

The Soundtrack of Migration: Tahsin Incirci and the Türkischer Arbeiterchor West Berlin¹

ABSTRACT

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Berlin has always had a strong working class tradition and a history of political activism that was echoed in its music, literature, and film. This paper asks how immigrant workers and working-class sympathizers have interacted with Berlin's indigenous proletarian tradition. Considering representations of international worker's solidarity during the 1970s, this paper examines the degree to which Turkish-German labor migrants can be regarded as contiguous with Berlin's earlier traditions of organization and protest. Central to the analysis are songs from the album *İşçi şarkıları ve marşları* (1974) by Tahsin Incirci and the Türkischer Arbeiterchor West Berlin. Even during the early stages of immigration during the late 1960s and early 1970s, this paper reveals, the choir incorporated the guestworkers' perspective into the tradition of German labor and protest movements. My analysis will show how Incirci and his choir emphasized the mutual influence and constant interaction of Turkish and German cultural traditions – in particular, workers' songs and politically engaged literature – and, in so doing, created something new: a synthetic, genuinely proletarian, Berlin-rooted musical tradition.

In 1973, due to economic slowdowns and job shortages, the West German Government initiated a recruitment ban and introduced the *Rückkehrhilfe* (return aid), a program that provided subventions to *Gastarbeiter* (guestworkers) in the hopes of encouraging their remigration to their countries of origin: principally Turkey, but also Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Tunisia, Morocco and Yugoslavia. For the German government and civic authorities, the labor force of guestworkers had been initially conceived of as a temporary phenomenon that entailed a transitional status for these workers.

Following the recruitment ban, (West) Germany's handling of the foreign labor force was characterized by a focus on limiting immigration and encouraging the

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return of foreigners and the restriction of social integration. Competition for jobs and a rising unemployment rate gave rise to doubts about the economic benefit conferred by the guestworkers. (Herbert 1990, 222) What entered the public discussion as the *Gastarbeiterproblem* (guestworker problem) during recession soon became the *Türkenproblem* (Turk problem). An example of this can be seen in the 1973 July issue of the weekly news magazine *Der Spiegel*, which published an article entitled „Die Türken kommen - rette sich, wer kann“ (the Turks are coming, save yourself if you can) in which Turkish immigration was described in pejoratives like „Andrang vom Bosphorus“ (rush from the Bosphorus), „Invasion“ (invasion), „Scharen“ (flocks), and „Türken-Run auf die Städte“ (Turk-run on the cities) (1973). The rhetorical choices in this article construe Turkish immigration as, at best, disconcerting and, at worst, alarming; *Der Spiegel* places Turkish immigrants on par with animals through the uses of „rush,“ „invasion“ and „flocks.“

In the face of growing discrimination and the West German consolidation policy, Turkish-German artists have used their work to document the experience of Turkish guestworkers, representing Turkish immigrants as an undeniably permanent presence in Germany. In what follows, I analyze three songs from the album *İşci şarkıları ve marşları* (Workers' Songs and Marches, 1974) by Tahsin Incirci and the Türkischer Arbeiterchor West Berlin (1973–1985). Their album, as I will show, stands for an international worker's solidarity based in Berlin. In my analysis, I will focus on the ways in which Turkish labor migration and workers' solidarity are represented aesthetically. I argue that Incirci and the choir, drew on the longstanding artistic tradition of German labor and protest movements (Brecht and Eisler) in their songs, while incorporating the perspective of the newly-arrived Turkish guestworker, during the early stages of immigration. In contrast to *Der Spiegel's* representation of Turkish guestworkers as a disorderly and uncontrollable „flock,“ the choir focuses on the workers' participation in and continuation of German labor traditions and political movements. In addition to songs based on poems by Brecht sung in Turkish, the repertoire of the choir also included songs based on poems by Turkish writers like Nazım Hikmet, emphasizing the influence and interaction of Turkish and German cultural traditions in their works, and thus creating something new: an aesthetic that draws on and synthesizes both traditions.

The Music of Early Migration

Extensive Turkish immigration to West Germany had begun with the signing of the bilateral labor recruitment contract between Germany and Turkey on October 30th, 1961. The experience of labor migration was not only presented and processed literarily – mainly through poetry and prose – but also through music and by labor migrants themselves as well as by professional musicians. The most prominent music genres in the early stages of migration were primarily Turkish folk music, and increasingly *arabesk* music, particularly dealing with the condition of *gurbet*.² The word *gurbet* has its roots in Arabic, and means „absence from the homeland; separation from one’s native country; banishment; exile; life or place away from home“ (Çağlar 1994: 39). Being in *gurbet*, whether by reason of exile or voluntary migration, calls forth a sentiment of displacement and uprootedness. Composed during the 1970s and 1980s, the majority of folk and arabesk songs concerned themselves with the intolerability of experiencing *gurbet*: of being in Germany, stricken with a longing for Turkey.

Particularly the Turkish folk singers, called *âşık*, proved especially adept at incorporating this nostalgia into their repertoire.³ Examples include Âşık Garip Ali’s „Geçti gurbette yıllar“ (The Years Went By in Gurbet), Âşık Devriş Can’s „Yol üstünden yol geçiyor“ (One Journey Follows Another), and Âşık Muzaffer’s „Yağmur yağar Almanyada“ (It Is Raining in Germany). The most popular and prolific *âşık* were Âşık Metin Türköz, who came to Cologne in 1962 to work at Ford Motor Corp., and Âşık Şahturna, who came to Berlin into exile in 1975. Throughout the 1980s, „Gurbet konserleri“ (gurbet concerts), featuring artists from Turkey performing folk music and arabesk, were very popular. Many such concerts were organized by an agency in Cologne called „Gurbet Kervani“ (gurbet caravan). (Greve 2003: 47)

Musicians in Turkey also have incorporated the impact of migration into their repertoire. Ruhi Su (1912–1985), a well-known Turkish folk musician, included two songs about the notion of *gurbet*, in collaboration with the singer Sümeyra Çakır and the choir *Dostlar Korusu*, on his album *El kapıları* (*The Gates of*

² As musical genre arabesk is an amalgam of Anatolian folk music, Arabic arrangements and Western pop music.

³ An *âşık* is a minstrel poet, in the folk musical tradition of central and eastern Anatolia whose music is considered the highest form of folk music. (Akdemir / Schiffauer 1985: 44)

Strange Lands, 1977).⁴ One of these songs is entitled „Almanya Acı Vatan“ (Germany, Bitter Home). It presents a new perspective: that of those left behind, rather than of those who have emigrated. This song emphasizes the bitterness and agony felt towards Germany as the cause for the separation and the grief of the family members, especially the children and wives, left behind in Turkey.

Incirci and the choir differ from these other performers in terms of their theme and execution. For one thing, they are a choir, and perform choral arrangements, which diverge from the one-singer songs the other artists produced. In addition, they focus on labor protest and solidarity from the perspective of the guestworkers in Berlin, not only building a bridge between Turkish and German labor protest, but also connecting with workers around the globe. Their plight is presented as collective and universal, rather than as individual and unique to a single national context.

The Sound of Solidarity

Workers' solidarity is a key theme in the works of the composer, musician, and choir director Tahsin Incirci. He came to Berlin in 1963 in order to study at the UdK (Berlin University of the Arts), formerly HdK. After graduating he had to return to Turkey to complete his military service, but decided to come back to Berlin in the aftermath of the military coup in 1971. Back in Berlin he founded the Türkischer Arbeiterchor West Berlin (Turkish Workers' Choir West Berlin) in 1973, the first Turkish workers' choir to have been formed anywhere in the world. Some 90% of the choir members were guestworkers. The repertoire of the choir included Turkish folk songs as well as political and protest songs. (cf. Brandes / Hauer / Hoffmann 1985: 172) The choir was closely connected with union activities, especially the ATTF (Avrupa Türkiyeli Toplumcular Federasyonu). The ATTF is the organization of Turkish socialist workers abroad, and was formed by various socialist organizations throughout Western Europe (mainly the FRG) in 1968, with its headquarters in Cologne. It was dedicated to the problems of the workers and stipulated the need for solidarity between workers in Europe as its primary aim. Its organizational magazine entitled „Kurtuluş“ (Liberation)⁵ was well received by a broad readership in Germany as well as Turkey. (cf. Özcan 1989: 223–254; ATTF 1975)

⁴ Sümeyra also collaborated with Tahsin Incirci on two albums *Lieder für den Frieden/Lieder für die Fremde* (Songs for Piece/Songs for Abroad, 1979) and *Çok uzaklardan geliyoruz/Wir kommen von weit her* (We Come from Very Far Away, 1986).

⁵ A magazine of the same name and intent had existed decades before. In 1919, Turkish workers were sent to Berlin for professional training. They established a party, the *Türkiye İşçi ve Çiftçi Fırkası* (Turkish Workers' and Peasants' Party) and its accompanying journal entitled *Kurtuluş*. The first issue was entitled „To the Proletariat of all Countries“ (May 1919). When they returned to Turkey the same year, they

Music has always been a significant part of the organization of the working class. Workers' songs, *Arbeitergesang*, especially in the form of the choir, have a longstanding tradition in Germany, which extends back into the 19th century. (Lammel 2002: 72) During the Weimar Republic the *Deutscher Arbeitersängerbund* (Federation of German workers' singers) belonged to one of the largest socialist organizations in Germany. (Bodek 1997: 5) Incirci's choir continues the tradition of *Arbeitergesang*, while at the same time supplying a new perspective: that of the Turkish labor migrants in Germany. Incirci emphasizes the building of bridges between the Turkish and German workers' movements, while at the same time having international solidarity as his ultimate goal.

The Türkischer Arbeiterchor West Berlin was innovative, as they transformed traditionally solo and male-dominated repertoires into choral repertoires for performance throughout Germany and the rest of Europe. (cf. Bohlman 2008: 256) They performed at events organized by German leftist parties and newspapers throughout Western Germany, the *Festival des politischen Liedes* (Festival of the Political Song, 1981) in East Berlin, but also across Europe: in France, Belgium, and Sweden for Turkish *Arbeitervereine* (workers' associations). For events that were mainly attended by a German audience, which was the case with most events organized by leftist parties and organizations, the choir provided brief German introductions to and translations of the songs they performed. They further performed in cooperation with German choirs, such as the Bert-Brecht-Chor from Essen, Die Zeitgenossen from Bremen, the Ernst-Busch-Chor from Kiel and the Hanns-Eisler-Chor from Berlin (West). An example of this collaboration is the album *Wenn die Feinde mächtig sind...: Chöre live* (When the Enemies Are Powerful, 1981), where workers' solidarity is enacted at the level of professional cooperation and musical collaboration among choirs.

The first LP entitled *İşçi şarkıları ve marşları* was released in 1974. Central to this album's songs, which are all sung in Turkish, is the solidarity among workers in Berlin and beyond. They are characterized through political lyrics, based on texts by Marxist literary figures like Nazım Hikmet and Bertolt Brecht, like „Dayanışma“ („Solidaritätslied“ in the original by Bertolt Brecht and Hanns Eisler, 1931) and „İşçi Birlik Cephesi“ („Lied von der Einheitsfront“ in the original by Bertolt Brecht and Hanns Eisler, 1934). They also recorded „The Internationale“ for the first time in Turkish, and the recording appears on the

continued the journal until allied occupation in 1920 brought an end to their activities. (Harris 1967: 40–49)

album as well. Workers' marches from various countries were sung in Turkish, like the Austrian March „Kızıl Yıldız“ (Die Arbeiter von Wien, 1929), the Italian march „Kızıl Bayrak“ (Bandiera Rossa, 1908), and the Chilean march „Venceremos“ (1970). Through this inclusion of workers' hymns from around the globe, the Turkish-German collaboration is taken to the international level.

This album familiarizes the Turkish speaking/listening audience with Brecht and Eisler who were largely unknown in Turkey at that time, while at the same time introducing German audiences to Turkish poets – like Nazım Hikmet, Fazıl Hüsni Dağlarca, and Ahmet Arif – through song. The choir's first album was banned in Turkey, but the union, especially DİSK (Türkiye Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu), the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Turkey founded in 1967, made black-market copies and distributed them, meeting a high demand.⁶ The choir's songs had an impact on the labor movement in Turkey, and were sung in union strikes and demonstrations in Turkey. (cf. Incirci 1988: 201; *Deutsche Volkszeitung*, July 3rd, 1975)

Both the opening and concluding song of the album are based on poems by Nazım Hikmet, which endow him with a particular significance for the album as a whole. The opening song, „Kerem gibi“ (Like Kerem), sets the theme for the album: a call for political action and solidarity. Composed when he was breaking new grounds in Turkish poetry, this is one of the first poems Hikmet wrote in free verse. He wrote it in May 1930, when most revolutionary militants had gone underground because of strengthened repressive measures in the aftermath of the ban of the Turkish Communist Party in 1922.

The figure of Kerem is based on a Turkish folk story „Kerem and Aslı.“ Kerem burned to death the night of his wedding, due to an inability to consummate their marriage (Kerem's incineration was soon after followed by the burning of Aslı).⁷ This song begins with the flute and the violin, introducing the leitmotif. The melody sounds monotonous and lugubrious, until a second violin in higher register disrupts and suspends the melody. Next the piano joins in and restates

⁶ Incirci gave me this information in a conversation we held in Berlin on January 14th, 2009.

⁷ The Muslim boy Kerem falls in love with the Armenian girl Aslı. Her father is against his daughter marrying Kerem, but with the help of the governor, Kerem convinces her father to consent. However, Aslı's father has his daughter wear a magic robe with forty buttons on the wedding day. During the night, Kerem is unable to unbutton the robe; when trying to unfasten the last one, all other buttons fasten again. Tirelessly trying all night but not succeeding in undressing, he opens his mouth to express his emotions about not being able to consummate their marriage. Flames come out of his mouth and as a result he burns to death. Today in Turkey, there is still the saying, „Kerem gibi yanıyorum“ (I am burning like Kerem) which people use to indicate that they cannot tolerate the suffering. (Silay 1996: 327)

the leitmotif, together with the violin and flute in unison. The flute sounds the melody of the leitmotif throughout the first stanza accompanied by the choir, female and male voices together. They sing in deep and slow tone, articulating ponderousness, which reflects the lead-laden air the choir sings about: „The air is lead-heavy, I’m scream-scream-scream-screaming! Come running, I’m calling you to melt the lead.“⁸ The metaphor of lead in the air, repeated twice for emphasis, symbolizes the problems of the time. In Hikmet’s case, these included censorship and political oppression. In the case of the worker’s choir, singing more than three decades later, workers’ legal discrimination, exploitation and lack of political representation were the main issues. With the second stanza, the tempo quickens and a single male voice starts singing, accompanied by the piano. The singer responds to the first stanza’s call for action with the reminder of the consequences of speaking up: turning into ashes after burning like Kerem, a scenario which allegorizes suffering. In contrast to the first stanza, the voice of the male solo sounds cheerful probably to mark and reflect his airiness when reminding the singers to be cautious, warning them about the possible fate awaiting them when speaking up. This section is concluded by a paradox: „there are many problems, and there are no problems“.⁹ This verse reflects the oppositional mindsets: inaction versus commitment. The final verse attests to the general ignorance of existing problems, „the ears of the hearts are deaf,“ first sung in male solo, then, for emphasis, repeated by the choir.¹⁰ The „deafness“ of the hearts, or souls, is countered through song and constant repetition.

Following the second stanza, the melody of the leitmotif reappears, and the first two verses are repeated. Through the iteration of the metaphor of lead-laden air, the song reconnects this section to the beginning, reminding the listener of the problems that continue to exist. After this statement, the male voice accompanied by the piano, delivers a response to the male solo sung in the second stanza: „I shall turn into ashes burning like Kerem.“¹¹ The repetition of this verse and his word-by-word utterance add authority and assertiveness to what is being sung. Rather than emphasize a specific word, the singer ensures every word is given equal significance. The chorus joins in to sing the last verse, extending the statement being made in the male solo through their

⁸ „Hava kurşun gibi ağır! Bağır bağır bağır bağıryorum. Koşun kurşun eritmeğe çağırıyorum.“
Translations mine, unless noted otherwise.

⁹ „Dert çok, hem dert yok“.

¹⁰ „Yüreklerin kulakları sağır“.

¹¹ „Kül olayım Kerem gibi yana yana“.

communal support: „For if I do not burn and if you do not burn and if we do not burn who else is here to dispel the darkness.“¹² This verse addresses everyone – first, the singular individual through the use of „I“ and „you“, and then the collective „we“ by the end of the verse. Unity and solidarity is achieved on both levels, textually through the use of the pronoun „we“ and musically through the voices of the choir. In addition the song transitions into a marching tune accompanied by the drums, underlining the urgency to act. Hikmet had to remain unspecific in his poem, neither mentioning a specific date or particular issue due to censorship restrictions. As a result, Incirci was able to adopt „Kerem gibi“ for the purpose of calling workers to action in unity through song.

Of equal importance to this album are the Brecht poems set to music by Hanns Eisler. The „Lied von der Einheitsfront“ (İşçi Birlik Cephesi/United Front Song) and the „Solidaritätslied“ (Dayanışma/Solidarity Song) – both sung in Turkish on Incirci’s album – are the most popular Eisler compositions based on Brecht poems. „Solidaritätslied“ is the theme song of *Kuhle Wampe oder wem gehört die Welt?* (Kuhle Wampe or Who Owns the World? 1932). The screenplay was written by Bertolt Brecht and Ernst Ottwald, and its musical score was provided by Hanns Eisler. In this montage of „documentary footage and fictional narrative“, which was shot in Berlin’s workers’ district Wedding, more than four hundred thousand workers participated. (Alter 2004: 82) The „Solidaritätslied“ constitutes the leitmotif of this film and is crucial both diegetically and non-diegetically. Throughout the movie, the song is sounded in three different versions all based on Brecht’s original version of the poem written in 1931: an instrumental version, a version sung by a mixed choir, and an all male version with the lead soloist Ernst Busch. The song itself „suggests an active participation in the class struggle based on unity among workers“. (Alter 2004: 83) It emphasizes the necessity of the political organization of the working class – a feat that was at the time of great urgency, as the proletariat was divided between two parties, the KPD and the SPD. It further expressed an opposition to growing fascism, replacing current political passivity by the active political engagement of the workers. It calls for workers to take the class struggle into their own hands, as a united front against the exploitation by capital and the rise of fascism in Germany. (Whitaker 1985: 65)

The version sung by the choir is an abbreviated version of the poem, which Brecht modified in 1947. This version incorporates the first, third, and last stanza, and the chorus. The song begins with the chorus that directly addresses

¹² „Ben yanmasam, sen yanmasan, biz yanmasak, nasıl çıkar karanlıklar aydınlığa“. Translation taken from Larry Clark, in Silay 1996: 328.

the workers, and asks them to remember that solidarity is a source for strength endowing the workers with the ability to bring about change. The use of slogans like „haydi“ („forward“) heightens the dynamic effect of the song. The clear diction of the lyrics as well as its simple regular marching rhythm delivered by the drum, enables listeners and singers to easily remember and memorize the song and reinforces its dynamism. In contrast to Eisler's original in *Kuhle Wampe*, Incirci abstains from using the trumpet, solely employing the drums and the piano. Incirci structures the song alternating between the chorus sung by the choir and stanzas sung in two voices. The pronoun used in the chorus, the plural „we“, is replaced in all three stanzas by the personal plural pronoun „you.“ This underlines the explicit call to workers across the globe to join in solidarity. All three stanzas provide the listeners with the potential of showing solidarity, and are sung by a female and male voice in unison. Hence, workers' solidarity is not presented as a matter of gender, but equally addresses and incorporates men and women.

After the chorus' reminder to get into motion and to never forget solidarity, the first stanza following the chorus, explicitly calls for the workers to unite with the same goal. Furthermore, the choir reminds all workers to share the goods in the world, emphasizing equal distribution. The repetition of the chorus throughout the song gives emphasis to the call for action, underlined by „haydi,“ and to the reminder that solidarity is the main source of the workers' potential to act against exploitation and injustice. The chorus further underlines that solidarity has to be maintained as a constant, independent from material well being: indeed, both when „hungry and when full“ („hem açken hem de token“).

In comparison to „Kerem gibi,“ „Dayanışma“ (Solidaritätslied) is more explicit in its demands for an international workers' solidarity, which becomes the sole solution to all problems, lending power to the united workers to overcome oppression and to enable the fraternization of all people „zenci, beyaz, sarı, esmer“ (black, white, yellow, and dark). Both songs address the urgency to act, asking workers to take matters into their own hands. „Dayanışma“ ends with a repetition of the chorus and modified final two verses: „Bu dünya kimin dünyası? Gelecek kimindir?“ (Who owns the world? Who owns the future?). The movie *Kuhle Wampe* ends with the „Solidaritätslied“ sounded extradiegetically, accompanying the footage of marching workers, and while the song asks, „Who owns the world? Who owns the future?“ the visual responds:

the workers. Similarly, the version sung by Incirci's choir lends emphasis to this question, which is reminding the workers of their share in the world.

In addition to their compositions based on German and Turkish poems and their Turkish rendition of international workers' marches, Incirci's choir included an original composition on the album, entitled „İşçi yürüyor baştan“ (The Workers March at the Forefront). This song's lyrics are the outcome of the collective effort of the choir members. Its melody is taken, in modification though, from a prominent Turkish folk song (türkü) by Sadettin Kaynak entitled „Gemim geliyor baştan“ (My Boat Is Coming at the Forefront). Although the songs do not have anything in common with regard to their texts, the choir's title choice is a variation of the original title, replacing the „coming boat“ with the „marching workers.“ The piano and the tambourine accompany the voices of the choir, the tambourine being the main sound. The constant rattling sound of the tambourine throughout the song serves the function to innervate and activate the listeners while at the same time providing a regular rhythm. Similar to „Dayanışma“, the song's structure alternates between chorus and three stanzas, starting with the chorus. The first verse of the chorus announces the arrival of the workers, „we are coming breaking the chains“ („geliyoruz zincirleri kıra kıra hey“). This is followed by the second verse, where they sing, „knocking the head of the bourgeois“ („burjuvanın kafasına vura vura hey“). The third verse is a repetition of the first, and the fourth is an iteration of the second, replacing the „bourgeois“ with the „fascist“ („faşist“). The repetition of the verbs „kırmak“ (to break) and „vurmak“ (to knock) in the gerund underlines the acuteness and simultaneity of the actions described. Furthermore, the choir adds assertiveness to what is being sung, by ending each verse of the chorus with the exclamation „hey.“ In addition, each verse ends in a double clap, which functions as an exclamation mark and underlines the singers' determination. The chorus achieves two goals, announcing the need to break free from the „chains“ of capital and exploitation, while at the same time establishing the bourgeoisie and the fascists as enemies of the working class.

The chorus is followed by the first stanza, which begins with the song's title stating that „the workers march at the forefront“ („işçi yürüyor baştan“); the workers, who are victorious in overcoming all obstacles and fights.¹³ The second verse underlines, as do the other two songs discussed here, the solidarity

¹³ „galiptir her savaştan“.

and comradeship among workers, but also between workers and peasants.¹⁴ Their strength and force is likened to a natural catastrophe through the allegory of the „flood“ („sel“). The last verse harkens back to the first verse, which consists of words synonymously used for workers in low wage and manual labor: „amele, ırgat, köle“ (peon, peasant, servant), listing those, who are joining forces and are gathering the sheer force of a flood. The last stanza, introduces the listeners to their characteristics and strengths, „güçlüyüz“ (we are powerful), „kavgada bilinçliyiz“ (we are experienced and knowledgeable in struggle), and „faşizme hınçliyız“ (we are vengeful toward fascism).

The chorus and stanzas consist of short slogans, which deliver the singers' goals and self-perception, accompanied by a catchy and rhythmic tune. The stanzas are syncopated, which alters the stress pattern of the song. All verses last four seconds, but the difference lies in the number of syllable per line; in the chorus, each line consists of thirteen syllables, while in the stanzas each line contains only seven syllables. The syncopation allows the singers to stretch the syllables of each verse in the stanzas, which modifies the melody and results in a melodic difference between chorus and stanza.

All three songs discussed here call workers to action. Whereas „Kerem gibi“ is more implicit, „Dayanışma“ and „İşçi yürüyor baştan“ are more explicit, directly appealing to workers to unite in solidarity. The acuteness to act is underlined through the use of instruments such as drums and the tambourine and regular rhythmic patterns. In all three songs, the instruments and voices support the lyrics, translating the content of the lyrics musically. This enables the listener to associate a specific mood or atmosphere with the song: in „Kerem gibi“ ponderousness is evoked by the deep voices of the choir and the sound of the flute, in „Dayanışma“ acuteness is induced by the drums and the accentuation of the choral voices, in „İşçi yürüyor baştan“ the double clap in the chorus and the sound of the tambourine strengthen assertiveness.

Conclusion

The songs analyzed here articulate political concerns, and express the necessity for workers to show solidarity in their fight against exploitation and capital. The potential for change, these songs insist, lies in the hands of the workers themselves, and can only be achieved through an international solidarity, which has its base in Berlin, a landmark in the tradition of German labor protest.

¹⁴ „işçi köylü elele“ (workers and peasants hand in hand).

Furthermore, Incirci conceptualizes the experiences of the Turkish guestworkers as part of the German labor movement in his songs, in drawing on the long-standing German cultural tradition of Arbeitergesang and through the incorporation of Brecht/Eisler songs into the choir's repertoire. In addition, by setting Turkish poems to music, he accentuates the mutual interaction of Turkish and German cultural traditions, which he illustrates by his creation of something new, that draws on both traditions.

The choir's songs are informed by the Marxist intellectuals Bertolt Brecht and Nazım Hikmet, who emphasize the artists' responsibility to their historical situation and perceive art as a means of laying bare political injustices and eliciting a critical response. In addition to drawing upon this political-aesthetic archive for support, this album is very much a document of its time. That is, the album has to be situated in the context of the recession years 1966 and 1973, the recruitment ban, mass unemployment, and discriminatory practices towards Turkish guestworkers and immigrants, circumstances the choir addresses more generally through the thematization of workers' exploitation, which is of concern to all. Though their own situation in Berlin provides them with a point of departure, they extend their call for solidarity internationally, connecting Germany to Turkey, to the rest of the world.

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