

Sound as an Intermedial Category in the 15th-17th Century Ottoman Palace Festivals

The aim and scope of the thesis

Ottoman-era music practices occupied an important place in terms of quality and quantity in Turkey-based music studies. There are several articles and books about musical notation, performance, theory, and also biographies of composers and performers, visual and verbal descriptions of instruments, etc. in Turkish and in other languages. Music can be considered as an area of performance in its own right and as a part of the whole performance, its relationship with different branches of art can be examined. The Ottoman festivals, which consisted mainly of celebrations for the marriage and circumcision rituals of the siblings and children of the Ottoman rulers, are characterized by a wide variety of performances that appeal to different senses (theater, dance, acrobatic performances, firework shows, depictions of war scenes, sports-based performances, culinary culture, special architectural designs, presentation of exotic animals, etc.) Researchers who work on this subject are known for their studies in theater, dance, literature, and history, and the research literature addresses this multifaceted structure of the festivals in certain aspects. Because the vast majority of the studies examining the role of music in this performance is limited, there is a need for musicological studies in this field. Combining visual and linguistic processes to control human perception and sensation, it is an integral part of the festivities; in this respect, it is important to consider the music from a musicological view that can be defined as the complement of performance. In my thesis, the relationship between music production, performance, and other performance areas will be examined. The necessity to treat the Ottoman festivals as a complete work of art, will aim to understand the whole performance with "intermediality theory". In this thesis, the subject will be limited to Ottoman festivals held between the 15th-17th-centuries and will focus on the most spectacular festival of all the Ottoman festivities, organized by Sultan Murad III in 1582.

Theory

The interaction of different disciplines, the comparison of works, and the analysis of the performances revealed by collective consciousness and collective work led to the emergence of a new theory in the field of social sciences in the 2000s: "intermedia". The concept of media, which means "medium", coming from the Latin word "medius", started to use the notion "mediator" from the second half of the 18th century. In the previous period, the

concept of media, which was narrowly limited to mass media, began to be discussed in a broader context in the 20th century; not only in the area of communication but also in philosophy, psychology, sociology, pedagogy, information studies, physics, and chemistry. In a general framework, the media are the phenomena that provide the transmission of meaningful indicators that perform the function of recording, preserving, reproducing, reprocessing, and transmitting information. According to this, intermediality means the combination of different media in terms of content and aesthetics, and the mutual interaction of each other. The main approach of this thesis is to examine the communication of music with other branches of art and practices within the context of this theory, which adopts the notion of media not only as mass media but in the broader sense as the phenomena that express an indicator for people as mediators, and transmitters.

Literature

There are various studies about the magnificent festivals organized by the Ottoman rulers. According to sources, the circumcision ritual organized by Sultan Murat III for his son Şehzâde Mehmet in 1582 is considered the most important event among the centuries mentioned. In addition to this festival, which is examined in detail, there were other circumcisions and wedding ceremonies by other sultans in the 15th and 16th centuries, and especially the ones which represented by the Sultan Suleyman I are important. Including spectacular games, illuminated shows, firework shows, dramatic fights, and war depictions, magic-based performances, circuses, guests, and presents for the sultan are explained in detail by manuscripts, from the preparation process to the end of the event. These sources called *sûrnâmes*, take place as the primary sources of the thesis. The Persian word *sûrnâme* consists of a combination of the words *sûr* (wedding, festival, feast) and *nâme* (letter, written document). They contain all of the festivals plans with all performances and guests and were written by historians and stenographers who lived in this period. And the other important thing about these sources is that they include pictures (“miniatures”) from that period. The miniatures give an opportunity to get visual descriptions about performance, music instrument, etc.

As stated in the historical sources, although 32 festivals were organized between the 15th and 17th centuries, only a few of the festivals have been the subject of *sûrnâmes*. The celebration organized by Sultan Murad III in 1582 comes to the fore on this subject. In the literature, it was determined that there were books, articles, and theses which were transcribed from Arabic and then examined: Mehmet Arslan, Nurhan Atasoy, Mehmet Özdemir, Metin And, Özdemir Nutku's books and articles, Robert Elliott Stout, Şeref Boyraz, Gülsüm Ezgi

Korkmaz, and Derya Ocak's theses. These sources are extremely valuable for us to obtain information about the preparation process of the festival, the event program, the list of guests, shows, prepared models, decorations, meals, and other subjects. The existing research literature reveals that the descriptive studies examining the performances, decorations, different demonstration groups, music and other elements in the festivals were predominant.

Preparatory steps

In the preparation process of my thesis, first of all, I will engage in extensive reading about concepts such as sound, soundscape, performativity, ritual, media, intermediality, festivity, space, and their theoretical framework. The aim is to examine these concepts and theories within the scope of this subject and to establish the necessary theoretical background to understand the relationship between power and timbre.

In the following periods, libraries and archives in Istanbul, Paris, and Vienna will be visited to get access to primary sources. The most important part of this study is the archival work. 15.-17. century manuscripts include *sûrnâmes*, *mühimme books* (books about the political, military, social and economic important decisions regarding the internal and external issues encountered in the meetings of the Council), *harem books* (includes palace expenses), *vakayinames* (generally, day to day tells the experiences of the sultan and important statesmen), embassy reports, and *Şer'iyye Records* (books about the records of the legal relations between people in the center and in the provinces in the Ottoman Empire. They are the most important sources for the history of many areas of Ottoman life such as family, society, economy, and law). For this reason, to reach the primary sources, archival work will be done first at the Istanbul University Library, The Prime Minister's Ottoman Archives, Topkapi Palace Museum Library, Suleymaniye Library, Nuruosmaniye Library, then in Paris Bibliotheque National, and Vienna National Bibliotheque.

In order to understand the music perception of the period, the use of instruments, and the theoretical approach of this period, it is necessary to compare it with the music practices in the festivals, and theoretical books, biographies, and autobiographies of the composers and performers have to be examined. In this context, the sources describing the palace life and city life of the period will be among the secondary sources. However, the fact that most of the resources provided in the literature have been prepared by researchers from the field of history, literature, and dance leads to a lack of information about the function and organization of sound, which is a decisive factor in temporal and spatial organization. It is an integral part of the festivities and combines visual, linguistic, olfactory and touch processes to control human

perception and sensation; it is important that the music, which can be defined as the complement of performance, be handled in this context.

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