



## Research Article

# A study on somatic expressions in Arabesque music as an elements of popular culture in Turkiye: Arabesque dance design<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The artistic work, developed through the processing of units derived from and compiled by society itself, undoubtedly represents more than just a pure artistic production process. Like Arabesque music, which has emerged as a popular cultural product in Turkey, preferred by the society to which it belongs and emerging from internal collective stimulation, a movement pool that is familiar to both individuals on a micro level and society on a macro level has been reached. This study aims to offer a new artistic material pool to the world of dance studies by transforming the movement patterns of kinesthetic expression, which carry the emotions and characteristics of individuals engaging in the collective behavior of listening to a common music, into a dance design. This work proposes an experimental dance design that draws support from the knowledge of dance genres, including folk dances, but cannot be defined as a folk dance or any other type of dance. In this study, using the results of data collected through surveys on Arabesque music, one of the elements of popular culture in Turkey, joint reactive movement patterns were processed, and an experimental choreography of Arabesque Dance was created. This is a modeling study in which data obtained through interviews and observations were analyzed, coded, and an Arabesque Dance Choreography Design was developed. The study involved 100 voluntary participants. The results indicated that Arabesque music was listed as the sixth most frequently listened genre. While participants generally reported that they rarely listen to Arabesque music, the mood commonly associated with it was described as melancholy and sadness. The most frequently listened artists were Müslüm Gürses, Orhan Gencebay, and Ferdi Tayfur. The frequency of participants moving or not moving while listening to Arabesque was found to be nearly equal. Movements while listening to Arabesque were described as swaying, head movements, rhythm, hand movements, and dancing. In the structuring of Arabesque dance, analysis of videos collected from willing participants identified head positions such as front, center, back, left side, right side, front left side, front right side, back left side, and back right side. In the arm positions, various spontaneous variants with the inclusion of the hands can be utilized. These variants can be supported by technical studies from ballet arm positions. Ballet technique was also used in both the upper and lower extremities in the overall dance design. The created Arabesque dance choreography design is presented in the study.

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## Introduction

The reflections of common identity elements of cultures in different branches of art are also a reflection of the development and formation process of artistic material in that region. Setting aside the debates on whether popular

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culture products enter the realm of artistic material, Arabesque music, which has become one of the popular culture elements in Turkish society, is also a phenomenon that has attracted the attention of Orientalists. According to Martin Stokes, Arabesque is an urban music for the city. It depicts the complex, turbulent emotional worlds of doomed love affairs, and the deteriorating city where poor immigrant workers are exploited in bad jobs, inviting its listeners to pour another glass of raki, light another cigarette, and curse their fate and the world (1992). Arabesque music is a style that has drawn the interest of many Western researchers like Stokes. It is known that Arabesque has been one of the popular music genres in Turkey since the 1960s. In their article published in *Musicologist*, Serkan Şener and his colleagues stated that Arabesque is a distinctive Turkish popular music genre that emerged in the late 1960s, combining elements of folk, art, pop, Western, Middle Eastern, and even jazz, rock, and world music styles (2022).

From a sociological perspective, it has been embraced by the audience as a reflection of the emotions, pain, and problems of the people who migrated from the countryside to the city since that period. Although it may seem that its origin allows it to be viewed as the music of the oppressed, or its audience to be labeled as such, it has not been limited to this audience over time. The findings of this field study show that it is a music genre with an audience from very different occupational groups, educational, and income levels.

### **Arabesque music**

Some fundamental concepts come to the fore in the decoding of the codes of Arabesque music. The first of these is melancholy and sadness, which can be said to feed negative emotions. The listener who feels the melancholy in Arabesque with emotional intensity establishes an emotional bond with the music. Elements such as heartbreak, the weariness of life, loneliness, and loss in the lyrics enable these people to integrate with the music (Stokes, 2010; Tekelioğlu, 1996). "In other words, Arabesque music reads the inner worlds of its audience and cries out their emotional turmoil and confusion" (Danielson, 1997).

Another important code of Arabesque is its blending of the musical motifs of Eastern music with the instruments of Western music. In Arabesque music, we can see the darbuka and bağlama as well as guitars and electronic keyboards. This situation reveals it as an East-West synthesis (Stokes, 2010). The contribution of this synthesis to this music genre paves the way for it to have both a local-regional and a universal sound (Bates, 2011).

Arabesque music, by revealing the suffering of the poor, working-class lower class, depicting injustice, unfairness, and the hardships of life, also serves as a tool for social critique and protest music" (Danielson, 1997; Stokes, 2010). "In fact, it can be said that Arabesque is also used as a kind of learning tool. Because the aspect of it that screams the meaning of life, the injustices, and the difficulties that may be encountered to the uneducated class assumes a role of raising awareness and offering a critical perspective (Erol Işık, 2018). Arabesque music also has a bridging role in understanding between rural and urban culture. This music, listened to by people from rural areas, has formed an identity for them, like a garment that integrates with them (Stokes, 2010). It is seen that the listeners of this music genre use it as a means of self-expression and a demonstration of social belonging (Erol Işık, 2013). When looking at the musical structure of Arabesque, it is seen that it carries the codes of Turkish folk music and Ottoman makam music. Moreover, being a synthesis music, it also contains the tonal structure and harmonic richness of Western music. It can be said that this synthesis provides a great impact on Arabesque music (Stokes, 2010; Tekelioğlu, 1996). This impactful aspect has been a factor in the wide consumption of Arabesque music by the masses (Şen and Kaplan, 2020).

In addition to being the subject of a music research study, it can also be said that Arabesque is a subject of sociological research. As a reflection of the migration phenomenon and the problems it caused, it has become a common consumption tool. Through this tool, which allows individuals to integrate with their emotions, it can be seen that they are trying to integrate themselves with society (Şen and Kaplan, 2020; Stokes, 2010). In music research, Arabesque can be accepted as the style and form in which sociological change is musically expressed (Şen and Kaplan, 2020).

### **Processes of creating dance from music**

The reflections of music as dance are also observed in many cultures. The processes of creating dance from music involve certain stages. Moreover, expressive works are also quite significant. Any movement or kineme<sup>3</sup> particle that emerges from bodily arousal, or a small structure that consists of at least two movement fragments and reaches a length that can be called a figure, may have the characteristic of forming a pattern in dance. The movement that emerges through the expression of bodily, or somatic, arousal will be characterized by kineme (Kaepler, 1972) and figure fragments. On the other hand, the dance design in this study not only includes the movement patterns characterized by kineme and figure fragments that were collected through surveys and videos as examples of this somatic expression, but also includes the processes of creating dance from music. The necessary analyses and processes for this are provided.

These processes should also be associated with the experience of human emotional structuring and mood changes, i.e., transitions between emotions, through sound and music. We can consider sound and music material as one of the objects used by the artist in creating the artwork. Additionally, the artist will transform their emotional processes into a new potential space within the path of artistic expression. “The artist’s search for new ways to make the world they live in deeper and more meaningful has continued. The desire to express their emotions and passions through objects with which they have formed bonds through experiences has increased day by day. When the artist sets out to discover themselves, the act of perception triggers the revelation of the latent essence of objects that would strengthen the expression. Besides the well-known general definitions of the objects surrounding them, which have varying functions in expressing emotions that can be perceived differently from person to person, the artist also considers the functions that remain hidden and are discovered by the artist’s perception and redefinition of the object” (Aydın, 2023).

The design of the artist who will create dance based on a sound or musical element will naturally be nourished by the variables of human emotional structure. Therefore, the mood created while listening to that music will be among the elements that support the emergence of the artwork in the processes of creating dance from music.

### **Performing a music analysis**

Music analysis is the examination of the fundamental components of music, such as rhythm, melody, tempo, and harmonies. Conducting a music analysis is essential in the creation of dance because it is important for the dance choreography to be in harmony with the music. Through musical analysis, the rhythmic structures and accents of the music are revealed, allowing for the design of appropriate movements (Himberg et al., 2018; Ørbæk & Engelsrud, 2019). In the process of examining the rhythmic and melodic structures and tempos encountered in Arabesque music, and evaluating the structural features of musical phrases, the most suitable attitude and character for the design of Arabesque dance have been sought. When considering Arabesque music specifically, this genre typically includes simple rhythms. The rhythmic structures are not compound, and the tempos are generally brisk to moderate. These characteristics of the music have also influenced the structure of movement.

### **Development of suitable movements**

At this stage, movements are developed in accordance with the structure of the music and inspired by it. These movements are designed to be suitable for both individuals and groups. Creativity is particularly important at this stage. While doing this, movements that are appropriate to the musical structure are brought forth through improvisation. It is important to involve individuals with high bodily intelligence and strong musical ears. In movement development, body memory and movement experiences enable the emergence of rich movements (Ørbæk & Engelsrud, 2019; Tarsy, 2015). During improvisations, the dancer attempts to naturally express the music and tones they are journeying through. The dancer’s experience of embodying within their own body, coupled with their technical accumulation, interpretation skills, and developed bodily features, results in a unique naturalness. Accordingly, the movement, kineme, and figure patterns that can be developed from improvisations related to a dance inspired by any music essentially mean

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<sup>3</sup> Kineme; Adrienne Lois Kaepler used this concept in her dance analysis methodology. “As dance ethnologist, Kaepler developed a system of dance analysis that identifies culturally significant units of movement—the kineme; it has become a useful methodological tool for comparative studies of movement and dance in other parts of the world.” Ricardo D. Trimillos (2006). *The Society for Ethnomusicology* (2006 Lecture: Adrienne L. Kaepler)

the embodiment of the music in the body. Therefore, the set of movements created for "Arabesque dance" in this study is the result of individual accumulation.

### **The creation of choreography**

Creativity is also at the forefront in the creation of choreography. The overall structure of the dance is revealed by bringing together the developed movements. The choreography created here must be in harmony with the music. When creating choreography, elements such as the dynamics of the movements, spatial distributions, and coordination for the group are taken into consideration. This way, the choreography gains a holistic structure (Himberg et al., 2018; Ørbæk & Engelsrud, 2019). Creating art is an effort to reach a whole in the work. Any idea or product that emerges in the creative process realizes itself as a result of a situation called inspiration. Inspiration is the process of being inspired, which occurs when the creative force is triggered as a result of any impact or perception. American existential psychologist Rollo May defines the state we call the muse as something triggered by 'intense work' and describes the end of this process as expressions that the subconscious brings out freely when our mind is allowed to rest (Dinçeli, 2020). Therefore, the choreographic arrangement should also be a cohesive structure nourished by these processes. Arabesque dance is a choreography in which the artist, through creativity, inspiration, and conscious work, transforms elements from the unconscious into a sequential movement structure. The experimental "Arabesque dance" choreography discussed in this study is also an artistic work characterized and inspired by collective somatic tones, illuminated by data collected from individuals in society. It represents the expressive and individual resolutions that the collective somatic movement tones create in the artist.

### **Performing rehearsal and revision**

The prepared choreography needs to be rehearsed. During this process, the harmony between the music and the choreography is reviewed and, in a sense, tested. Rehearsals are actually an important tool for ensuring the coherence of the dancers' performances. Revisions are made to address interruptions observed during rehearsals (Ørbæk & Engelsrud, 2019). As revisions are applied, the choreography takes its final form. During subsequent rehearsals, the dancer internalizes the choreography into their bodily-kinesthetic memory. As the choreography is repeated in rehearsals, a flawless unity emerges where there are no pauses in the connections between movement figures, motifs, movement phrases, or sequences. The goal of the rehearsals is to embed this seamless unity into bodily-kinesthetic memory without interruption.

### **Performing and evaluating the performance**

This stage is the final phase of the process of creating dance from music. The dancers perform their choreography, after which they receive and evaluate feedback. This evaluation is also crucial for the development of the choreography. Analyzing the dance and observing the audience's reactions are necessary for evaluation. A good performance analysis also contributes to the development of the dance (Himberg et al., 2018; Tarsy, 2015).

It is important that the processes of creating dance from music are scientifically grounded. In this study, scientific processes were applied in transforming Arabesque music, a significant element of Turkish music culture, into dance. The Arabesque dance choreography design is an important model for creating dance from other types of music and is original in that such a dance had not been created before.

### **Problem of Study**

Arabesque dance, the dance of Arabesque music that has left its mark on popular culture in Turkey, is an important field of study as a sociological phenomenon. The emotions of this music genre and the movements it evokes in people were collected through the survey method. Common emotions, kinemes, motifs, and figures were identified with a quantitative majority. These elements were characterized by the artist through the filter of individual accumulation and experience. Both sociological and artistic factors play an active role in the formation of Arabesque dance. This study approaches the process of combining Arabesque music with dance to create a new art form from a scientific perspective.

## Method

### Research Model

In this study, the collection of data regarding the dances or movements performed by participants while listening to Arabesque music, the analysis of videos, and the creation of the codes for Arabesque dance align with the mixed methods research approach. Mixed methods research combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. This method provides a deeper and more holistic understanding of a research problem. The aim of this research is to examine the dances or movements performed by participants while listening to Arabesque music, to create the codes for Arabesque dance through video analysis of these movements, and to develop a new "Arabesque dance" style based on these codes.

### Participants

Participants of the study consist of individuals aged 18 and over who have come into contact with popular culture products in Turkey through various channels (family, media, environmental factors, society, etc.). The target population and participants of the study include volunteers who have agreed to participate randomly without any sociodemographic preferences such as income level, education level, occupation, student status, unemployment, or any other factors.

**Table 1.** Participant characteristics

Variables	f	
<b>Age</b>	Under 20 ages	3
	20-25 ages	31
	26-30 ages	20
	31-35ages	9
	36-40 yaş	11
	41-45 yaş	6
	46-50 yaş	5
	50-51 yaş	5
	Above 50 ages	10
<b>Education Level</b>	Primary education	14
	High school	48
	Associate degree	1
	University	29
	Postgraduate	8
<b>Job</b>	University student	56
	Accountant	2
	Others	42
<b>Total</b>	100	

According to Table 1, the participants' ages predominantly range between 20 and 40 years. Their educational levels are primarily at the high school and university levels. In terms of professions, the majority of participants are students, with others engaged in various different occupations

### Data Collection Tools

#### Opinionnaire on Arabesque Music Listening Habits and Behavioral Responses During Listening

In the first phase of the study, this form was used to collect data from participants regarding the dances or movements they performed while listening to Arabesque music. The form aimed to determine the participants' demographic information, their habits of listening to Arabesque music, and the dances or movements they performed while accompanying this genre. The questions in the form pertained to the participants' interest in Arabesque music, the manner and frequency of listening, their mood while listening, and the movements they performed (see Appendix 1).

### Video Recording

After the completion of gathering opinions, participants were asked to record videos of the dances or movements they performed while listening to Arabesque music. These videos were collected to analyze the participants' movements in detail. Video data of kinemes and movements described by the participants in the responses to open-ended survey questions were obtained from 20 participants who agreed to provide video footage out of 100 participants.

### Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Participants' demographic characteristics, Arabesque music listening habits, and the frequency of dance/movement were statistically examined. The videos were analyzed using content analysis methodology. In this phase, the dances and movements performed by the participants were coded and categorized under specific themes. The analysis of movements in the videos was used to create the codes for Arabesque dance.

## Results

### Genres of Music Listened to by Participants

**Table 2.** Frequency analysis of the responses given by participants regarding the genres of music they listen to

Genres of Music	f
Pop	33
Rock	33
All types	28
Turkish classical music	21
Classical Western music	16
Arabesque	15
Turkish folk music	13
Rap	12
Music that sounds pleasing	11
Jazz	10
Metal	9
Slow	8
Foreign	6
Latin	6
Turkish pop	6
Ethnic	4
Electronic	3
Blues	3
R&B	3
Other responses (57 different)	1

As seen in Table 2, participants most frequently reported listening to pop and rock music. If Turkish pop (6) is included within the pop category, it has been determined that pop music is the most listened to. Arabesque music was mentioned 15 times (participants' numbers: 2, 6, 12, 15, 18, 22, 30, 37, 39, 52, 68, 69, 71, 81, 86, 99). From this, it can be inferred that Arabesque music is also among the most listened to genres.

### Arabesque Music Listening Habits

**Table 3.** Frequency analysis of the responses given regarding Arabesque music listening habits

Arabesque Music Listening Habits	f
Yes, I listen	76
No, I don't listen	20
Other responses (13 different)	1

As seen in Table 3, 76 responses indicated "Yes, I listen" to Arabesque music, while 20 responses indicated "No, I don't listen." It is also noted that there are 13 different responses that follow the "Yes, I listen" or "No, I don't listen" answers.

### Arabesque Music Listening Duration

**Table 4.** Frequency analysis of the responses given by participants regarding their periods of listening to Arabesque music

Arabesque Music Listening Duration	f
Very rarely	34
Sometimes	21
Once a month	20
Every day	15
Once a week	14
When feeling down	11
Never	7
When drinking alcohol	6
Most of the time	4
Other responses (12 different)	1

As seen in Table 4, the participants' periods of listening to Arabesque music are described as very rare, sometimes, or once a month.

### Emotions Experienced While Listening to Arabesque Music

**Table 5.** Frequency analysis of the responses given by participants regarding the situations in which they feel the need to listen to Arabesque music

Emotions Experienced While Listening to Arabesque Music	f
Sad mood	58
Cheerful, joyful mood	21
While drinking alcohol	12
Feeling of longing	5
Heartache	5
Other responses (12 different)	27

As seen in Table 5, the participants' emotional states while listening to Arabesque music, it is frequently noted that they most often listen to it when they are in a sad mood.

### Artists Listened to in Arabesque Music

**Table 6.** Frequency analysis of the responses given by participants regarding the artists they listen to in Arabesque music

Music Artists	f
Müslüm Gürses	59
Orhan Gencebay	22
Ferdi Tayfur	22
Yıldız Tilbe	14
İbrahim Tatlıses	14
Cengiz Kurtoglu	14
Bergen	14
Güllü	12
Ebru Gündeş	10
Sezen Aksu	7

<b>Music Artists</b>	<b>f</b>
Ahmet Kaya	6
Azer Bülbül	4
Ferdi Özbeğen	4
Kibariye	4
Melek Mosso	3
Ümit Besen	3
Haktan	3
Semi Cenk	3
Nilüfer	2
Gülden Karaböcek	2
Sibel Can	2
Hakan Taşıyan	2
Cem Karaca	2
Melike Şahin	2
Neşe Karaböcek	2
Derya Bedavacı	2
Other responses (12 different)	41

As seen in Table 6, it is seen that the most frequently listened Arabesque music artist by the participants is Müslüm Gürses.

### **Movement While Listening to Arabesque**

**Table 7.** Frequency analysis of the responses given by participants regarding their movement while listening to Arabesque

<b>Movement While Listening to Arabesque</b>	<b>f</b>
No movement (No desire to dance)	69
Movement	43

As seen in Table 7, it is frequently noted that participants report not moving while listening to Arabesque music. The "movement" response appears 31 times, while the "dancing" response appears 12 times. The participant numbers associated with these responses are: 4, 7, 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, 21, 23, 31, 35, 40, 43, 45, 50, 51, 52, 57, 58, 61, 68, 69, 71, 72, 73, 74, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 85, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 96, 98, 100.

### **Movements Performed While Listening to Arabesque**

**Table 8.** Frequency analysis of the responses given by participants regarding movements performed while listening to Arabesque

<b>Coding of movements performed while listening to Arabesque</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Participant no</b>
Swaying Movement	22	4, 7, 8, 21, 32, 33, 54, 56, 57, 63, 113, 128, 129, 134, 140, 156, 161, 168, 175, 189, 191, 222
Head Movement	9	6, 33, 49, 54, 65, 136, 142, 155, 216
Rhythm	6	33, 129, 144, 149, 154, 216
Hand Movement	5	3, 23, 41, 50, 179
Dance	5	31, 103, 104, 106, 122
No Movement	4	17, 19, 75, 178

As seen in Table 8, the frequencies emerging from the anatomical coding of the movements participants make while dancing to Arabesque music show that the swaying movement is the most common.

### **Structuring Arabesque Dance**

In this study, the structuring of Arabesque dance will be based on the example of jazz dance. Jazz, a music genre that originated from the pains of slavery among African Americans, has had a significant global impact due to its musical



quality and has reached a broad audience with its improvisation-based music aesthetic. The roots of jazz music and dance lie in the rhythms brought by African slaves to America (Nallett, 2005).

Jazz dance, based on ballet, offers bodily flexibility and technical advantages. The foundation of ballet is also important in the study of Arabesque dance. A person who practices ballet develops physical flexibility and an aesthetic structure; their sense of rhythm and harmony with music improves, bringing pleasure (Cote-Laurence, 2000; O'Dwyer & Gürcan, 2021). Ballet, as a universal language, will be a foundational element for Arabesque dance. The prevalence of ballet courses in Turkey proves the acceptance of this art form. Therefore, those who will participate in Arabesque dance studies will not struggle with ballet practices.

Arabesque dance is designed to be performed by dancers and performers who have also received classical ballet training. The third pillar is the swaying motion found in ethnic dances, particularly in the form of traditional Turkish dance. Swaying consists of repetitive flexions of the knees and is common in folkloric dances. In this structuring, special emphasis is placed on traditional Turkish dance forms.

Finally, the use of mime, an important element of expression in performing arts, and the art of pantomime encountered in ballet, have also been included in the study of Arabesque dance. The feature of interspecies permeability is also seen in the example of Mademoiselle Mercédès in the 1800s. "As a character dancer, Mademoiselle Mercédès combined her talent as a mime with the performance of social, folkloric, and national dances. In 1890 and 1891, she acted in transvestite roles" (Román, 2023). Despite the rigid rigidity of the classical framework, it is possible to talk about the permeability between styles in ballet also, which arises from the interaction of time and spatial relations. Since companies like the Royal Ballet are supporting today's eclectic dance genres, incorporating aspects from contemporary dance and even Hip Hop, yet are still performing the past, they need to acknowledge that by giving classes which draw on earlier values, it can enable dancers to understand the past. We see this in the example of jazz dance as well. Jazz refers to both a music and a dance genre. Originating in the first quarter of the 20th century in America, jazz dance, also known as theatrical dance, is featured in musical theater. In the 1940s, jazz dance was influenced by classical ballet and modern dance. ... Jack Cole, known as the 'Father of Theatrical Jazz Dance,' developed his own technique. Cole studied modern, ballet, and ethnic dance (Nallett, 2005). Jazz dance, characterized by African rhythms and steps, was nourished by the pains of slavery. With its structure containing the influences of ethnic style, classical ballet, and modern dance, jazz dance is an important example in the development of Arabesque dance. Similarly, Arabesque dance is nourished by the coexistence of different styles. It is characterized by kinemes, movements, motifs, and/or figures that have emerged from the expression of Arabesque music, a highly popular music genre in Turkish society.

### **Importance of Ballet-Based Training Program and Ethnic Dimension**

Classical ballet requires a comprehensive curriculum and physical discipline. It necessitates long-term practice and repetition for the movements to be ingrained in muscle memory. Ballet includes exercises on the ground, at the barre, and in the center, focusing on positions of the feet, arms, hands, head, legs, and body. Ballet, which enhances flexibility, muscle, and skeletal strength, and health, focuses on delicate aesthetics and attention to detail. Ballet supports other dance forms and provides bodily strength (O'Dwyer & Gürcan, 2021). Therefore, there is almost no professional dancer without ballet training. Ballet is also critically important for Arabesque dance. The Arabesque dancer needs to reflect the flexibility, grace, balance, and strength of ballet in their choreography.

In the ethnic dimension, the "swaying" movements in traditional Turkish dance are characterized by knee flexion and are found in most folk dances. Although this fundamental movement contrasts with the strict leg usage in classical ballet, it can be applied to Arabesque dance, as seen in jazz dance, where the knees are relaxed. Thus, on the classical ballet foundation of Arabesque dance, the "swaying" movement from ethnic dances can be added, enriching the dance.

In classical ballet, certain movements are used to express specific meanings. For example, movements are performed to express phrases like 'Will you marry me?', 'I love you', 'I am afraid' (O'Dwyer & Gürcan, 2021). Mime and pantomime play an important role in expressing emotions and situations in performing arts. The increasing number of movement theater and physical theater groups proves the universal power of non-verbal expression. Choreographic movements are

enriched by the use of mime and pantomime. Therefore, it is very important to equip the foundation of Arabesque dance with these elements.

### Basic Posture Position

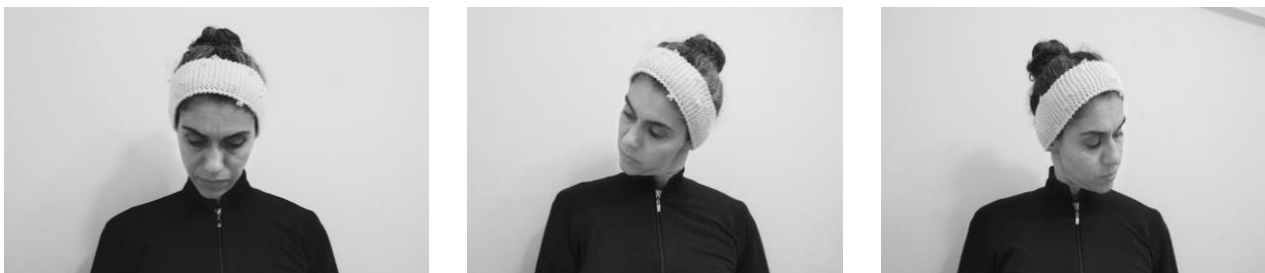
Upright posture and anatomical position form the foundation of bodily performances. In most movement arts, an upright body posture is the starting point. “Exercises typically begin with the body in an upright position; the spine is drawn upward, and the shoulders are pulled downward” (Gerber and Wroblewski, 2001).

In dance studios, the imagination of having one’s body suspended upward by a string is commonly used. This visualization starts with the thought of a string extending upward from the head area, creating a downward momentum from the shoulders as the individual pulls themselves upward. The abdominal muscles are pulled in, and the hip area is gathered inward, thereby achieving an upright posture.

In Arabesque Dance practices, this upright posture will also be used as the basic starting position. Regardless of the direction of head exercises, the vertical axis of the body should not be disturbed.

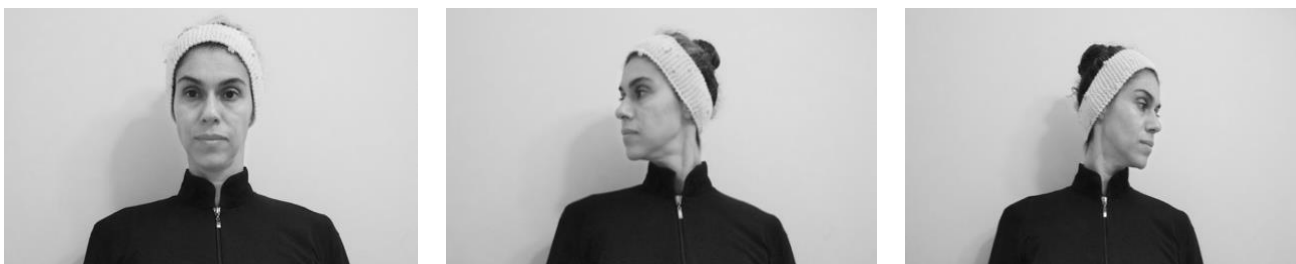
### Working Principles with Head Positions for Arabesque Dance

Head exercises should be performed while the upper body is in an upright and anatomical position. Due to the sensitivity of the head, the speed of these exercises should initially be between *lento* (slow) and *moderato* (medium), with the speed increasing as the level progresses.



**Figure 1.** Head forward position

This is the head position achieved by tilting the head along the vertical axis forward. The foundation of warm-up exercises includes rotation to the right and left. In Figure 1, the rotation movement of the head is visualized by applying it in two different directions. In all basic Arabesque dance head positions, visuals of the rotation in both directions will be used similarly. The same pattern and brief explanations will be provided for the other figures following the completion of the rotation movement visuals.



**Figure 2.** Head middle position

This is the position where the head is aligned with the vertical axis of the body without any tilt, continuing directly from the body’s vertical axis. Rotation is also applied in this position during warm-up exercises (Figure 2).



**Figure 3.** Head back position

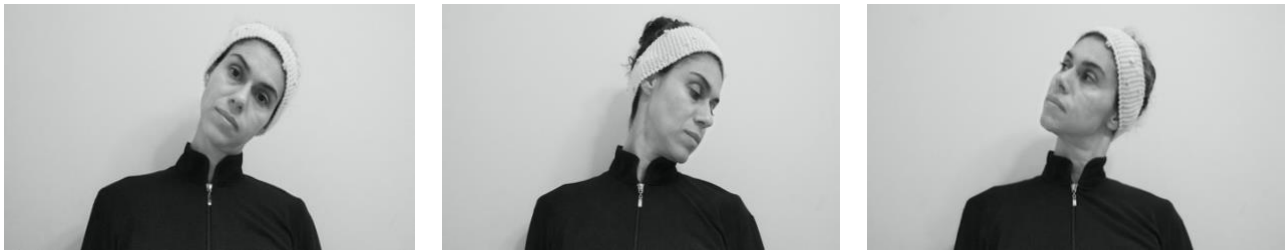
This is the position achieved by tilting the head as far back as possible, depending on individual flexibility. Even in the head back position, an upright posture of the body is maintained. Rotation exercises should be performed at a calm/slow tempo and gradually increase in speed over time. The head and neck areas are sensitive, and careful attention should be given during these exercises.

### Side Head Positions

There are two basic positions: right and left.

#### Head Side Left

The vertical axis of the head tilts to the left from the center point. It forms a 45-degree or similar angle to the body's horizontal axis. The rotation demonstration in the head side left position is provided in the following visuals. Stabilization is achieved by fixing the axis, and when rotation is applied without disturbing the axis, the movement occurs at an angular upward and downward direction.



**Figure 3.** Head side left position

#### Head Side Right

This position is achieved by tilting the head axis to the right from the center point. Depending on individual differences, it can vary in angles but generally forms a 45-degree angle to the horizontal axis. Rotation exercises should be performed while maintaining the position of the axis and ensuring stabilization.



**Figure 4.** Head side right position

### Compound Head Positions

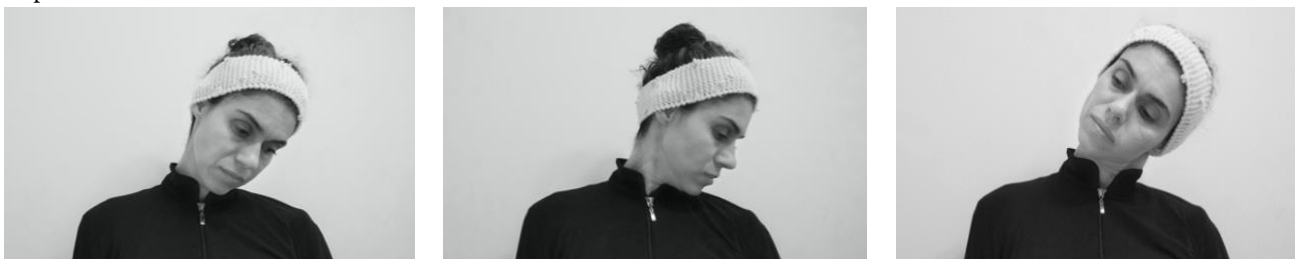
The vertical axis of the head moves in more than one direction, forming a compound position. Below, the front and side, back and side head positions are crossed.

#### Front Side Head Positions

The vertical axis of the head first moves forward and then to the right or left.

#### Head Front Side Left

This position is achieved when the head is tilted forward and then moved to the left.



**Figure 5.** Head front side left position

### Head Front Side Right

This position is achieved when the vertical axis of the head first moves forward and then to the right. In this position, during rotation exercises to the right and left, the vertical axis of the head should be stabilized. Rotation exercises are exemplified in the following visuals.



Figure 6. Head front side right position

### Back Side Head Positions

The head axis first moves backward and then to the right or left. It is important that the movement of the head and neck does not disrupt the posture of the body.

#### Head Back Side Left

The head axis first moves backward and then to the left. The angle to the horizontal axis varies from person to person. It should be performed with an upright and undisturbed posture.



Figure 7. Head back side left position

#### Head Back Side Right

The vertical axis of the head first moves backward and then to the right. It shifts to a new balance point while maintaining flexibility. The upright posture of the body is maintained. The head back side right position will appear roughly as shown in Figure 8. When rotation is applied, it appears as exemplified in the visuals.



Figure 8. Head back side right position

### Other Movement Patterns

It is also possible to utilize other movement patterns and combinations. For example, as Nihal Ötken states in her book "Movement Analysis in Turkish Folk Dances," "The circumduction movement is a movement combination formed by the union of flexion, extension, abduction, and adduction (or lateral flexion) movements" (Ötken, 2011).



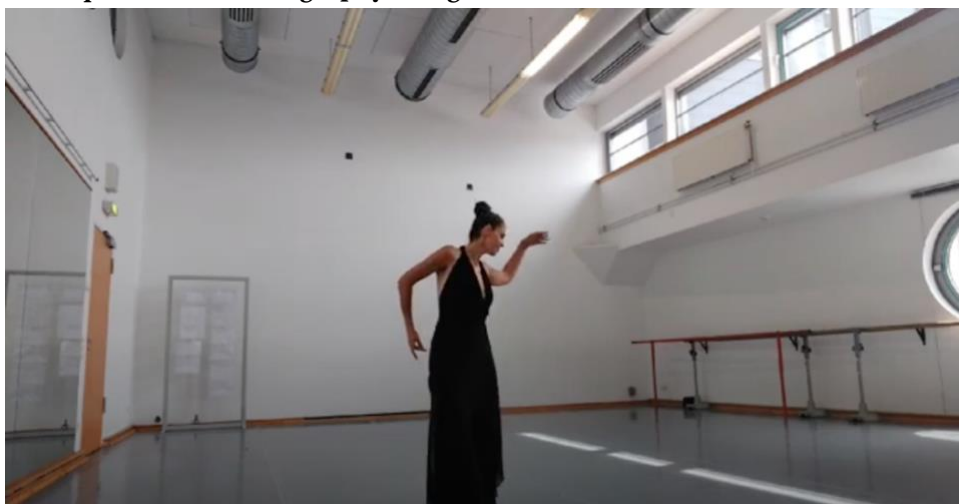
**Figure 9.** Sequential stages of neck circumduction movement

This movement combination is important for the development and flexibility of the neck muscles. Since the neck is frequently used in Arabesque dance, strengthening its muscles and increasing its flexibility will be beneficial. Adding combinations like circumduction to the supportive exercises of a dance with high movement intensity in the head region can be advantageous.

### Arabesque Dance Arm Positions

Based on survey data, various spontaneous variations or improvisations can be used in arm positions with the participation of the hands. In this section, especially single arm and hand movements resembling swaying to the right and left are emphasized. The choreographic use of abduction and adduction movements can be considered. Given the contribution of ballet technique to strong arm and shoulder development, these spontaneous movement patterns can be enriched with ballet discipline, traditional dances, pantomime, and contemporary elements. These disciplines support the technical structure and aesthetics of Arabesque dance.

### Arabesque Dance Choreography Design



**Video 1.** Developed Arabesque Dance Choreography Design

In the Arabesque dance performance, ballet movements and figures such as sissone fermé, grand battement, arm positions, head positions, turns; chaine, etc., have been used. Additionally, movements compiled from the survey research have been incorporated. Accordingly, the mood created by Arabesque music in individuals, along with somatic expressions emerging through bodily stimuli, are included in the movements and figures. The movements and figures compiled from the participants are characterized by the synchronization of the arms with the head and shoulders in the upper extremity. Accents are marked at the end of abduction or adduction movement lines as punctuations. This is almost reflected as an expression of rebellion and pain. Swaying movements, also present in traditional dances, are noticeable at the beginning and end of the dance. Sliding movements, which can be found in many dance styles, have also been included.

## Conclusion

Arabesque dance is a dance genre associated with Arabesque music, which is one of the popular culture elements in Turkey. In this study, a randomized participation open-ended survey method was used to create the choreography of Arabesque dance, and data were collected from 100 participants. The survey results examined the statements of 96 out of 100 participants, who have a habit of listening to Arabesque music, on "how and in what way they move while listening to Arabesque music." Video data were collected from participants who gave consent, and written or verbal movement notations were analyzed.

The research revealed that the movements characterized by the intensive use of the head, arms, and swaying, predominantly felt in the upper extremities, are prominent. These movements, like jazz dance reflecting the American social structure, may also reflect the social life of Turkey in Arabesque dance.

Among the prominent figures of Arabesque dance are the swaying of the head and arms, and abduction and adduction movements. These figures have been developed by utilizing ballet and traditional dance disciplines. The results of the research show that Arabesque dance requires a strong arm and shoulder structure, and ballet techniques contribute to the development of this structure.

This study is a preliminary attempt to determine the technical structure and aesthetics of Arabesque dance. With future research and additions, this dance genre will further develop. Therefore, it is anticipated that Arabesque dance may emerge as a tradition and become a part of popular culture. Turkish choreographers and dance researchers can continue to embody and develop this social phenomenological structure in the body.

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## Biodata of Author



Performance artist and Art Psychotherapy Practitioner Beste Naiboğlu Özgüç was born in Istanbul in 1982. With academic training in the fields of Performing Arts and Behavioral Sciences, the artist conducts work in art psychotherapies, tendencies of gifted/talented individuals towards art, sublimation of these individuals into the art field, as well as art education, music, and dance research. She has participated in various stage projects and continues her stage work. She has produced many contemporary and original works, which have been exhibited on both national and international

platforms.

### Published Books

- Beste Naiboğlu- Piano Etuds (September 2023). Music Education Publishing
- Milaşlı Asil - Real Sibling Story (March 2024). Music Education Publishing

### Selection of International Works

- The world-renowned La Fura Dels Baus Theater Group portrayed the characters Ikaro and Gelin in the special 40th-anniversary performance "Istanbul Istanbul" by IKSŞ.
- She presented the special opening performance of the Artbosphorus Contemporary Art Fair with a 30-person performance team. <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/istanbul-highlights-contemporary-art-44128>
- At the Artİstanbul Contemporary Art Fair 2015, she showcased a duo performance titled "Koridor Contemporary Art Beste Naiboğlu Kromatit.

**Academiaedu:** <https://independent.academia.edu/BesteNaiboğlu>

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- Web 2.** How to Analyse Dance, Laban and Semiotic Levels, and Analysis (4.6.1) <https://worlddanceheritage.org/analysis/>

**Appendix 1. Opinionnaire on Arabesque Music Listening Habits and Behavioral Responses During Listening**

<b>Part I. Personal Information</b>	
What is your name? You may also use a pseudonym.	
How old are you?	
What is your level of education?	
What is your profession?	
Where do you live?	

<b>Part 2. Opinionnaire on Arabesque Music Listening Habits and Behavioral Responses During Listening</b>
<b>Explanation:</b> Dear participant, this form has been prepared to determine your situation regarding Arabesque music listening and the movements you make while listening. Please answer the questions sincerely.
<b>Semi-structured Interview Questions</b>
<b>Q1.</b> What kind of music do you listen to?
<b>Q2.</b> Do you listen to Arabesque music?
<b>Q3.</b> How often do you listen to Arabesque music?
<b>Q4.</b> What kind of emotions do you experience while listening to Arabesque music?
<b>Q5.</b> How do you generally feel when listening to Arabesque music?
<b>Q6.</b> Who do you listen to?
<b>Q7.</b> Do you ever feel like dancing to this type of music, or do you listen without moving?
<b>Q8.</b> If you do move, how do you move?