



Research Article

Güledâ and Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Ensembles in the context of gender

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Abstract

As of 2023, it has been determined that there are about 210 Turkish classical music ensembles in İzmir. This article mainly focuses on the gender equality, women's labor, women's place in society, the importance of women for democratic futures, the place and importance of women in social life and special days, the representation of modern Turkish women, and the Güledâ Turkish Music Women's Ensemble. and Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Ensemble in the context of the concept of gender. These ensembles have been chosen among the ensembles in İzmir, in that everyone performing in the ensemble is a woman, the repertoire they have chosen, and the issues that focus on women. In this study, the questioning of the place of women in the field of Turkish classical music has been examined in parallel with the subjects of female composers, female orchestral artists, female conductors, and female soloists that Makal (2020) mentioned in her work. This study is suitable for qualitative research techniques as it is based on the analysis of the data obtained from the choir conductor (also soloist), the interviews with the instrumentalists, the data obtained as a result of netnography, and the data obtained from the audio and video archives. The focus of this article is that both choirs mainly perform at scientific meetings in the field of women's studies, special days for women, women's festivals, and are a stakeholder in platforms where positive actions and discourses towards women take place, thus contributing to the studies on women.

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Introduction

Amateur Turkish art music choirs have an important place in İzmir's cultural life. The fact that their number is around 210 as of 2023 and that new ones are added to this number day by day shows that the people of İzmir have a great interest in these choirs.

The choirs provide employment as conductors and instrumentalists to those who graduated from the Ege University State Turkish Music Conservatory in İzmir and want to profit from this work, the choirs provide the students who are preparing for the conservatory with a predisposition to the field and provide a repertoire, and they participate in choirs in municipalities and public education centers, universities and various associations. Reasons such as not charging a fee for participation, seeing choirs as an indicator of advertising, promotion and social activity, enabling people to socialize, lack of standardized criteria for being a conductor, and increasing the prestige of the municipality with invited guest artists play a role (Yıldırım, 2017: 41-42).

Güledâ Turkish Music Women's Ensemble, which is located in İzmir and consists entirely of women, draws attention with their specially prepared repertoires. The musical instruments of the Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Ensemble, also

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founded by Küçükgökçe, of which he is the art director and the soloist, accompany the saz in the concerts of the "Güledâ Turkish Music Women's Ensemble". In addition, Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Ensemble gives individual concerts under the soloist Özgen Küçükgökçe without the Güledâ Turkish Music Women's Ensemble. Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Women's Ensemble consists of conservatory graduates, academics and artists who have made their name known in their fields. The names of the saz players in the ensemble are as follows: In classical kemençe, Assoc. Dr. Beril Çakmakoglu on violin, Dr. Nurdan Tezel, Beste Emnalar Aydın in Kanun, Nesem Coşkun in Bendir, Seher Erkan in Cello, soloist and artistic director: Assoc. Dr. Ozgen Kucukgokce. The choir members of the Güledâ Turkish Music Women's Ensemble are composed of women from İzmir who are interested in amateur Turkish classical music. Kavramsal Çerçeve

"The concept of gender, in its most common sense, is used to express the qualities that are built in a complex social relations network, the meanings attributed to femininity and masculinity, and the behaviors expected from them, apart from the concept of gender, which denotes the biological characteristics that define men and women" (Akca and Ergül, 2015: 17). "Gender concepts point to different focal points for the criticism of heteronormative structure, sometimes only women's rights, sometimes gender equality (gen-der) in the light of feminist theories, and sometimes homosexual (queer) theory" (Çak, 2017: 214) In this study, this concept focuses on women's rights, women's studies, gender equality, the relationship between music and activities in the environments where these are practiced, and the relationship between women and music.

Importance of Research

The effectiveness of female Turkish classical music ensembles performing in İzmir's music life cannot be limited to performing a musical performance only. Choir members gain gains such as socializing, learning the subtleties of a branch of art, gaining the courage to appear in front of the community, increasing their self-confidence, ability to work together and being motivated. In addition, the inclusion of concerts in the program flows of events and scientific meetings about women's rights shows that music plays a role as an auditory bond in the interdisciplinary field. It was seen that the choir members and the audience who came for the concert attended the events and meetings related to women's rights before or after the concert. In this context, it is important to examine the role of music in the axis of women's studies and the role of women in Turkish art music in the context of this community.

Purpose and Problem of the Research

This article questions 'what is the effect of musical performances in the creation of positive acts and discourses towards women, and how they contribute to scientific studies and social activities for women. The main problem of this study; The musical performance of Turkish classical music ensembles has an effect on making the female identity visible and underlining, and for what purpose such an ensemble needs to be established.

Method

In this study, data were obtained from the audio and video archives, concert program booklets and concert posters of the relevant communities. In addition, all the data obtained as a result of the interviews with the choir conductor (also the soloist) and the netnography and the data obtained from the literature study were examined with the concept of gender.

Results

Güledâ and Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Ensembles in the Context of Gender

"Güledâ Turkish Music Ensemble", which is the first of the ensembles that is the object of study of this article, was founded by music teacher Muharrem Dayanç upon the proposal of Özgen Küçükgökçe to form a women's choir. The name of the ensemble and the idea that the instrument accompaniment consists entirely of women belongs to Küçükgökçe. Küçükgökçe (2023) gave the following information about the choir during our interview: "I named it. It means pretty, graceful, rose. The name of this choir means 'every woman is a flower'. It is possible to come across this characterization of Küçükgökçe in literary works and folk culture. The fact that the society's way of symbolizing women is included in the name of the choir is one of the reasons why the subject is evaluated in the axis of the concept of gender.

As a matter of fact, it is possible to see the musical reflection of this metaphor in the songs of "Fikrimin İnce Gülü", "Manolyam", "Rose Dalda Oten Bülbülün Olsam" in the repertoire of both groups.

The ensemble, which is the second object of study of this article, is "Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Ensemble". This community is also a community that consists entirely of women and was founded by Özgen Küçükgökçe. Although there are female Turkish classical music choirs formed from time to time in İzmir's music life, it is not common to come across a choir whose instrument accompaniment consists entirely of women. In the "Güledâ Turkish Music Ensemble", the accompaniment of a female instrument group to the choir is consciously preferred. The preference here can be associated with women's labor, women's solidarity, and the representation of women's identity. Küçükgökçe (2023) stated that this community is supported by various associations, including women's solidarity associations, non-governmental organizations and İzmir Metropolitan Municipality. When we look at the issue from the perspective of the stakeholders of the ensemble and the environments where the concerts take place, it is possible to conclude that the issue can be examined with the concept of gender.

Music ensembles are largely shaped by the understanding of the choirmaster. The works of Özgen Küçükgökçe, the chief of both music ensembles, on women's studies and women's rights are important in terms of the establishment, functioning and mission of the choir. Küçükgökçe's presentation at the Ege University I. International Women's Symposium with the theme of "Women in the Art, Aesthetics and Violence Triangle" is one of the examples in this direction.



Photo 1. Ege University I. International Women's Symposium Poster (Web 1)

The fact that the section titled "Women Composers in Turkish Traditional Art Music" belongs to Özgen Küçükgökçe in the book titled "Women and Art Through The Ages" published by Ege University Women's Issues Application and Research Center, scientific studies of Küçükgökçe's place of women in Turkish art music shows what you're doing. It is important in terms of the relationship between women's studies and music that Küçükgökçe reflects her experience in this direction to the members of the ensemble and the repertoire.

When we approach the subject in terms of "Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Ensemble", it is possible to say that the choral conductors as well as the saz players act with similar thought and behavior patterns. The conductor of the group Özgen Küçükgökçe, members Nurdan Tezel and Beril Çakmakoğlu drew attention to the visibility, place and importance of women in the field of Turkish music by making workshops and speeches at the "Turkish Music and Women" themed event held within the body of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Turkey, presented examples on this subject and they held a concert.



Photo 2. Poster of the Workshop titled "Turkish Music and Women" organized by Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Ensemble on March 8, 2019 as part of the "International Women's Day" Event (Özgen Küçükgökçe Personal Archive)

Another example of the Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Ensemble's contribution to scientific meetings on women's studies; They performed a presentation titled "Izmir Women and Music" and then a concert at the symposium titled "Pioneering Women Writers Who Left A Mark on Izmir's History" organized within the body of Ege University.



Photo 3. "Izmir's Pioneering Women Writers Symposium Leaving A Mark in History" Poster (Web 2)

The first concert of the Güledâ Turkish Music Ensemble and the "Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Ensemble" took place on March 5, 2016 at the Izmir fair. It is also an important detail that the concert took place on the 7th of the Women's Festival organized by the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality as part of the International Working Women's Day. According to the news of Hürriyet newspaper, the festival program is as follows:

It will be opened with the "Women's Labor Fair" at Kulturpark Hall 3 on Saturday, March 5 at 11:00. Again on the same day; An important event will be held at 12.30 in Hall 3 as part of the "HeForShe" (Men for Women) social responsibility project, which aims to make men fight for gender equality as well. Theater and film actress Engin Altan Düzyatan, who supported the project aiming gender equality with

the slogan "Democracy without Women is Days Without Tomorrow", İzmir Women's Organizations Union President Sema Övgün, Fox TV Alarm Clock Program Presenter - Journalist İsmail Küçükçkaya and Ege University Department of International Relations Lecturer Prof. Dr. Tanju Tosun will be among the speakers of the awareness event. The event will be moderated by journalist-writer Ayça Dikmen. After the speeches, Ege University Aşk-ı Nevâ Women's Turkish Music Ensemble and Güledâ Turkish Music Women's Ensemble will give a concert at 14.00. On Sunday, there will be a concert program of the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality Pop Orchestra in Hall No. 3. On Monday, March 7, saplings will be planted in the "Women's Memorial Forest" to be created by the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality in Menemen - Seyrek. On March 8, the theater play "All Women Are Confused", adapted from Ece Temelkuran's novel, will meet with the audience. Starring Deniz Çakır, Şebnem Sönmez, Zeynep Kankonde, İpek Türktan Kaynak and Kadir Çermik, the free play will start at 19.00 at Kültürpark İsmet İnönü Art Center. (Web 4).

When the festival program is examined, we see Güledâ Turkish Music Women's Ensemble and Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Ensemble as important stakeholders in activities that raise awareness on women's themes such as women's labor, gender equality, democracy and women. During my meeting with Küçükçkaya (2023), all the female mayors of İzmir districts and Işlay Saygın, who served as the Minister of Tourism and Environment for a period, attended the concert of Güledâ Turkish Music Women's Ensemble and stated that they went on stage and sang together, women's studies It is possible to express it as support and value for women's labor and appreciation for women's art production. The fact that this concert took place in the news bulletins and in the newspapers is important in that it shows that the public awareness towards women is created through musical performance.



Photo 4 . Festival Program of Güledâ Turkish Music Ensemble and Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Ensemble Concert for 8 March International Working Women's Day (Özgen Küçükçkaya Personal Archive)

One of the themes that Küçükçkaya determined in her concerts is "Strong Women, Hand in Hand with Music". This theme is one of the aims that institutions working for women aim to achieve.

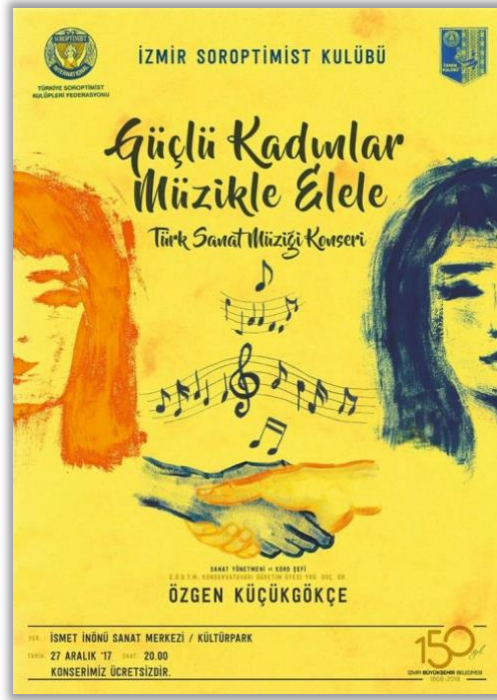


Photo 5. Poster of the Concert "Strong Women Hand in Hand" Conducted by Özgen Küçükgökçe (Web 5)

It is seen that both groups perform in activities for women such as "Mother's Day". The notes on the hands of the women shaking hands on the poster symbolize that in women's solidarity, music is an auditory bond between women.



Photo 6. Poster of the workshop organized by Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Ensemble for Mother's Day (personal archive of Özgen Küçükgökçe)

"Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Ensemble" fulfills its mission by giving concerts in different cities in Turkey and even in the international arena.



Photo 7. A Frame from the Concert of Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Ensemble on August 24, 2018 at Uşak University 1 Eylül Campus (Özgen Küçükgökçe Personal Archive)

In the concert held with the participation of England, Spain, Russia and Romania as part of the Erasmus project of the Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Ensemble, the “modern Turkish woman identity” was represented with a musical performance indicator form. In addition, the success of Turkish women in Turkish art music was represented by the musical performance.



Photo 8. Concert Invitation by Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Ensemble as part of Erasmus Project (Web 6)

Repertory Approach

The repertoire of Güledâ Turkish Music Women’s Ensemble includes women, songs about women, works by female songwriters and composers, and outstanding examples of Turkish classical music. In the repertoire understanding of this ensemble, it is important to perform “moving” works that will make the members of the choir happy and motivated.

In the repertoire of Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music Ensemble, besides the works in the repertoire of the Güledâ Turkish Music Women’s Ensemble, there are also “difficult to perform” and “classical” pieces due to the fact that the ensemble consists entirely of professionals. The “classical/traditional style” stands out in the performance of this repertoire. The fact that Küçükgökçe, the chief of the ensemble, is an expert in the field of repertoire is also effective in this. Küçükgökçe (2023) also stated during our interview that they interpreted the works of the 15th century Meragalı Abdülkadir with a traditional style.

“The concept of gender is a set of ideas. It is also decisive for the classification of roles and placing them in molds. In this system, certain roles are assigned to each gender” (Ersoy Çak, 2018: 358). One of the most sacred roles given to women is the role of mother. The piece titled “Lullaby’s Song (My Mother)”, which is included in the repertoire of Güledâ Turkish Music Women’s Ensemble, is a good example of expressing the love, longing, value, and loyalty to mothers and presenting this through music. The words of the work are as follows:

Turkish	English
Kulağımdan gitmiyor ninni sesin	Your lullaby voice is not going out of my ear
İçimdesin içimde derindesin	You're inside me, you're deep inside me
Gördüğüm her şeyde, sevdiğimdesin	In everything I see, you're in love
Anlatılmaz öyle güzel bir şeysin	You are such an indescribably beautiful thing.
Gözümün nuru annem	My mother is the light of my eyes
Ömrümün nuru annem	The light of my life, my mother
Şu kalbimin ateşi annem	This is the fire of my heart my mother
Ayırmasın seni Allah benden	God don't separate you from me
Sana versem ömrümü yetmez bile	Even if I give you my life is not enough
Senin için çekilir çile bile	Even the ordeal is for you
Yok eşin emsalin dünyada bile	You are not your wife, even in the world
Anlatılmaz öyle güzel bir şeysin	You are such an indescribably beautiful thing.

Conclusion

“Performing is a gender issue in itself. Since a person performing instrumental or vocal music on the stage is also in the foreground with his visibility, gender representation is in question. The image created with elements such as clothes and make-up on the stage refers to the performed gender and is evaluated in this context” (Ersoy Çak, 2018: 8). The fact that women are active in the field of music management, instrument performance and vocal performance in both ensembles is an indication of the place and presence of women in the ensemble and in the field of Turkish classical music, an example of how they can be the transmission and representative of the tradition. In addition, the fact that all members of the Aşk-ı Nevâ Turkish Music ensemble are composed of academics with a high level of musical education is important and exemplary in terms of showing that education and labor are one of the pillars of a strong woman's power.

Among the composers in the ensemble's repertoire are female composers such as Dilhayat Kalfa, Fatma Sultan (Gevheri Osmanoglu), Kevser Hanım, Faize Engin, Leylâ Saz, Vecihe Daryal, Fahire Fersan, Neveser Kökdeş, Semahat Özdenes, Melahat Pars, Mehveş Hanım, and Kevser Hanım. . The ensemble's extensive coverage of the works of female composers and songwriters in the repertoire contributes to making women's place and power visible in the musical field.

It is clear that the communication between the conductor and the choir members and the choir members among themselves contributes to women's solidarity in the choir. In addition, in the social activities of the community, the members of the community socialize. From time to time, Küçükgökçe gives information to the choirists about the stage manners of women and the subtleties of the stage. This effort of Küçükgökçe and her teaching of women's singing style (style) in Turkish classical music to the choir members allows us to evaluate the subject within the scope of gender and music.

The contexts in which musical performances take place are data that should be considered in studies in the field of ethnomusicology. Since both choirs, which are the focus of this article, mainly perform at scientific meetings in the field of women's studies, special days for women, women's festivals, and are stakeholders of platforms where positive actions and discourses towards women take place, they contribute to the studies on women.

Acknowledgment

I thank Ozgen Kucukgokce for his contributions to this study. Since the interviews conducted in the research have consent for the use of transcription and personal archive, ethics committee permission is not required.

Biodata of Author



Emin Yıldırım started his musical journey in 1998 with the Bornova Municipality Turkish Classical Music Choir under the direction of conductor Yaşar Ceylan, and gained a professional dimension when he won the Ege University State Turkish Music Conservatory Voice Education Department in 2000. He completed his undergraduate education in 2005 as the second in the department. During his undergraduate education, Halil İbrahim participated in more than a hundred concerts in the projects "A Legend Zeki Müren", "A Giant in Turkish Music Yıldırım Gürses", "Music in the 623 Years of the Ottoman Empire" and "Atatürk" together with the Executive Committee of the Ege University State Turkish Music Conservatory under the direction of Atınç Emnal. "Münir Nurettin Selçuk Special Concert", Selahattin Pınar Special Concert, "Ferahnak Team", Nihavent Fasil", "Suzidil Team", "Sufi Music" concerts performed by Ege University State Turkish Music Conservatory Classical Turkish Music choir under the direction of Yüksel, He took part as a soloist and choirist in the project "From Altags to Anatolia" under the direction of his. He accompanied many amateur choirs with his drum. He participated as a soloist in various radio and television programs, especially in TRT. He graduated from Ege University Social Sciences Institute, Secondary Education Department of Music Teaching in 2007, which he entered in 2005. He graduated from Dokuz Eylul University Fine Arts Institute Music Sciences department in 2017 with his master's thesis titled "The Problem of Interpretation and Conductor Figure in Traditional Turkish Art Music in the Context of Cultural Capital". He graduated from Ege University Social Sciences Institute Turkish Music Department in 2023 with his doctoral thesis titled "Music Practices from Manisa Salihli in the Context of Cultural Identity and Capital Concepts". He started to work as a music teacher in the Ministry of National Education in 2007 and still continues this position.

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