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ARTICLE

Musical convergence and divergence in occupied İstanbul, 1918–1923

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Abstract

The Allied occupation of İstanbul after World War I had a transformative impact on the city's musical entertainment sector. The arrival of large numbers of military personnel created additional demand for music halls, cabarets, *cafe-chantants*, and concert venues. Servicemen's musical preferences were catered for by resident İstanbulites and others who found refuge in the city, creating opportunities for musicians and entertainment entrepreneurs to benefit from new and existing patrons. This buoyant market was further harnessed for charitable causes directed at new categories of people in need. The distinct political climate introduced with occupation also made its mark on musical performance, with nationalist and socialist groups using concerts to promote messages of salvation. The end of the occupation led to the dispersal of these musicians to new locations, such as the new Republican capital of Ankara, which attracted talents intent on staying in Turkey, and Athens and Thessaloniki, which received Greek Orthodox musicians fleeing the new Turkish nationalist regime, and still further afield. Using British, French, and Ottoman government documents, memoirs, and newspapers, the article investigates this process of musical convergence and divergence and analyses the local and global impact of the aural encounters of this overlooked period in İstanbul's cultural history.

Keywords: İstanbul; music; occupation; entertainment; cultural history

Introduction

The occupation of İstanbul, in the words of the 1922 guidebook *Constantinople Cameos*, led to an "eruption of theatres, music halls, cabarets and similar institutions," as the entertainment sector under the patronage of Allied military personnel recovered from war-time deprivations (Brigg and Hessenstein 1922, 19). Any investigation of the diaries and letters of foreign military servicemen or the memoirs of performers, patrons, and concertgoers will soon uncover commentaries on this effervescence (Kamertan 2017, 202). The impact of occupation on the entertainment sector of İstanbul was more complex than that of a simple economic stimulus, however. The convergence of individuals and overlapping of authorities that came with the multinational French–British–Italian occupation produced a distinct period in the cultural history of the city. The arts produced in this context were characterized by the confluence of diverse influences and conflicts on social and political axes that

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reached their apogee in 1918–1923. This article will explore how the encounters of newly arrived and established musicians and concertgoers and the political–economic situation in the city and the wider Ottoman Empire shaped musical life in occupied İstanbul.

Cultural life has been largely ignored in the existing literature on the occupation, which focuses on Allied military and political interventions and national resistance (Bozkurt 2014; Criss 1999). As this article will argue, the arts were deeply affected by both the Allies' imperialist presence in İstanbul and inflected by the politics of the Turkish resistance movement and the national aspirations of the Greek and Armenian communities. At the same time, archival sources reveal significant evidence of at times surprising collaborations that regularly crossed the boundaries of these politically defined camps. The neglect of these trans-communal and transnational interactions from the last years of the Empire has been in part deliberate, a function of the national historical models that dominate writing on cultural history in Turkey, Greece, and Armenia (Tongo 2015, 115). It further reflects the tone of memoirs by musicians, actors, and artists who, like a range of figures who remained in İstanbul rather than crossing to Anatolia to join the Turkish national movement, emphasized the harm and hardship endured under occupation while ignoring or minimizing often significant outputs in collaboration with artists and patrons cast as internal and external enemies (Ertuğrul 1989, 268). Historians have repeated such claims downplaying cultural activity under occupation, for example arguing that "beyond Western diplomats, schools, Levantines and minorities the experience, culture and education of Western music was in a dim situation" on account of the identification of Western-style music with the imperialist powers in the minds of the Turkish Muslim population (Uçan 2022, 35).

This article reconsiders these appraisals by situating such secondary sources alongside diverse primary documents gathered from British, French, and Ottoman archives and articles and reviews on music in the English, French, and Turkish press. This multi-archival, multi-lingual approach is necessary to capture the complexity of connections that made up occupied İstanbul's musical scene. This is especially important in light of the dispersal of artists and patrons away from İstanbul and the political and cultural transformation undergone during the first decades of the Republic of Turkey. The research presented here reveals the post-armistice period to be one of dynamism across a range of musical genres which saw the participation of all resident and transient communities in the city, despite their varying responses to the politics of occupation.

The article further aims to reinstate an understudied phase in the history of music in Turkey and the Empire. Like much of cultural history, the historiography of music has been dominated by the Westernization thesis, whereby the incremental growth of Western influence from the Tanzimat era to the one-party period of the Republic led to the adoption of new forms of music and new standards for the composition and performance of existing styles (Aksoy 1985, 1212). Parallel reforms to Greek (Erol 2015, 8) and Armenian (Yıldız 2019, 222) church and folk music generated a comparable debate over questions of authenticity and modernization across İstanbul's major linguistic communities. Given the attention placed on the abstract West in these transformations, it is logical to ask what impact the presence of British–French–Italian occupying forces, representing the apogee of direct Western influence in the Ottoman realms, had on

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musical output and preferences. That this obvious question has remained unasked is largely due to the appraisal of the birth of the Republic in 1923 as a caesura (Salgam 2011, 50) and academic focus on subsequent reforms and debates over traditional musical styles (O'Connell 2013, 53–58).

This article is not concerned with tracing changes to musical style, but rather with the influences on and impact of musical performances and their reception in the complex cultural, political, and economic context of occupied İstanbul. It argues that musical performance was influenced and expanded by the presence of Allied forces in the city as patrons, consumers, and producers of music, while these actors have so far been entirely neglected in the musical history of the period. More broadly, I show how the political contest unleashed by their victorious entry into the city in November 1918, the subsequent return and arrival of musical migrants, and continuing post-war economic hardships made musical performance a source of sustenance and a mobilizing tool for the diverse political constituencies in the city.

It was the convergence of these different constituencies in İstanbul after the armistice that produced this distinct period in the city's musical history. While musical venues, audiences, and patrons were to a degree shared between the multiplying musical scenes encountered in the city, this notion of convergence is not intended to imply the harmonization of interests or tastes between audiences and groups of performers. It will be seen that the political and economic conflicts produced by occupation led to exclusionary and at times violent musical encounters, and resulted in a final divergence, as represented in the dispersal of these same individuals and groups in anticipation of and following the evacuation of Allied forces.

In order to examine these patterns of convergence and divergence, the article will first trace how previous migrations and internal developments had established the dynamic musical scene that Allied forces and other arrivals encountered post-armistice. It then assesses the impact of new musical migrations, including the arrival of touring musicians from Britain, France, and Italy, refugees from the Russian Empire, and the return of Ottoman musicians trained abroad. The article then examines the role of musical entertainments in the mitigation of economic and social hardships resulting from war and occupation. Lastly, it shows how the politics of the occupied city and the developing Turkish War of Independence in Anatolia were reflected in musical performances, dynamics which culminated in the departure of numerous musicians and patrons along with the occupying forces in 1922–1923.

Multiplying musical spaces

The city that Allied soldiers encountered was already experiencing a pronounced growth of musical institutions and groups. The earliest of these had been centered on the palace, which remained an important source of patronage throughout the post-armistice period. The Musika-yi Hümayun (Imperial Palace Orchestra) had been established during the reign of Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839), with the later aid of Italian music teacher Gaetano Donizetti, as part of a state and elite effort to import European musical styles and methods of instruction (Mestyan 2011, 266–267). State patronage was supplemented by private initiatives, such as the Musiki-i Osmani Cemiyeti (Ottoman Music Society), formed early in the Second Constitutional Period, and the Darüttalim-i Musiki (House of Musical Instruction), in 1912. The outbreak of war

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proved extremely disruptive to the lives of Ottoman musicians, including both those called to the front and those who fell victim to accompanying political persecutions, most notably the Armenian musician and ethnomusicologist Gomidas, who never recovered from his harrowing deportation to Anatolia (Kuyumjian 2001, 128). Despite the death and trauma inflicted on individuals and the demand placed on resources, the war also saw the creation of new musical ventures, such as the reciprocal tours of German, Austrian, Bulgarian, and Ottoman musicians, and institutions, like the Bahriye Musiki Mektebi (Naval Music School) and the Darülelhan (House of Melodies) conservatory (Ayangil 2018, 19). These institutions, their musicians, and benefactors remained active throughout the post-armistice period, supplemented by new initiatives, often drawing on individuals who had trained or taught at the aforementioned schools.

The armistice period saw the popularity of operetta reach new heights among the İstanbul public. Musahipzade Celal and Kaptanzade Ali Rıza formed the İstanbul Operet Heyeti (İstanbul Operetta Society) in 1919, complementing the earlier Milli Osmanlı Operet Kumpanyası (National Ottoman Operetta Company), established in 1910 (Papazyan 1975). Numerous works by Celal were debuted to the İstanbul public in the period, including *Macun Hokkası* (1919), *Yedekçi* (1920), *Lale Devri* (1921), *Kaşıkçılar* (1921), *Atlı Ases* (1921), and *Demirbaş Şarl* (1922) (Şener 1963, 15). Celal's most celebrated work, *İstanbul Efendisi*, composed by Leon Hancıyan and first performed in 1917, was revived at the Apollon Theater in Kadıköy in September 1919 with the support of musicians from the Darültalim-i Musiki and Musiki-i Osmani Heyeti (*İkdam* 18 September 1920). The armistice years were also a period of significant output from one of Celal's collaborators, Muhlis Sabahattin, whose works *Zühre*, *Kelebek*, *Zabıt*, *Çaresaz*, and *Ayşe* were performed in 1922 alone (Taranç 1988, 14). These Turkish operettas were complemented by the arrival of foreign language troupes, such as the Italian Operetta Company (*Orient News* 3 March 1922), and individual operetta stars, such as Valentina Piontoskaya (*Orient News* 20 July 1921).

The armistice saw significant developments in the field of Eastern and folk music. Among the most important was the foundation of the Şark Musiki Cemiyeti (Eastern Music Society) in 1920 in Kadıköy under the patronage of Süreyya (İlmen) Paşa (Karabey 1953, 356). The intense, regular collaborations between members of this new group such as Leon Hancıyan, and those of earlier state institutions across a variety of venues are documented in the memoirs of another Şark Musiki Cemiyeti member, Lemi Atlı (1947, 101–107). The group made frequent appearances following a founding concert honoring the deceased musician Tanburi Cemil Bey at the Moda Apollon Theater on November 19, 1920. A second concert was held at the same location on November 24, led by Ali Refat (Çağatay) of the Darülelhan, who "had brought a major revolution to our national music" (*İkdam* 16 December 1920). The group again performed over the spring of 1922, concluding with a concert at the Kadıköy Kuş Dili Theater (*İkdam* 18 April 1922). Ata (Öztan)'s Anadolu Musiki Cemiyeti (Anatolian Music Society, later known as the Darülfeyz-i Musiki Cemiyeti/House of Musical Abundance Society) also performed what was announced as their first concert in June 1922 at Kuş Dili Theater (*İkdam* 8 June 1922). These activities represented a high point in *alaturka* music, with many of these groupings disappearing or losing prominence under the Western-facing musical culture promoted in the single-party era (Ayas 2013, 98–103).

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Musicians on the march

Newly arriving Allied troops showed little interest in developments in *alaturka* music, whose growth in the period was the product of Allied disinterest rather than benevolence, much as they remained unaware of the dynamism of Ottoman cultural, social, and political life more generally (MacArthur-Seal 2021). The British occupation-era newspaper *Orient News* acknowledged that "Turks have always been great lovers of music" but cautioned readers that "oriental music" was rarely moving for European ears (*Orient News* 10 December 1919). The idea of the unintelligibility of *alaturka* music in Europe was explored at length by Rauf Yetka, who gave multiple reasons for "why a European who travels to the Orient finds that Oriental music very strange and completely incomprehensible" (Yetka 1922, 2967). While such engrained preferences prevented Allied troops from having any intentional impact on local musical styles, they assumed a notable presence in Western genres as both performers and patrons, roles that the German military had performed prior to the armistice (O'Connell 2018, 38–56). Allied troops in İstanbul continued the wartime entertainment practices that had developed in the Egypt–Palestine and Macedonian theaters (Murphy 2018, 350), from which many of the troops composing the British and French contingents in İstanbul were drawn.

The Allies' direct contribution to the city's musical scene was both formal and informal, comprising official concerts by regimental bands and off-duty performances by groups and individuals. Among examples of the former are the First Battalion Gordon Highlanders' performance at the British Officers Rest House (*Orient News* 11 December 1920), established in the requisitioned Teutonia Club, which had played host to German musical evenings prior to and during the war (Akyoldaş 2022, 210–214), the Royal Scots Fusiliers' moonlight concert at Robert College (*Orient News* 28 August 1920), and the Loyal Lancashire Regiment's charitable concert to raise money for a Boy Scouts organization at Taksim Square gardens (*Stamboul* 30 March 1922). Talented individual musicians were also found among the ranks. Private Anthony Collins' concert in the hall of the Union Française led those present to form "a high opinion of this artist's gifts and predict a great future for him as a violinist–composer" (*Orient News* 24 June 1919). Their predictions were correct, and Collins later studied under Gustav Holst at the Royal Academy of Music before going on to have a career as a successful composer of film scores. The military presence also contributed to church music in the city, with a male choir under Private W. Hyde regularly attracting large congregations at the Church of St Mary in Pera, where they performed hymns in English and Latin (*Orient News* 20 October 1920).

Rather than classical or church music, however, it was comic songs that seem to have been most popular with military performers and audiences at exclusive army and navy venues. "The Dots and Dashes" British army concert party provided a "grand variety entertainment" at the Lesser Riding School, a venue inside the requisitioned Harbiye Military Academy frequently put to use for the purposes of entertainment (*Orient News* 18 November 1920). Among similar events was a "smoking concert" at the 28th Division Signal Company recreation rooms at Moda, which included the songs "Billet, Johnny, Please" and "Kit Inspection" (*Orient News* 6 November 1920). While the titles of such songs indicate their intended audience, other military performers were able to reach a wider public. Among the most popular was Corporal Frederick Miller,

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who became famous for his renditions of the song “K-K-Katie,” which a writer in the *Orient News* had heard “hummed by a Turk” leading him to ask, “Was ever an English comic song sung before by hundreds of foreigners who probably know nothing else in English, in the way that Greeks, Armenians, and the medley of nationalities that one finds here, are now singing this song?” (*Orient News* 23 September 1919). Miller collaborated with civilian entertainers in the city, performing for the audience in the interval of a performance by Spiros Trichas, one of the most popular Greek comedians of the era, and the Afentaki operetta troupe at the Amphithéâtre des Petits Champs. The largely Greek-speaking audience, perplexed at first, apparently soon warmed to his comic songs and pantomime (*Orient News* 24 June 1919). Comic performances and lewd songs were indeed a developing, if at times controversial, element of the Ottoman entertainment world (Blackthorne-O’Barr 2021, 14), meaning that artists like Miller could find popularity despite variances with English music-hall style.

The more novel contribution of the Allies, albeit unwitting, to the styles of musical performance available in the city was jazz. Groups formed by sailors on US navy ships, such as the USS St Louis, performed what were likely the first jazz musical evenings in the city in the years 1919–1921 (Woodall 2022, 265). Such performances pre-date the claims put forward in Turkish literature on the history of jazz, in which chronologies commensurate with the birthdate of the Republic have served to obscure the genre’s earlier, occupation-era origins (Uyar and Karahasanoğlu 2016, 129–131). Military authorities did not necessarily appreciate the music that men under their commands had ushered in to the city, however, and the interallied police banned late-night performances of the Maxim Club’s orchestra following a petition against the “so called jazz band, which has made it a point of honor to justify its reputation of being the noisiest in town” (Michotte de Walle et al. to French High Commissioner 31 July 1922). Official responses to the musical engagements of Allied personnel, like their broader social and cultural activities in the city, spanned an axis from patronage, to approval, disapproval, and even suppression.

New acts and returning artists

The arrival of musicians in the ranks of the Allied militaries meant the displacement of others. Under the terms of the armistice, German and Austrian civilians were compelled to leave the Empire with their departing military contingents, depriving the city of an important source of musical influence and patronage that had been particularly pronounced over the war years (Stein 2019, 433–434). There were occasional exemptions. Paul Lange, who since his arrival in İstanbul in the late nineteenth century had acted as an instructor for naval and army bands, and teacher at Robert College and later the Darülbedayi, was spared deportation (Baydar 2010, 146–152; O’Connell 2018, 40–46). Despite the severing of relations, Germany’s musical influence lived on thanks to a generation of students trained prior to the rupture of 1918 who were able to adapt to the new circumstances posed by Allied occupation. German music evenings were organized by the Bach Musical Gymnasium under the direction of Diran Kurdjian of the Dresden Royal Conservatoire (*Orient News* 1 July 1920). Berlin-trained Epaminodos Floros (1945) gave small performances at the Union Française (Grand Concert 1919) and went on to direct the Constantinople Philharmonic Orchestra for the 1920–1921 season, including performances of

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compositions by both foreign and local composers such as Hungarian pianist Gezevon Hegyei and Darülelhan instructor Edgar Manas (*Orient News* 1 December 1920), and the 1921–1922 season at the Variety Theater (*Proti Megali Synavlia tis Periodou 1920–1921* n.d.).

For musicians trained in France and Italy, by contrast, the armistice (re)opened the possibilities of performance in İstanbul. Armenak Shahmuradyan, a pupil of Gomidas who later trained in Paris, returned after many years to perform in June 1922 to the particular excitement of the Armenian community (*Stamboul* 21 June 1922). Cemal Reşit (Rey) a young pianist who was in training at the Paris and Geneva conservatories through the war years, also returned to the city of his birth and performed at the Union Française in the company of Osman Zeki (Üngör) in June 1922 (*Stamboul* 22 June 1922). Another concert at the same venue was held by the Turkish graduates of French universities and colleges (*İkdam* 13 July 1921).

Besides these indigenous returnees, touring musicians from Allied nations were attracted to the city by a ready audience of service personnel and civilians. From France, Max Trébor, "the great star" (*Stamboul* 21 January 1921), arrived with his Folies-Bergères troupe and performed at the Alhambra, Tepebaşı Gardens, New Theater, and other locations over the winter of 1921–1922, combining acts both reminiscent of home, like "*Paris en folie*," and evocative of the East, such as "*Voyage en orient*" and "*L'Amour au harem*" (*Stamboul* 13 December 1921). Romanian Nicolae Buica arrived in 1920, performing with quintets and small orchestras regularly at the Garden Bar (*Stamboul* 7 October 1920), Pera Palace Hotel (*Stamboul* 11 November 1921), and Tokatli's restaurant (*Orient News* 14 October 1921), where he was advertised as head of the Petit Champs Theater Orchestra. In 1922, the scale of his ambitions seems to have grown, directing several well-received concerts of a large Symphonic Orchestra at the New Theater (*Orient News* 10 March 1922). George Georgescu's Bucharest Philharmonic Orchestra visited the city in 1922, attracting the custom of diplomatic and military representatives of the Allies and notable citizenry (*Stamboul* 24 April 1922). Karl Berger also arrived in the city in 1920, where he was introduced as a guest of Prince Abdülmecid at a performance at the Galatasaray high school (*İkdam* 22 July 1921). While the stays of most European musicians arriving during the armistice era were as brief as the occupation itself, Berger proved an exception, staying for over two decades, during which he married his student, the artist Aliye Berger, until his death on Büyükada island (*Adalar Postası* 25 April 2018).

The Russian wave

Of the new musical arrivals in occupied İstanbul, by far the most numerous were those fleeing the former Russian Empire in the aftermath of the 1917 revolution and ongoing civil war. Thanks to the work of Jak Deleon and others, the names of many of these musicians and aspects of their backgrounds and activities in İstanbul are known, though the details of their experiences and interactions with the other component parts of the occupied city's cultural life, gleaned here from the many Russian memoirs of the period, have often been lacking (Deleon 1996, 59–65; Uturgauri 2015, 193–199). The arrival of these musicians was to have a particular marked effect on two musical genres in the city: classical and cabaret. From advertisements and reviews in the city's press, it is clear that a significant proportion of the performances across these genres

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drew on Russian musicians, who performed either alone or in collaboration with other newcomers or established artists.

Among the most prominent classical musicians to reach the city was Thomas de Hartmann, who arrived from Tbilisi following his spiritualist teacher, George Gurdjieff, for whom he performed music on board the ship that bore them from Batum to İstanbul in June 1920 (de Hartmann and de Hartmann 1992, 150). Both men showed an interest in Ottoman mystical music, attending Mevlevi gatherings that would influence their later compositions in Paris (Barber 1986; Petsche 2012, 278). Though Gurdjieff (1963, 283) claimed that the İstanbul public "assembled in large numbers" and "showed a great interest" in de Hartmann's musical accompaniments to his spiritual choreographies, he was undoubtedly better known for his more conventional contributions to classical music as head of the Russian Symphony Orchestra (*Orient News* 28 November 1920). The orchestra gave weekly garden performances at the YMCA over the summer of 1921 (*Stamboul* 8 June 1921) and a series of grand concerts over the winter season at the New Theater (*Stamboul* 10 November 1921). At its height, the orchestra drew on the talents of some sixty musicians (*Stamboul* 18 November 1920), and aimed at developing "a permanent Philharmonic Orchestra for Constantinople" (*Orient News* 1 October 1920), receiving the praise that "[i]t could at times merit comparison with the famous orchestras of western capitals" (*Stamboul* 10 November 1920).

Many more classical musicians reached the city among the waves of refugees from the former southern territories of the Russian Empire. Sergei Pissanko de Romanovsky, "Russian composer–poet of mystical music" (*Stamboul* 29 March 1920), also gained the ear of the Allied High Commissioners, performing at the Pera Palace Hotel under the patronage of Helen Beverley Moore Bristol, wife of American High Commissioner Mark Bristol, among others (*Stamboul* 10 March 1922). Piatro Borisov, a native of Crimea and composer graduated from the St Petersburg Conservatory (Vodarsky-Shiraeff 1940, 101), performed at the Union Française (*Stamboul* 3 December 1919), New Theater (*Orient News* 20 September 1919), and other venues, earning praise as one of the few artists "worth hearing" in the city (*Orient News* 14 October 1919). Sergei Bortkiewicz, who had been forced to leave Berlin as a Russian national during World War I, was displaced again from Novororossisk in November 1919 and reestablished his career in İstanbul. He counted the daughters of Osman Zeki Bey, the Belgian ambassador, and High Commissioner Rumbold among his pupils (Kalkman 2015). These musicians collaborated with earlier generations of immigrants. Pianist Gezevon Hegyei, for example, who had come to İstanbul on the invitation of Abdülhamid II in the 1890s (Baydar 2010, 100–101), formed a trio with newly arrived Yasha Bunchuk and Arkady Dubensky in a Grand Russian Christmas Concert on December 24, 1920 (*Orient News* 23 December 1920).

However, the musicians who would gain the greatest fame were popular in style, being more attuned to the musical preferences of Allied troops in the city. Foremost was opera and folk music singer Isa Kremer, who had trained in Milan prior to the war before returning to Odessa. During her time in İstanbul she made a series of recordings for the Orfeon record label (*Orient News* 17 April 1921) and became a regular singer of light songs in French, Russian, Yiddish, and Italian at cabarets like the Printania music hall (*Stamboul* 23 April 1921) and Petit Champs Winter Garden (*Orient News* 13 February 1920). Of particular interest to British audiences were her

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renditions of English musical theater songs, like the aforementioned "K-K-Katie" and numbers borrowed from the London hit "Chu-chin-chow," which she sang together with other Russian artists as part of the production *The Geisha* at the Alhambra Theater (*Orient News* 15 December 1920). Another major hit was Seversky's operetta *Scenes of Gypsy Life*, in which Kremer performed "with great passion and perfection" at Stella (*Orient News* 18 September 1920) and the Union Française (*Stamboul* 2 October 1920). In the words of the *Orient News*, there was "no artist better deserving of the Constantinople public than Mme Isa Kremer" (*Orient News* 28 July 1920). Like for many other musical migrants, occupied İstanbul proved an important transitional period, in which Kremer established a reputation as a singer of folk music for an international audience that would carry her to global success (Palomino 2020, 51). The transient nature of the occupation and the multicultural audiences and performers it produced served to prepare such artists for international career paths.

Patronage and entrepreneurship

The deployment of Allied officers and soldiers provided musicians with a large base of customers and patrons that sustained the expansion of the entertainment sector. Such growth was witnessed in the opening of a number of new music venues by recent migrants to the city, whose success depended in large part on the custom of Allied service personnel and other recent arrivals to İstanbul. The example of Frederick Bruce Thomas, the Mississippi-born Moscow resident who arrived in İstanbul in April 1919, is the most well known of such successes (Alexandrov 2013, 298). Thomas's first venture in the city, the Anglo-American Garden Villa, was opened with Bertha Procter, who had herself traveled from Britain to Thessaloniki, where she had run an eponymous bar favored by British troops, before arriving in İstanbul on the tails of the British Army of the Black Sea (Wheeler 1960, 35). Thomas later directed the Alhambra Music Hall on the Grande Rue de Pera, which soon became "the most popular rendezvous for anyone who likes to hear good music and watch good entertainment" (*Orient News* 8 November 1920). Among his other ventures stood Stella, a garden bar opened in Şişli, and the longer-enduring Maxim Club at Taksim.

Thomas was far from the only recent migrant whose musical entertainment career was sustained by the city's new clientele. Opened with the support of her lover Vladimir Smirnov, Russian operetta star Valentina Piontkovskaya's Parisiana cabaret (Himelstein 2009, 305) attracted the "cream of the expeditionary corps," officers whose pay helped the venture to flourish (Isheyev 1959, 38). Among the performers at the Parisiana was Yuri Morfessi, a famed Russian–Greek accordionist, who described how he "immediately felt like a Rothschild" on receiving his 35-lira daily fee at the Parisiana in addition to the "monetary gifts from officers of the Allied armies and navy for private appearances in their intimate company" (Morfessi 1931, 145). He went on to open the Strelna, soon known as "the meeting point of the high life of Constantinople" (*Stamboul* 20 April 1920). Its grandest production was *Beautiful Helen*, an Offenbach operetta in which Piontovskaya reprised the role of Helen that she had played in Russia, attracting a full house on each occasion (*Stamboul* 2 September 1920).

The influence of Allied custom is also apparent in the career of cabaret artist, poet, and composer Alexander Vertinsky, who arrived at İstanbul in 1920 (*Orient News* 21 October 1920). Famous for his Pierrot costume and sad songs, Vertinsky was able to

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win important patrons among Allied forces. He recalled that Admiral Bristol booked a table at his Black Rose cabaret almost every night, leading to an invitation to perform on the US flagship (Vertinsky 1989, 54). Vertinsky described how "[t]he main income was from foreigners. They really liked everything Russian. Starting from Russian women, capricious and spoiled, who demanded a lot of attention to themselves, and ending with Russian music and Russian cuisine" (Vertinsky 1989, 42). Later in 1921, Vertinsky became involved in a restaurant, the Hermitage Yanni, which would host regular performances by the artist (*Stamboul* 18 October 1921). After his own ventures closed, Vertinsky became a frequent performer at Thomas's Stella (Vertinsky 1989, 48).

Besides the custom they brought to the private venues of musical entrepreneurs, Allied military and diplomatic representatives and their wives acted as important patrons of larger-scale concerts. Numerous performances were patronized by diplomats' wives, as seen in the performance of the Sternad brothers, cellist and violinist, whose concert at the Pera Palace was made possible by the patronage of Ms Chaponitch, wife of the Serbian ambassador at İstanbul, and Svetlik, wife of the Czechoslovak representative in the city, attracting British High Commissioner Rumbold among its audience (*Stamboul* 12 June 1922). Another concert at the New Theater was held under the patronage of Rumbold's wife, Etheldred Constantia Fane, and Helen Beverley Moore Bristol (*Stamboul* 21 April 1922). Before his departure for Europe, a farewell concert for de Hartmann was organized under the patronage of Lady Rumbold in August 1921 (*Stamboul* 10 August 1921).

Of course, artists also took advantage of a network of local state and private patrons. Vertinsky gave a personal concert with his orchestra for Sultan Mehmed VI Vahideddin (r. 1918–1922) at the Yıldız Palace (Vertinsky 1989, 46). Morfessi, meanwhile, enjoyed several months as the guest of a "rich, European-bred and educated Pasha," in whose mansion he was able to create a private dinner and concert club (Morfessi 1931, 147). Prince Abdülmecid, himself a musician, played a leading role in the patronage of both Turkish and classical music, inviting Hegyei and the Darülelhan to perform at the Galatasaray sporting club (*Stamboul* 14 March 1921), and presiding over numerous concerts by the aforementioned Karl Berger (*Orient News* 22 June 1921), whom he had first invited to İstanbul (Baydar 2010, 113–114). Indeed, what made occupied İstanbul a hospitable place for artists was the combination of local and international patrons, who at times acted together to co-sponsor performances they deemed to have a shared importance.

Despite the benevolence of such figures, musical entrepreneurs were far from guaranteed success. The same Allied and Ottoman officials that brought their patronage to musicians and musical venues imposed and policed regulations that could prove financially ruinous. Morfessi's Strelna club was hit by a temporary foreclosure following a breach of closing-time regulations, and a later tax bill, paying which he described "as physically impossible as swallowing the Hagia Sophia Mosque," forced him to flee the city (Morfessi 1931, 152). The Russian manager of the Bi-Ba-Bo club went out of business after he was unable to pay debts to his Greek landlord when his income was interrupted by a period of foreclosure as punishment for doing business after hours (Report of Capt. Bally 15 March 1920). A collective of music hall managers was formed to protest the economic impact of midnight closing imposed by the Allied police, meeting with some success, as seen in the eventual

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relaxation of closing times to 2 a.m. (Petition to French High Commission 29 October 1919).

Regulatory challenges encountered by musical entrepreneurs had further knock-on impacts on their employees. The director of the Beykoz casino warned that the failure to gain Allied permission to host gambling rooms would leave him unable to pay contracts for musicians and artists, many of whom had come from abroad (Société Ottoman Bosphore to French High Commissioner n.d.), a warning repeated by the director of the Petits Champs Garden Music Hall (Direction du Jardin Municipal Petits-Champs Garden Music-Hall to French Commander-in-Chief n.d.). Such unfulfilled contracts were a frequent hazard, with one Belgian musician turning to Allied police in an effort to claim back-pay from the Russian director of the Cercle Moscovite (Ordres jugées par le secteur français de la police 26 October 1922). At its most direct, the occupation's breach of rights and laws in the name of military necessity could disrupt the lives of musicians, with the requisitioning and later destruction by fire of the home of the senior civil servant, violinist, and later musicologist Sadeddin (Arel) a case in point (Öztuna 1986, 45–46).

Charitable concerts and relief work

Despite the costs that could be imposed by the occupation authorities, music still served to alleviate the economic precariousness facing musicians and the wider public in armistice-era İstanbul, both by providing a living for musicians, and by generating money for charities through the sale of concert tickets. The city had suffered serious economic strain during World War I under the impact of high inflation and the dislocation of mobilization and blockade, the effects of which would continue into the armistice period. Individuals, charities, and state authorities looked to musical and other entertainments to extend support to the ranks of impoverished denizens of the city, swelled by the arrival of refugees.

Charitable entertainments had long been a mainstay of the expanding Ottoman social state (Özbek 2016, 63). The outbreak of war had reshaped the charitable entertainment sector. Organizers focused on raising funds for military-focused charities such as the Hilal-ı Ahmer (Red Crescent), Mudafaa-i Milli Cemiyeti (National Defense Society), and Donanma Cemiyeti (Navy Society), for whom concerts and other entertainments were held in both İstanbul and the cities of the German and Austria–Hungarian empires (DH.UMVM 116/31, 27 September 1915; DH.UMVM 116/33, 11 April 1916; HR.SYS 2171/13, 6 May 1915). The armistice and occupation brought further changes, as new causes presented themselves resulting from the ongoing conflicts that afflicted Ottoman and neighboring territories. The presence of Allied servicemen and their superiors provided an attractive potential source of fundraising for such causes. As General Pelle, the most senior French officer in the city in 1922 noted, "In the complex milieu of Constantinople all the world wants to give charitable balls" (High Commissioners' Meeting 3 March 1922).

Most obviously, the war had resulted in a large number of wounded and disabled individuals requiring care. The Hilal-i Ahmer continued to feature prominently among the causes for which charitable concerts were given, such as a performance at the Hasan Bey Gazino by İsmail Hakkı Bey and the Mabeyn-i Hümayun (Imperial Palace Staff) *saz* (a type of stringed instrument) group (*İkdam* 27 October 1921). In May

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1920 a concert of twenty-five saz musicians was organized for the benefit of the society for the treatment of military invalids (*İkdam* 20 May 1920), supplementing money raised from the sale of products (*Stamboul* 17 July 1919) and tombola tickets (*Stamboul* 4 January 1921). Charitable entertainments extended to the wounded Allied soldiers present in the city. A masked ball was held on February 24 at the Théâtre des Petits Champs for the Russian war-wounded (Neratow to French High Commission 19 February 1921). Another concert was held under the direction of Frederick Thomas at the Garden Bar in support of the Union National des Anciens Combattants Français (French National Union of Ex-Combatants) on September 4, 1920 (*Stamboul* 1 September 1920).

Entertainers also turned their attentions to the large number of orphans requiring care as a result of military and civilian casualties (Üngör 2012, 175–181). Established by prominent Ottoman state figures in 1917 to care for children, the Himaye-i Etfal Cemiyeti (Society for the Protection of Children) turned to concerts to supplement its income (Karataşer 2020, 565), requesting use of the Tepebaşı Winter Theater to hold performances in November 1919 (DH.UMVM 96/64, 14 November 1919). The Hanımlar Esirgeme Derneği (Women's Protection Foundation) orphanage attempted to raise money the same way (*İkdam* 8 January 1920). The Prinkipo (Büyükada) Armenian orphanage raised funds through a concert at the island's yacht club, including violinist Miss Agopian and the famed Polish soprano Hanna Skwarecka, who had performed across the Russian Empire before arriving in İstanbul. In addition to ticket sales, a woven rug produced by Armenian orphans in Adana was auctioned to raise further funds (*Stamboul* 17 September 1919). Such individual acts of charity complemented a broader campaign of communal authorities to care for and support Armenian orphans gathered in the city in the aftermath of the genocide (Ekmekcioğlu 2016, 28).

Alongside the war-wounded and orphans, concerts aimed at supporting the city's multinational refugee population. Among the largest of these efforts was the 1921–1922 season of some twenty concerts directed by Zeki Üngör and organized at the Union Française under the patronage of the Prince Abdülmecid for the benefit of Muslim refugees. The New Year concert in the series attracted the French, Italian, and American high commissioners (*İkdam* 1 January 1922). The sixth drew still more notables, including Japanese High Commissioner Uchida, the wife of General Pelle, former city prefect Yusuf Razı Bey, and Fehime Sultan. The ninth concert included compositions by Abdülmecid and Hacı Arif Bey, previous chief of the Musika-yi Hümayun, and was again attended by senior Allied and Ottoman officials, such as Minister of War Ziya (Kutnak) (*Stamboul* 3 February 1922). Such Allied–Ottoman shared cultural endeavors, and the opportunities these exchanges provided artists, have been largely ignored in writing on the period.

Further musical entertainments attempted to alleviate the situation of Russian refugees. These comprised both classical music concerts, such as the Russian Opera Society's performance of Tchaikovsky's Eugene Onegin at the Théâtre des Petits Champs (*Orient News* 30 November 1920), and popular musical entertainments, including a grand concert on September 23, 1920 for Russian refugees at Morfessi's Strelna club (*Stamboul* 23 September 1920). In this way, venues opened by refugees to sustain their livelihoods in the city came to act as centers of support for the wider community. Institutions linked to Allied nations also used performances to raise

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money for Russian refugees. The Constantinople Relief Fund organized a series of concerts for Russian refugees at the Pera Palace (*Stamboul* 27 December 1921). While these musical entertainments likely raised a small amount of money compared to direct donations and governmental support, they doubled as attention-raising efforts, attracting audiences who may have gone on to act as donors in an individual capacity.

In addition to the new challenges presented by the consequences of war, musical entertainments continued to benefit a variety of longer-established causes. The urban poor were the recipients of money raised by regular concerts held by the Fukaraperver Cemiyeti (Friends of the Poor Society) (*İkdam* 27 November 1921), and a performance by Isa Kremer at a charity event for the Suppression of Begging Society, held at the Anglo-American Garden Villa (*Orient News* 28 July 1920). Educational institutions took advantage of the same fundraising schemes. The Constantinople College raised money to buy a new organ through the holding of a concert by the nine-year-old Leo Dubensky, who arrived at the city with his composer–father Arkady (*Orient News* 14 November 1920). The performance of the female group La Bonne Volonte (The Good Will) at the Bene Israil lodge in Ortaköy raised funds for Jewish students in the city (*Stamboul* 19 March 1921). The Francophone Notre Damme de Sion (Our Lady of Zion) also raised money for student bursaries through the organization of a concert by Hegyei (*Stamboul* 15 June 1920).

Meanwhile, the arriving Allies brought with them new charitable causes. British, French, and Russian boy scout troops, which had rapidly expanded in the occupied city, raised money through musical performances at the New Theater (*Orient News* 15 October 1920). A ball given in aid of the Italian Red Cross at the Pera Palace Hotel illustrates the diversity of musical happenings at the behest of the city's occupiers (*Stamboul* 30 November 1920). Performers included the violinists Yasha Bunchuk, a Russian Jew who would depart for New York with a reference from Admiral Bristol (Biron 1931, 8), and Mehmet Ali Feridun, a regular performer at the palace who would later write musical instructional books. It may be suggested that the charitable aims of such performances aimed to transcend the political divisions present in occupied İstanbul and helped draw together talents and patrons from across the resident and transient communities of the city.

The politics of performance

Musical performance was as much a venue for the promotion of political as charitable causes, raising the concerns of Allied and Ottoman authorities. Suspicions that music could act as a vector for political subversion were already well established, and musical venues were subject to close security monitoring, particularly when events expressed communal identities (Erol 2013, 716). National anthems and flag waving were scrutinized by undercover agents, and traveling Greek operas had been deported when performances raised communal tensions (Erol 2013, 720–721). With the arrival of the Allies, the freedom of the Ottoman state to make such interventions was severely curtailed. Musical performances became venues for the assertion of the conflicting national aspirations of the Turkish, Greek, Armenian, and Jewish communities that characterized politics at the end of empire, and for the Allies to proclaim their dominance and entrench their influence.

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Most obviously, entertainments organized by the occupying powers acquired a new prominence in the city. The Osmanbey gardens in Şişli were requisitioned and transformed into the British Military and Naval Gardens in the summer of 1919, open exclusively to servicemen and their guests, where they could hear army songs such as "Who won the war and why" and "Tommy Lad" and the performances of Russian musicians and singers (*Orient News* 27 June 1919). The gardens were host to a "Festival of British Music" in June 1919 and musical celebrations in honor of Peace Day (*Orient News* 17 June 1919). French prestige in the city was asserted on the 50th anniversary of the Republic on November 11, 1920. Following a review of French troops and a gathering at the French embassy, those celebrating gathered at the Théâtre des Petits Champs to hear orchestral pieces directed by Thomas de Hartmann and violin recitals by Bunchuk, before entertainments from clowns, mimes, and popular and operatic songs, some of the latter performed by Olga de Hartmann (*Stamboul* 12 November 1920).

However, more than the triumphalist tune of the occupying Allies, it was the new tempo of nationalist sentiment that prevailed over musical events organized by the non-Muslim communities of İstanbul that most concerned Ottoman authorities. Greek warships and contingents of troops took their place alongside the larger British, French, and Italian armies of occupation until the Allied declaration of neutrality in the Greek–Turkish conflict in 1921. The invitation of senior Greek officers to charitable events and their reception by the local Rum population caused particular consternation. On March 30, 1919, the presence of naval officers from the Greek warship Averof at a ball in aid of the Greek Red Cross in Pendik so excited the local Greek population that they marched on a police station with the musical accompaniment of barrel-organs and hurled insults at officers of this symbol of Ottoman authority (DH.EUM.AYŞ 4/95, 13 April 1919). In a similar incident, a group of Armenians gathered in a small square, where they played a barrel-organ and repeatedly chanted with loud voices "Long live Armenia, down with Turkey," until police came to disperse them (DH.EUM.2.Sb 66/36, 28 January 1919).

The Jewish community of the city also used musical events to set out their national claims. In October 1919, the "Festival of the Zionist Federation of the Orient," a film and music evening, was held at the New Theater, at which Gregoire Raissov sang "Jewish national hymns" and music specially composed by Boris Moroz accompanied films of the Jewish Legion in Palestine (*Orient News* 30 October 1919). In May 1920, a large "Concert of Jewish Music" was held in celebration of "the recognition of Palestine as a Jewish National Home" (*Orient News* 9 May 1920), with the participation of Kremer, Raissov, and others. The concert closed with the recital of the *Hatikvah*, the nineteenth-century poem that later became the national anthem of Israel. Kremer's Jewish identity had set her at odds with the Tsarist Russians with whom she had emigrated. When she refused to stand for the imperial anthem in the presence of White Army officers after a concert, she was admonished by host Yuri Morfessi. In the latter's recollection, she later took her revenge, apparently reporting his Strelna club for breaking closing time regulations (Morfessi 1931, 148–151).

Turkish musical performances were also marked by the politics of national salvation. Two operettas dramatizing the Greek invasion of İzmir and Turkish resistance appeared in 1921. The four-act *Greek Barbarianism on the Road to İzmir* by the İstanbul Operetta Society drew an audience that well exceeded the capacity of the

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Millet Theater, and a rival performance, *Greek Savagery*, capitalizing on this success, was held in its wake (*İkdam* 5 December 1921).

Rather than operetta, however, marches seemed to be the musical form most suited to expressions of nationalism. In April 1921, at the third "Eastern Concert" of the Darültalim-i Musiki the audience listened to Ali Rıfat (Çağatay)'s Anatolian march "standing with one national and patriotic body" and a votive of thanks was also offered for his composition for the *İstiklal Marşı* (Independence March) (*İkdam* 3 April 1921). Mehmet Akif's (Ersoy) poem had only been selected for the national anthem by the Ankara parliament the previous month, and the date of the performance suggests that Ali Rıfat had begun composing a musical accompaniment almost immediately, and notably before most sources date the start of the competition for a musical score (Doğrusöz 2021, 37; Töker 2017, 141). His winning composition remained the official national anthem until 1930 (Üngör 1965, 72). At a performance of the Şark Musiki Cemiyeti in June 1921, it was described how "[t]he new march was performed addressing the magnificent Ottoman flag that was brought out by a tiny Turkish girl" (*İkdam* 20 May 1921). Such marches would become one of the core outputs of the budding recording industry in occupied İstanbul, as demonstrated by the catalogues of labels such as Odeon and Orfeon (Ünlü 2004, 186–188).

The city's vibrant socialist and communist movements also used the draw of entertainment to spread their message. The tax office continued to chase the Turkish Socialist Party for its organization of fundraising entertainments (DH.UMVM 117/26, 22 August 1922). More concerning to Allied authorities were the activities of Moscow-aligned communists, who held a musical evening promoting the International Union of Workers at the Kuruçeşme depots on September 29–30, 1922 (Appendix B 25 October 1922). The fact that the Russian Trade Delegation infiltrated agents into İstanbul posing as musicians and used musicians as code in intercepted messages only heightened Allied suspicions of the political content of such entertainments (Appendix C 25 October 1922). A tenor arrived from Odessa, Vitali Koretsky, was marked for expulsion by Allied authorities as a suspected Bolshevik agent (British Commander-in-Chief to British High Commissioner 12 April 1920). The Bolshevik sympathies of the aforementioned Boris Moroz appeared to have escaped Allied attention. He had been captured by the White Russian army, and after his release and escape to Baku was appointed to the local Union of Art Workers and later attended the Congress of the Peoples of the East (Gill 2020, 35). After his stay in İstanbul, he was able to emigrate to the United States, where he was exposed as a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) double agent who had channeled money from the KGB (Soviet Committee for State Security) through his music company (Haynes and Klehr 2006, 220). Nadzedhza Plevitskaya, acclaimed for her "extraordinary expressions and immense dramatic talent" (*Stamboul* 8 December 1920), also later attained notoriety as a Soviet agent after she and her husband, who she had married in a White Army camp in Gallipoli, kidnapped a White Russian general in Paris (Jordan 2016, 78–79, 151). These connections between itinerant radicalism and traveling entertainers continued, with the added stimulus of a nascent socialist state across the Black Sea, a pattern set on other shores of the Mediterranean in the pre-war period (Khuri-Makdisi 2010).

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Conclusion

The Allies' evacuation from İstanbul on October 2, 1923 ended a distinct and overlooked period in the musical history of the city. Although notable musicians among the ranks left with the departing Allies, their more impactful role had been as patrons and regulators of the musical endeavors of the larger communities of the city. More broadly, the occupation of İstanbul had made it both a place of refuge for the wider region and a place of intense political contestation, features that were both reflected in the culture of musical performance.

The Allies were accompanied in their departure by a far larger number of Christian İstanbulite artists and the majority of the refugee musicians who had arrived from the former Russian Empire. Of those discussed here, Kremer and Borisov found their way to the United States, Bortkiewicz to Austria, de Hartmann and Vertinsky to Germany, and Morfessi and Romanovsky to Italy. Such movements followed the broader pattern of emigration on the part of Russian-speaking refugees, of whom few would remain to face of legal changes in the post-1923 period (Üre 2020, 212). Greek-speaking musicians joined the more general wave of emigration of Greek Christians fearing for their physical and economic security under the Ankara government. Floros continued his career at the Macedonia Conservatory in Thessaloniki (Baydar 2010, 303–304). Basileios Kamarados, cantor at Tatavla church of Hagios Dimitrios, left in 1922, along with other Greek nationals compelled to end their employment in İstanbul churches (Erol 2015, 6–7). Arrivals from İstanbul and more so from Anatolian cities under the terms of the population exchange brought new influences on music in mainland Greece (Karahasanoğlu and Doğan 2017, 117; Papadopoulos 2017, 50).

The loss of the patronage of the palace with the declaration of a Republic and the relocation of the new state's capital also helped disperse the concentration of performers that had defined late Ottoman İstanbul. The Musika-yı Hümayun was brought to Ankara and affiliated to the new institution of the presidency (Bayram 2020, 301–304). Like other areas of the arts, music was subject to state-led institutionalization and reform in the early years of the Republic. Traditional styles of *alaturka* music were demoted as a result (O'Connell 2013, 70–73). Musicians whose training enabled them to adapt to this new environment, like Osman Zeki Bey and Edgar Manas, who collaborated on the composition and orchestration of the *İstiklal Marşı* used after 1930 (Manas 2022, 269), succeeded under the patronage of new state institutions.

The divergence of the musicians and audiences that had defined occupation-era İstanbul and the intensification of debates over musical style resulting from later reforms make any assessment of the legacy of musical encounters prior to 1923 all the more challenging. By combing the dispersed archives available in Turkey, France, Britain, and elsewhere and combining findings with ego documents produced by artists active in the city it has been possible to provide a more comprehensive picture of the transnational and trans-communal conflicts and collaborations that defined musical entertainment under occupation. It is hoped that increasing interest in the exploration of new facets of the post-armistice period beyond the framework of European imperialism and national resistance and the critical reading of available sources will continue the reappraisal of this distinct period of musical history.

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