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The *Yeni Müzik*¹ Scene in Türkiye: How did the 'New Music' Discourse Change Local Contemporary Music Practice?

ABSTRACT

Although the field of contemporary music composition in Türkiye is mainly considered an institutionalization grounded on the nation-state ideology and the cultural policies of the early republic period, the political, economic, and cultural changes experienced in the last 30 years have led to the formation of alternative discourses and new institutionalizations in the field. Among these new formations, the 'yeni müzik' discourse - which can be considered as the local manifestation of the 'new music' discourse that originates in the 20th-century art music canon and the new composition scene shaped around it have marked significant differences in the local contemporary music practice. By providing a critical overview of the local history of the field, examining the early emergence of 'yeni müzik', and documenting the post-2000s development of this new compositional institutionalization, the present paper proposes 'yeni müzik scene' as an alternative formation and discusses how it differs from its predecessor 'Turkish Contemporary Music' in terms of institutional, social and musical practices. Our account of the topic - which has hardly been studied in the literature - benefits from both historiographical and fieldwork practices, hoping to provide a continuous socio-cultural narrative that situates the 'yeni müzik scene' within the local history of contemporary music.

KEYWORDS

Turkish composers

New music in Türkiye

Turkish contemporary music

Music institutions in Türkiye

¹ *Yeni müzik* is the Turkish term for 'new music'. Throughout the study we have used *yeni müzik* when referring to events and production in Türkiye and new music when referring to the global/international history and practices.

Introduction

While the history of Eurogenetic Art Music² (from now on EAM) in Türkiye goes back to the 19th century, its institutionalization is often discussed in the context of the music reforms, cultural policies of the nation state and the establishment of the state music institutions implemented during the early republic period. In parallel, compositional activity in Türkiye tends to be considered in continuity with the music and discourse of the Turkish Five and other early composers, and following generations of composers who are enculturated within this institutional sphere, in a way constituting the national school of composition, often referred as ‘Turkish Contemporary Music’ (from now on TCM). While it is true that this early institutionalization constitutes the basis, during nearly a hundred years of history, the contemporary music scene in Türkiye has faced political, social, and musical changes, which led to new discourses, practices, actors and institutions. Therefore, current conceptualization of contemporary music in Türkiye incorporates multiple formations that differ in discourse and diverge in musical and social practices.

Despite recent developments, current scholarly writing on the topic rarely engages with the documentation of the local contemporary music activity in the late 20th and the 21st centuries, addressing tendencies such as *yeni müzik* discourse, jazz and free improvisatory performances, cross-overs with traditional and popular musics, as well as the newly founded education and performance institutions in which these practices were adopted. This gap in the literature leads to a reduced understanding of the development of the field and indirectly contributes to the reproduction of the singular narrative of contemporary music as a national school of composition despite the later diversification.

As far as this study is concerned, *yeni müzik* is a later discourse and formation that emerged around the 1990s, having relationships of both negation and continuity with the former school of TCM. The term *was* first used in a festival title, *1. Uluslararası Ankara*

² The term Eurogenetic was coined by artist and ethnomusicologist Dr Robert Reigle as an alternative to conception and discourse of ‘Western’. As it developed out of his effort to title his course on Balkan Art Music and to find “a term for musics that had an identifiable quality of sound that can be traced to a European genesis, as it is widely practiced in higher education throughout the world” (Reigle, 2021). Term makes an emphasis on the place (the geography) of origin, not people, nor philosophy/logos. By doing so it helps to avoid the possessory indications of ‘European’ or ‘Western’ for musics that are now practiced across the world, as well as to avoid the discourses of ‘West-East’ or ‘the West and the Rest’. Throughout the study we have used Eurogenetic Art Music (EAM) to refer to what is commonly called ‘Western Art Music’.

Yeni Müzik Festivali (The 1st of International Ankara New Music Festival, 1989), which was organized under the direction of composer and musicologist Ahmet Yürür in Ankara. Later the discourse was shaped around certain music departments and art institutions established in Istanbul in the late 90s. Since the mid-2000s, *yeni müzik* has been established as an umbrella term to refer to a diverse range of musical outputs performed and studied in those institutions. Similar to its English use³, *yeni müzik* functions as a discourse about contemporary composition, rather than defined as a particular musical genre, style, or category, and it has a practical use to refer to the events such as *Bilkent Yeni Müzik Günleri* (Bilkent New Music Days), *Bilgi Yeni Müzik Festivali* (Bilgi New Music Festival) or *Yeni ve En Yeni Müzik Festivali* (The New and the Newest Music Festival). Hence, in this study, '*yeni müzik scene*'⁴ refers to the discourse and the practices that have been shaped around such events; as a 21st century urban musical sphere of contemporary music in Türkiye.

Regarding the underrepresentation of the topic in the current musicological literature, the present paper aims to identify *yeni müzik scene* as an alternative formation through the documentation of its emergence and the recent history, and the discussion of institutional, social and aesthetic patterns that mark differences in the history of compositional practice in Türkiye. The methodological approach in this study follows what is often described as the ethnomusicology of Western art music (Cook, 2008;

³ Despite its widespread use in music associations, festivals, ensembles, and publishing ventures, the term 'new music' has not yet been defined as a category denoting a musical genre with particular qualities. Rather musically and contextually, its meaning and scope are multivalent, and the term is often used interchangeably with other terms such as contemporary, modern, avant-garde, or experimental. As documented by Heile (2009), in terms of its historical development, it is related to the *Neue Musik* discourse, which was based on the German critical tradition in music, first theorized by Paul Bekker (1923) and later by Adorno (2006). *Neue Musik*, which referred to a specific field of composition associated with 2nd Viennese School and Darmstadt circles, later transformed into the English term 'new music', which indicates a more neutral 'contemporary music' discourse, consolidating with other experimental practices developed in the post-war period (Pace, 2022).

⁴ The term 'scene' here refers to a multilayered conceptualization of a local field that combines observations on discourse, practices, institutions, people and musics, as well as meanings and representations. Rather than the 'scene' concept applied in popular music studies (Bennet & Peterson, 2004) with an emphasis on the equal role of audience as an active agency, our notion of 'scene' is more in line with 'scene thinking' (Woo, et al., 2015) as a perspective to examine multiple domains of the local production and dissemination since our field often situates out side of culture industry. Hence conceptualization of scene grounded on several other previous studies in similar spheres. It has been influenced by Becker's theory of the 'art worlds' (1982/2008), in the inclusion of the study of institutions, the mechanisms of education and production, and socioeconomic factors. Born's semiotics approach, which argues for "multitextuality of music as culture" (1995:17), and her notion of "aesthetic discourse as a long term cultural system" (1995:31) also formed our basis. Similarly, Usner's concept of "*Musikwesen*" which refers to a cumulative musical "being" or "entity" that brings together "customs, people, institutions, discourse and representations" (2010: 6) has been provided a theoretical background for our conceptualization of scene.

Nooshin 2011; Nooshin 2014; Bayley et al., 2016), combining historiography with fieldwork (conducted between 2020 and 2022), aiming to provide a socio-cultural perspective. Hence, the present account of the scene is a product of the close readings of *yeni müzik* events, participant-observation in the current scene, and in-depth interviews with composers on the history and current state of the compositional field. To provide a continuous account that situates the *yeni müzik* scene within the larger local history, we first issue a critical overview of the institutionalization of TCM, and then discuss the diverging marks of *yeni müzik* discourse.

The ‘Holy Synthesis’: Institutionalization of Turkish Contemporary Music

Although there were 19th century cultural and musical encounters with EAM (Turan & Komşuoğlu, 2007), the discourse of ‘Turkish Contemporary Music’ was institutionalized through modernization reforms of the early republic period. During the period between 1923 and 1950, the state implemented several music policies as part of a broader cultural policy of the new nation-state, such as the establishment of formal music education based on European notation and repertoire in the form of state conservatories, allocation of state grants for early student’s education in Europe, collaborations with foreign music experts in establishing music institutions, the foundation of symphony orchestras, development of radio stations, or compilation studies on the Anatolian folk musics (And, 1984; Tekelioğlu, 2001).

The central concept grounded in these musical policies was the *sentez* (synthesis) discourse. It was based on a hybridity formula, in which Anatolian folk musics were intended to be combined with ‘Western’ techniques (Gökalp, 1923), which was also the vision of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk – to compile national folk idioms and process them with the latest rules of music (Nurcan & Canbey, 2016: 78-79). In this respect, the synthesis discourse had claims of both internationality and locality, in favour of a kind of trans-traditionality, positioning ‘contemporary music’ as a national school of composition that aimed to become integrated into international contemporary music. This was highly compatible with the notion of ‘internationality’ in Europe during the first half of the 20th century. For instance, similar to what Collins observed for the political orientation of the *International Society for Contemporary Music* between 1920 and 1940, the synthesis discourse was also projecting an internationality that instead “registers more at the level

of cosmopolitanism” (Collins, 2019: 74), as it was based on competing for national representations, more than cultural encounters.

As Tekelioğlu points out, Gökalp’s synthesis idea was motivated by “the eventual success of the new nation-state and ... a new ‘Turkish Civilization’” (2001: 94). Yet, because of this ideological aim, the institutionalization of the synthesis took place within cultural hierarchies, in which both of the traditions were subordinated to nation-state politics and the discussion of aesthetics and cultural histories of both traditions became secondary. EAM was reductively idealized as a ‘universal’ set of techniques and materials such as notation, polyphonic technique, European instruments, and the ‘canon’ of the Common Practice Period, rather than as a tradition in the ethnomusicological sense. Local traditions, on the other hand, were either excluded for their ethnic/religious/political identities, filtered by the ideology of the new nation-state (Ayas, 2014; Öztürk, 2016), or were “reinvented” (Erol, 2012: 43) as cultural resources for the formation of a national school of composition, as in the case of folk traditions in Anatolia. The larger part of the literature concerns the effects of the synthesis discourse in shaping musics in Türkiye; on the exclusion of traditional Ottoman art music from music institutions (O’Connell, 2000; Ayas, 2014; Greve, 2017), the abstraction of local music as national signs (Markoff, 1991; Değirmenci, 2006; Balkılıç, 2009), as well as its consequences on popular music spheres (Stokes, 1992; Tekelioğlu, 1996; Karahasanoğlu & Skoog, 2009).

The music policies of the early republic shaped the field of music in Türkiye in a contentious way. Paralleling a Weberian definition, it created a notion of legal authority in music, in which the administrative organization, and thus music institutions are both the source of legitimacy and also the executive power (Weber, 1978: 217-220). Additionally, since musicians are subject to the governance of official committees such as general directorates of fine arts, it created a bureaucratic model of an artist and strictly regulated mode of music creation, production, and dissemination, in which art is produced as a national duty, and secondarily as an existential, individual and aesthetic necessity. Performance practices were also shaped in this governmental sphere, idealizing symphony orchestras and opera houses that perform Common Practice Period repertoire and celebrated works of Turkish composers for an audience whose cultural capital aroused with the modern republic and the government. These patterns formed the basis of the sociology that facilitates TCM, marking it as a governmental type of

musicking, symbolizing the foundational values of the republic. In the public debates, it frequently became the subject of a simulated modernization/Westernization, which led to an antagonistic reception from the broader public⁵. As the state patronage regressed after the 1950s and as this critical connotation became more evident in later political spheres, a self-closed institutional practice with a protectionist discourse on the initial music policies became common in state music institutions, maintaining its institutional representation in association with secularism, universalism, and contemporaneity (Parkinson & Muslu Gardner, 2021: 373).

The repertoire produced in this institutional sphere parallels the synthesis formulation, often displaying canonical forms of the Common Practice Period, such as opera, symphony, or concerto, combined with national idioms. In their orchestral music,⁶ composers used folk idioms as a resource, combining them with adopted techniques and styles from the pre-modernist EAM canon, such as non-functional harmony or extended tonality, a 19th century style of abstraction of folk idioms, or the orchestration and chromaticism of the late Romantic Russian composers. In terms of the attachment between the repertoire and nation-state politics, those works can be understood in parallel to the receptions of composers such as Smetana, Grieg, Kodály, Janáček or Sibelius. The two most identity-retaining genres in the repertoire remained (1) orchestral suites and tone poems, often using dance-driven folk idioms and/or programming local stories⁷, and (2) polyphonic *türkü* (folk song) arrangements and compositions resourcing folk songs⁸. The use of these folk idioms differs for each

⁵ Especially apparent in socio-political cases such as the radio ban of 'Alaturca' music in 1934 (Özdemir, 2018), the parliament debates in 1947 on the act that provided state grants for young talents (İnce Erdoğan & Çetin, 2020, pp.631-32), the *arabesk* debate of 80s (Stokes, 1992), and lately in the public critics of AKP representatives on the cultural policies of the early republic, music reforms have been subject to harsh criticism and politicized.

⁶ Among the early examples, Rey's *Symphony No.1* (1941), Erkin's *Symphony No.1* (1944-46) and *No.2* (1948-51), and Saygun's *Symphony No.1* (1953) can be listed.

⁷ Among the examples of suites Rey's *Türk Manzaraları* (1928), Alnar's *Türk Suiti* (1928), Saygun's *Suit Op.14* (1937), *Halay Op.24* (1942-44), Ferit Tüzün's *Anadolu* (1953-54), Kodallı's *Suit Op.5* (1946) and *Telli Turna* (1967) can be listed. The tendency to use folk dance-driven materials can also be observed in programmatic orchestral works such as rhapsody or symphonic poems as in the cases of Erkin's *Köçekçeler* (1943) and *Bayram* (1943), Rey's *Bebek Efsanesi* (1928), *Karagöz* (1931), *Enstantaneler* (1931), *Fatih* (1953) and *Türkiye* (1971), Akses's *Bir Yaz Hatırası* (1932-33), *Çiftetelli Op.6* (1934), *Ankara Kalesi Senfonik Tarih* (1942) and *Barış için Savaş* (symphonic poem for commemoration of Atatürk, 1981), Ekrem Zeki Ün's *Yurdum* (1956), Kemal İlerici's *Köyümde* (1945) and Ferit Tüzün's *Capriccio a la Turque* (1956).

⁸ Various songs from collections such as Saygun's *Op.18 Dağlardan Ovalardan* (1939), Erkin's *Yedi Türkü* (1943) and *On Türkü* (1963), Akses's *Çokseslendirilmiş Türküler* (1936), Kodallı's *Op.21 Beş Halk Türküsü* (1962) and Alnar's *On Halk Şarkısı* (1964) can be considerable among such examples. Compositional use of *türkü* is not only limited to choral works, but can also be accompanied by orchestra or solo instruments

composer and should be considered on a continuum that spans from the direct use of the primary material in the forms of transcription, arrangement, and harmonization, through stylization and abstraction, and to newly composed material in the style of the folk idioms. Among others, polyphonic folk songs gained a popularity that met the populist aims of the music reforms most, in reaching the broader masses, perhaps on account of its familiar content, participatory accessibility and a significant amount of time devoted to this genre on the radio.

Although state patronage gradually decreased starting from 1950 as cultural policies were estranged from early republican ideology (Güray, 2016) and the global political sphere changed significantly after WWII, the idea of establishing a national compositional school have been remained attached to the notion of contemporary music later in the 20th century. The following generations of composers continued to produce within the frameworks of synthesis discourse, expanding the repertoire of TCM that is nowadays referred to as the ‘post-Saygun school’, reflecting on Saygun’s representational power as an artistic identity that combines many of the grounding codes of the synthesis discourse (Yöre & Gökbudak, 2012), in mediating the politics of the nation-state (Woodard, 2007), and as well as his organicist discourse on employment of local idioms (Saygun, 1945/2009). After the 60s, a much sharper nationalist school of composition that aimed to reach a wider public with a particular focus on choral music emerged, as is best observable in the works and discourse of Muammer Sun, as well as Yalçın Tura and the late-period works of İlhan Baran (Nurcan & Canbey, 2016: 81; Öztürk, 2016: 44).

While the post-Saygun school has remained a dominant tendency, the pioneering examples of *yeni müzik* that differ from the national school of composition have been put forward by the composers associated with the *Elliler Modernizmi* (50s Modernism) (Köksal, 2015), namely Usmanbaş, Arel, Mimaroglu and Fırat, known as *Helikon* circle⁹.

as in the cases of Saygun’s *Kızılırmak Türkü* (1933-35) for soprano and orchestra, Rey’s *12 Anadolu Türküsü* (1926) or Saygun’s *10 Halk Türküsü* Op.41 (1968) which were first composed for soprano and piano and later adopted for orchestral accompaniment.

⁹ Köksal describes ‘50s modernism’ as a local interdisciplinary abstractionist tendency experienced during the 1950s. The common basis was ‘the deliberate breaking’ from the existing tendencies through abstraction, such as from the formalism based on the nature models in fine arts or from the structure of natural language and folk poetry in literature. Alongside of composers, Köksal associates the tendency with sculptures Hadi Bara, Zühtü Müritoğlu, Şadi Çalık, and Ali Teoman, *Tavanarası* painters led by Nuri İyem, modernist designers Sadi Öziş and İlhan Koman, caricaturist Turhan Selçuk, and the poets of *İkinci Yeni* (*The Second New*). Founded in Ankara in 1952, the *Helikon Association*, of which Usmanbaş and Arel were

Rather than focusing on the synthesis of the local idioms with conventional techniques of composition, these composers were particularly interested in international cutting-edge compositional trends inclining musical abstraction; first in line with the mid-century continental modernist techniques, primarily serialism and the utilization of electroacoustic means, and later in American avant-garde practices influenced by the idea of indeterminacy. As Manav says in relation to Usmanbaş's career, they "had stepped into all the lands that the first generation of Turkish composers stayed away from" (Manav, 2015: 54). As Köksal points out, the modernism of the 1950s was in favour of formal and grammatical abstraction that enables an open-ended, associative, and polysemic interpretation, which was in stark contrast to the identity-retaining function of the TCM repertoire, liberating the composition from culturally coded signification. It was also a modernist break from Romantic aesthetics, towards a notion of composition as an 'organized sound' allowing composers to explore any material, procedure, and technology as a compositional element. Although those composers produced pioneering pieces¹⁰, it did not lead to the institutionalization of a new music discourse that would be followed by other local composers and institutions. Instead, they remained as the exceptions within the continuity of TCM, signifying an aesthetic break solely.

Today, the ingrained notion of the TCM as a national school is best observable in national composition competitions. Often organized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism or local municipalities, the specification for the call for pieces often includes the expectation of a national mark, which is commonly expressed as '*Türk müziğinden esintiler taşımak*', meaning 'to have a feel of Turkish music' (Süreyya Opera House National Composition Contest, 2018:1). Paralleling the synthesis discourse, competitions also aim to cultivate contemporary music that feeds on 'local musical sensitivities' and uses 'the universal

among the founders, was the most important civic initiative of the '50s modernism' for artists and intellectuals in Ankara (Ali, 2002: 32-33; Demirakın & Demirakın, 2019: 329).

¹⁰ Usmanbaş's *Üç Müzikli Şiir* (1952) setting Fırat's poems, *Three Movements for Two Pianos* (1957) and Arel's *5 Sonnets* (1958), are among the early 12-tone and integral serialist pieces. Arel's *Music for String Quartet and Tape* (premiered in 1958), *Stereo Electronic Music No.1* (1960) and *No.2* (1964), *Mimiana* series (1968-1973) composed for modern dance ensemble, *Fantasy and Dance for viols and Tape* (1974) constitutes important works in electroacoustic composition. As issued in recent studies, Usmanbaş's *Two Pieces for Violin and Violoncello* (1960), *Ölümsüz Deniz Taşlarıydı* (1965), *Raslamsallar I-II-II-II* (1967), and *Bakışsız Bir Kedi Kara* (1970) are among pioneering pieces that display various early applications of indeterminacy, and proportional and graphical notation. (Öğüt, 2012; Pöğün, 2015; Yayalar & Yüceer, 2015).

musical language'¹¹. Another area in which the synthesis discourse has remained effective is compositional education in state conservatories. As reflected by many composers enculturated in state conservatories, the expectation of a musical Turkishness operates as an implied convention rather than a direct imposition, although the aesthetic means of the identity-retaining have, relatively speaking, diversified in recent years. Such expectations can also be observable in the programmes of state performance institutions. Although local composers have a limited representation in the programmes (Taşdemir & Şen, 2021:162), most of the performed works are in line with the synthesis discourse (Ayday, 2008; 11). Ayday's study also documents that the audience's better engagement with pieces signifying local idioms is among the reasons why the conductors also prefer to programme well-known examples of the TCM repertoire.

In the multiplicity of such different layers, one can observe the centrality of the synthesis discourse in setting the scene for the local contemporary music activity and how it prevails today. Beyond the field of composition, the synthesis discourse constitutes a broader nationalist outlook that profoundly shaped the conventions in art and culture of Türkiye. As reflected by many composers - whether critically or sympathetically - the institutionalization of TCM is discussed as a case of cultural domain that is expected to serve an identity-retaining function rooted in the synthesis discourse. This is how it became a "holy synthesis" as composer Altınel puts it; a habitus that arts have never entirely escaped the cultural identity question but had to respond one way or another;

"In Türkiye, there is a collective national identity that is imposed on you when you make art, not just music. It existed in the 30s, 50s, and 2000s, and it exists now too. It's not just something that happens around state conservatories. This is not only even the state's view of culture but also what the audience expects from the artist. This is what they expect even from an avant-garde composer. They say, "I heard the Anatolian steppes in your music." I don't know how they heard it, but that expectation is always there. I think this is due to the general cultural environment. The synthesis is a holy one. It is something that is expected from the artist forever" (Ahmet Altınel, Personal Communication, 4 April 2021).

¹¹ As part of our fieldwork, we have attended the 2018-2022 editions of *Süreyya Operası Ulusal Beste Yarışması* (Süreyya Opera House National Composition Contest) organized by Kadıköy Municipality. We have observed the patterns of TCM institutionalization effectively shaping the events in terms of the specifications in the call for pieces, the institutional background of the jury members and participants, the formal social atmosphere of the event as well as the aesthetics of the awarded pieces.

The synthesis discourse and its marks on the TCM's institutionalization are critical to understanding what *yeni müzik* signifies in contemporary music in Türkiye. As the present paper argues, *yeni müzik* discourse has been emerged as an alternative to this former institutionalization. Gaining an institutional continuity since the 2000s, it created a separate scene of contemporary composition in which the institutional, social and musical practices carefully negate the described patterns associated with its predecessor.

The Yeni Müzik Scene

Unlike the governmental sphere of TCM, the *yeni müzik* discourse has emerged and developed within an environment subsidized by the newly established universities, private local art institutions, and cultural centres and embassies. This new environment created a different sociology of musicians, and new standards in music education, diversified the dissemination practices, and led to a reformulation of some of the discursive marks of the former synthesis discourse. By mobilizing the first *yeni müzik* activities and shaping the development of the scene with their graduates over the years, three educational institutions established in Istanbul in the late 1990s constitute the pillars of these changes; Yıldız Technical University, Faculty of Art and Design (1999), Istanbul Technical University, MIAM (Center for Advanced Studies in Music, 1999) and Istanbul Bilgi University Music Department (1997/2005).

The programme at the Yıldız Technical University was established under the lead of composer Ahmet Yürür who first coined the term *yeni müzik* publicly in the *1. Ankara Yeni Müzik Festivali* (The 1st Ankara International New Music Festival) in 1989 (Ali, 1989). As a composer who was ienculturated in state conservatories, yet who later pursued his graduate studies in the USA during the 1980s (Albertson & Ron Hannah, 2017), Yürür had a critical attitude towards the existing compositional practice, investing in a local discourse of global new music as an alternative (Yürür, n.d.). After his return to Türkiye, he organized the first three *yeni müzik* festivals in Ankara (İlyasoğlu, 1993a) and Istanbul in 1993, entitled *1. Uluslararası Modern Müzik Festivali* (The 1st International Modern Music Festival) (İlyasoğlu, 1993b). Between 1999 and 2002, in collaboration with the newly founded *Borusan Sanat* (Borusan Art), he organized monthly seminars on the music of young composers titled *Istanbul'dan Yeni Müzik* (New Music from Istanbul) (Erdoğan, 1999). In 1999 he initiated the Faculty of Art and Design at Yıldız Technical

University. Unlike the conservatories, the faculty was structured with three divisions concentrating on music ensembles, dance, and audio design, to create an intersectional space between performance and creation inspired by interdisciplinarity in other contemporary arts. In 2003 he started the annually organized international festival *Akdeniz Çağdaş Müzik Günleri* (Mediterranean Contemporary Music Days) in collaboration with *Borusan Sanat* and Italian, Spanish and Greek Culture Centres, which lasted until 2008. In an interview he gave as part of the 2nd edition of the festival, he criticized the former institutionalization as follows;

“The Turkish Five... prevented the entry of conceptions related to new music into Türkiye. We could meet with the values of the 20th century only in the last decade... For us, the concerts of the state symphony orchestras are harmful concerts that numb people with the same works... At our festival, there will be world premieres. It is necessary to take some risks and introduce new works” (Koçoğlu, 2004: 14).

Since 1989, Yürür has programmed pieces by composers’ of ‘50s modernism’ and closely collaborated with Usmanbaş in his organizations, and the festivals included the Turkish premieres of continental modernist composers such as Schoenberg, Boulez, Nono and Berio. Starting with the first festivals in Ankara and later in Istanbul, many of the current *yeni müzik* composers’ early pieces were performed in those events, such as Alper Maral, Kamran İnce, Tolga Yayalar, and Zeynep Gedizlioğlu.

MIAM, the music centre at the Istanbul Technical University, was also structured following the lead of a composer, Kamran İnce, who is based in the USA after his early music education in the state conservatories in Ankara and İzmir during the 1970s (Dedrick, 2004). In 1999 MIAM started education as the first graduate programme entirely in English (MIAM history, n.d.). As Ince explains, their vision was to fill the gap in music education in Türkiye by adopting the “American higher music education system which applies 20th century methods and offers a creative approach instead of a rote” (Andante, 2014:9). While Ince has remained the foundational figure, Pieter Snapper, Mark Lindley, and Mark Wingate were also active in composition education in the early years of MIAM. Robert Reigle and Michael Ellison joined the academic staff, who were later influential in shaping the orientation of MIAM with new performance practices, conference organizations and formations of various ensembles. In 2000 the *Dr. Erol Üçer Music Library* was founded as the most extensive music library in Türkiye, and the

recording studio was opened. With its international staff and organizations, the accessibility to contemporary scores, recordings, and the sound technologies not commonly found in Türkiye at the time, as well as performance opportunities, MIAM became the flag institution of progressiveness and a gateway to international music scenes. As reflected by many composers, compared to Yürür's discourse, the central figures of MIAM did not adopt a critical discourse on the local history of contemporary music; instead, MIAM came to be an apolitical institution, embracing an orientation of affirmative postmodernity.

The other institution was the privately funded Istanbul Bilgi University Music Department, established in 1997 as a jazz music school (Bilgi Music Home, n.d.). Including many well-known jazz and experimental musicians in its academic staff and performance, recording, and composition practices within the same roof, the department was the first music school integrated with the urban alternative music scenes that have been gradually developing since the late 1980s. The programme was inspired by the courses at Berklee College of Music. While it was mainly a jazz department, on account of figures such as Selen Gülün and Seda Ergül, who are also practitioners of contemporary composition, improvisation and experimental music, there has been a permeability between jazz and new music through the pivotal notion of the avant-garde. In 2005 the department was restructured as a general music programme, and the performance department was closed. The department's orientation changed towards composition and sound technology without defining a particular music tradition. During this change, Gülün, Ergül, Kozlu, and Tolga Tüzün – who became the head of the department in 2010 – were influential in shaping the new structure of the programme.

The early editions of the *BYMF*, standing for *Bilgi Yeni Müzik Festivali* (Bilgi New Music Festival), jointly organized by the Bilgi Music Department and MIAM in 2004 (entitled *Bilgi New Music Days*), 2005 and 2006, were significant in the formation of a *yeni müzik* discourse. As composer Türkmen announced in the 2005 edition, these panels aimed for a building of “a discussion about the content of new music” that “will gradually develop with the participation of everyone who makes new music in Istanbul” (Türkmen et al., 2005). Michael Ellison's talk on minimalism and early spectralism as means of musical abstraction through temporal prolongations, a separate panel on music of Scelsi and Cage where Zeynep Bulut and Reigle talked about the differentiation of musical modernism

from avant-garde or Pieter Snapper's seminars on electroacoustic composition, gave an American vernacular avant-garde orientation to this newly emerging discourse. The BYMF series also provided early examples of the festival convention that includes separate concerts for acoustic compositions, electroacoustic performances, and improvisatory music within the frame of *yeni müzik*. It was also with the early editions of BYMF, in particular, thanks to the active role of MIAM-based percussionist Amy Salsgiver, that pieces by post-minimalist and 'simplicity' composers such as David Lang, Arvo Part, or Wolfgang Rihm have been included within the discourse. In terms of local production, the early editions programmed pieces such as Erdem Helvacioğlu's *Personal Crisis*, Esin Gündüz's *Universal Bicycle*, Mehmet Can Özer's *Öznel Gerçeklik*, Murat Yakın's *Planet X*, Selen Gülün's *Uzaklar*, Turgut Pöğün's *Yüksel In Berlin*, Türkmen's *Question*, and electroacoustic performances by Ahmet Altınel, Barkın Engin, Burak Tamer, Mehmet Can Özer, Meliha Doğuduyal, Pieter Snapper, Selçuk Artut, and Tuna Pase.

These new departments were influenced by American education in adopting values such as the student-centred approach, interdisciplinarity, aesthetic pluralism and individualization, internationality, and technical compatibility. Contrary to the conservatories' basis in early childhood education, the programmes are designed for undergraduate and graduate students without any requirement of prior formal music education in EAM, enabling a different sociology of musicians with diverse backgrounds in music. Musicians who were not eligible to study at the conservatories but who produced in areas where contemporary music intersects with experimental, electroacoustic, jazz, and improvisatory practices, gained access to formal education. From the perspective of *yeni müzik* composers of the current scene, this new institutional accessibility is considered a democratization of the composition field.

The overall programmes are structured in a less compartmentalized way to support intersectionality and collaboration among creation, performance, and research, in contrast to the strict specialization of conservatories. Influenced by the student-oriented approach, university-based dissemination practices began to emerge, student works gained visibility, and small ensemble practices became the common concert situation of *yeni müzik*.

In contrast to the centrality of the Common Period Practice music in the conservatories, the 20th Century repertoire was studied as a primary reference in compositional teaching. The diversity of techniques in new music, starting from the early 20th century, becomes the foreground as the basic equipment of a composer. In contrast, earlier music is considered fundamental knowledge, often learned through a few intense survey courses on the history and materials. In these departments, twelve-tone and serialism, electroacoustic composition, notion of indeterminacy and other frames of openness in music, extended techniques, computer-aided composition, Spectralism, New Complexity, *Musique Concrète Instrumentale*, and many different approaches originating in the 20th century gradually became common knowledge. Aiming to compensate for the gap inherited from the former school of TCM, both the continental modernisms and the American avant-garde formations constituted the contemporary and value given to the integration with the all-current international scenes, repertoires, and literature.

Emerging and developing within a sphere of globalization and digital connectivity, *yeni müzik* formations parallel the ‘crystallization’ of styles and practices in contemporary music in the last quarter of the century (Clarke, 2018:415). In that sense, this new compositional education promoted individualism, aesthetic plurality, and fluidity rather than schools of composition. This also became the central poetic position of *yeni müzik* composers. In contrast to the Romantic image of composition, the notion of artwork and the doings of a composer in *yeni müzik* came to be closer to what Piekut describes as a ‘database model’; “musicians build up an ever-expanding individual database of instrumental and vocal techniques, technical setups, stylistic and aesthetic tendencies, stand-alone compositions, and highly personal approaches to improvisation, some or all of which might be drawn upon and recombined in a given performance. Concerts are less often occasions to present experimental ‘works’ than they are reports from an ongoing investigation” (2018: 441).

Musicians’ profiles often combining practices from multiple traditions also contributed to the coexistence and the fluidity among different traditions of music. Most significantly, free improvisation became the intersectional practice that combined previously exclusive traditions of jazz, contemporary composition, and sonic arts in these new departments. The coming together of different traditions can also be observed through the *International Spectral Music Conference* held in 2003 at MIAM. Inspired by Reigle’s

radically inclusive approach to the definition of ‘spectral music’ that “foregrounds timbre as an important element of structure” (Reigle, 2008: 1), the conference included ethnomusicologists drawing on the role of timbre in non-Eurogenetic traditional cases alongside top-notch composers of spectral music such as Murail, Dumitrescu, Dayer, Avram, and Fineberg. However, the issue of trans-traditionality became foregrounded most concerning the encounter of the Turkish *makam* tradition and contemporary composition, particularly at MIAM. The inclusion of traditional *makam* music in ITU’s ethnomusicology, performance, and composition programmes signified an explicit difference regarding the conflicting histories. Such an affirmative notion of trans-traditionality enabled a trend in composition that employs traditional instruments and *makam* as pitch relations and is sometimes referred to as ‘new locality’ as distinct from the use of local idioms in TCM (Demirel, 2015). Türkmen’s and Baysal’s early studies on just intonation and modality (2009), and workshops and commissions of *Hezarfen Ensemble*, which aims to develop “projects that facilitate intercultural exchange... that explode the very notion of separate cultures or traditions” (Hezarfen Ensemble Mission, n.d.) were effective in terms of incorporation of the *makam* tradition into the discourse. Türkmen’s dissertation (2009) on applied extended techniques for *makam* instruments and his development of *hat* (line)¹² as a compositional technique constitutes the most comprehensive study on this topic. Collaborations between composers and performers of *makam* instruments led to further productions such as the albums *Lahza* (NK Ensemble, 2019) and *New Music for Kanun & Piano* (Berkman & Tonella, 2021).

Many composers who were at the beginning of their careers during the early *yeni müzik* activities in the 2000s later came to administrative and academic positions after the 2010s when *yeni müzik* discourse was adopted in other institutions and gained continuity. In the lead of Tüzün, Bilgi Music Department continued to organize BYMF as the longest *yeni müzik* festival that calls for new pieces to be performed by international

¹² Inspired by the relations of lines in Islamic calligraphy, Türkmen developed a compositional approach that brings together the linearity and heterophony of makam music with the timbre-orientation of new music, resulting in a highly fused single stream auditory experience that blurs the binaries between monophony and polyphony. The tendency can be best observable in his early pieces: *Hat: a line for two musicians* (2009), *Hat for 3 percussion players* (2011) and *Hat for Kemençe and Strings* (2011).

ensembles, and pieces by many of the younger generation composers of the current scene have been performed in BYMF¹³.

Similarly, in the late 2000s, new formations developed at the Faculty of Art and Design at Yıldız Technical University under the leadership of Alper Maral, who has been a lifelong pupil of Ahmet Yürür working with him during *Istanbul'dan Yeni Müzik* seminars and *Akdeniz Çağdaş Müzik Günleri* in the early 2000s. In 2007 Maral founded the *Karınca Kabilesi* (the Ant Tribe), a new music ensemble consisting of musicology and composition students. They performed at the *mzkynlr - müzik yeniler* festival in Garage Istanbul with a comprehensive programme, including Charles Ives's *Like a Sick Eagle* and Tōru Takemitsu's *Litany for Piano*, alongside performances of jazz pieces such as Tony Williams's *Pee Wee* and Charles Mingus's *Re-incarnation of a Lovebird*, as well as works by Turkish *yeni müzik* pioneers such as Usmanbaş and Mimaroğlu. Later in 2015, the faculty held the *Elektronik Müzik Festivali* (Electronic Music Festival), including performances by 30 artists, and in 2017 *Yeni Müzik Festivali I* (The New Music Festival I), both having a vernacular avant-garde orientation. Shaped by Maral's active role, the new music festival in 2017 featured four separate concerts, the first dedicated to Japanese avant-garde music, the second to solo new music pieces, including Berio's *Sequenza III* performed by Gülce Özen Gürkan, a tribute concert to Cage and a concept-driven concert *About humans and animals. Who do we think we are?* which included avant-garde pieces related to animals.

After 2006, the composition department at Bilkent University was restructured by composers Pöğün, Türkmen, Altay, Yayalar, and Aydın, and the composition education that was previously under the influence of the Hacettepe University Ankara State Conservatory has changed similarly to the programme at MIAM. The department organized concert series at the Contemporary Arts Centre (2006-2009), the annual *Bilkent Yeni Müzik Günleri* (Bilkent New Music Days, 2011-2016), and has been organizing *BCA* (Bilkent Composition Academy) since 2017. A similar restructuring took place at the composition department of the Yaşar University under the lead of composers Mehmet Can Özer and Fusün Köksal after 2014, which led to the early *yeni müzik* festivals

¹³ Such as Aslıhan Keçebaşoğlu, Engin Dağlık, Enis Gümüş and Uğur Çerkezoğlu in the 2014 edition by *Ensemble Garage*, Aida Shirazi and Didem Coşkunseven in the 2015 edition by *Argon Ensemble*, Deniz Güngören, Deniz Nurhat and Mithatcan Öcal in 2017 edition by *Plug Ensemble*.

in İzmir; the *digitIZMir Uluslararası Dijital Müzik Festivali* (International Digital Art Festival, 2015-present) dedicated for audiovisual electroacoustic performances and *İzmir Yeni Müzik Günleri* (İzmir New Music Days, 2019-present) that programmed pieces by Gedizlioğlu, Enno Poppe, Rebeca Saunders, Schnittke, Ligeti, Ferneyhough and Marco Stroppa, alongside pieces by students.

Performance practices shaped around the *yeni müzik* discourse have also gained continuity after 2010. Although few, institutionally independent civil ensembles collaborating with university departments, art institutions, and cultural embassies have been formed. In 2010, co-founded by Michael Ellison and Ulrich Mertin, the *Hezarfen Ensemble* started performing, bringing together competent performers from different music institutions in Türkiye. Since then, the ensemble has commissioned and recorded a significant part of the repertoire through regular participation in local festivals, international appearances and specific projects such as the *Light and Shadows* album (Hezarfen Ensemble, 2015). The other regular ensemble of the current scene is the *Diskant Ensemble*, which consists of performers from MSGSÜ (Mimar Sinan Fine Art University State Conservatory) led by composer and conductor Ahmet Altinel. Since 2005, *Diskant* has commissioned and premiered pieces by many local composers, alongside the Turkish premieres of works by Carter and Takemitsu. Performance collectives such as *the Anadolu Nefesli Beşlisi*, *MIAM Percussion Ensemble*, *MIAM Improvisation Ensemble*, *Nodus Ensemble*, and *NK Ensemble* performed in several projects. Founded under the lead of violinist Ellen Jewett in 2008, the *Klasik Keyifler* association created another platform for *yeni müzik* with recording projects such as *Sei Solo* (2020) and the annual summer composition programme *Besteciler Kazanı* (Composer's Cauldron). Newer formations, such as *Klank.ist*, *Istanbul Composers Collective*, *Istanbul Coding Ensemble*, *SAVT*, *IBULOrk*, and *Soundinit* have adopted new performance practices in which the concepts of composer-performer, composition-improvisation, or electronic-acoustic are intertwined.

Since the early events, *yeni müzik* performances have been partially subsidized by privately funded art ventures such as *Borusan Sanat*, *IKSV* (Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts), *Akbank Sanat*, *Salt*, *Gedik Sanat*, *Arter* or *KargART*, often in collaboration with university departments and the culture institutes of European countries. This new group of facilitators displays an alternative environment for

contemporary music that is more socially integrated with the current urban city culture than state music performance institutions. Particularly in Istanbul, often organized in small-to-medium capacity venues at the city centres such as Beyoğlu, Kadıköy and Karaköy, *yeni müzik* events have been gradually become partially integrated with other contemporary arts and the audiences for different alternative music genres. However, it is often the case that the majority of the audience of these events consisted of professional musicians and insiders of the artistic and academic scenes. Alongside acoustic ensemble performances, visually displayable ways and interactive modes of listening became central through sound art exhibitions, happenings, conceptual works, and soundwalks. Among the current examples of such private subsidization of *yeni müzik*, the annual *Yeni ve En Yeni Müzik Festivali* (The New and the Newest Music Festival) by Arter brings together academic circles of the current scene with the contemporary artist and audiences, incorporating ensemble music, electroacoustic performances, and sound installations together. Independent collectives, such as *A.I.D* (Art is Dead), represent the non-institutional cases of a vernacular avant-garde orientation within the *yeni müzik* scene.

As reflected during the interviews with composers, this new sphere of contemporary music also has discursive differences from the former school of TCM. Today, *yeni müzik* composers often do not consider themselves part of the former TCM institutionalization ideologically and aesthetically, and many reject the cultural identity-retaining function rooted in the synthesis discourse. In contrast to the musical construction of national identity through employing local idioms, they advocate the careful study and internalization of local music traditions, often critical of eclectic engagements with the locality and mostly hesitant of such application in their own works without a refined understanding.

This negation of the synthesis discourse is grounded on reformulations of both concepts of *culture* and *music* functioning in *yeni müzik* discourse. Musicians in the scene often have extremely fluid and individualized understanding(s) of culture and tradition, which can be significantly distant from the larger sociocultural patterns collectively attributed to geography and history. For many musicians, their culture is defined by what they are enculturated in individually and what they consciously choose to be familiar with. Pointing towards the coexistence of multiple practices on the scene and their own

musical backgrounds, they consider a given collective understanding of ‘Turkish culture’ and musical tradition paradoxical and reductive. Most composers prefer to identify themselves as ‘a composer based in Türkiye’ rather than as ‘a Turkish composer’, denoting a category of belonging. This creates a typical tension for many of them when they participate in international organizations and interact with the local audience. Many composers reflected that they find themselves in situations where their music and professional identity is expected to be confirmed with this collective notion of ‘Turkish composers’.

The other ground of this cultural negation parallels ideas from musical modernism, particularly the discourse of *Neue Musik*, in changing the notions of what constitutes the value in musical composition. In parallel to the Adornoian emphasis on the critical stand of composition that “repudiates any meaning of organized society”, through the critical examination of the means of expression and the structure of the music itself (Adorno, 1949/2006: p.19), *yeni müzik* discourse similarly negates socially constructed meanings (mythos) of music in favour of analytical (logos) approaches to composition. In this analytical approach, not only is the musical construction of national/cultural identity negated, but this negation is often solidified in coherent systems of organizing sound in the forms of algorithmic models, spectral calculations, information theory, stochastic processes, and other procedures that are analysable¹⁴. Such an analytical approach to composition significantly contrasts and inevitably cancels the narrative, representative, and descriptive functions of former TCM that entangle with cultural familiarities. The revised notion of composition, particularly its material and technical means of organizing sound, is considered part of an autonomous field of expert knowledge beyond cultural origins.

Conclusions & Further Discussion

The present study argues that the *yeni müzik* scene appears to be a new sphere in the local contemporary compositional practice, providing an alternative to the former

¹⁴ The analytical tendency attached to *yeni müzik* discourse can also be observed in different forms, taking its cue from other continental modernisms. For instance, the composers of the *Istanbul Composer Collective* refer to the IRCAM-based term *musique savante* which has many parallels with *Neue Musik*. As part of a seminar in Arter’s New and the Newest Music Festival in 2021, composer Emre Dündar explained that “in order to consider any music in the category of *musique savante*, that music must have been produced with knowledge, theory and sound expertise. Therefore, a *musique savante* appears as a piece of music that is worth analysing, a piece that will provide information when analysed”.

synthesis discourse and the school of TCM since the early 2000s. It has been documented that in contrast to the governmental, institutional sphere of TCM that marked a bureaucratic model of musician, artistic production and dissemination, the *yeni müzik* scene has been subsidized by universities, private art institutions, and international culture organizations, pointing towards a relative civilianization of contemporary music in Türkiye.

Diverging from the legacy of TCM with a cultural identity mark inherited from the nation-state ideology, this new sphere has been oriented towards integration with the global/international scenes of new music. The discourse is negated from such identity retaining function in favour of individualized and multifaceted approaches to composition and dissemination of contemporary music that is more compatible with the crystallization in the global compositional field during the last quarter of the 20th century. We have argued that the reconceptualization of music informed by modernity, and individualized notions of culture in a much more globalized sphere, provided the ground the bases for *yeni müzik* composers to negate the musical construction of cultural identity through the eclectic processing of local idioms, which marked the repertoire of the former TCM. On the other side of the aesthetic differentiation, we have also argued that while the TCM school has been based on an understanding of 'Western Music' referring to the materials, techniques and canon of Common Period Practice, in *yeni müzik* discourse, those references to the 'Western' were replaced with an amalgam of 20th-century EAM repertoire and practices, which enabled a far more diverse production and blurred what constitutes a musical composition.

As the paper argues, the combined effects of these institutional, aesthetic and discursive patterns in *yeni müzik* have been increasingly sharpening its difference from the former school of TCM and led to the formation of a separate sphere in the local compositional practice. However, the fieldwork study also shows that the relationality of the *yeni müzik* scene to the former compositional practice is not purely negational but also continuous in some discursive and social ways that we would like to raise as further points complementary to our argument. Sharing similar situatedness in EAM, we also observed that the pivotal centrality of EAM tradition forms a base for both scenes' composers to build and consolidate a professional identity of being a composer. Many of the composers we collaborated with stated that *yeni müzik* for them is primarily an act of composition

as an expert field of knowledge, which is inevitably informed by the EAM tradition, despite the aesthetic fluidity that later marked new music. This common base for professional identity, which connects composers to the tradition in one way or another, also creates consolidated spaces. The most important platform we observe such consolidation of *yeni müzik* and TCM is the *Sesin Yolculuğu: Genç Besteciler Festivali* (Journey of Sound: Young Composers Festival), which has been held since 2004 with the participation of students from institutions of both scenes¹⁵.

We also observed that, despite the striking differences in the notions of cultural identity in the two scenes, the pivotal centrality of EAM tradition positions both as culturally peripheral practices due to their situatedness in processes of Westernization. In both scenes, the institutionalization of the EAM tradition was indeed developed as a short, intense and rough integration process. Just as with the simultaneous incorporation of Bach, Mozart, and Wagner in the institutionalization of TCM, the music of Schoenberg, Boulez, Berio, Cage, Fluxus, Lachenmann or Murail was simultaneously institutionalized in Türkiye with the *yeni müzik* formation. Thus, nuanced understandings of these practices' aesthetic, cultural and contextual differences do not yet appear fully registered in local practice. Hence, in terms of their local reception, both scenes face similar limitations in appreciation and cultural relevance in interacting with the audience, and both remain as socially isolated fields of musicking depending on institutional legitimacy. In comparison, the issue of social isolation regarding the limited number of normative audiences and promoters is more frequently raised about *yeni müzik* production, questioning the legitimacy of the 'scene without a receiver'. While we consider the socio-cultural isolation surrounding *yeni müzik* production as a central issue with multiple layers of factors that are beyond the scope of this paper, we frequently observed that the situation increases the dependencies for both scenes to be integrated with the international agencies for commissions and production, as well as reception and recognition, which in turn deepens the cultural gap in the local contexts and reproduces

¹⁵ The festival officially started in 2006, under the lead of MSGSÜ-based composer Özkan Manav, inspired by the joint concert in 2004 where composers from several departments came together. As Manav described in our interview, the aim was to bring together the new institutions with the existing conservatories and to eliminate the lack of communication between these institutions. The festival reflects on the exceptional case of the MSGSÜ composition department as a bridging institution between two scenes. Contrary to the isolated position of state conservatories, MSGSU composers Altınel, Manav and Nemetlu have been involved in *yeni müzik* activities since the early 2000s.

those notions of cultural 'centre' and 'periphery'. In that context, the cultural identity issue inherited from the synthesis discourse and its socio-economic effects in shaping the production-reception relations remains unsolved in the *yeni müzik* scene, which we hope to explore more through further studies.

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