961), Cevat Memduh Altar (1902-1995), Dr. Suphi Ezgi (1869-1962) and Rauf Yekta Bey (1871-1935) valuable researchers such as Muzafer Sarısözen (1899-1963) and Ahmet Kudsi Tecer (1901-1967) are the musicians who contributed to the education of first generation Turkish composers (<http://www.turkishmusicportal.org/page.php?id=36&lang2=tr>).

According to Önder Kütahyalı, the composers that had influence on contemporary Turkish musical life were:

1. First generation composers who were born approximately between the years of 1904–1910. The composers known as Turkish Five are the main community of this generation.
2. Among the second generation, known as 20th century Turkish composers, who were born between 1910–1930 are important names such as Bülent Arel (1919–1991), one of the worldwide pioneers of electronic music, İlhan Usmanbaş (born in 1921), master representative of contemporary musical styles in Turkey, Nevit Kodallı (born in 1924), who has an important place with the themes of his pieces as well as the music he composed, İlhan Mimaroğlu (born in 1926), known for his electronic music and the articles and books he wrote, Ferit Tüzün (1929–1977), with his successful conductorship and his pieces written on Anatolian tunes, (1929–1977), Muammer Sun (born in 1932), who contributed a great deal to music education with his pedagogic studies as well as his pieces, Cengiz Tanç (1933–1997), who demonstrated with his pieces that Turkish musicians, too, can write universal pieces, Yalçın Tura, who devoted his life to the improvement of Turkish music as a composer, writer and trainer. These artists could both absorb the contemporary art and made their names in both Turkey and Europe and America with their works right after Turkish Five.
3. 3- Towards the mid-20th century are 3rd generation Turkish composers, born after 1930, Okan Demiriş (born in 1942), Sarper Özsan (born in 1944), İstemihan Taviloğlu (born in 1945) and Ali Darmar (born in 1946).

Our 4th generation composers following the artists mentioned above, born after 1950, increased greatly in number with the involvement of artists born during the 1960s and 1970s. Each of them are today valuable names, world famous for their successful pieces. Meliha Doğuduyal, Hasan Uçarsu, Mehmet Nemitlu, Ali Özkan Manav, İlteriş Sun, Sıdıka Özdil, Betin Güneş, Kamran İnce and Fazıl Say win awards in prestigious composition competitions with their pieces and make valuable contributions to musical education by training the Turkish composers of the new century in the meantime (<http://www.turkishmusicportal.org/page.php?id=36&lang2=tr>).

A considerable number of young generation composers work as faculty members at State Conservatories in Turkey. Some of these are Babür Tongur, Volkan Barut, Ertuğrul Bayraktar, Cem İdiz, Turgay Erdener, Meliha Özbal, Hasan Uçarsu and Özkan Manav (Say, 1994, p.533).

3. Turkish Five

The earliest Turkish composers whose main pursuit was composition were the composers known as ‘Turkish Five’. Named as ‘Turkish Five’ by some writers such as music writer and educator Halil Bedii Yönetken are our international composers who studied in European countries and made today’s Turkish Music life virtually from scratch. They are Necil Kâzım Akses (1908-1999), Hasan Ferit Alnar (1906-1978), Ulvi Cemal Erkin (1906-1972), Cemal Reşit Rey (1904-1972) and Ahmet Adnan Saygun (1907-1991). Each member of the Five set out from a neo-nationalist mentality and benefited from the colors of our traditional music. This can be regarded as a common trait. Compilation and notating, and examination and evaluation of folk melodies created a significant source for the first generation composers. This beginning was a result of the trend, inclining towards national values, which occurred in many European countries in the late 19th century. Turkish folk melodies and the modal character and irregular rhythm structure of our traditional classical music started to arouse the interest of not only Turkish composers but also, in time, performers from many different parts of the world.

Comparing the Turkish Five to other composers of the world, we can see that they are likened to the Russian Five. They were not composers who came together on the basis of a common understanding like The French Six. Like the Russian Five, they gave priority to making use of national sources. However, while Russian five represented a reaction with this attitude, the composers who were named ‘Turkish Five’ and wished to be drawn to a common ground were engaged in realizing the official musical policy of the newly established Republican regime. They took on important duties in our music life as teachers, conductors, directors and writers between the years of 1930–1970. In spite of some common features, the five composers differed in style arising from both their personalities and musical backgrounds (Say, 1992, p. 1205).

According to Halil Bedii Yönetken “Turkish music, too, owns all the necessary conditions required to reach an international contemporary character. Especially our folk music owns the qualities to be the unique source for the new Turkish Classical Music.”

An examination of the early practices show that, as Yönetken stated, use of folk music remains a principle ever present in contemporary Turkish music. However, it will be a mistake to assume that all of our composers are people who only produce folk music originated works, or that a composer merely writes pieces depending on this source. An example of this is that it is possible to observe many tendencies of the time in our composers’ works. It is possible to see Debussy-Ravel impressionism in the early works of Saygun and Erkin and the influence of post Debussy French composers in many works of Rey (Kütahyalı, 1981, p.106-107).

When our composers turned to folk music, they harmonized and modernized many folk songs for quadrophonic full chorus, voice-piano and voice-orchestra. Furthermore, some folk melodies were used as themes in various works. For example, in Adnan Saygun’s piano pieces called “Anadoludan”, the melodies of each part were taken from folk music. The melody of “Havuz Başının Gülleri” can be seen in Saygun’s Kerem Opera. Examples of this can be increased. As seen in Bartok and Kodaly, the general trend of our composers is making use of the general tone, melodies and rhythms of our folk music but avoiding the use of unique themes.

Folk music has not been the mere source for Contemporary Turkish Music. Our composers also made use of the tempo and mode of Turkish Classical Music as often as necessary (Kütahyalı, 1981).

- Hejaz mode was used in the main themes of the first and third parts of Hasan Ferit Alnar’s Cello Concerto.
- Rast mode was used in the first theme of the first part of Hasan Ferit Alnar’s Zither Concerto.
- In Adnan Saygun’s Yunus Emre Oratorio, Basso Aria (especially the flute solo at the beginning of the aria) is in Bestenigâr mode.
- The second part of Necil Kazım Akses’s Viola Concerto is also in Bestenigâr mode.

More examples are available.

4. Conclusion

The result of the examination and research is that the talented young musicians who were sent to Europe after taking the exams given by the state between the years 1924-1928 in order to realize Atatürk’s priority aim to

develop and create contemporary polyphonic music had the opportunity to study in Europe's significant art centers such as Paris, Vienna, Berlin and Prague. Among those who completed their studies and got back Cemal reşit Rey who studied in Paris with his own means and Ulvi Cemal Erkin, Necil Kazım Akses, Hasan Ferit Anlar and Ahmet Adnan Saygun who were awarded a scholarship as a result of the state exam formed our first generation composers named "Turkish Five". They started their music career as trainers at School of Music Teachers and Municipal Conservatory of Istanbul. First generation composers made a great contribution to contemporary musical and cultural life of our country composers and directors at educational institutions as well as being music instructors (TUNÇDEMİR, 1997). Ulvi Cemal Erkin, one of our composers whose pieces are the most performed, engaged in traditional Turkish music in his pieces, and Hasan Ferit Anlar also made great use of folk melodies. Although Cemal Reşit Rey used local melodies in his pieces, he composed his works in a more abstract sense with impressionist effects. In his compositions, Necil Kazım Akses reflected local tunes with intense chords and longwinded melodies and under the influence of late Romanticism. Ahmet Adnan Saygun, too, used the motives of local Anatolian music. First generation composers also played a leading role in creating the chain of composers who earned original works to 'Contemporary Polyphonic Turkish Music' by training some of the second generation composers at Ankara State Conservatory like Bülent Tarcan, Nevid Kodallı, Ferit Tüzün, Cenan Akın, Muammer Sun, İlhan Baran and Sabahattin Kalender, who reflected local motives in their compositions, and Bülent Arel, İlhan Usmanbaş, İlhan Kemal Mimaroglu, Ertuğrul Oğuz Fırat and Cengiz Tanç, who reflected the concept of Experimental Music. Upon completing their education abroad and returning home, Ekrem Zeki Ün, Cezmi Rıfkı Erinc, Fuat Koray and Halil Bedii Yönetken trained many music teachers at Gazi Institute of Education. Our first generation composers had a say in musical education in various conservatories in our country where they took office, particularly at Ankara State Conservatory, and their opinions played an important role in forming Republican period musical education system. When their works, artists they trained and the present Turkish music system are analyzed, it will not be wrong to say that they successfully constituted a unique Turkish music system using western patterns.

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