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Hoping for the Best, Preparing for the Worst: A Sociological Study on Being a Musician in Turkey

En İyiyi Ümit Edip En Kötüye Hazırlıklı Olmak: Türkiye’de Müziyenlik Mesleği Üzerine Sosyolojik Bir Araştırma

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the socio-economic status, behavioral patterns and cultural constituents of being a musician in Turkey. The main objective is thus to unveil various different aspects of how musicianship is structured, expressed and perceived in Turkey. This research employs semi-structured in-depth interviews with 12 educated and professional Turkish musicians of different genres, which are grouped under the categories of serious and popular music. The main findings put forth that musicians, as artists, seem a bit unsure about the occupational prestige of their job. Lack of interest in serious music, inclination towards more trendy and ready-to-consume genres, interventions of new media technologies, trying to maintain a professional artistic network and to meet the demands of the music market while trying to stay creative and authentic, together with job insecurity and income instability are reported among the major difficulties that musicians face today. Engaging in free-lance work is also deemed an inevitable dimension of their job. Improvements in the management of musicians and the flourishing of innovative performance ideas came to the forefront as promising developments. Moreover, even though musicians share many behavioral patterns with other professionals, being patient, disciplinary, cooperative and hard-working, were listed among the necessities for musicians' career success.

Keywords: Musicianship, music business, occupational prestige, occupational behavior

Öz

Bu çalışma, Türkiye’de müziyenlik mesleğini, sosyo-ekonomik statü, davranışsal örüntüler ve kültürel bileşenler açısından incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çerçevede, ülkemizde müziyenlik mesleğinin farklı boyutlarının nasıl yapılandırıldığı, ifade edildiği ve algılandığını ortaya çıkarmak çalışmanın ana hedefidir. Çalışmanın temel araştırma metodu, ciddi müzik ve popüler müzik alanları altında toplanan farklı müzik

türlerinde çalışmalar ortaya koyan eğitilmiş ve profesyonel 12 müzisyen ile gerçekleştirilen yarı-yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşmeleri içermektedir. Araştırma sonucunda, birer sanatçı olarak müzisyenlerin kendi mesleklerinin itibarı ve saygınlık düzeyi konusunda tereddütlerinin bulunduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. Ciddi müzik türlerine yönelik ilginin azalıp tüketime hazır son moda müzik türlerine ilginin artması, yeni medya teknolojilerinin müzik alanına müdahil olması, profesyonel iş ağının içinde kalıp müzik piyasasının taleplerine uymaya gayret ederken, bir yandan da yaratıcı ve özgün işler yapmaya çalışmak, müzisyenlerin günümüzde karşılaştığı temel güçlükler arasında ifade edilmiştir. İş güvencesi ve düzenli gelir konusundaki sorunlar da bu listeye eklenerek, serbest-çalışmanın müzisyenlik mesleğinin kaçınılmaz bir boyutu olduğu dile getirilmiştir. Öte yandan, menajerlik alanındaki iyileşmeler ve gelişmekte olan yenilikçi performans fikirleri, ümit vadeden gelişmeler arasında sayılmıştır. Ayrıca, müzisyenler diğer meslek gruplarıyla pek çok ortak mesleki davranışsal özellikler paylaşsalar da, sabırlı, disiplinli, iş birliğine yatkın ve çalışkan olmak, kariyer başarısı açısından gerekli nitelikler arasında belirtilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Müzisyenlik, müzik piyasası, mesleki itibar, mesleki davranışsal özellikler

1. Introduction

All musical pieces, as is the case for works of art and creative productions, are capable of representing the characteristics of their time and somewhat reflecting the cultural preferences that hold social groups together. Indeed, composition techniques, performance types, ways of reception and patterns of musical consumption are all reflections of the mode and the relations of production of a society. Among various different social actors and groups who contribute to the systematic realization of musical production, musicians -both composers and performers- constitute the most influential actors within this art world.

Sociological analyses on being a musician make use of macro-sociological perspectives, as their main objective is the study of the political economy upon which its system is built and is maintained. In addition, the analyses on musicianship may adopt a micro-sociological perspective and unveil the social structure, which is multifaceted and prone to many different patterns of social interactions among numerous social actors. Such an approach to musicianship stands at the intersection of different fields of sociology, primarily sociology of work and occupations, cultural sociology and sociology of music. In this sense, major topics including globalization, post-industrial society, postmodern approaches, social inequality, poverty, precarious economy and the gender issue can be subjected to a thorough analyses of how musicianship is structured, expressed and perceived in a given society. Similarly, topics like cultural capital, performances and concerts, authenticity, stratification of taste and preferences offer an area of study for the analysis of face-to-face interactions among different social groups. In the light of this vast background, this article aims to analyze the socio-economic status, behavioral characteristics and cultural patterns of being a musician in Turkey.

The theoretical background of the study depends significantly on Becker's conceptualization of 'art worlds' where musicianship alongside other creative and artistic jobs, is thought to be stratified, multifaceted and interrelated with other social actors and organizations. It also draws upon the key concepts of Bourdieu together with the socio-musicological concepts of the post-Adorno period. This study uses mainly semi-structured in-depth interviews with musicians as part of its qualitative research methods, along with a comprehensive literature review.

In this direction, the first part of this article is reserved for the theoretical framework of the study, which focuses mainly on music, art, culture and work, in order to reveal the social positions of musicians. Secondly, the research methods are explained alongside the main scope and the limitations of the study. The third part presents the results of the research through different themes and sub-themes in accordance with the data gathered from the musicians. Then, a discussion will be held on the delicate balances that musicians redress in Turkey. Here, with this relatively small-scale yet comprehensive research, the author wishes to contribute to the current literature on musicianship with original data from Turkey.

2. Theoretical Background: Occupational and Cultural Implications of Making Music

Howard S. Becker's different typologies of artists in his influential work "Art Worlds" provided this research with an essential categorical-theoretical framework. According to Becker (1997, p. 410-417), an art world consists of the people and organizations who produce those events and objects that the world defines as art. When it comes to music, as a branch and a domain within this conceptualization of art worlds, it includes in the first place 'people who conceive the idea of the work' (i.e. composers). Then it incorporates 'people who execute it' (i.e. performers or instrumentalists) and 'people who provide the necessary equipment and materials' (i.e. musical instrument

makers and manufacturers). Finally, an art world includes people who make up the audience for the work. Becker underlines that art worlds require established conventions, expert competent professionals, a certain amount of regulative force and standardizations with a high level of division of labor. In this context, he distinguishes between different major categories of artists including musicians and other performers. “Integrated professionals” constitute the first category and consist of composers or performers who recognize the organizational structure of the music world, the expectations and the capacity of the audience and the requirements of the art business. Becker points out that such composers ‘write music that performers can read and play on available instruments’. For that reason, integrated professionals have regular salaries, are preferred and favored by producers or event organizers and are acknowledged by society. In comparison to “integrated professionals”, the second typology “mavericks” keep a loose connection to an art world but refuse to conform to its rules and conventions. Maverick musicians do not hesitate to experiment in innovations and are open to challenges. Apart from the established audience, they also seek to address a different audience. On the other hand, “naïve artists”, as the third artist typology, know very little about the nature, history, conventions or the mechanism of the art world they are working in. They usually work alone and have to create their own network of cooperation. Finally, “folk artists” are located amidst no professional art community and their works are characterized by a lack of artistic merit. Becker gives the example of the singers of ‘happy birthday’ for this last category. Therefore, it should be noted that the word ‘folk’ does not denote an authenticity in itself. This research, which aims to discover the social components of professional musicianship in Turkey, is mainly interested in “integrated professionals”. Yet, instead of exemplifying this first artist typology of Becker, this study rather draws on its certain distinctive artistic features in order to better interpret the professional attitudes and occupational positions of professional musicians in Turkey.

The status of musicians as a particular occupational group has previously been a research topic for many theorists of economy and sociology. From a Marxist point of view, musicians can be considered as falling within the category of wage-laborers. Economists, in particular, distinguish between certain characteristics of different jobs. Smith (cited in Chanan, 1994, p. 144), for instance, says in a passage of “Wealth of Nations” that musical performance fell into the category of ‘perishable services’, the type of activity, which ‘*does not fix or realize itself in any permanent subject, or vendible commodity, which endures after the labor is past*’. According to this perspective, when evaluating work on a scale of most respectable in society, musicians, opera singers and opera dancers take their place towards the end of the spectrum. Attali (1989, p. 38) similarly states that, “*the court musician who is not a productive worker, is paid a wage by someone who employs him for his personal pleasure. His labor is exchanged for a wage or paid in kind*”. He sees two use-values here; material and spiritual sustenance. Stokes (2002, p. 151), with examples from his original fieldwork in Turkey and his evaluations from other studies concerning the professionalization of musicians in Romania, Sardinia and Morocco, questions “*the selling musical selves*”. While extending his arguments on Marx’s historicism, Stokes (2002, p. 61) points out that “*The commoditization of music may produce modes of understanding music which increase our fetishization of the musical object or text, and deepen or sense of alienation and moral failing as we struggle to connect ourselves with the otherworldly epiphanies promised by the sublime*”. Such an understanding was also one of the pivots of the “culture industry thesis” of Adorno and Horkheimer (1991) where reproduction and circulation of music through the culture industry created commodity fetishism mainly through ‘alienation’ and ‘reification’. Adorno also pointed out that musical goods, as part of this industry, were capable of creating “regressive listening”. In the

face of culture industries, musicians, particularly in their role of integrated professionals, follow certain patterns when composing, performing and offering their artistic work. These patterns of musicianship display themselves in a rationalized music world, as Weber (cited in Pedler, 2010) puts it, through conventions and standardizations of the musical milieu, which contributes to its universality and equilibrium.

Orientation towards music or the will to become a musician often flourishes at an early stage of life. Especially the path to institutional music education opens up almost simultaneously with the entrance of the infant to primary school education. In keeping with the hard work on the music genre adopted by the soon-to-be educated musicians, this requires a particular level of economic, social and cultural capital. In this sense, Bourdieu's (1984; 1990) major concepts (including "habitus" as all the dispositions of a musician; musicianship as a "field"; and "mélomanie" as being a devoted and well-informed expert listener) all serve as the key terms to unveil the engagement level and attachment ways of a musician to his particular art world. Moreover, the discovery of the musical talent of an individual as well as the guidance and the support that s/he receives depends highly on the level of symbolic capital, which can also be detected through the frequentation to musical and other cultural activities starting from his/her childhood. Additionally, as Woody II (1999, p. 242) points out "*an individual's interest in music is cultivated through early experiences within the home (e.g., parents' interest in music, opportunity to take music lessons, etc.), and is later subject to the reinforcers of identification with peers and idiosyncratic self-concept*". This article will thus refer to these very influential terms for the interpretation of the answers of the musicians interviewed for this research.

The music world is also considered as part of "*different types of intellectual and artistic practices and processes*", which is in fact one of the essential definitions of culture by Williams (2005, p. 90) from a sociological point of view. Finally, Adorno's (1994) distinction between "serious music sphere" and "popular music sphere" constitutes the base for the research model. The serious music sphere reserves a highly anticipated place for its composers and performers and also demands a higher level of reception and reaction from its audience. During the post-Adorno period, this distinction was further elaborated. Many examples from different genres such as rock and jazz together with pop are situated within the popular music sphere. Several scholars (i.e. Tagg, 1982) used the distinction between the art music, popular music and folk music spheres as the figurations of main different art worlds. The informants for this research were determined according to their current affiliations to either serious or popular music spheres. With reference to this theoretical framework, the scope and the limitations of this research is bounded only with Becker's "integrated professionals" category (other limitative criteria of the informants such as educational background, etc. will be specified in the following part). Regarding the nature of qualitative studies with respect to the representativity of the sample, we narrowed it down to Western art music professionals for the serious music sphere, and rock music professionals (including pop-rock) who hold a music degree or are conservatory graduates for the popular music sphere. This helps the researcher to arrange the similar or divergent thoughts, aspirations and challenges of the musicians who compose and perform similar music genres.

This study takes into account aforementioned previous theories and related studies that analyze musicianship as a 'job' in a developed, industrialized, urbanized society with a high division of labor. These mainly include qualitative studies, which focus on various different occupational aspects of educated and professional musicians from around the world (e.g. Cahn, 1992; Dyce and O'Connor, 1994; Frederickson and Rooney, 2016; Perrenoud and Bataille, 2017; Vaag et al., 2014;

Publicover et al., 2019) and from Turkey (e.g. İmik and Haşhaş, 2016). The focus on the social, cultural and economic dimensions of musicianship as a ‘job’ necessitated the exclusion of ethnomusicological studies from the literature review, about musicians in so-called ‘unfamiliar’ local communities (for instance, percussion usage of Polynesian tribes). Likewise, studies that touch upon musicianship amidst faculties of health sciences (with specific topics, such as health problems due to right hand usage of musicians), or educational sciences (again with specific themes, such as comparison of different composition teaching methods) were left out due to their irrelevancy to the sociological approach of this study. Given the specific focus on musicianship as a ‘job’ and an ‘occupation’ in Turkey, this study also does not aim to analyze different music cultures or taste publics in Turkey, as the entire emphasis is on the experiences of Turkish musicians.

3. Methodology

In order to focus on the occupational aspects of being a musician in Turkey, this research employs semi-structured in-depth interviews with professional Turkish musicians of different genres as the main qualitative research method, and these are clustered under “serious” and “popular” music spheres in accordance with Adorno’s (1994) distinction. Different styles within the scope of Western art music (i.e. atonal, contemporary music) are hereafter referred as classical music within the serious music sphere. Also, rock, pop and jazz are listed under the popular music sphere. A total of 12 musicians whose occupational details are given below in Table 1, were interviewed between September 2018 and October 2019. Most of the interviews were conducted at university campuses and at a production studio by appointment, while one interview was recorded via telephone and three were conducted after concerts in the foyer areas, all of them again by appointment. The duration of the interviews varied between around twenty-five to seventy-five minutes. The interviewees were selected based on the following criteria: (1) claiming musicianship as their primary job/occupation, (2) having official work experience as a musician, (3) having an institutional music education, and (4) making a living from musicianship. As I was looking for “integrated music professionals” with the aforementioned characteristics, I used purposive sampling (Bernard 2006, p. 191) where “the researcher decides the purpose s/he wants informants to serve, and s/he goes out to find some; there is no overall sampling design that tells the researcher how many of each type of informant s/he needs for a study”. The age range of the interviewees was designed on the grounds of UN age intervals and included young adults and elderly people. There was no upper age limit but teenage musicians were excluded from the sample. Having lived and worked in Istanbul was also another required feature of the interviewees.

The open-ended semi-structured questions addressed mainly the following themes and sub-themes; (1) social status; hierarchy, recognition, respectability of/in musicianship, (2) music business; culture industry, working ethics and principles, job security, syndical affiliations, talent and professionalism, (3) creativity and freedom, (4) prominent behavioral characteristics, and (5) vocational experiences and interactional features. After I transcribed the voice recordings, I highlighted the common concepts that my informants talked about, and regrouped them into more specific categories. I applied one of the text-analysis tables designed by Bernard (2006, p. 497), where I designated the main topics that were covered during my interviews as the first-order category, and the specific concepts that arose from them as the second-order category. Finally, I gave them numeric codes and arranged them accordingly. This helped me retain the data from my interviews that corresponded to the same theme and interpret the findings.

Table 1. List of interviewees

Interviewee	Music Sphere	Occupational Detail	Gender	Age
GA1	Serious Music	Contemporary Music Composer, Viola Player, Conservatory Professor	Male	48
GA2	Serious Music	Classical Music Composer, Piano Player, Conservatory Professor	Male	59
GA3	Serious Music	Conductor of a Chamber Orchestra, Piano Player	Male	64
GA4	Serious Music	Violin Player in a Philharmonic Orchestra	Female	32
GA5	Serious Music	Violin Player in a State Symphony Orchestra	Male	31
GB1	Popular Music	Composer, Electric Guitar Player	Male	43
GB2	Popular Music	Composer, Electric Guitar Player, Producer	Male	40
GB3	Popular Music	Composer, Drum Player	Male	37
GB4	Popular Music	Composer, Piano Player	Female	35
GB5	Popular Music	Singer, Vocal Artist, Acting Coach, Violin Player	Female	33
GB6	Popular Music	Sound Engineer, Tonmeister, Violin Player	Female	24
GB7	Popular Music	Composer, Violin and Accordion Player	Male	72

4. Findings

4.1. The Occupational Social Status of Musicianship within Social Hierarchy

Musicianship, or being an artist in a broader sense, is often considered, at least to a certain extent, as something ‘special’, ‘unique’ or ‘valuable’ in comparison to various other jobs. When it comes to creativity and being able to reach to the depth of the human soul, many different jobs and occupations, ranging from a white-collar president of a company or a blue-collar textile factory worker would probably agree on the ‘respectability’ of being an artist. Here, being authentic and not fake or self-proclaimed is regarded as being the major evaluation criteria for being a ‘real’ artist. Yet, musicians’ experiences seem to drive them to a degree of uncertainty regarding this allegedly high level of social recognition.

Among the interviewees, classical music composers hesitated before deciding on the hierarchical status of their art world. They share the idea that classical music constitutes a relatively small art world and as it requires serious education and practice, it is therefore a respectable art milieu in Turkey. Yet, they were uncertain about the appreciation criteria in Turkey. They all emphasized that while reaching millions of people and making a lot of money out of music are the key criteria to social recognition, success and a higher social status, the classical music milieu runs a little bit behind in the occupational competition. Concerning this issue, interviewee *GA1*, contemporary music composer and viola player, shares his critical observations as follows:

“Our art world is appreciated only by a small fraction in Turkey – either by people who received a modern education, who live in a secular milieu or by those who wish to ‘look Western’. But I do not think that classical musicians are respected throughout our society”.

GA1 and *GA2* both drew attention to the nationwide decreasing financial support as a contributing factor to this loss of prestige. When it comes to the internal occupational hierarchy, *GA5* indicated that concertmaster (violinist) and conductor occupy the highest rank within symphonic

orchestras and senior instrumentalists are also more respected by their fellow instrumentalists. Besides, there seems to be a difference when a professional musician is a composer and a performer at the same time. *GA1* claims that *"Being a musician means being an artist and an artisan at the same time. A performer who does not compose should be like a skilled craftsman. Playing properly the parties on stage is the key to success"*. However, he adds from a critical point of view about musicianship that, being a performer requires less creativity in comparison to being a composer and that is how a musician might become interchangeable. Interviewee *GB4* admits that she sometimes regrets giving up on composing in order to concentrate on her professional career in the popular music business. She adds: *"Thanks to my classical music education, I feel not superior but self-confident as a musician who works currently as an instrumentalist in the popular music industry"*. In some way, composing and playing an instrument occupy varying hierarchical positions depending on the performative contexts within both classical and popular music spheres.

The general shared view towards becoming a musician has always been bit problematic in Turkey. This was influenced by the ongoing difficulties of finding a financially and socially secure job with a regular income on one hand, and the toughness of the creation and the execution of art on the other hand. In relation to this contested common belief, musicians themselves have quite fuzzy thoughts on the level of prestige of their job. Three of the informants associated the allegedly decreasing respectability towards musicianship in Turkey to the reverse correlation between offer and demand of the culture industry. In other words, there is an increase in the number of educated musicians, but they have to compete for payroll employment opportunities offered by only a few established institutions that recruit musicians. *GA1* compares the current situation in Turkey to the 1970s where "live orchestras" and a "club culture with a live music tradition" were widespread around the major cities in Turkey. He says; *"It was probably one of the few golden decades during which musicians were most respected in our society"*. He adds that the peak of live music halls made way for the increase in the number of jazz bands and pop (or as they called it back in the day 'Western light music' (*hafif Batı müziği*) to indicate the pop sound of the era) bands, as well as classical Turkish art music and Western art music orchestras.

Concerning the status of classical music, *GA3* who also designs and manages additional informative activities before his concerts, thinks that the actors within the classical music sphere should come up with innovative ideas. He strongly emphasizes that the extra-classical music world should promote the music itself and claims:

"I think that efforts to popularize classical music should be proper and systematic. Here, popularization does not necessarily mean vulgarization. To me, it is just reaching out to more people so that they can develop affections. Presenting information about music is not a burden, it is necessary for its recognition".

In this sense, *GA3* thinks that classical musicians should collaborate with their fellow musicians and take initiatives along with formal institutions and NGOs. Similarly, *GA5* thinks that: *"[The] presentation of classical music concerts should be assisted by historical or musical informative introductions, otherwise the audience would be limited to elderly people and the tourists. Young people always love to discover new things"*. In a related context, *GA5* also draws attention to the immediate necessity to increase the number of 'proper' concert halls, not only to increase the number of classical music concerts but also to help young musicians to practice and improve their excellency in playing their instruments. He adds: *"There is a great difference between playing for a small group and playing in a concert hall in front of 500 people"*. While stressing the

importance of the amelioration of the classical music milieu, *GA5* touches upon a very important but highly controversial issue about the allegedly higher status of classical music in Turkey. Without comparing and classifying the genres and attributing a higher -thus unreachable and complex- status to classical music, he says:

“I do not agree with the old discourse that says; ‘classical music should descend to common people’. Rather ‘common people should be drawn to classical music’ via elaborate performances... Good music always draws the attention of people. I know very well that Turkish people have always been interested in classical music and in all good music. But the presentation of it is very weak now. Classical music productions in France and Germany are extraordinary. People thus value quality.”

Other interviewees also criticized the insufficient interest in serious music. *GB6*, for instance, is a young violinist who used to play with the Istanbul Youth Symphony Orchestra and has recently started to work at a music production studio as a sound engineer. In the light of her relatively short yet intense experience as a concert performer, concerning the status of musicianship, she speaks of an increasing significant lack of interest in classical music among her peers and younger people. She adds: *“I was disturbed a few times during my concerts by the murmuring coming from the audience, when there are only a few rules to follow at classical music concerts, like keeping quite or knowing the appropriate time to applaud”*. Sadly, she thinks that this is mainly because of the fact that most people do not care about the music itself or appreciate the hard work on stage. She also relates this to the increasing consumerism and states: *“Classical music is not suitable for consumption. Therefore, half an hour concerto or an hour-long symphony are no longer appealing for today’s people who are impatiently in constant search of fast consumption”*. Yet, she adds that such an attitude is present for other genres as well. She thus sees this as a contributor to the decreasing respect towards musicians and artists in general in Turkey. From another standpoint, musicians who received a classical music education but who are currently working in the popular music industry think that every genre has its own public and it does not make much sense to compare one with another.

Another point of view comes from a rock musician *GB2*, a graduate of the music department of a private college where he also studied jazz, who underlines that: *“The status of musicianship has improved over the past decade on public space in Istanbul. I remember people disrespecting rock musicians in the 1990s. Today, people that I meet every day, taxi drivers for instance, show great appreciation.”* He has recently opened his own recording studio and also started working as a producer. Today many musicians are willing to work with him because, after several years, his compositions, songs and works got credit and are sought after, so he thinks that respect is something earned over time.

4.2. There is a Place for Everyone under the Sun. Or, is There? Questioning the Music Business in Turkey

Work ethics and principles may vary from one job to another, yet certain qualities like being decent, honest, creative, hardworking and cooperative always pay off in an ideal work place. Professionalism on the other hand demands additional decision-making processes from a procreator and these are usually considered to be the rules of the business. Indeed, the professional music world is not exempt from these requirements of the worldwide post-industrial and neo-liberal industry.

First of all, finding a job that will provide a living, a regular salary and security is not an easy task for musicians in Turkey, regardless of the music genre that they compose and perform. As

part of the serious music sphere, artists who take place in the classical music milieu and play Western art music styles have been confronting multifaceted reactions and requests. The common major requisitions in the worldwide music business also exist in Turkey but *GA1* draws attention to certain particular demands of the classical music business as follows:

“The main expectation from a classical musician who received an institutional Western art music education in Turkey is to compose music in accordance with the Turkish-style modernization process; it should include motifs from classical Turkish art music. Before, it was rather Turkish folk music.”

GA1 adds that if classical musicians want to get involved on the market, they need to meet this demand of the classical music business in Turkey, and by following the unwritten rules, they should create “glorious sounds”. All other interviewees share the idea that those who “play along” will receive support both from the state and private foundations, and thus will reach a wider audience. Yet, *GA4* thinks that the usage of authentic Turkish instruments on stage along with the symphony orchestra creates a different and a unique atmosphere on stage, and considers this as a distinctive feature of the classical music art world of our society. She adds: “*I am only interested in how well I play. As long as I challenge myself with the musical partitions, I leave the stage with gratification*”. *GA5* draws attention to another aspect and remarks that:

“It is important to be an entrepreneur and not to stick to a limited milieu in order to get recognized on the market. Sometimes being humble does not pay off. Social networks become important. There are several talented genius musicians in Turkey that people have never heard of.”

Job security for the classical music milieu is also a fragile issue. Our interviewees pointed out that working as an instrumentalist in state orchestras or teaching music at state conservatories or music schools provides a stable salary and job security. However, *GA1* and *GA2* drew attention to the difficulty in finding such positions and remark that many talented instrumentalists went abroad to seek stable jobs in orchestras. As for the composers, if they wish to reach to a higher economic status and become known by the larger society, they should definitely serve the demands of the market. Emphasizing national values or local features in accordance with the expectations of the market has become important to maintain the continuity of one’s artistic network in the music market.

While figuring out how to adapt to the demands of the market and to choose an institution to sign contracts with, being a free-lance musician serves as a good interim situation. However, all the interviewees pointed out that being a free-lance musician is a very hard endeavor and all free-lance composers and performers seek a stable and secure job to actually be free. In this sense, being a free-lance worker might seem to be the opposite of being ‘really free’ for a musician. Yet, *GB3* shares his confusion about the two types of liberty that he has: “*Sure, it gives me some kind of economic liberty when I get my regular salary. But this is nothing compared to the liberty I feel when I can spend long hours at the studio, improvising and experimenting new techniques*”.

On the other hand, many musicians within the popular music sphere think that engaging in free-lance work is an inevitable dimension of their job. Interviewee *GB5* is a vocal artist who works at many different jobs; she works as a dubbing artist for Disney’s and Warner Bros’s animated cartoons, she sings in musical theaters and she works as an acting coach. She is a conservatory graduate who also holds a second conservatory degree from abroad. She has five years’ experience in working at Broadway musicals. After she returned to Turkey, she gradually became a highly sought after vocal artist. Yet she says:

“Today it is too hard to make a living only from one steady job as a musician or an artist, unless you are a super star in Turkey. Either you have to be really famous –yet they appear in commercials even if they earn like 500,000 a night from their performances. As a result, you need to be a free-lancer in our sector. I wish artists could just live by only professing their art. I wish I could buy a car or a house by only doing musical theaters. But it is not possible”.

Even though *GB4* prefers being a free-lance musician, she signed a contract with a company last year. She pointed out that she would probably get tired of the irregularity of job offers and uncertainty would negatively affect her talent as a musician. At this point, it is suitable to compare this situation to its counterpart in the world. For instance, Frederickson and Rooney’s (2016) analysis on professionally trained free-lance musicians sums up quite interesting results, including the devaluation of the musicians’ technical skills by the audience, overshadowing the esthetic aspect by the functional purpose of their performance and the feeling of low-prestige accompanied by being treated as non-persons. Similarly, Vaag et al. (2014, p. 215) in their analysis of Norwegian free-lance musicians showed that tolerance for ambiguity and poor financial security, flexibility and adaptability are among the most significant challenges of being a free-lance musician, who in return, might also have a larger degree of autonomy and responsibility. The significant occupational structure of the free-lancers in the music industry seems to cover the singers in Turkey and in the world. The increasing autonomy of an artist is explained by *GB5* as follows:

“Today, the sector has become a little more secure for vocal artists. Now, we have seal and signature, we make out an invoice and have insurance for any kind of recording work. Yet, copyright is still a huge problem. For example, I hear my voice, my singing, used somewhere and I cannot put in any claim for it.”

Many of the informants agree on the fact that instead of a single music industry, there are several different music industries in Turkey. Capitalism seems to have been the most recent ‘patron’ of the musicians along with other jobs and occupations in the world, if earning a livelihood is the point in question. Our classical musician interviewees remarked that many of their colleagues compose or perform for populist projects and collaborate with pop singers. Even though they did not give examples from their personal experiences, they reported some examples from their peers where they pointed out that such an attempt damages a musician’s self-esteem. When it comes to the rock music industry in Turkey, the nature and the form of problems start to proliferate. Music graduate rock musician and studio owner producer *GB2* states that:

“The music business in Turkey did not have a systematic path at the beginning of my career. I think 2004 was a milestone because many rock musicians signed contracts with major labels in Turkey. Highly educated and experienced music managers entered the scene. Still, today the pie is too small. I see every day in my recording studio many talented musicians competing over projects. This is a metropolis and the lack of venues and performance halls is still one of our major problems”.

We learn from him that today music managers concentrate on particular districts and neighborhoods, like the Kadıköy music scene in Istanbul. *GB2* also reveals the organized networks of booking agencies in Turkey who systematically get in contact with managers to find new musicians and bands for different kinds of organizations and projects.

We can conclude from the interviewees’ responses within the classical music milieu that attitudes towards the demands of the music industry vary depending on whether the artist is a com-

poser or a performer. If a musician is a composer and a performer at the same time, they tend to be more critical of the market demands of their art world, whereas an instrumentalist who only performs on stage or for recordings, seems to be less critical and more open to the demands of the extra-musical world.

5. Discussions

5.1. Can We Speak of Some Prominent Occupational Behaviors of Musicians in Turkey?

Many scholars hold the idea that different occupations are closely associated with prominent characteristic features and recurring behaviors. Sensitivity, creativity and vulnerability are among the characteristics that are often attributed to artists, including musicians. For instance, in a recent study, Publicover et al. (2018) interviewed musicians who contributed to a musical work called Playlist for Planet, which engaged with environmental issues, and uncovered the significant high level of sensitivity of musicians towards ecological and social problems. They also drew attention to a delicate balance between clinging onto the music business and keeping up with all sorts of fans whilst trying to be 'authentic'. A similar sensitive attitude towards social problems was also deemed as a common behavior by *GB1*, who emphasized that; "*Music-making is a healing activity. A musician first heals his own soul, then begins to diffuse the cure to his environment*".

In another study, Wiggins (2011) focuses on vulnerability and after a series of in-depth interviews with classical musicians and jazz musicians suggests that vulnerability is a learned behavior that emerges when seeking approval from a respected fellow musician. The early stages of career and anxiety before onstage performances were also found to be related to the vulnerable attitudes of musicians. Concerning this characteristic, *GB4* complains about how female musicians are, by default, deemed to be 'more' vulnerable, emotional, whimsical or even unreliable in comparison to male musicians. She complains that: "*Doctor, teacher, secretary, musician; they are all the same when it comes to gender inequality. Women are always thought to be more emotional and less rational*". It was also noticeable that none of the male informants spoke about gender differences when asked about the behavioral patterns of their profession.

GAI disagrees with these attributes and claims that a high level of sensitivity can also be found within all professions, such as mechanical engineers or forklift technicians. Yet he stresses that a musician's trademark is "*discipline*" and "*cooperation*", especially if s/he performs in an orchestra or a band. Indeed, a musical orchestra is like a micro-cosmos of a society where both mechanical solidarity - among the players of the same instrument - and organic solidarity - between different instrument groups, such as woodwind or string instruments - can be observed. He adds that what most musicians both within serious and popular music spheres in Turkey have in fact is a mechanical talent:

"Quickly overcoming the difficulties of playing an instrument, being a fast learner and playing the written notes correctly have always been deemed as indicators of musical talent in Turkey. Conservatories also care about this kind of mechanical talent. Saying something new with music and stylistic creativity unfortunately takes a backseat in Turkey."

Among the interviewees, classical musicians, especially *GAI* and *GA2* also lay stress on the banalization of musicianship because of the demands of the market, which turns a composer into an "*arranger*". In a related study, Cahn (1992, p. 27) points out that "symphony orchestras, like other human institutions, require the involvement of many individuals and are therefore in many respects political entities". From this point of view, he maintains that when authority and a series

of rules are put aside, when there is a common ground for all contributors to music-making, such as performers, listeners or fund-raisers, and the contribution is appreciated by others, frustrations could be reduced and musicians will have a chance to have the highest level of self-fulfillment.

According to Woody II (1999, p. 241) deciding to become a musician is much like other career choices because it depends on different motivations, needs and opportunities that are beyond the prediction or control of the individual. Personal psychological traits should therefore be considered as contributing factors instead of sole determinants. Among these traits, some compartments and attitudes are widely observed by musicians. These kinds of topics on the socio-psychological status of musicians has long been the object of research. Nash (1957) for instance, evaluated solitary work for a long period of time, and stated that performing and presentation were among the intrinsic behavioral aspects of musicians. *GB6* illustrates this issue by stressing the hard work of the musicians as follows:

“Sometimes we play an instrument for 8 hours non-stop in a room, or work on the mix till our ears bleed. That is why musicians know how to grow gradually. They know very well that nothing is easy. Sometimes you have to work for long years on a piece and nothing happens. But one day everything changes. It is all about patience and hard work.”

In another research that focuses on the personality traits of popular musicians, singers, drummers, guitar and bass players in rock and country music bands in particular, Dyce and O'Connor (1994, p. 172), found out that the performers display significantly extroverted, dominant and arrogant characters. *GB2*, who has played at stadium rock concerts until now, comments on this matter as follows:

“A certain amount of ego is necessary for a musician. Otherwise, we would not go on stage and play for thousands of people. We want to tell our thing and be heard by the others. Yet, a musician should be keen on cooperation because music-making is a collective activity”.

Concerning the capacity to cooperate, *GB5* states that: *“Even if you are a very talented artist, you should definitely have the qualifications to cooperate with all of your colleagues, like producers or technicians. You cannot exist on your own. You should leave your ego aside”.* According to the observations of *GB2*, doing everything at the last-minute is another interesting common characteristic for many musicians in Turkey. Yet, he says that it does not cause anxiety when all the talented musicians get together. He says; *“As long as the musicians are talented and good at their instruments, even though they rehearse right before the sound-check, they can be great on stage at a stadium concert.”*

GA5 figures that musicians on the way to becoming a ‘real artist’ generally share some common characteristics, including being mature, attentive and sensitive. But he very importantly points out that: *“An artist sensitivity is definitely not about sharing emojis and status updates about recent events on facebook! A real artist is someone who can turn the traumas into an acquisition and then to an art work”.* Being a ‘real’ artist, which has always been a highly anticipated discussion topic, can be better analyzed by reviewing the challenges they face in time.

5.2. Seeking Balance while Struggling: How Do Musicians Liberate Themselves?

Musicians like other artists and workers in creative occupations have to deal with both internal and external occupational stress. Creativity in fact is seen as a prerequisite for musicians, as for other artists. This inevitably causes a massive challenge that drives them to be more prone to

suffer from disorders. The internal struggle of a musician can be best seen in the following statement of *GA2*, who shares his feelings on performing as follows: “*Performance means sweat and stomach ache. No matter how professional you are, you feel the excitement and pressure at the same time. The substantial moment is when you compose, not when you perform on stage.*”

Being a musician is also regarded as a matter of existence for all of my interviewees. However, freedom, as an essential component of existence signifies a two-sided concept within this perception. The interviewees from both serious and popular music spheres think that their freedom is very limited mainly because of economic instability and the oppression of the music industry in Turkey. Yet, they all expressed that musicianship, or being an artist in a broader sense, compared to other jobs, gives a person ‘the most’ freedom possible when s/he gets a chance to create independently and focus on their inner world.

GB3 is currently working on two different projects but complains about the indifferent or condescending attitudes of the producers. He says: “*When we perform, we are travelling around the edge of symphonic rock with syncopated rhythms. What bothers me most is the criticism towards our experimental sound, when it is actually the only thing that should be cherished*”. This concern of *GB3* can also be interpreted as the ambivalent demands of the market because syncopated rhythms are among the characteristic features of Turkish music, therefore can meet the demands about including traditional music. However, when used outside the sphere of popular or familiar sound as in an abstruse composition of a progressive rock band, the producers can harshly criticize it.

The disappointment of musicians can emerge in various different ways. *GB7* is in fact a retired classical musician who had performed for many years at the Istanbul State Symphony Orchestra. Around his late 50s, he decided to arrange Turkish tangos and has been playing mainly accordion and sometimes the violin for the cover performances of popular love songs or jazz standards. His keen capacity to play multiple instruments in many different music genres got him into a network of popular music recording companies. During our interview he spoke of the “good old days” when he used to perform at Cemal Resit Rey concert hall for a “caring audience”. Even when *GB7* says, “*I do not remember a single moment where there was not a melody in my mind. Now I am playing these songs from my youth to a younger generation. I hope they will get what I have to offer*”, his graceful gestures were partially accompanied by disappointment and affliction.

Another struggle might come to light when a musician is asked to compose for a particular project. When *GB2* composes musical pieces on demand, he feels free and satisfied only if he is allowed to be “artsy” and put his soul in it. He says: “*This year I made the music of two documentary films, a television series and a commercial. I enjoyed the first two, they were good works, but not the last one, not really*”.

In a related recent study on young musicians’ views about the future in Indonesia, Sutopo, Nin and Threadgold (2017, p. 560), using Bourdieu’s terminology, state that young musicians’ struggle in the music *field* is an investment in the *illusio*, as they discuss the ontological insecurity of professional musicianship, arguing that there is a continuous reproduction of a *doxa*, namely ‘survival of the fittest’. Similarly, in a comparative research on French and Swiss musicians, Perrenoud ve Bataille (2017) indicate that musicians in France are less picky in the first years of their career and try to increase the number of their performances as much as they can in addition to music teaching activities for a side income. The situation seems quite the same in Turkey. For instance, almost all of the interviewees from the popular music sphere, who are all educated musicians with music degrees, pointed out that they used to say yes to “more-commercial-and-less-artistic” offers when they were younger and during their early career.

Dealing with the unexpected impacts of technology on music also creates conflictual situations for musicians. For instance, *GB5* thinks that people can see if a singer is really good, except for young people, because they are nowadays more into rap and electronic music where vocal talent does not matter. So, she makes the following comparison to show that the parameters of singing are neglected: *“Being a vocal artist was more respected before technology interfered, packaged and became capable of selling even the worst voice. YouTube and the manipulative effect of the new media also changed the codes of being a musician”*. She continues to question the impact of the new media technologies on the ways of surviving in the music business. She says: *“Music industry used to be in the hands of a few producers. You had to be talented, educated and good-looking. Today, if you have the money you do your own PR. Things have changed and are even harder”*.

GB6 draws attention to another struggle that arises from the lack of knowledge on the nature of music as a collective artistic work. She explains the strains on producers, sound engineers or tonmaisters -who are also musicians at the same time like herself- as follows: *“People see tonmaisters and sound engineers as blue-collar workers or uneducated servants whereas it is they who set the perfect sounding on stage”*. This is in fact one of the least known struggles that musicians have to deal with off stage.

In order to ease these pains of musicians in Turkey, a very insightful suggested solution comes from classical music artist *GA5*: *“We need a musical revolution. We need to write the manifesto of real art in Turkey. For this, first, music should be considered, above all, as part of the education system, and not be treated as a servant to the entertainment industry.”* This can take time and perhaps the next generations will see the outcomes of better art policies.

6. Conclusion

Musicians of different genres, with respect to their views on the position of their profession, share numerous common feelings, thoughts and concerns. This study on various aspects of being a musician in Turkey primarily put forth that despite the different characteristics of the particular music world to which they belong, musicians have significantly similar experiences and live through similar situations.

Holding a music degree from conservatories or music schools with an expertise in a particular instrument, claiming musicianship as their primary profession and making a living from being a musician were among the common features of all my interviewees. The interviewees from different music genres represented for this study a variety of occupations, such as composer, instrumentalist, conductor, musical arranger, tonmaister and producer. This helped me to uncover many different aspects of being a musician in Turkey. In the first place, all of the interviewees within the serious music sphere reported a relatively lower level of widespread prestige for their profession in a milieu where higher income and popularity define the higher status of a job. The insufficient number of established institutions that recruit classical musicians and the lack of support given to orchestras were stated as a demotivating factor. Additionally, seniority and experience were reported as a ground for the internal hierarchy for musicians in Turkey. Composers of classical music also accord a higher status on their own job in comparison to instrumentalists, in terms of creativity.

The difficulty of finding a financially secure job with a regular income and meeting the demands of the market on one hand, and the existential toughness of the creation and the execution of art on the other hand, were reported among the major struggles of musicians who are forced to develop survival methods in the music business. Furthermore, all the interviewees pointed out that

despite the spare time it offers for experimenting new musical techniques, being a free-lance musician is a very hard endeavor and all free-lance composers and performers would prefer to seek a stable job with social insurance to be actually 'free'. Even though some minor developments for free-lance musicians are reported, such as having a seal, signature and invoice, copyright is still deemed to be a problem. Coping with the demands of the music industry and the consumerist attitudes of the audience are reported to be among their subsequent major professional problems. Classical musicians drew attention to the expectations of the serious music market, such as including local and traditional motifs in their compositions, whereas musicians from the popular music sphere were affected negatively by the impact of the social media and new technologies that opened the way for incompetent and unserious self-made stars in the market. The outbreak of relatively simpler musical forms like rap and electronic pop also made it difficult for creative artists who are in search of qualified innovative sounds within the popular music sphere. The increasing necessity to package and sell the self as an image, in order to be seen, heard and recognized as an artist, revealed as the main reason for the struggles that musicians in Turkey confront today.

The interviewees who were asked to define the prominent behavioral aspects of their profession reported discipline, cooperation and patience as the major required behavioral attitudes for being a musician, both for composing and performing in Turkey, in addition to other varying characteristics like sensitivity, creativity or vulnerability. However, a certain amount of 'ego' that crystalizes in the confidence to perform is reported necessary for musicianship. Gender inequality among musicians was the least mentioned topic, which came to light merely as a neglected issue. All the interviewees shared the idea that a musician should also be regarded as someone who has trouble with oneself and with the world and has the aim of speaking up for the people.

None of the interviewees spoke of harmony, peace and solidarity to describe their professional work environment. Instead, being a professional musician means negotiating between the strong inner force to create the best artistic piece and the commodification of their art works regarding the terms of the market. In the end, musicians could be evaluated as an occupational group that constantly seek to redress a delicate balance between their endless effort to integrate into the music business and to stay creative.

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