PAPERS AND MONOGRAPHS OF THE FINNISH INSTITUTE AT ATHENS VOL. XIX

OTTOMAN INTIMACIES, BALKAN MUSICAL REALITIES

Edited by Risto Pekka Pennanen, Panagiotis C. Poulos and Aspasia Theodosiou

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Contents

Section III: Ottoman Echoes and the Current Mediaspace

The Non-Muslim Musicians of Istanbul: Between Recorded and Intimate Memory

Panagiotis C. Poulos

This chapter explores certain instances and modes of remembrance of Istanbul's non-Muslim musical heritage in modern Turkey. More specifically, this chapter traces the genealogy of nostalgic responses towards the non-Muslim musical heritage of the city, juxtaposing a short ethnographical account of the cultural events of Istanbul 2010, when the city was – along with Essen and Pécs – one of the European Cultural Capitals, with narratives on the life and career of a musician from the Greek Orthodox minority (*Rum*)[1] of Istanbul, namely Aleko Bacanos (1888–1950), in the first-half of the twentieth century. This juxtaposition aims to situate the loss of the non-Muslim musicians of Istanbul in an historical context and to look beyond the generalized formal commemoration of "Istanbul's minorities", within the lives and interrelations of the actual actors of this historical event.

The use of the notion of "intimate memory" in this chapter derives initially from Pierre Nora's formulation of the theory of "sites of memory" (*lieux de mémoire*).[2] The content of the term "intimacy", as implied in most of the analysis that follows, however, draws widely from Lauren Berlant's notion of the "range of attachments" that link the experience of individual lives with the more institutionalized events that define collective life.[3] In this respect, the texts which are analyzed and compared cover a wide range of metadiscourses that record various ways of attachment to the "non-Muslim musician" in modern Turkey; in the case of Bacanos these include administrative documents like community records, formal biographical notes and obituaries, to mention just a few.

Overall, this analysis aims to question, on a diachronic level, nostalgia as a response to major socio-political turns in modern Turkish history. In addition, this analysis is a means of highlighting the various "reorientations" of the musical heritage of the city of Istanbul, and consequently of its past, that have been inevitably embedded in features of the current process of remembrance.

In Quest of a New Concert Venue

The venue of the concert of the, otherwise familiar, Istanbul State Classical Turkish Music Choir (İstanbul Devlet Klasik Türk Müziği Korosu), puzzled both me and my Turkish friends – some of them members of one of the various Turkish classical music[4] amateur

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[1] For an overview of the term *Rum*, covering the shift of its meaning from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic, see Ors 2006, 24–31. In this chapter, the term *Rum* is used exclusively to refer to the Greek Orthodox community of Istanbul, and it does not account for the rest of the Greek Orthodox communities of the Ottoman Empire that demonstrate a certain degree of differentiation. For a general history of the Greek minority of Istanbul since the establishment of the Turkish Republic, see Alexandris 1992.

[2] Nora 1989.

[3] Berlant 1998, 282–283.

[4] "Turkish classical music" is a genre-term that was introduced after the establishment of the Turkish Republic

societies of Istanbul. Rather than one of the usual concert halls such as, for instance, the Cemal Reşit Rey Concert Hall or the Ataturk's Cultural Centre (Atatürk Kültür Merkezi)[5] which for years has been the principal venue of concerts of Turkish classical music in Istanbul, we were now trying to locate the Armenian Catholic Church in Taksim! This unusual choice of venue was due to the fact that the concert we were about to attend was not one of the weekly, scheduled appearances of the Choir in the AKM. Instead, this was a themed concert entitled "Our Armenian Composers" (Ermeni Bestekârlarımız), the ninth in a series within the project "The Music of Istanbul's Architecture" (İstanbul Mimarisinin Müziği), which was organized within the context of Istanbul's nomination as the European Cultural Capital 2010.

Our sole navigating tool in the remapping of our concert-going habit was some vague information about this church being "somewhere behind the French Consulate" in Taksim, and after a few failed guesses about which building this might be, we arrived at Taksim square. The dense commercial and leisure activities of İstiklal Caddesi (Independence Avenue) created a noisy and lively soundscape.[6] A contributing part of this was a rock n' roll band at the top of İstiklal Caddesi performing on a replica tram, which was circling around at the top-end of the regular Tünel-Taksim tramway line. Ironically, in the context of our quest for the Armenian Church, the art gallery in the old water storage facility in Taksim (Taksim Maksemi Cumhuriyet Sanat Galerisi), a few steps away from the tramway musical happenings, was hosting another exhibition of the European Cultural Capital, entitled "History and Destruction in Istanbul/Ghost Buildings".[7] Eventually, a short stroll in the backstreets of the French Consulate revealed to us the gate of the walled Armenian Catholic Church of Surp Ohan Vosgeperan (St. Jean Chrisostomus).

The courtyard was full of regular followers of the choir, and members of the Armenian community of Istanbul, as well as followers of the European Cultural Capital's events. While observing the audience I wondered whether they shared my mixed feelings of excitement and surprise at the same time, due to this rather curious concert setting. I thought that for those following the scheduled concerts of the Choir it was exciting to watch their favourite musicians of Turkish classical music performing in such an unusual, almost exotic, space at the very heart of Beyoğlu. One could not possibly fail to think that

(1923) serving the need of the newly-founded state to redefine its Ottoman urban musical heritage. For a thorough analysis of the term, see Feldman 1996, 15–19.

[5] At this point, it should be noted that the Atatürk Kültür Merkezi (hereafter AKM) has been closed down since 2008 for renovation. Its renovation, undertaken by the Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture agency, resulted in a long public dispute over the socio-historical significance of the building and its future architectural identity. This dispute led to a series of legal actions between those opposing the plan, the Union for Culture and the Art and Tourism Workers (Kültür Sanat-Sen) and the proponents, the Culture and Tourism Ministry and the Preservation Board that halted the renovation works throughout the period of the Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture activities. The debate over the renovation of AKM is, in many respects, relevant to the topic of this paper, as it is brings forth a number of current issues related to the politics of memory, identity and urban planning in Istanbul. An analytical examination of this issue is, however, beyond the scope of this paper.

[6] In this article, the term "soundscape" has the meaning of an "auditory landscape", after Thompson (2002, 1). Yet, at this point in the text the term "soundscape" adheres to its general definition of a "sonic environment" (Schafer 1994, 274).

[7] This exhibition traced the history of twelve extinct buildings of Istanbul, from their foundations until their demolition, answering also, through fascinating 3D representations, the question of "what would have happened if their destruction never took place?" Hayal-et Yapılar – Ghost Buildings, http://www.hayal-et.org/i.php/site/bilgi_info. Accessed 9 January 2012. It should be noted that the title involves an interesting word play: the hyphenated word *hayalet* (Turk. ghost) alludes to the verbal form *hayal et*, meaning "imagine", therefore the title can be read as "imagine buildings".

having a Turkish state orchestra performing a bizarre repertoire under the title "Our" Armenian Composers in one of "their" – meaning an Armenian – sacred spaces made an intriguing interplay between the notion of majority and minority.[8] The concert programme added further to this ambiguity, as it consisted of a type of Ottoman popular songs (*şarkı*s) from the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, as opposed to Armenian church music (Fig. 1). The composers featured included members from both the Armenian Catholic and the Apostolic Churches, and represented the diverse social and cultural strata of the Armenian musical community. For instance, the compositions of the head cantor of the Armenian Church in Kumkapı and Mevlevi affiliate Nikoğos Ağa (1836–1885) were featured next to those by Kemânî Tatyos Efendi (1858–1913), the celebrated Armenian tavern (*meyhane*) musician of the Pera (Beyoğlu) district.

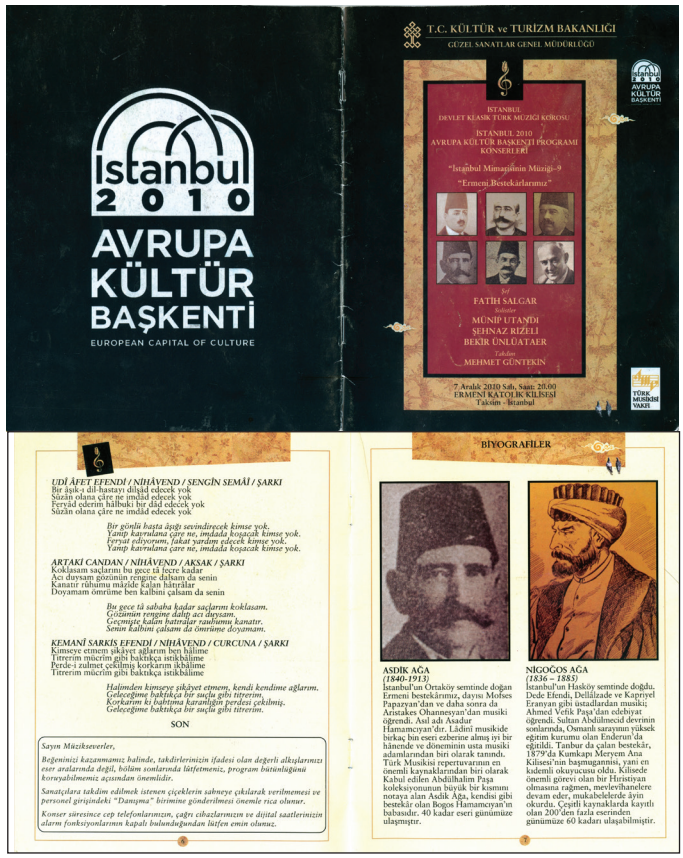

Fig. 1. Programme of the concert "Our Armenian Composers".[9]

[8] This is not the first time that a Christian church has been used as a concert venue in Istanbul. The most renowned example is the Orthodox church of Holy Peace (Gr. Αγία Ειρήνη, Turk. Aya İrini) at the outer courtyard of Topkapı, which has been used since the 1980s as a concert hall of mainly Western classical music. The decision to convert the church into a concert hall was taken in 1963. The discourse regarding this decision is documented in Öngen 1963, 105.

[9] From the author's archive.

The performance was in accordance with the standard concert typology and aesthetics of Turkish classical music as they were formulated in the mid-twentieth century.[10] The musicians, in their usual formal dress, were seated in a semicircle in front of the main altar, with the mixed chorus standing behind them, and all of them facing the director who was standing with his back to the audience. Choir songs were sung in unison and alternated with vocal solos and instrumental improvisations (*taksim*s). The audience listened attentively most of the time. While I was trying to balance in my mind the customary image of this typical Turkish classical music state orchestra and that of the magnificent Christian decoration of the church, surprise gave way to familiarity, followed by enthusiasm. We were, in fact, listening to well-known songs from the bulk of the repertoire of Turkish classical music, performed in the way that this music has mostly been performed since the second-half of the twentieth century. As the concert progressed, some people from the audience started beating the rhythmic cycle discreetly on their knees, whereas others were singing along with the choir, scarcely consulting the detailed programme brochure, which included the song verses in both Ottoman and modern Turkish and short biographical notes of the composers and the soloists. At the end of the concert, the musicians were warmly applauded by the enthusiastic audience, which called for continuous encores. After the concert, in a small beer-hall in Beyoğlu, conversation with my musician friends began to concentrate on the musical aspects of the performance, while the impact of the bizarre venue and the theme of the concert gradually faded away…

Showcasing Minorities, Reorienting the Past

Fortunately, the Armenian Catholic Church of St. Jean Chrisostomus was not one of the buildings presented in the aforementioned exhibition of Istanbul's *Ghost Buildings*. Instead, the Church of St. Jean Chrisostomus was properly featured in another exhibition of the Istanbul 2010 European Cultural Capital, dedicated exclusively to the "Armenian Architects of Istanbul in the era of Westernisation" (Batılılaşan İstanbul'un Ermeni Mimarları). It opened its gates to the public a week after the Armenian composers' concert, this time in the Istanbul Museum of Modern Art (Istanbul Modern). Interestingly, this exhibition had a "Greek-Orthodox" twin, the "Batılılaşan İstanbul'un Rum Mimarları" (Greek Architects of Istanbul in the era of Westernisation). So far, from this short tour of the events of the concluding month of the Istanbul 2010 European Cultural Capital, it is clear that the historical ethno-religious minorities of Istanbul constituted quite a prominent component of the organizers' agenda. Specifically, with regard to music, in the overall programme of the Istanbul 2010 European Cultural Capital, two out of the thirteen projects listed under the label of Turkish classical music were directly related to minority musical culture, whereas in cases like the aforementioned project on "Music of Istanbul's Architecture", minorities were also represented as a sub-component. Among these, it is worth noting the launch of "Yorgo Bacanos Istanbul International Ud Festival", which was a tribute to the Rum *ud* virtuoso Yorgo Bacanos (1900–1970), commemorating the 110th anniversary of his birth.

The foregrounding of minority cultures in the cultural life of Istanbul, whether in their tangible or intangible forms, can be traced back to before the city was nominated

[10] For the processes of modernization in Turkish classical music in the early Republican era, see Tekelioğlu 1996 and O'Connell 2002.

as a European Cultural Capital. Specifically, this foregrounding has been an element of a wider trend of interest in "Old Istanbul" which started at the end of 1980s;[11] this was put forth by both the world of cultural managers and that of academics, resulting in a boom in publications on all aspects of the history of the city and of public artistic events. In this context, non-material cultural practices like, for instance, musical genres and community religious celebrations as well as aspects of the material fabric of the city – especially places of worship of the various communities – were rediscovered and restored, marketed and consumed.[12] Overall, this trend has been much debated in the recent critical literature in relation to its selective reading of the city's historical heritage and its imaginary approach towards recent Turkish history, the politics of exclusion and nationhood, and to the neoliberal entrepreneurial strategies involved on the part of cultural managers in their efforts to proclaim Istanbul a "global" city. Of late, all of these issues are being discussed within the secularist vs. Islamist (neo-Ottomanist) debate in contemporary Turkish politics that follows the gradual emergence of the moderate-Islamic Justice and Development Party (Turk. Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)[13] onto the political scene since 1994.[14]

Within the rediscovery of the historical quarters of Istanbul's minorities, their places of worship and (communal) cultural practices, Amy Mills sees the negotiation of a complex relationship between the city's landscape, social memory and identity, within the context of inscribing the "boundaries of belonging to and being excluded from the nation."[15] Projects like "The Music of Istanbul's Architecture", which, as stated in its programmatic description, aims to restore the unity between the architecture of a period and its musical sound,[16] and also the auditory component in this negotiation process. The themed concert "Our Armenian Composers" constructs a unifying soundscape of a non-Muslim community, bound to one of its liturgical spaces. In this manner, the Armenian musical heritage of Istanbul in this spatially and conceptually well-defined form is then easily appropriated, as the title of the project states. This careful appropriation can be seen as a strategy on behalf of the Turkish economic and cultural elite to sustain the ideal of a European identity that values cosmopolitanism and tolerance, at the same time as reinscribing national and class boundaries; thus establishing a canon of who is included and who is not.[17] The concerts' concept is an invitation to the auditory experience of this canonization process for those who can actually "find their way" towards the concert venue. It is these people who identify with the terms of this process.

As recent critics observe, in this process of rediscovering the cosmopolitan past of Istanbul, it is not only the future of the city that is subject to "reorientation", as illustrated in the above ethnographic episode, but also its past.[18] For the musical modernization programme of the early years of the Turkish Republic's "cosmopolitanism", as well as other historical features of the Ottoman musical tradition that challenged the unifying national narrative of the history of Turkish music, were systematically attacked and largely

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[11] Göktürk et al. 2010, 10–11; Türeli 2010, 303.
[12] Yardımcı 2007, 4.
[13] Hereafter AKP.
[14] See Keyder 1999; *id*. 2010, 27; Mills 2006, 371; Öncü 2007, 235–236.
[15] Mills 2006, 371.
[16] İstanbul Mimarisinin.
[17] Mills 2010, 31.
[18] Göktürk et al. 2010, 7.

dismissed.[19] Although compositions by the non-Muslim composers from the seventeenth century onwards constituted a well-integrated component of the standardized repertoire of Turkish classical music, the position and role of non-Muslim musicians in the world of Ottoman music was not, until recently, a distinct topic in the canon of twentieth-century Turkish music history. The history of non-Muslim musicians was preserved throughout the twentieth century mainly through the transcribed compositions that had been orally passed down, and secondarily through scattered biographical information concerning certain musicians. It was in the late 1980s that the history of non-Muslim musicians of Ottoman music started appearing as a distinct topic in Turkish music historiography and then in the recording and cultural events industries under the heading "minority" (azınlık) musicians.[20] This turn in Turkish music historiography coincided with the broader revisiting of Ottoman cultural heritage mentioned above, and it accounts for the reframing of the minority musical component of Istanbul and its new "placement" in the context of the "global" city narrative.

Interestingly, this turn provides an important paradox concerning the auditory experience: the devotees of the genre from the twentieth century onwards might not have been familiar with the historical details of the role and contribution of non-Muslim musicians in Ottoman music, yet they would have been well-accustomed to their compositions, which were always performed alongside those by Muslim composers. This also explains the "familiarity" that gradually overtook the "surprise" of the audience of the concert on the Armenian composers. The musical fabric (repertoire, performance style etc.) of this concert was drawn from the standard resources of twentieth-century Turkish classical music. In this respect, the soundscape of this concert was really about the relocation of a very "republican" sound to the space of the Armenian church, which had been first emptied of its original sound.

Modes of Remembrance: Investing in Historical Rupture

A central vehicle in this reorientation process has been the feeling of nostalgia, which has been the subject of much theorization in the fields of social sciences and humanities. As in most cases where nostalgia is studied as, broadly, "a distinctive […] way we have of relating our past to our present and future",[21] in the Turkish case, critics have put forth an array of interpretations, highlighting diversity and heterogeneity in utterances of nostalgia for Turkey's various types of "bygone days". For instance, in the longing for the various layers of the city's imperial heritage, particularly its Ottoman past, which in this context often appears as synonymous with the concepts of cosmopolitanism and religious tolerance, critics recognize an "inclusive Ottomanism" stemming from the politics of the dominant AKP.[22] Contrary to this, Özyürek, in her recent study entitled "Nostalgia for the Modern", highlights the nostalgia of the disillusioned Kemalists for the early republican days. This counter-nostalgia develops while political Islam gains visibility within Turkey's public

[19] Feldman 1990/1991, 100–101.
[20] Özalp 1986. For a general discussion on this issue, see Poulos forthcoming. For the Jewish minority in particularly, see Jackson, 2011 and O'Connell 2011.
[21] Davis 1977, 419.
[22] Keyder 2010, 27.

sphere and takes a form of the privatization of political state ideology.[23] Both cases confirm that the significance of nostalgia, regardless of its content, lies in its relationship with the present rather than the past.[24] It is the recognition of this heterogeneity that constitutes a prolific step forward towards a critical understanding of nostalgia, its openings and limitations, and consequently towards an effective historical interpretation.[25]

Alongside the prevailing critical approach that views nostalgia as a challenge to the certainties of Turkish modernity, particularly those related to nationhood,[26] recent studies underscore the link between the various forms of commodification of the past and neoliberal ideology.[27] In fact, this seems to be a meeting point for the various expressions of nostalgia, appropriated in such manners that fit diverse political agendas in the present. In this context, the marketed nostalgia for Istanbul's multicultural and cosmopolitan past becomes a tool in the hands of the state's Islamist managers that is fully compatible with the neoliberal discourses on "global cities". With regard to music, this tool, as Stokes observes, allowed them to hold together traditional and bourgeois sectors in a "fragile accommodation"; the locus of all that is the "re-cosmopolitanized" city.[28] The themed concert on the Armenian composers serves as an illustration of the commodification of the minorities' musical heritage in Istanbul. It manages, in a way, to accommodate a number of the above diverse political agendas and the aspirations of those involved in the rediscovery, promotion and consumption of Istanbul's multicultural past; all that, though, within a very familiar and secure soundscape.

The spatial rupture discussed above is followed by a historical rupture. The quest for the "Old Istanbul" emerges after a period of approximately forty years, during which time the minorities of Istanbul experienced a gradual extinction due to certain policies of Turkification on the part of the Turkish state.[29] Therefore, there is an interesting paradox in this shift towards a specific aspect of the history of the city, which is related to the precondition of this particular historical rupture. As Amy Mills puts it: "Greek and Jewish minorities are beloved, and their homes restored, only after they themselves have abandoned the city and no longer pose a challenge to the space of the nation. They are present in contemporary urban culture today, then, only through their very absence."[30]

In other words, the celebration of Istanbul's minority cultures is in fact of minor significance to the minorities themselves, as their physical presence in the city is limited, as is their position in social memory. Their place of residency is largely in forms of mediated memory, and this is precisely what constitutes their revisiting, after this social rupture, a production of a *site of memory*. It is a "celebration" founded precisely in that "push and pull" process between "moments of history torn away from movements of history, then returned", as described by Pierre Nora.[31] As such, this process occurs right at the time that "immense and intimate fund of memory disappears, surviving only as a

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[23] Özyürek 2006.
[24] Özyürek 2006, 31.
[25] Tannock 1995, 454.
[26] Öncü 2007, 260; Mills 2006, 371; Stokes 1996.
[27] Keyder 2010, 27; Özyürek 2010, 3, 7. For a broader analysis of the relations between nostalgia and commodification, see Appadurai 2005 [1996], 75–79.
[28] Stokes 2007, 8. The term "re-cosmopolitanization" is after Yang 2002.
[29] See Alexandris 1992; Zürcher 1998.
[30] Mills 2006, 388.
[31] Nora 1989, 12.

reconstituted object beneath the gaze of critical history".[32] In the case of music and musicians, immense and intimate memories of friendship, professional companionship and performance completely fade away, overtaken by archival memory, which in the case of music takes the form of recorded sound. The music of the minorities is now revisited as a "reconstituted object", through the various reissues of historical recordings, either in the form of CDs or on the Internet, which, as Stokes notes, allowed Turkish middle classes to rearticulate their Turkishness, which is imagined as "urbane, cosmopolitan, multi-cultural, tolerant of its minorities and (at last) on good terms with its neighbors".[33]

A prerequisite of this type of remembrance is segregation that links us back to the politics of belonging. The themed concert on the Armenian composers is a case where the musical past of a community is singled out from the wider historical context and is represented as an isolated, self-contained entity. This type of indexical remembrance of a community that is grounded solely by markers such as religion and ethnicity eliminates both intra-community and inter-community dynamics, which constitute an indispensable feature in understanding Ottoman social and cultural history. Pairing the diverse milieu of Ottoman Armenian composers with the Armenian Catholic church building is an example of this type of segregation. Put differently, a late nineteenth-century Armenian nightclub composer certainly had more in common with his contemporary professional colleagues from the Rum community than with an Armenian Church cantor, who was affiliated with the upper-class Ottoman Mevlevi intelligentsia of his time. In addition to this, the space that historically hosted the activities of the professional musicians in Istanbul's entertainment scene, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was not the church, but rather the tavern, which was also frequented by Muslim customers. However, exploring the soundscapes of the entertainment scene of Istanbul was obviously not part of the agenda of the Istanbul 2010 European Cultural Capital event.

Remembering the "Average" Musician

Complementary to the current trends of nostalgia for the music of the minorities of Istanbul, this part explores the occasions of "intimate", in Pierre Nora's opinion, remembrance of a non-Muslim musician from the Rum community of Istanbul. This type of remembrance is situated socially and historically at the time when the presence of the Rum population in Istanbul was not wholly established as a subject of social memory, or, more precisely, at the threshold of becoming a subject of social memory. Specifically, the following text examines narratives of the life story of a single Rum musician, namely the *kemençe* player Aleko Bacanos – brother of the aforementioned Yorgo – as these are documented in different Turkish texts following his death. These texts vary from canonizing biographical notes to commemorative articles written by his fellow musicians on the occasion of this death. A close reading of these narratives reveals further layers of nostalgia bound to the historical circumstances of the time that are added to the long genealogy of Turkish nostalgic responses in the twentieth century. The purpose of this analysis, apart from filling in gaps within the genealogy of Turkish nostalgia for the non-Muslim musicians of Istanbul, is to explore the thin line between intimate and recorded memory.

[32] Nora 1989, 11–12.
[33] Stokes 2007, 8.

Alexandros (Aleko) Bacanos was born in Istanbul, in 1888, into a Rum family of musicians.[34] His parents, Charalambos (Lambo) and Panagiota, were both born in Silivria (Silivri) and moved to Istanbul at some point in the third-quarter of the nineteenth century, settling in Beyoğlu. Alexandros' father Lambo was a *lavta* player and his uncle was the celebrated *kemençe* player Anastas.[35] Unlike his brother Yorgo who, as seen earlier holds a special position in the pantheon of Turkish classical music, Aleko remained in the background and made a name for himself mainly as a performer in the nightclubs (*gazino*s) of Istanbul; in this sense, he was an average professional musician.

For the musicologist and music encyclopaedist Yılmaz Öztuna,[36] Aleko Bacanos was a bad musician. In a short biographical note on the musician that was first published in 1960 in the legendary İstanbul *Ansiklopedisi* ("Encyclopaedia of Istanbul"), edited by Reşad Ekrem Koçu, and included later with modifications in his *Türk Musikisi Ansiklopedisi* ("Encyclopaedia of Turkish Music") he states the following: "His *kemençe* playing was not good; his sound was not bright and he made quite a lot of mistakes. However, he was reputable in the entertainment musical scene and he was among the most well paid musicians. It is said that when he was younger his playing was better."[37]

Instead, Öztuna does acknowledge the compositional skills of Aleko Bacanos, though he stresses the fact that these were limited to the genre of light popular songs (*şarkı*s).[38] Actually, in the modified version of this entry published later in the *Encyclopaedia of Turkish Music* – nowadays, a fairly standard reference source on Turkish music and musicians – the author stated explicitly that Bacanos's compositions were "artistically weak".[39] For the modernist musicologist Öztuna, the identification of Bacanos' musicality with the popular and entertaining domains of music is a subtle way of excluding him from his vision of Turkish classical music history[40]. The social and cultural connotations of the nightclub scene of early twentieth-century Istanbul seems to be incompatible with the aims and values of the classicisation process of Ottoman music that was initiated by pioneer reformers like Hüseyin Sadeddin Arel (1880–1955) and was pursued intellectually and institutionally by Öztuna. Notably, this attitude reveals the conservative aspect of the ideology of this particular strand of music intellectuals. Not surprisingly, as discussed above, the same incompatibility remains an issue for the current revisionism at play in the history of the non-Muslim musicians of Istanbul.

When tracing back the genealogy of Turkish biographical sources on Rum musicians, it is noticeable that the uneasiness of Öztuna towards the entertainment aspect of

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[34] All Turkish sources state Silivria (Silivri) as Aleko's birthplace. Rona (1970) and İnal (1958) date his birth to 1892 and Öztuna (1960) to 1888. However, in the census of the Rum community of the parish of Stavrodromi (Pera) in the first-quarter of the twentieth century which records the whole of Bacanos family, Aleko is registered as born on 1888 in Istanbul (Anthemion Θ2, 721). His place of birth is also confirmed in his autobiographical note that appeared in the Encyclopaedia of Istanbul in 1960. In the same source, Yorgo Bacanos' date of birth is 1898 rather than 1900, which is the standard date given by the Turkish sources.

[35] Özalp 2000, 400.

[36] For an analysis on the ideological background of Yılmaz Öztuna and his role in sustaining a type of Turkish modernist musicology that drew on the Ottoman musical heritage, see Stokes 1996.

[37] Öztuna 1960, 1782.

[38] Öztuna 1960, 1782.

[39] Öztuna 2006.

[40] An additional element regarding Aleko Bacanos' identity that can be relevant in this context is the widely shared view among Turkish musicians about him being of Gypsy origin. The fact that his family's origin was from Silivria can be an indication of this, yet this issue requires more detailed research. In particularly, with regard to what were the nuances of 'Christian Orthodox Gypsy' identity in this historical context.

Turkish music is not necessarily shared by the previous generation of biographers.[41] An essential difference between the modernist encyclopaedic writing of Öztuna to that of the compilers of biographies of Turkish musicians like Mustafa Rona (1900–1970) and İbnülemin Mahmut Kemal İnal (1870–1957) is that the latter, to a large extent, base their writings on the memoires of the musical world written by musicians like Aleko Bacanos. In particular, the late-Ottoman intellectual İbnülemin Mahmut Kemal's concludes his short biographical note on Aleko Bacanos by citing an incident of them meeting at one of the places where Bacanos was performing:

> […] One day, while sitting at the Çiftlik park with Nuri Bey – the son in law of Said Paşa who was one of the past prime ministers prior to Fethi and Sadrı – and two other people, Aleko Efendi came to us. He said that they would play and sing whatever we wished. I proposed some special songs from the preferences that my companions suggested to me. They played and sung beautifully.
>
> When we complained about those disrespectful customers who spoke and laughed loudly during the music – breaking the enthusiasm and offending the greatness of the performers, and annoying the rest of the audience –, a manner that was contrary to the rules of conduct, he replied: "Don't feel sorry. We play in order to please a couple of people. Their listening – with deep appreciation and pleasure – is enough for us.[42]

This extract is a significant document which attests to a number of issues related to the social and cultural transformations of the early twentieth century. Firstly, it records the memory of a non-segregated musical world where performance served as the meeting point for former high-ranking Turkish officials and minority musicians of popular music like Aleko Bacanos. Secondly, the reference to the complaint about the disrespectful attitude of certain customers in relation to the music and the musicians records the changing ethics and attitudes towards listening to music. The most noteworthy feature in İbnülemin Mahmut Kemal's text is, however, the fact that by citing his conversation with Bacanos he voices the musician, and consequently preserves his agency. In other words, in this recollection the non-Muslim musician is named, he converses with his Muslim audience and he exposes his very own views and expectations on his performance and his audience.

Fig. 2. Aleko Bacanos on the cover of the memorial issue *Türk Musikisi Dergisi*.

[41] On the genre of musical biography in Turkish classical music, see Stokes 1996.

[42] İnal 1958, 48. All translations from Turkish are mine. I would like to thank Sofia Prokou for her invaluable language comments and amendments.

The identification of Aleko Bacanos' life within the nightclub scene of Istanbul was sealed by his dramatic death on stage. Mustafa Rona, in his biographical note for Bacanos includes this historical detail of his death while performing at the Turkuvaz Gazino on 27 December 1950.[43] Bacanos' death was also commemorated in an issue of the musical magazine *Türk Musikisi Dergisi*, which had his picture on the cover (see Fig. 2). His fellow musicians Burhanettin Ökte and Osman Nihad, who contributed the two commemorative articles, described the absence of Aleko in equally dramatic terms. For them, his absence was irreplaceable both as a friend and an artist.[44] The mournful tone of Ökte's article entitled *Alekoyu kaybettik* ("We lost Aleko") is further amplified by the dominant reference to Aleko Bacanos' financial hardships that he was facing towards the end of his life and the implications of this for the fate of his wife and two daughters:

> The wreaths sent to the funeral filled up a whole truck. From what I gathered, they cost at least two thousand liras. However, what Aleko left behind was seventeen liras, a watch, and above all a wife with two daughters in need of their father's tenderness and support [...]. Reflexively, I cursed those who introduced in this country this wreath custom. If only the two thousand liras spent for this stack of leaves that will be stolen by the cemetery's crooks and sold back to the flower-sellers before midnight were given instead to Aleko's family, which at the moment has no other help than God's, it would soothe part of their sorrow.[45]

The sad end of Bacanos' career, described by Ökte, contrasts with Öztuna's entry that names him as "one of the well paid musicians." As Ökte writes, Aleko had fallen from a first class ensemble leader into an ordinary musician playing all day long, Sunday matinees included, in order to earn very little. In their discussions in the corridors of the radio station right before his death, Alekos' sole hope was to become a member of the permanent staff of the national radio, something that as Ökte notes, he "unfortunately did not live to see" (see Fig. 3).[46]

Fig. 3. Aleko Bacanos' family gravestone.[47]

[43] Rona 1970, 361.
[44] Ökte 1950, 6, 20; Nihad 1950, 6.
[45] Ökte 1950, 6
[46] Ökte 1950, 6.
[47] Photograph supplied courtesy of Stelyos Berberis.

For *neyzen* Burhanettin Ökte, Bacanos' death was also an occasion for lamenting the sad ending of Istanbul's long tradition of non-Muslim musicians. In this context, Bacanos is registered in the long genealogy of Ottoman non-Muslim musicians that goes back to the celebrated Zaharya in the eighteenth century: "Aleko was Zaharya's continuing companion. At the moment, there is only a Yorgo left. On his back, Paraşko's head comes into sight, that's all. On the path crossed by Vasilis, Sotiris, Tatyos' and Nikoğos' there is only one Yorgo and one Paraşko [...]."[48]

Burhanettin Ökte's expression of nostalgia for the gradual fading of the non-Muslim musicians of Istanbul resembles, one can argue, the current nostalgic trends for Ottoman cosmopolitanism. However, for Burhanettin Ökte, who was born in 1904 and had experienced the social and cultural effects of the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic, this cosmopolitanism was partly based on recorded memory and largely on intimate memory. It is nostalgia for a cosmopolitanism coined by Robbins as "actually existing cosmopolitanism", socially and locally situated in the context of the aforementioned political transition.[49] What accompanied this particular loss was highly relevant to Burhanettin Ökte's own life story. Being a *ney* player, Burhanettin Ökte had experienced the closing down of the Mevlevi *tekke*s in 1925[50] and, as a radio musician, the ban on Turkish music in 1934–1936. These two illustrative reforms are indicative of the direct consequences of the wider modernization programme of the newly established Republic on music and musicians. This programme led to the gradual marginalization of Turkish classical music. In this respect, Ökte's nostalgia conveys the anxiety towards this marginalization. Two years later, through a very militant editorial in the same magazine, Ökte accused the policy of the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*) for being responsible for the absence of any type of formal education in Turkish Classical music within the state music institutions since the establishment of the Turkish Republic.[51]

The above narratives of the life story of Aleko Bacanos have an important textual companion; an autobiographical note by Aleko Bacanos written in 1947, three years before his death. This note was produced on demand by the *Istanbul Encyclopaedia* and it is interesting that it was included in the encyclopaedia's entry on Aleko Bacanos that was originally authored by Yılmaz Öztuna. The importance of this note lies in its complimentary role to Ökte's narrative, for it adds to it the voice of the subject of nostalgia; that of the minority musician.

Aleko Bacanos starts his autographical note by narrating the genealogy of his family, going back to his grandfather who was a clarinet player, and his initiation into the *kemençe* in his early childhood by his uncle Anastas. Through that, he places himself within the lineage of the celebrated Rum nightclub musicians of Istanbul. This is followed by his early entrance into the music business, playing next to celebrated performers of the rank of his father, namely the clarinet player İbrâhîm Efendi (d. 1925), the singer *hânende* Karabaş, and the Armenian *lavta* player Ovrik Kazasyan (1872–1936). This is followed by a detailed reference to his acquaintance with the celebrated musician Tanburi Cemil Bey (1871–1916):[52]

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[48] Ökte 1950, 6.
[49] Robbins 1998, 2–3.
[50] Zürcher 2007, 173.
[51] Ökte 1952, 1.
[52] For biographical notes on Ovrik Kazasyan and *klarnetçi* İbrâhîm Efendi, see Öztuna 2006.

> At the age of twelve-thirteen, I got a part as an amateur in the most famous ensembles of which my father was a member and which, at that time, had made it into the palaces. At that point, I started receiving offers from other competent ensembles. Within a short time, these offers increased so much that I was taken to the ensemble of the clarinet player İbrahim, the singer Karabaş and the *lavta* player Overik which at that time was as good as my father's band. So, in this way, I was thrown into the music business at a very young age. Following that, the celebrated artist Tanburî Cemil Bey came frequently to listen to us, and he continually proposed to me that we might play together. It is a pity that at that time we were stuck to those who first grabbed us. Only one night, we got together at Şehzade Bürhaneddin Efendi's. The great Cemil Bey said: "There you are son, that's the way one can get you". On seeing him, I got so excited that I nearly got out of control. After the music, he left his *tanbur* aside and hugged me with a pale face: "Congratulations, to this day I have not enjoyed playing so much, it is as if we had done lessons together for a long time".[53]

As seen in the case of İbnülemin Mahmut Kemal's biographical note, this extract confirms the social and cultural pluralism of the early twentieth-century musical scene in Istanbul. Ensembles like that cited above constituted inter-community contexts of music making. Furthermore, Aleko Bacanos acquaintance with Tanburi Cemil Bey at the house of Şehzade Bürhaneddin Efendi illustrates the social overlap between the domains of music entertainment and the private musical gatherings of the Muslim elite. The picture conveyed here is certainly far away from the segregated musical worlds of non-Muslim communities that are presented in current nostalgic responses.

Finally, Bacanos rounds up his life story by giving the names of the places he worked: "In that way, our life passed in Beyoğlu's historical places like Kafe Ruayal, Eftalopos, Eldorado and Türk Yuvası. Masters like Kemanî Memduh and Bülbülî Salih introduced me and let me lead ensembles that even experienced musicians could not get into."[54]

Following Benjamin Fortna's critical remarks on late Ottoman autobiographies,[55] it is obvious that Bacanos in constructing his narrative was trying to make a consistent pattern of his life on the basis of a selective recapturing of his own past. His narrative is based on certain high points in his life, like his family's celebrated musical genealogy, the praise he received from Tanburi Cemil Bey, and the heyday of his professional career at the various historical nightclubs of Istanbul. What was certainly not selected on this occasion is the financial hardship and anxieties he faced after the decline of his professional career; this bit of his life story was to be filled-in three years later by his friend Burhanettin Ökte in his commemorative note. Instead, Bacanos prefers to close his note in a more modest manner: "My everyday life passes quietly, and I thank God for keeping up myself in its current state".[56] As Fortna notes, autobiographers who have experienced the political, social and cultural effects of the transformation from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic face a challenge in keeping the aforementioned consistency in their narratives when trying to accommodate the turbulent events of this traverse. In Aleko Bacanos' narrative, there seems to be a gap somewhere around the time of the establishment of the Turkish Republic, puzzling the reader as to the connection between the heyday

[53] Bacanos in Öztuna 1960, 1782–1783.
[54] Bacanos in Öztuna 1960, 1783.
[55] Fortna 2001, 7.
[56] Bacanos in Öztuna 1960, 1783.

of his career and his later "quiet days". The sole hint concerning this rupture, it can be argued, is his selective reference towards the end of his note to the heyday of his career: "The brightest days in my artistic life were at the Kadıköy Yoğurtçu fields and in all the aforementioned nightclubs (Kafe Ruayal, Eftalopos, Eldorado, and Türk Yuvası);"[57] a nostalgic turn on his own life's bygone days.

Although the two texts together construct a larger picture of Istanbul's bygone musical days by complimenting each other, they both fail to acknowledge the causes of the fading-out of the minority musical culture of Istanbul. The nostalgic overtones in both texts act as a compensation for the absence of any traits of the massive political and cultural transformations that both Aleko Bacanos and Burhanettin Ökte experienced in their lives. Bacanos, like most of the musicians that Ökte lists in his genealogy, were professionals in the nightclub scene of Istanbul, traditionally run by non-Muslim businessmen. Since the early years of the Turkish Republic as part of the Turkification policies, these businesses had been much affected by a number of state policies, like the law concerning the alcohol monopoly in 1926.[58] Following this law in 1942–1943, the implementation of the Wealth Tax (*Varlık Vergisi*) was also a further factor in the gradual extinction of the non-Muslim minorities of Istanbul.[59]

Through the examination of the above "intimate" texts it becomes clear that the history of the non-Muslim musical heritage of Istanbul is far more complicated than the manner in which it is perceived and represented in the current commemorative and celebratory events. This complexity becomes apparent only when the "past" is examined in relation to its actual actors and their interrelated discourses. The nostalgia expressed both in the biographical and autobiographical texts are complimentary in that it is a response to the dramatic social and cultural transformations that Turkey went through in the first-half of the twentieth century. Unlike the current trends of nostalgia for the depersonalized and indifferent "minority", whether Greek or Armenian, this nostalgia is situated within a web of diverse emotions defined by companionship, grief, anxiety and hope, which are based on actual lived experience; a nostalgia that embodies human agency. Additionally, these texts largely record a nostalgic response to the milieu of exponents of Ottoman music in the early Republican era towards their marginalization, exercised by the Turkish modernizing programme. In this respect, rather than a nostalgic response based on entrepreneurial motivations, this one is a nostalgia forced by the anxiety of the uncertainty of one who is seeing his life turning from a real experience to a *lieu de mémoire*.

Conclusion

The choice of venue of the concert on the part of the Armenian composers was indeed a powerful act of reorientation of the city; by adding to the contemporary concert-going map, the Armenian Catholic Church of Surp Ohan Vosgeperan in Beyoğlu foregrounded a very important feature of Istanbul's historical heritage. This reorientation, however, restores only partly the historical soundscape of a non-Muslim community of Istanbul. In this musical remapping of Beyoğlu there is a significant historical part missing. This is the Beyoğlu documented in the autobiographical narrative of Aleko Bacanos with which

[57] Bacanos in Öztuna 1960, 1783.
[58] Alexandris 1992, 108, 263; Aktar 2000; 2012.
[59] Aktar 2000; *id.* 2012.

the author identified his life and musical career. Aleko Bacanos' map of Beyoğlu is constructed by the narration of the various nightclubs that hosted both the heyday of his career and the most modest days towards the end of his life. This map is also shared by a number of musicians who formed Istanbul's entertainment scene and who were of different faiths, social strata and varying degrees of fame. However, this point is not intended to emphasize a naïve conception of an Ottoman cosmopolitanism based on the "melting pot" rhetoric.[60] On the contrary, it aims to contribute to the critical inquiry into the politics of exclusion following the current nostalgic trends. In this respect, the analyses followed in this article adhere, to a large extent, to the argument, stressed by Amy Mills, that considers cosmopolitanism and nationalism as interrelated ideals, rather than oppositional.[61]

The point of intersection of the nostalgia expressed in the current commemorative acts of the non-Muslim musical heritage of Istanbul and in the biographical, and the autobiographical texts of the mid-twentieth century is that in both cases the story is half-told. It is only through the combination of the various nostalgic narratives that one can get the whole picture of what has been actually lost, and why this loss matters. Nonetheless, as in the case of the parallel reading of Aleko Bacanos' and Burhanettin Ökte's texts, the reasons behind loss are not necessarily explicitly revealed. While the puzzle of nostalgia will continue to be filled-in, the causes of loss will carry on being the subject of further interpretations.

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[60] For a critical assessment of the notion of Ottoman cosmopolitanism in the context of revisiting Istanbul's urban history, see Eldem 1993.
[61] Mills 2010, 31–32.

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