The Short History of Syrian Street Music in Istanbul: Challenges and Potentials

Evrim Hikmet Öğüt

Department of Musicology, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Istanbul, Turkey
Correspondence: evrim.hikmet.ogut@msgsu.edu.tr

Abstract

Over the last ten years, fluctuations regarding political, legal, social, and economic parameters have transformed the migratory experience of Syrian migrants in Turkey. This transformation has not only affected musicians' day-to-day lives, but also their musical practices, venues of performance, repertoires, and even the meanings associated with all of these. However, the limited literature on the Syrian musicians' experience in Turkey does not adequately reflect this transformation.

In the context of a social and economic history of migration between 2015 and 2020, this article will focus on a specific musical practice of Syrian musicians in Istanbul, namely street musicianship. More specifically, based on a basic argument that this practice fulfills multiple economic, social, and political functions in a context marked by a lack of systematic support and institutional means under migratory circumstances, the article will examine various aspects of it.

A detailed examination of this specific practice can provide a basis for a productive discussion leading to a better understanding of the Syrian migratory experience in Turkey. Moreover, every single aspect the article deals with has the potential to provide an understanding of the intricate social relations and issues that involve not only migrant musicians but also many other actors.

First, I will discuss Syrian street music in Istanbul as an emergent practice occurring in migratory conditions. Without ignoring the heterogeneity of migrant and Syrian identities, I attempt to portray Syrian street music and its performers according to various parameters such as their age, gender, musical background, etc. Second, I look at how Syrian musicians use street music to interact with other public space actors, including local and migrant communities, as well as tourists. I will also provide examples that illustrate how these musicians tactically manage these encounters by choosing from their repertoire to suit their respective audiences. Fi-

ISSN: 2791-4569 DOI: 10.52411/mm.2021.4

mdwPress

nally, I argue why street musicianship, rather than representing a merely transitional, temporary job for migrants during the early years of their migration, is, in fact, the first step of a career in a newly forming market by migrant musicians.

Arabic Abstract

تاريخ موجز للأداء الموسيقي السوري بالشوارع في إسطنبول:
التحديات والإمكانات

اڤريم حكمت اوجوت

تلخيص

على مدار السنوات العشر الماضية، ساهمت التقلبات في المؤشرات السياسية والقانونية والاجتماعية والاقتصادية في إعادة صياغة تجربة الهجرة لدى المهاجرين السوريين في تركيا. لم يؤثر ذلك التحول على حياتهم اليومية فحسب، بل أثّر أيضاً على ممارساتهم الموسيقية و أماكن أدائهم للموسيقى ومخزونهم الموسيقي وحتى المدلولات والمعاني المنسوبة لتلك الجوانب. بالرغم من ذلك، لا زالت الدراسات المحدودة حول تجربة الموسيقيين السوريين في تركيا لا تعكس هذا التحول بشكل كافٍ. سوف تسلط هذه المقالة الضوء على أحدى ممارسات الموسيقيين السوريين في إسطنبول وهي الأداء الموسيقي بالشوارع، في ظل السياق الاجتماعي والاقتصادي لتاريخ الهجرة في الفترة ما بين عامي ٢٠١٥ حتى ٢٠٢٠.

بناءًا على الحجة الأساسية التي تؤكد بأن الأداء الموسيقي بالشوارع يلعب العديد من الأدوار الاقتصادية والاجتماعية والسياسية في سياق يفتقر للدعم المنهجي والمؤسسي بسبب ظروف الهجرة، ستدرس هذه المقالة الجوانب المختلفة لتلك المسألة. سيكون الاستنطاق التفصيلي لهذه الممارسات بمثابة نقطة انطلاق لنقاش مثمر يؤدي بدوره إلى إلمام أفضل بالتجربة السورية مع الهجرة إلى تركيا. وعلاوة على ذلك، فإن كل جانب يتعامل معه المقال لديه القدرة على توفير فهم للعلاقات الاجتماعية المعقدة والقضايا التي لا تشمل الموسيقيين المهاجرين فحسب، بل تشمل أيضًا العديد من الممثلين الآخرين.

بدايةً، سأناقش الموسيقى السورية في شوارع إسطنبول كممارسة ناشئة في ظروف الهجرة. دون تجاهل عدم تجانس الهويات المهاجرة والسورية، أحاول تصوير الموسيقى السورية في الشارع وفنانيها وفقًا لمعايير مختلفة مثل العمر والهوية الجندرية والخلفية الموسيقية وما إلى ذلك. ثانيًا، ألقي نظرة على كيفية استخدام الموسيقيين السوريين لموسيقى الشارع للتواصل مع الجهات الفاعلة الأخرى في الفضاء العام، بما في ذلك المجتمعات المحلية والمهاجرة، وكذلك السياح. سأقدم أيضًا أمثلة توضح تبني الموسيقيين السوريين لمهارة التعامل مع المواقف المختلفة، حيث يقتبسون من مخزونهم الموسيقي ما قد يناسب الجمهور المتباين. أخيرًا، تخلص هذه المقالة بأن الأداء الموسيقي بالشوارع، هو عمل أكثر من مؤقت بالنسبة إلى المهاجرين خلال سنواتهم الأولى في بلد جديد، إنه بمثابة الخطوة الأولى في السيرة المهنية الخاصة بالموسيقيين المهاجرين.

Translation from English to Arabic by Nihal Salama.

Turkish Abstract

İstanbul'da Suriyeli Sokak Müziğinin Kısa Tarihi:
Güçlükler ve Potansiyeller

Özet

Son on yılda siyasi, hukuki, sosyal ve ekonomik parametrelerdeki dalgalanmalar, Suriyeli göçmenlerin Türkiye'deki göç deneyimlerini dönüştürmüştür. Bu dönüşüm, müzisyenlerin sadece günlük yaşamlarını değil, müzik pratiklerini, icra mekanlarını, repertuarlarını ve hatta tüm bunlarla verilen anlamları da etkilemiştir. Ancak Suriyeli müzisyenlerin Türkiye'deki deneyimlerine ilişkin sınırlı literatür bu dönüşümü yeterince yansıtmamaktadır. Bu makale, 2015 ve 2020 yılları arasındaki göçün sosyal ve ekonomik tarihi bağlamında, İstanbul'daki Suriyeli müzisyenlerin belirli bir müzik pratiğine, yani sokak müzisyenliğine odaklanacaktır.

Daha spesifik olarak, makale, bu pratiğin göç koşulları altında, sistematik destek ve kurumsal araçların bulunmağı bir bağlamda çoklu ekonomik, sosyal ve politik işlevleri yerine getirdiği temel argümanına dayanarak sokak müzisyenliğinin çeşitli yönlerini inceleyecektir. Bu özel pratiğin ayrıntılı bir incelemesi, Türkiye'deki Suriyeli göçmen deneyiminin daha iyi anlaşılmasını sağlayan verimli bir tartışma için bir temel sağlayabilir. Ayrıca, makalenin ele aldığı her bir husus, yalnızca göçmen müzisyenlerin değil, aynı zamanda diğer birçok aktörün de dahil olduğu girift toplumsal ilişki ve meseleleri anlamaya yardımcı olma potansiyeline sahiptir.

İlk olarak, İstanbul'da Suriyeli sokak müziğini göç koşullarında ortaya çıkan yeni bir uygulama olarak ele alacağım. Bu bölümde, göçmen ve Suriyeli kimliklerin heterojenliğini göz ardı etmeden, Suriyeli sokak müziğini ve icracılarını yaş, cinsiyet, müzikal geçmiş gibi çeşitli parametrelere göre tasvir etmeye çalışacağım. İkinci olarak, Suriyeli müzisyenlerin sokak müziğini yerel ve göçmen toplulukların yanı sıra turistler de dahil olmak üzere diğer kamusal alan aktörleri ile etkileşim kurmak için nasıl kullandıklarını inceleyeceğim. Ayrıca, bu müzisyenlerin dinleyicilerine uygun repertuarı seçerek bu karşılaşmaları taktiksel olarak nasıl yönettiklerini gösteren örnekler de vereceğim. Son olarak, sokak müzisyenliğinin, göçmenler için göçlerinin ilk yıllarında yalnızca geçici bir işi temsil etmekten ziyade, göçmen müzisyenler tarafından yeni kurulmakta olan bir müzik marketin ve buradaki kariyerinin ilk adımı olduğunu savunuyorum.

Introduction

March 2021. After a long break caused by the Pandemic, I meet with a musician friend Fawaz Ahmad,[1] in Beşiktaş. He is exhausted from waiting in a day-long line for paperwork in front of an official facility. While drinking our tea in a café's courtyard, we talk about how the pandemic causes difficulties for musicians' lives and how he deals with them. He mentions that because of the Pandemic, there are but two students left in the

[1] After completing the writing process, I contacted my interlocutors and shared the relevant passages in which I referenced or quoted them. I inquired whether they preferred that I use their full name, initials, or a pseudonym. I adhere to their choices throughout the text, except when the referenced statements are accessible in the Sounds Beyond the Border video interviews with Turkish and English subtitles.

music school he runs with his Kurdish friend from Turkey; and there are no more performances in the cafés where he performed regularly over the last years. Our conversation, which concludes with our regrets over how the Pandemic turned everything upside down just when things started to improve for Syrian musicians in recent years, gives me the idea of looking back at ten years of Syrian music practices retrospectively.

Over the ten years of Syrian migration to Turkey, the migratory experience of Syrian migrants has been in a state of continuous transformation due to various political, legal, social, and economic developments. These changes have affected musicians' lives, preferred musical practices, venues of performance, and repertoires, as well as the meanings these are imbued with. Therefore, any attempt to comprehend the musical life of Syrian migrants requires taking into account this complex background.

Syrian migration to Turkey started in 2011, right after the uprising in Syria took place. Turkey implemented an "open door" policy for Syrians. However, according to the geographical limitation to the 1951 Geneva Convention that Turkey applies, asylum rights are restricted to Europeans only. Thus, Syrians fleeing to Turkey were not be considered refugees. Instead, in April 2013, Turkey passed a new Foreigners and International Security Law that clarified Syrians' status in Turkey as one of temporary protection (Temporary Protection n.d.),[2] which positions them as the objects of humanitarian aid (Şimşek 2019: 4).

In the first years of this wave of migration, Syrian musical practices were mostly limited to community performances, or they addressed a broader Arab audience, especially the tourists from Arabic-speaking countries. The summer of 2014 was a turning point in this regard, as it marked the beginning of Syrian musicians' street performances in the city center and, thus, targeting a wider audience, including locals. In the years to follow, this musical practice became the main musical activity and primary source of income of many Syrian musicians.

2016 constituted a milestone for Syrian migration in Turkey. From this year on, due to the deal reached between the European Union and Turkey, the Syrian community de facto permanently settled in Turkey. After this shift in the community's migratory experience, the numbers of Syrian businesses and NGOs increased, and so did the number of music venues, which consequently also became more diversified. Istanbul, especially, became one of the leading cities with an economically and culturally visible Syrian community.

However, in July 2019, after Istanbul's government declared that they would send immigrants to the cities where they had registered,[3] fear among Syrian and other immigrants was created through identity checks on the streets and the circulation of the news about the deportation of unidentified immigrants (Amnesty International 2019).

[2] According to this status, Syrian migrants need to be registered in a specific city in Turkey. Their access to education and health care is limited to the city they are registered to.

[3] As a requirement of temporary protection status, Syrian migrants need to be registered in a specific city that they are allowed to reach public services (education, health, etc.). According to law, they need to get permission from the city government to travel to another city.

Many musicians had to quit performing on the street and some even feared leaving their homes.

In February 2020, as a response to the Syrian attacks on Turkish troops in Syria, Turkish officials announced that they would no longer block Syrian refugees from crossing European borders (Reuters n.d). The COVID-19 pandemic completely limited the musical and cultural practices for migrants as well as locals working in the cultural sector. Even when a temporary return to the streets became possible again, this did not really revive the practice. Eventually, the developments in Afghanistan that increased the number of Afghan refugees in Turkey caused a new wave of hatred on social media against Afghans and Syrians in the country. Consequently, in August 2021, the houses and workplaces of Syrian migrants were targeted in Ankara once more (Jones 2021).

Even though Turkey hosts the most significant Syrian population, and Istanbul is the most vital center for Syrian culture outside of Syria, the literature on the Syrian musicians' experience in Turkey is limited. While street music as one of the primary musical practices of migrants is briefly touched upon in this literature, it does not represent its direct focus. The sole article that addresses Syrian street musicianship in Istanbul considers it as a "social non-movement" performed in the public space and only concentrates on the political aspect of the practice (Öğüt 2021). Since some of the studies related to the musical practices of Syrian migrants in Turkey were published during a relatively early period of the migration (Hajj 2016; Kurtişoğlu, Öztürk, and Hajj 2016), they do not explore the larger dynamics of the migratory experience over a longer time span. Although based on short-term fieldwork during the summer of 2018, Habash (2021), in an article examining identity, belonging, and homemaking in the context of the resettlement experience of Syrian musicians in Istanbul, discusses street music practices very accurately, emphasizing the agency of migrant musicians in adopting this practice.

The only study that considers the dynamics of changing migratory conditions is Jonathan Shannon's article, which focuses on the nostalgic remembrance and musical rebuilding of homes under displacement conditions. Shannon uses data both from 2019 and from his 2015 field research and concentrates how Syrians' relationships to their new surroundings and their future perspectives change (Shannon 2019). This article, albeit briefly, also discusses street music practice.

Unlike mentioned studies, my research examines a more extended period of time without interruption, namely the time between the end of 2015 and the present day. Methodologically, I adopted a flexible approach when conducting my field research, combining various forms of observation and ethnographic interviews, including semi-structured interviews, daily conversations, insights gained from interacting with friends met in the process of doing this research, organizing events with them, etc. The focus of the research is street music as the most visible musical practice; however, I have had the chance to observe the same – and other – musicians in various performance venues and contexts over those years. My personal interaction with these musicians was put on a break in 2020 due to my research trip abroad and the pandemic

circumstances. However, we have not lost touch, and after returning to Istanbul, I carried out some follow-up interviews in March 2021 to update on critical issues. The scope of my research is limited to Istanbul; nevertheless, the observations and interviews I report in this article also extend to some other cities of Turkey, such as Gaziantep and Eskişehir.[4]

Tanenbaum (1995), Grill (2009), Simpson (2011), Kytö and Hytönen-Ng (2016), Doughty and Lagerqvist (2016), and others have written about street music practices in the public space, touching upon migrant musicians' street music practices. However, these studies rather than focusing on migratory conditions and their complex role in migratory experience, consider migrant musicians' street musicianship as one of the practices contributing to ethnic and cultural diversity in urban settings. Going beyond describing street music just as an economic activity or a contribution to a multicultural cultural music scene in public space, in this article, I draw on my long-term field research to provide a comprehensive look at this multifaceted practice. I approach street musicianship through the lens of a dynamic social and economic history of migration in Istanbul – a city that has recently emerged as one of the world's most important cultural centers for Syrian music and culture.

I believe that this experience is shaped by the agency[5] of the migrant musicians in response to the discriminatory environment to which they are subjected. To avoid overgeneralization concerning "Syrian identity" – which is discussed in more detail below – and to highlight the experience, I give room to my interlocutors' voices as much as possible by highlighting controversial point of views.

---

[4] The outcomes of my field research, so far, have expanded to outside of the academic publications such as non-academic seminars, magazine articles, interviews, a video-interview project, a workshop, and a radio program. The seminars and interviews I have delivered as well as the magazine/newspaper articles I have written aim to make visible the experience of the migrant musicians in the public eye and to highlight the agency of immigrants. The output of our collaboration with musician Omar Alkilani (Öğüt and Alkilani 2019) is a joint non-academic article. Further "applied" outcomes of my research are a radio program, *Göçmenin Müziği Müziğin Göçü* [Music of Migrant, Migration of Music] (Öğüt 2017–2018) and the video interview series *Sounds Beyond the Border* (Öğüt and Sülün n.d.).

I believe both the radio program and video interview series provide a valuable resource to make the voice of Syrian musicians heard in the public domain. In this article, besides other interviews that have been carried out in various phases of my field research, I draw on the statements of my interlocutors from these broadcast radio programs and the video interview series.

[5] While emphasizing the agency of migrants as human actors, I am not ignoring the possible new materialist explanations which may consider the agency of the repertoire, the technology, or the other infrastructures they employ. From the viewpoint of new materialism, the concept of agency not only arises from the actions of the human being but also on everything that acts and causes results. Using the term intra-action, Barad (2007) argues that the actions of these human and non-human agents are not independent of each other, but jointly create agency. While a new materialist reading regarding these intra-actions may reveal rich, multilayered stories about mobility and motility of musical aspects involved in this practice, I prefer focusing on the agency of migrants themselves in this article to avoid diminishing the historical role of human praxis.

In this article, I argue that street music practice is a multi-faced economic and social practice that Syrian musicians engage in, especially in the absence of systematic support and institutes under migratory circumstances. First and foremost, I address Syrian street musicianship in Istanbul as a practice that has emerged amid migratory conditions. In this section, along with depicting Syrian Street music practice and without ignoring the diversity of migrant or Syrian identity, I first portray Syrian street musicians in terms of basic characteristics such as age, gender, musical background, etc. Second, I tackle street music as a key medium in encounters with several public space actors, including various local and migrant communities and tourists. Since I suggest street musicianship as a political claim in public space in another recent article (Öğüt 2021), I do not discuss the political potential of the practice in detail here. However, I examine the tactical decisions that Syrian musicians make when managing these encounters. Finally, I consider street musicianship an economic activity on a continuum with the formation of a newly developed music market in Turkey that is distinct from the Turkish music market.

I. Street Musicianship as an Emerging Practice

The current mass migration from Syria that started in 2011 resulted in Turkey's Syrian population reaching 2.5 million by 2015, and its peak in 2018 with over 3.5 million refugees in the country. Istanbul, Turkey's cultural and economic center, is an attraction center for migrant communities in the country as it is for Turkish citizens. Informal work opportunities, the presence of migrant networks and international NGO's, the possibility of staying invisible among the crowds, and the cultural and spatial resemblances with some cities in Syria (Kaya 2016) are among the main reasons for insisting on living in Istanbul for Syrian migrants. According to official records, the number of Syrian migrants in the city is around 521,315 (Temporary Protection n.d.),[6] while the actual number is estimated to be much higher.

Regardless of their educational background, talents, abilities, or capabilities, Syrian refugees in Turkey are among the most vulnerable actors on the labor market. In general, they face long working hours, adverse working conditions, and low payment. Studies show that they work, in fact, in the lowest-paying jobs, filling the positions of low-skilled native employees, and are subject to abuse by employers who take advantage of their fragile legal status (Ertorer 2021: 6). The main economic activities they engage in are labor-intensive, low-wage manufacturing jobs in the informal sector, including, for example, domestic and care services, entertainment, sex work, work in tourism and in the textile industries (İçduygu 2016: 11).

[6] This number refers to the Syrian migrants registered to Istanbul under the temporary protection status. Some Syrian migrants stay in the city with residence permits (the total number in Turkey is 83,814, see, Residence Permits n.d.), and a few have citizenship (the unofficial total number in Turkey is around 90,000). However, the actual number of Syrian migrants in Istanbul is assumed much higher than the entire of these statuses.

As an alternative to low-paid, precarious jobs, musicians turn their faces to Turkey's music market, where they experience even more difficulties. In general, labor in Turkey's culture industry is characterized by atypical employment situations, such as freelance or self-employed work, work in multiple jobs, part-time jobs, project-based jobs, etc. The working conditions of culture industry workers usually involve income instability and lower earnings than in other industries. Besides these poor working conditions, cultural workers in Turkey face precarity and in-work poverty (Dudu 2020: 118); the music sector is not an exception in this regard.

Apart from the precarious conditions, as is the case with other undocumented economic activities in Turkey, the music market primarily operates through social networks (Aydın Öztürk 2018) and complex power relations in which musicians' social capital plays a significant role. Due to very strong preconceptions about Arab culture[7] in the minds of the music audience and other actors in this sector, Syrian musicians as strangers – particularly the unacceptable ones – are confronted with many obstacles when entering the networks surrounding the music market even ten years after their arrival.

Especially in the initial years of their migration, the difficulty of earning a living through music directed many Syrian musicians to work in textile mills. Syrian musician and ethnomusicologist Hussain Hajj (2016: 483) provides the example of a Syrian musician who had to quit performing because of long working hours in other jobs. Fawaz Ahmad's experience, in other respects, does not only exemplify many cases in which the musician had to work for a non-musical and undesirable job in the early stage of their migration but also demonstrates how street musicianship can provide a way out:

> If one works at textile . . . music is better. Because it [working at textile] is difficult. In Syria, there is no such thing as working 12 hours [in a day]. When I came to Turkey [in 2012] I worked in textile for three months. There was a foreman; he said: "go Taksim to play." I did, and I met people gradually (Fawaz Ahmad, interview, July 17, 2018).[8]

Even though the other job opportunities were unattractive and street musicianship was one of the few possible ways of earning a living through music for Syrian musicians in the early years of their migration, many of them were unwilling to play on the street or considered street musicianship a temporary job that they would only do until they found another one. For instance, in a newspaper interview in 2015, accordion player

[7] The reasons for the bias against Arab culture can be found in the early republican period in Turkey. Turan (2009) discusses the formation of the Arab image in the new Turkish republic tracing the history books in the era. On the other hand, Turk-Arab relations are much more complicated. For example, there are local Arab communities in Turkey, and both the Arab and the Kurdish communities living next to the Turkey-Syria border have various transborder relations due to kinship, trade, religion, and cultural commonalities. These relations and networks based on them also play a significant role in the migratory experience of Syrians in Turkey.

[8] This interview was carried out in Turkish in Istanbul and broadcast on the radio program Göçmenin Müziği Müziğin Göçü [Music of Migrant, Migration of Music] on Açık Radyo. When translating his statements into English, I attempted to retain the impression of my interlocutor's brief and simple statements caused by his poor Turkish.

Khaled El Halebi stated that he would quit playing on the streets as soon as he found a "better" job (Arabian 2015).[9]

There are a set of socio-cultural reasons for Syrian musicians' unwillingness to play on the street. First, because of the government's strict control of public space, like many other public practices, street musicianship is uncommon in Syria. Second, the view of music in Islamic culture, in general, is based on quite a strict hierarchy, in which music as entertainment has the lowest status (Al Faruqi 1994).[10] Consequently, as most of my interlocutors stated, street musicianship is often seen as equivalent to begging in their country. Fawaz Ahmad mentions his friends' reactions to him when he started playing on the street: "My friends from Aleppo said that many times, 'Fawaz, it is like begging'" (Fawaz Ahmad, interview, July 17, 2018).

However, some young musicians note occasional, albeit mostly failed, attempts to create such an experience in Syria. Hozan Othman mentions a street music project conducted in Syria by a foreign organization, describing it as an organized event differing from the informal, spontaneous street music practices in Istanbul (Hozan Othman, interview, June 3, 2018).[11] Mahdy Alkelany, on the other side, talks about their more spontaneous attempt to play on the street in Homs with his friend Gays:

> In the past, Gays, a friend from Homs, and I tried to play on the street. We started to play on Alhadara Avenue in Homs, but the police arrived within half an hour and evicted us. I mean, we tried, but it was a half-an-hour experience. Police did not allow us to do it (Mahdy Alkelany, interview, April 8, 2018).[12]

Because of two reasons, such anecdotes are worth noting. First, discussing controversial stories is one of the most significant methodological strengths of ethnographic research. Especially in migration studies, researchers, while acknowledging the complexity and diversity of refugee experience, are prone to simplifying controversial narratives. Hence, emphasizing the uniqueness of the experience is an antidote to the risk of the homogenizing migrant experience, such as falling into methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003). Secondly, Mahdy and Gay's effort deserves mention as it can help avoid another potential pitfall of migration studies, namely dehistoriciz-

[9] Khaled El Halebi is one of the first practitioners of Syrian street musicianship in Istanbul who moved to Europe shortly after this interview.

[10] Other reasons can also be assumed. According to a Syrian music student in the United States, the view of street music as inferior is related to associations with Dom people, the people from Syria's Gypsy community with low social prestige, who represent the only community to play on the street in Syria (pers. comm., May 7, 2020). For a further discussion on the liminality of the social status of street musicians, see Butler Brown (2007).

[11] This interview was carried out in Turkish at Hozan Othman's studio in Istanbul and it was broadcast on the radio program Göçmenin Müziği Müziğin Göçü (Öğüt 2018).

[12] This interview was carried out in Arabic in Istanbul and is part of the Sounds Beyond the Border video interview series. The whole interview was translated from Arabic to Turkish by Ümit Doğru and from Turkish to English by Ayşegül Turan (the interview is available with both Turkish and English subtitles; Öğüt and Sülün 2018a).

ing migratory experiences and considering them out of the historical and political context (Malkki 1996). In the musical context, it is common to presume that migrant musicians bring traditional genres, repertoires, and practices with them. Any new or contemporary musical trait, in contrast, is assumed to have been learned or adopted in the destination country. Even if the past experience of the migrant musician acknowledged, migrant musicians' repertoire is often assumed to stick to the previous locality. This perspective can make us oblivious to the fact that migrant musicians are usually familiar with various musical styles, including the ones rooted in "the West." Moreover, it construes migrant musicians in terms of a blurred and frozen refugee, migrant, or – in this case – Syrian identity.

Depicting the Syrian Street Music Practice

In this section, I attempt to describe some basic features of Syrian street music practices and its performers. As there is no unique Syrian identity, neither in Turkey nor in Syria, it is not only difficult but also problematic to portray Syrian musicians in Istanbul. In the following sections, I provide – based on my observations – a general portrait of Syrian musicians who perform in the street in terms of some basic characteristics such as age, gender, and ethnic identity.[13] Undoubtedly, it can be assumed that these factors and others such as experience, education, etc., may establish various power relations among musicians. However, I do not have evidence to discuss the power relations among the musicians extensively; thus, a discussion of these power relations is beyond the scope of this article.

Syrian street musicians in Istanbul are primarily between their twenties and forties, and they are mostly less experienced musicians. As noted above, depending on moral and cultural considerations, street musicianship is not the preferred way of practicing for many musicians, especially the ones from older generations. Jonathan Shannon, in his article, mentions musicians who avoided playing on the street even in times of financial difficulties, as they thought of playing on the street as a "compromise" in terms of their "dignity" (2019: 2174).

The reluctance of some musicians to perform on the street is also related to the perceptions about the quality of street music in two respects: First, some musicians who perform traditional styles often believe that these musical styles or their instruments are not suitable for street performances. Oud player Alaa Alkateb expresses this idea while listing reasons to quit playing on the streets just a week after starting: "The sound of the oud [its volume] is inadequate for streets. You need a microphone so that people can hear the oud well. Oud is a stage instrument" (Alaa Alkateb, interview, September

[13] Unfortunately, relying on my data and the limits of the article in this article I only address a few ethnic identities and dichotomic gender roles. A more comprehensive discussion on the complexity of Syrian identity requires acknowledging other ethnic, religious, sexual, and socioeconomic diversities and the broad cultural traits assigned to towns and regions where the musicians came from.

5, 2016).[14] His statement, "the oud being a stage instrument," also reveals his concerns about the dignity of the music he plays as a conservatory-graduated musician with a traditional musical background. His example is more striking as I witnessed that he did not play on the street even in the first years of his migration, where he had to work for an undesirable, low-paid, non-musical job. This is one of the concerns shared by musicians with traditional music backgrounds. However, regardless of the musical style, the repertoire they need to play is another critical factor for musicians not choosing to perform on the street: Many musicians state that playing the same repertoire repeatedly to entertain the audience – primarily tourists – is far from musically satisfying for them.

Factors such as age and musical background for musicians' reluctance to perform on the street can be discussed by reference to the particular experience of Munzer Sheikh Alkar. Even though street music is nowadays mainly performed by the young, it used not to be uncommon to run into some middle-aged, experienced musicians on Taksim Square or Istiklal Street, especially in the haydays of street music. Munzer Sheikh Alkar, in his 50s, after talking about his respectful career in traditional music in Syria, admits that it was difficult to accept the idea of performing on the street:

> When I came to Istanbul, my musician friends playing on the streets suggested that I join them. At first, I thought it would be impossible because of my age and being a retired musician. Because this is frowned upon in Syria, and nobody plays music on the streets. But my friends encouraged me. At the beginning, I joined them and played for a trial run, I tried to convince myself. Everybody liked my performance in that first time. I don't know whether it was because of my age or because of my performance, I could see people's admiration in their faces (Munzer Sheikh Alkar, November, 2016).[15]

Munzer's story illustrates that, regardless of preference or necessity, adopting such a practice was not an easy but a conscious decision that Syrian musicians make; as Habash (2021: 1375) points out, this demonstrates the agency of Syrian musicians who challenge their taboos and adapt their worldviews as a consequence of replacement into a new social reality.

Going a step further, I want to describe street musicianship as an empowering practice for musicians due to two basic reasons: First of all, it is a practice that has turned many amateur musicians into professionals. Indeed, in the migratory context, to mobilize one's talents and knowledge, i.e. one's cultural capital, to earn one's living and to have a better social status is not rare or specifically limited to Syrian musicians.[16] In the

[14] This interview was carried out in Arabic in Istanbul and is part of the Sounds Beyond the Border video interview series. The whole interview was translated from Arabic to Turkish by Hussain Hajj and from Turkish to English by Ayşegül Turan (the interview is available with both Turkish and English subtitles; Öğüt and Sülün 2016b).

[15] This interview was carried out in Arabic in Istanbul and is part of the Sounds Beyond the Border video interview series. The whole interview was translated from Arabic to Turkish by Hussain Hajj and from Turkish to English by Ayşegül Turan (the interview is available with both Turkish and English subtitles; Öğüt and Sülün 2016a).

[16] An Iranian musician I met in Eskisehir in 2017 told me his story: While working as an expert in an insurance company in Iran, playing santur was his hobby. After migrating to Turkey with

case of Syrian musicians in Istanbul, I have witnessed various instances of young musicians learning about music from others and improving their skills on their instruments through daily practice. Thus, the street also served as a music school for them, before the Syrian community established their own music schools, and gave them an occupation.

Secondly, during my field research, I have observed that young musicians define music as an international language and describe themselves as "world citizens" who can earn their living through performing on the street anywhere in the world. Before the Refugee Agreement with the European Union in 2016, migrating to Europe was a strong prospect for young musicians. Indeed, many of them managed to do it. Hussain Hajj (2016: 483–484) reports that among the 30 musicians he interviewed in 2015, only three eventually stayed in Turkey. Indeed, according to my observations and the reports of migrant musicians in European countries, due to the regulations on street practices in Europe, their possible street music experience would not be the same as in Istanbul. In this respect, the street music experience in Istanbul in which Syrian musicians performed in bands of six, eight, or even more people scattered on the street in the city center during the first years of the practice is unique to these spatial and historical conditions. Even though it might not be repeatable in the "world" as they assumed, I believe the notion of "being a world citizen" gained through street practices highlights the emancipatory potential of street musicianship.

Syrian Street Musicianship as a Gendered Practice

In Turkey, women's participation in street music performances, although not completely non-existent, is limited. It is not a coincidence that in a survey conducted with Turkish street musicians in 2012, the number of female participants was only five (compared to 48 male musicians; Assad et al. 2013). However, this low rate does not explain the fact that there are hardly any Syrian women performing in public at all.

Hussain Hajj (2016: 476) reports that among the thirty participants of the face-to-face interviews he conducted with Syrian musicians in Istanbul, Izmir, Şanlıurfa, and Gaziantep in 2015, only four interviewees were female. Similarly, Tuğçe Erdoğu (2020: 54), who did research on the musical dialogue and interaction between Syrian and local musicians in Turkey, interviewed just one female musician. Habash (2021: 1378) also

---

his family, they were assigned as asylum seekers to a small city, Bilecik. He told me that it was challenging to work in constructions in Bilecik and how his life was difficult in general. One day, one of his friends suggested he move to Eskisehir, where there were street music practices. With his friend's encouragement, he moved to Eskisehir and met other musicians – among them, there was another Iranian musician – and started to earn his life by performing on the street. He tells me how he teases his wife, who did not want him to meet his friends to play santur until the late nights when they were in Iran, by telling her santur is now their bread and butter (This conversation was carried out in Turkish, in a café shop in Eskisehir after he gave a short concert following my seminar on music and migration on December 29, 2017. As we lost contact, I prefer to keep his name confidential).

mentions a female interlocutor of her who quit performing as she found street performance humiliating, especially for a woman. Throughout my field study, I have encountered several outstanding female musicians from Syria. However, just as Hajj and Erdoğu report, the ratio of female to male musicians was minimal, and they were hardly involved in public musical performances.

According to Shannon (2019: 2173), the lack of women in Syrian street musicianship in Istanbul reflects the gendered labor division in Syria. The reason for Syrian women's absence from or invisibility in public performances are the same the cultural codes underlying gendered labor division more generally. According to my observations, female musicians who received formal music education are generally graduated from the music education faculty at Homs, while male musicians often graduated from the conservatoire in Damascus. Investigating the reasons behind this, I have frequently been told that education is assumed to represent a more appropriate field of employment for women – a remark not unfamiliar to me as a woman who grew up in Turkey.

Considering the issue in the migratory context, it is evident that sexual identity and gender cause diverse migratory experiences for the migrants, even for individuals from the same community. Mavis Dako-Gyeke (2013), who conceptualizes female migration in her study, puts forward that due to social, economic, and political inequalities, female migrants are more vulnerable than male ones. However, migration, at the same time, is an experience in which some social and cultural conventions and norms are challenged. In the post-migration process, gender roles and hierarchies may be questioned at home or in the public sphere. For example, socioeconomic factors are critical explanations for cases where there is a reversal of gender roles, with the male's status as the breadwinner being turned upside down. On the other side, as Forbes Martin (2004: 15) points out, this transformation may also have negative consequences such as domestic violence. Keeping this complexity in mind to avoid romanticizing or exoticizing it (Ahmed 1999), we can still assume an emancipatory potential in migratory experience for women. Likewise, a recent study on the work experiences of Syrian women in Turkey reveals that Syrian women are pleased with the transformation in gender roles, and that because they relate that transformation to their experience in Turkey, they do not want to go back to Syria (Körükmez, Karakılıç, and Danış 2020: 5).

My previous field research with the Chaldean-Iraqi community in Istanbul also displayed significant cases of music-related emancipation of young female migrants (Öğüt 2015). Similarly, the women choir Syrian women formed in Istanbul, which started as an amateur music ensemble but ended up giving public concerts in big concert halls – even in the Istanbul Jazz Festival – is a remarkable case of empowerment through music. Therefore, we may anticipate a shift in Syrian women's participation in public performances. Nour Abuhemedia, a young woman who bought a classical guitar when the uprising started in Syria and started playing electric guitar after migrating to Gaziantep, Turkey, describes this potential of female migrant empowerment through music well

by saying that "the revolution was also my own" (Nour Abuhemeida, interview, May 13, 2017).[17]

Syrian Street Musicianship as an "Ethnic" Practice

Even though the ethnic diversity of the Syrian community in Turkey was one of the fundamental assumptions underlying my research from the start, exploring the diverse musical practices of Kurdish and Arab musicians from Syria has led me to think about the role of ethnicity in street music practices more deeply. Through my inquiry, I found that many Kurdish musicians refused to perform on the street as they were expected to perform "Arab music." If one of the reasons for this expectation was the potential audience being Arab tourists, another one was the common prejudice of the Turkish audience – Turkish citizens in general – that sees being Syrian as equivalent to being Arab. The statement of a Syrian-Kurdish musician, an interlocuter of Tuğçe Erdoğu, may help to elaborate this point of view:

> I said, "You see Syrians as one. Okay, we came from Syria—but here, you think like as though we have to speak or sing in Arabic." Fine, it's an Arabic Republic, but it has people from many different ethnicities, religions, and sects. It's like Turkey: it's diverse. If you forcefully say "You're an Arab", I would say "Yes, I am", just out of the fear (cited from Erdoğu 2019).

Another point of criticism from another Kurdish musician, Muhammad Kurdî, demonstrates that this homogenization was encouraged not only by the Turkish audience but also by musicians themselves, including Arab musicians from Syria: During a three-hour-long workshop[18] at Istanbul Biennial in 2017, neither the musicians from various countries who chose a preliminary repertoire nor those who performed extemporaneously covered a single Kurdish song (Muhammad Kurdî, interview, February 27, 2018).

This homogenization and audience expectations constrain musicians' freedom to perform music according to their own will. Similarly, another Kurdish musician, Fawaz Ahmad, explains why he quit performing in public locations, including the street, and

[17] This interview was conducted in English in Gaziantep.

[18] The workshop, "Add Your Voice to Mine: Istanbul's Musicians," was organized by the author as a public event in the Istanbul Biennial in 2017, which was themed "A Good Neighbor." The workshop aimed to provide an open platform for musicians who reside in Istanbul but have limited opportunities to perform together and to encourage the formation of networks. Two weeks before the workshop, two ad hoc bands made up of local and migrant musicians from various countries got together to pick and practice a preliminary repertoire which was then drawn upon to attract other musicians to join the performance. The event was held in a well-known world music performance hall in Istanbul. Almost 50 musicians attended the event, and after introducing themselves in the first part, over 30 musicians played songs from the planned repertoire or songs they spontaneously preferred while on stage. The event lasted around three hours and included jam sessions and open mic performances by individuals and groups. A short trailer and a video of the full event are available on YouTube (Öğüt 2017).

continued playing only at cafés and – occasionally – concert venues where he can play varied musical genres:

> I played on Istiklal [Avenue] . . . When I came in 2012, there were not Arabs [tourists]. Lots of Arabs are coming. As they were coming, I played Arab music . . . I do not want to play only Kurdish, Arab, or Turkish music (Fawaz Ahmad, pers. comm. July 17, 2018).

II. Street as the Space of Encounter

Street music performances in the Beyoğlu district, including Taksim Square and Istiklal Avenue, started in the early 2000s with both local and foreign musicians' performances – mostly from European countries. Koray Değirmenci (2008: 13), a music sociologist who researched the world music scene in Turkey, depicts the picture of three kilometer-long Istiklal Avenue, with its symbolic venues and the cosmopolitan flair in the 2000s, including Galatasaray Square, Flower Passage, The Fish Market, Tunnel, several churches, synagogues, and academic institutions. To that, we can add bookstores, movie theaters, cafes, and restaurants. Değirmenci notes that during this period which coincides with "a revival or rediscovery of traditional and local musical cultures that have been incorporated into the commercial category of 'world music'" (ibid.: 14), the avenue's visitors were already familiar with the sound of "popular (Western) classical music pieces, French chansons, or Hollywood soundtracks" (ibid.: 1) that emerged from cassette and CD shops and cafes in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

While Istanbul has become a center for this new world music scene in the last two decades, street musicians from various ethnic and national backgrounds, including Europeans, Turkish citizens with Turkish, Kurdish, and Roma ethnic origins, and, more recently, migrant musicians, mainly from Iran and Syria, have incorporated themselves into this scene through their street performances.[19] Because of this diversity, the street music practices in Istanbul can be studied to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complicated social reality of the city.

Migrant networks play a significant role in Syrian musicians' initiation to street music practices. While some of them already know each other from Syria, many of them meet in Istanbul through these networks. It is worth noting that the migratory experience brings together Syrian people from different regions of Syria with diverse cultural, ethnic, and social backgrounds. It was very striking to hear in a focus group discussion with the members of the Syrian Women Choir in Istanbul, that had they not migrated to Turkey, some members would not have met in Syria due to the ethnic, cultural, and class-based differences (choir members, pers. comm., August 9, 2017).[20] Bashar Balleh,

[19] As it will be demonstrated in the case of Syrian musicians, some bands formed on the street in the 2000s contributed to this world music market with their albums and venue concerts in the following years.

[20] This focus group discussion was carried out with the choir members in Arabic – along with an interpreter – in the office of the NGO that hosts the choir's rehearsals.

a musician from Latakia, also states that musicians from different cities learn more about Syria from one another (Bashar Balleh, interview, December 6, 2018).[21]

Omar Alkilani's initiation to street music practice, on the other hand, exemplifies another experience he shares with many others:

> I have a percussionist friend; his name is Basel Sheikh Alkar. I know him from Syria. We have been playing together for more than 7 years. When I came to Istanbul, I asked where he was and we met. We went to the most crowded avenue of Istanbul, Istiklal Avenue. We saw music bands performing there, Arab, Iranian, Kurdish, Turkish bands (Omar Alkilani, interview, September 11, 2018).[22]

The existence of the street musical practices of other migrant communities that Omar talks about is worth special mention. For instance, Iranian bands performing on the street in the earlier years seem to have inspired Syrian ones. During the years Syrian musicians performed on the street, Iranian musicians were among the primary musical actors of the street music scene. Even though Syrian musicianship has decreased ever since due to socio-economic developments which I will discuss in the last section, Iranian musicians' street music practices continue more or less in a stable fashion.

In addition, the multicultural soundscape that Omar mentions above causes an atmosphere that I call "unintended democracy." By this, I mean an egalitarian sound environment that is equally open to various voices regardless of the conflicting socio-political context in which these practices are embedded. The country's political atmosphere changed dramatically after the 2015 general elections (Esen and Gumuscu 2016; Bardakçi 2016) and the military coup attempt in 2016 (Gökarıksel and Türem 2019). Following various attacks against the Kurdish people, even speaking the Kurdish language in public space became a cause for concern. Despite this reality, it was surprising to hear Kurdish songs performed by young Kurdish bands in the city center. At my first encounter with their street performances, I assumed they were Kurdish musicians from Syria. Soon after, I realized that it was another false belief that enabled their performances: Many Turkish citizens assumed that the language they sang in was Arabic; therefore, they assumed the bands were Syrian. Consequently, these musicians' identity was not clear for many Turkish citizens, and this ambiguity provided them with a secure position. One of my interlocutors confirmed my assessment, stating that Syrian musicians made street music performances easier for Kurds in Turkey. I believe that, because of the multilingual environment that street performances by Syrian and Iranian musicians, it was difficult for many local residents to differentiate Kurdish, Arabic, and Persian languages. This plurality created space for street performances by Kurdish

[21] This interview was carried out in English in Istanbul.

[22] This interview was carried out in Arabic in Istanbul and is part of the Sounds Beyond the Border video interview series. The whole interview was translated from Arabic to Turkish by Ümit Doğru and from Turkish to English by Ayşegül Turan (the interview is available with both Turkish and English subtitles; Öğüt and Sülün 2018b).

musicians even during the most conflict-ridden times. In this regard, this emerging atmosphere in which Kurdish musicians operate illustrates the potential of migration to democratize the public space.

As mentioned above, Taksim Square and Istiklal Avenue are popular places for encounters among tourists, migrants, and local people from various social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. It can be assumed that art and culture have a positive effect on intercultural dialogue. However, emphasizing only the positive aspects of these encounters that music enables would mean romanticizing the role of art in social reality.

Ninety-two percent of the Syrian migrants live in cities instead of camps in Turkey (Alitok and Tosun 2018), and they are facing significant discrimination and hostility in their daily life. According to data gathered from current research, perceived cultural and ethnic threats, economic rivalry for resources and rights, and an unclear political agenda at the state level are the critical issues of public concern (ibid.: 2). In addition to that, media discourse, especially in the digital realm, is often discriminatory (Kavaklı 2018; Ozduzen, Korkut, and Ozduzen 2020). In such a context, street performances of Syrian musicians represent one of the most substantial claims to public space (Öğüt 2021) and have the potential to cause conflicts with the local communities in the city.

In our joint paper "Müzik ve Göç Üzerine Birlike Düşünmek" [Thinking about Music and Migration Together], Syrian musician Omar Alkilani, discusses the positive effects of street musicianship in his life in general, describing Istiklal Avenue as "a good stage for a musician who plans a career, who wants to prove himself."[23] He also mentions the positive reactions of some audiences who recorded and shared his band's performances via smartphones (Öğüt and Alkilani 2019: 79–80). Similarly, my own observations of incidents where the audience would gather around the band and join in the music through clapping and even dancing, have led me to believe that the Syrian musicians' street performances have quite a positive effect on the interaction between the migrant and the local communities.

My perception, however, was confined to my involvement in the audience since my study did not consider the crowd's responses. According to ethnomusicologist Nil Başdurak's data from her field study on the soundscape of Istiklal Avenue, a significant number of pedestrians she interviewed found the Syrian music played tiring, noisy, or were disturbed by hearing the Arabic language (Nil Başdurak, pers.comm., December 16, 2017). Furthermore, Bashar Balleh recalls incidents of Turkish audiences throwing eggs at musicians or putting hate messages instead of money into their boxes (Bashar Balleh, interview, December 8, 2018). Omar also cites some discriminatory remarks; for example, musicians were told to return to their own country and fight instead of Turkish troops fighting in Syria (Öğüt and Alkilani 2019: 80). My interviews with Syrian musicians also revealed that the absence of regulations for street music in the Beyoğlu district has a two-sided impact on their experience: On the one hand, the absence of regulations provides them with an open space for their daily performances; on the other, it

[23] The article was published in Turkish. The cited phrases were translated to English by the author.

causes them to face to arbitrary police or municipal police interventions, such as fines or arrests.

Doughty and Lagerqvist (2016: 58), in their article on the ethical potential of migrant musicians' performances in a central square in Stockholm, state that, especially in the case of busking, which often makes marginalized voices heard, only a favorable social, physical, and temporal context will allow for a positive experience for musicians. In Istiklal Avenue, the center of Istanbul, migrant musicians employ various tactics[24] to create those favorable conditions (Öğüt 2021). These tactics include, for example, selecting an appropriate spot and time as well as a suitable repertoire, considering safety precautions, managing the relations with the (municipal) police and shopkeepers, as well as orchestrating the crowd for maximum income. In the following sections, I will expand my discussion of these tactics to explain that the street music practices of Syrian musicians in the public sphere are not coincidental or spontaneous but intentional in every way.

Adjusting the Proper Repertoire

Philip Bohlman argues that "Street musicians determine where and when they perform in large part because of the financial benefits at each node along their urban musical routes" (2002: 137). Dueck (2011: 24), on the other hand, adds the need for a considerable negotiation for appropriate social and musical components of the performances in public space, where performances are more confrontational than performing on conventional stages, recordings, and broadcasts. In addition to the factors space and place highlighted by Bohlman, I suggest that repertoire has a crucial role in this negotiation as a third, social and musical component, as Dueck assumes. Repertoire is not only a fundamental feature of street music for Syrian musicians because of economic reasons, but also plays an important social role in these multidimensional encounters, because it aims to appeal to a diverse audience, including tourists from mostly Arabic-speaking countries, Turkish citizens from diverse cultural backgrounds, and other migrants.

While musicians' musical backgrounds and personal interests span a broad range of genres and styles – from rap to electronic music or flamenco – their repertoires for street performance tend to be very similar or almost identical. The songs chosen for street performances are well-known, some folk-based, a few traditional, all in Arabic, and usually quite lively songs originating from all across the extensive Arab geography. Because their Turkish arrangements from the 1970s are widely known, the songs of Lebanese singer Fairouz are among the most played ones. They are often chosen to attract the Turkish audience directly and to gain at the same time Turkish language skills by being sung bilingually (at least, there is often a switch to Turkish in the refrains).

[24] I use the term "tactic" in the sense Michael de Certeau (1984) uses it to discuss the acts of the subaltern in power relations of daily life.

Bashar Balleh's statement regarding the repertoire played on the street demonstrates the fact that there may be a significant difference between the musicians' tastes and the demands of the street music market:

> When I lived in Syria, I didn't listen to Arabic music. I had zero idea about Arabic music. When I came here, I started learning Arabic music. All my life, it was [Western] classical, in the beginning, then flamenco with the guitar. So, until now, like when we are singing on the street, I have zero idea about the lyrics (Bashar Balleh, interview, December 6, 2018).[25]

Regardless of musicians' personal preferences, performing a repertoire in Arabic language from "Arab geography"[26] demonstrates how Syrian musicians use transcultural capital. According to Glick Schiller and Meinhof, transcultural capital is a concept that emphasizes "the capacity for strategic interventions of migrant and minority groups" (2011: 8). They stress the potential of migrant musicians to play out the "ethnic card" or situate themselves in cosmopolitan and diverse artistic contexts when expressing themselves. In this perspective, the deliberate repertoire choice of Syrian musicians for various musical occasions, including the street performances, can be better understood as a tactic they utilize to balance unequal power relations in social interaction.

Choosing popular songs is not the only tactical decision musicians make when setting their repertoire. As Omar argues, the chosen songs are mostly played consecutively and faster than their "original" versions to entertain the audience:

> With our band, we choose famous songs from Arab countries and cover them. We play the covers with our interpretation and in a lively manner. I think it is necessary to play the music that can be danced on Istiklal Avenue because people come there to have fun. . . . I'm a little tired of playing those songs all the time, but we play them better every day than before. We play them livelier. It is not enough to play music on Istiklal Avenue, I think it is also essential to perform a show (Öğüt and Alkilani 2019: 85).

Even though playing catchy tunes is one of the key tactics for getting attention, as some of my interlocutors stated, especially in the earlier period of their migration, they reported feeling somewhat guilty for playing lively songs in times where there were news of violence in their homeland; sometimes, therefore, they would even apologize to their Syrian audience. Regarding the emotional dimension of the early years of the migration, some songs from the region that had special meaning for the Syrian audience are worth mentioning. "Mawtini" ("My Homeland") is a case in point. Even though it is not a vibrant song like many others, I did not come across a single concert or performance

[25] Bashar's statement serves to briefly touch upon another critical issue. As can be seen above, Bashar refers to this repertoire as "Arabic music." The term "Arab/Arabic music," however, is insufficient to represent the variety of musical traditions and styles in the region. Still, it is used by outsiders or by musicians from the region addressing outsiders. If it is necessary to use, I would prefer the plural form "Arab musics". On the other hand, as a label, "Arab/Arabic Music" usually refers to a genre in the world music market.

[26] The borders and the fluidity between Syrian and Arab identities in the case of Syrian musicians requires a comprehensive discussion beyond the limits of this article.

that did not feature this song, especially in 2015 and 2016. Composed by Mohammed Flyfel based on the Palestinian poet Ibrahim Tuqan in the 1930s, this song was the Palestinian national anthem for years. Hence, it became a powerful symbol for the Arab world. It also became the national anthem of Iraq after the US invasion, and during the Syrian revolution, the opposition used the song as a symbol of their struggle. Given the specific significance of this song for Syrian refugees, it was not surprising to witness a scene where the Syrian audience of a street concert listened to this song in tears.

Another song performed with a special significance in the early period of migration was "Janna Ya Watena" (or "Janna Janna", "Paradise Homeland"). It often was sung with words adapted to the migrant musicians' situation, such as "Paradise Syria." Some other researchers focusing on Syrian refugees' musical practices in Turkey and Europe have also discussed this song as a significant piece. For example, in his research findings, Ioannis Christidis (2020) refers to this song as one of the most frequently heard anti-regime songs. Similarly, in his notes on the SOAS Ceilidh Band's Istanbul visit in 2017, Ed Emery tells a story about the song that he heard in Istanbul:

> But, as they told us on the street, the version of the song performed by the Syrians on Istiklal is quite different. It is the voice of the Syrian revolution that started in 2011. Specifically, it was the song that was sung at the start of the uprising in the town of Homs. The words are taken and turned into a moment of powerful chant and dance, condemning the corruption and violence of the Assad government. In translation, the lyrics say of the home country: "Despite all the bad things that happen in you, you are my country, you are my paradise" (2017: 11).

III. Street Musicianship as a First Stage of a Music Market

Looking at Syrian musicians' professional musical practices in retrospect reveals that they first used the street as an open market to display their products and establish themselves professionally and then expanded the range of their musical practices. As previously mentioned, for Syrian musicians, who had to endure precarious conditions at different stages of their lives in Turkey due to the uncertainty of the country's legal system and social exclusion (Ilcan, Rygiel, and Baban 2018: 53), to enter the music market that operates through social networks is difficult if not impossible. Upon this realization, Syrian musicians have used the street as a stage to launch the first step of a new music career. Through continuous street performances, many of them have managed to improve their skills, form relatively stable street ensembles, create social media profiles, meet the agents, journalists, researchers, and other mediators; in short, many have managed to established a permanent musical career.

Mood Band is the most significant example of this. The band was founded on Istiklal Street by Syrian musicians from various cities of Syria. Owing to the reputation they gained through street performances and social media, they started to play in various venues, restaurants, bars, tourist ferries, at special events and festivals. A member of Mood Band, Omar Alkilani, summarizes this process:

> After three years of making music on Istiklal Avenue, I now communicate with many more people, both socially and artistically. Thanks to performing on Istiklal Avenue I met most of my friends. In this process, we have worked hard and achieved countless successes. We have become a known Oriental music band [Mood Band] in Istanbul. We are constantly playing at events and concerts. Many Arabs living here or tourists are particularly influenced by the music we make in Istanbul (Öğüt and Alkilani 2019: 81).

Due to factors such as musicians' efforts on the street and the growth of Syrian entrepreneurship (Atasü-Topcuoğlu 2019), especially after 2016, Syrian musicians' musical practices have changed over the years. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Syrian musicians could use several venues to perform, like cafés, restaurants, and bars, owned mostly by other Syrian migrants. Over time, not only the number of performance venues has increased, but Syrian musicians have also established music schools to teach both Syrian traditional and Western popular music.[27] Thus, they created a favorable context in which their art could flourish.

According to Jonathan Shannon, the prolific musical scene, with music lessons being taught at home, at small music schools and institutions established by Syrians are the result of the "growing needs of the Syrian community for musical education" (2019: 2174). Keeping traditional music – such as the *muwashshat* tradition of Aleppo – alive and transmitting it to the new generation indeed continues to be crucially important for the Syrian community in the tenth year of their migration. However, given the large number of young students willing to learn popular musical genres and instruments like guitar, I believe that there is another reason why these music schools are established and almost exclusively attended by Arabic-speaking individuals. I assert that establishing, teaching, and learning in these community-specific institutions is, indeed, a response to general discrimination and segregation in a country where Arab culture and music are deemed inferior. Similarly, the recording studios and TV channels Syrian musicians run or work for produce content for the Arabic-speaking audience in Turkey and the region. In other words, even though Syrian musicians have developed a vibrant musical life over the last couple of years, because of the obstacles to incorporation into Turkey's local music market and the prejudices of the Turkish audience, these musical activities mainly address an Arab audience both in Turkey and the Arab geography.

Shannon (2019: 2169) also refers to a growing Syrian musical culture in Istanbul. It is a fact that "Arab culture" has become more and more visible in everyday life, and music in Arabic language has come to be heard more often, especially in Istanbul's international music scene. However, even though an alternative music scene, such as that of DJs whose performances include "oriental" tunes and the Arabic language or the keyboard sound of Omar Souleyman, are becoming more interesting for young middle-class Turkish citizens, Arab culture(s) is still far from being a mainstream interest. Thus,

[27] Habash's (2021) research indicates that the summer of 2018, witnessing a vivid street music practice and newly founded music schools at the same time, was a crucial period in this slow but constant transition from street to institutions.

the social networks surrounding the music scene Syrian musicians involve are dominated by musicians, organizers, producers, audience, students, and consumers from Arabic-speaking countries and the schools and studios are run by these actors. Due to the fact that this new music market has hardly any connection with the music sector in Turkey, it can be seen as an emerging alternative that migrant musicians are building and within which they are operating. From this perspective, street music practices can be said to gain new meaning, being seen as more than just a breadwinning activity, namely as the first step in forming this new music business.

Today street musicianship is no longer the primary musical activity of Syrian musicians in Istanbul, but it provides a backup plan in difficult times. The emergence of new music venues and contexts to perform for Syrian musicians over the years is the main reason for them to leave the street stage. In addition to that, over those years, changes in Turkey's migration policy and their effects on the public view, have repeatedly caused temporary declines of street music practice. For example, the decision of Istanbul's government to send immigrants to the cities where they were registered in summer 2019 resulted in fear of being arrested or even deported; consequently, for musicians, it was not possible to perform in public settings. As a close observer of that period, I have witnessed that some musicians registered to other cities tried to move there, but because of the lack of job opportunities in those cities, they were forced to return to Istanbul. Similarly, the repeated attacks against the Syrian community in several cities caused various interruptions in the musical activities.

When during the COVID-19 pandemic musical performances could not take place inside venues, some Syrian musicians resumed playing on the street, particularly during the summer. However, this did not result in a sustained revival of the practice of street music.

Conclusion

Street music performances of Syrian musicians in Istanbul emerged in 2014 and soon became one of the most prominent professional musical practices. Like many other cultural practices, these musical performances evolved in parallel to the migratory experience, which has been in a constant state of flux due to the dynamic political and social developments affecting Syrian migration.

Despite cultural biases against street musicians in Syria, these musicians made a deliberate decision to adopt novel performance practices to earn a living through music in Istanbul, and due to a lack of performance venues, they have turned to the street as a stage. In the absence of music schools, this stage has served as a platform for young musicians to improve their musical skills and to became professional. They eventually have used this stage to overcome their invisibility in the city and to become public space actors.

Syrian musicians have developed specific tactics to manage their fragile encounters with a diverse set of public space actors, including city residents and state officials. Finally, the street, beyond serving as a temporary working space for musicians, has allowed street music to be developed into a form of economic entrepreneurship, and thus to establish a new music market for Syrian musicians representing a viable alternative to entering Turkey's established music scene.

A close look at musicians' experience through studying their testimonies reveals a more complicated picture than initially imagined. The variety in their experiences, and interpretation thereof, evidences the community's heterogeneity and the musicians' multiple subjectivities. This diversity and controversial approaches can be situated in a vibrant historical background and reveal the necessity of understanding the practices of migrant musicians as actors of a complicated social reality. This perspective provides an opportunity to develop a political stance on migratory experiences in the ethnomusicological encounter, which focuses on their agency and the capacity to develop tactics as musicians in a potentially hostile or discriminatory environment during a challenging phase of their lives.

These ten years of Syrian street music does not only illustrate a history of Syrian migration but many other intersecting social issues and power relations among multiple actors in the country. Even though my research focuses on a specific practice migrant musicians engage in, I believe that the migratory experience cannot be understood in isolation from the conditions and relationships surrounding it. Thus, I propose to approach this experience through the reciprocity that migrant musicians conduct carefully. Additionally, I propose that further study on the newly formed migrant music market or another musical practice of Syrian migrants should examine the interaction between migrant and local communities, including the various minorities living in the city. In the tenth year of Syrian migration to Turkey, rather than assuming an – artificially – isolated migrant experience, shifting the focus to the impact of the musical practices of migrant communities on others would not only help us to avoid reproducing discriminatory discourse but would also provide a fresh perspective on migrant studies in ethnomusicology.

References

Ahmed, Sara. 1999. "Home and Away: Narratives of Migration and Estrangement." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 2(3): 329–347. https://doi.org/10.1177/136787799900200303

Al Faruqi, Lois Ibsen. 1994. *Music: An Islamic Perspective*. Minna: Islamic Education Trust.

Altiok, Birce, and Salih Tosun. 2018. "How to Co-Exist? Urban Refugees in Turkey: Prospects and Challenges." *Policy Brief* 1(4): 1-9.

Amnesty International. 2019. *Sent to a War Zone: Turkey's Illegal Deportations of Syrian Refugees*. London: Amnesty International. Accessed January 29, 2021.

https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/EUR4411022019ENGLISH.pdf

Arabian, Berge. 2015. "Sürgünde Müzisyenlik Zor Zanaat" [Musicianship in Exile is Difficult]. *Agos*, March 3, 2015. Accessed March 30, 2021. http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/10779/surgunde-muzisyenlik-zor-zanaat

Assad, Ö. Can, Merve Beğen, İlkem Demirdöğer, and Pınar Kaya. 2013. "İstanbul'da Sokak Müzisyenliği Pratiği." Unpublished research paper, Marmara University, Istanbul.

Atasü-Topcuoğlu, Reyhan. 2019. "Syrian Refugee Entrepreneurship in Turkey: Integration and the Use of Immigrant Capital in the Informal Economy." *Social Inclusion* 7(4): 200–210. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v7i4.2346

Aydın Öztürk, Tugba. 2018. "Sosyal Sermaye, İlişkiler ve Müzik Dünyası: Yeni Medyada Ağlar" [Social Capital, Relations and Music World: Networks in New Media]. *Journal of Economy Culture and Society* 58: 91–103. https://doi.org/10.26650/jecs433288

Barad, Karen. 2003. "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter." *Signs* 28(3): 801–831. https://doi.org/10.1086/345321

Bardakçi, Mehmet. 2016. "2015 Parliamentary Elections in Turkey: Demise and Revival of AKP's Single-Party Rule." *Turkish Studies* 17(1): 4–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2015.1136084

Bohlman, Philip V. 2002. *World Music: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Butler Brown, Katherine. 2007. "Introduction: Liminality and the Social Location of Musicians." *Twentieth-Century Music* 3(1): 5–12. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478572207000308

Certeau, Michel de. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Christidis, Ioannis. 2020. "'Hurriya, Azadi, Freedom Now!' An Ethnomusicological Report on the Events of Thessaloniki, Greece 2016." Music and Minorities Research Center (website). Accessed March 30, 2021. https://musicandminorities.org/research/projects/music-in-the-experience-of-forced-migration/initial-research-findings/

Dako-Gyeke, Mavis. 2013. "Conceptualization of Female Migrants' Experiences across the Lifespan." *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 2(3): 259–266. https://doi.org/10.5901/ajis.2013.v2n3p259

Değirmenci, Koray. 2008. "Turkish World Music: Multiple Fusions and Autenticities." PhD thesis, Middle East Technical University, Ankara.

Doughty, Karolina, and Maja Lagerqvist. 2016. "The Ethical Potential of Sound in Public Space: Migrant Pan Flute Music and Its Potential to Create Moments of Conviviality in a 'Failed' Public Square." *Emotion, Space and Society* 20: 58–67. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2016.06.002

Dudu, Selda. 2020. "Exploring Cultural Employment: The Case of Turkey." *Economics Literature* 2(2): 104–121. https://doi.org/10.22440/elit.2.2.1

Dueck, Byron. 2011. "Introduction." In *Migrating Music*, edited by Jason Toynbee and Byron Dueck, 22–27. New York: Routledge.

Emery, Ed. 2017. “Radical Ethnomusicology: Towards a Politics of ‘No Borders’ and ‘Insurgent Musical Citizenship’ – Calais, Dunkerque and Kurdistan.” *Ethnomusicology Ireland* 5: 48–74.

Erdoğu, Tuğçe. 2020. “Intercultural Musical Dialogue in the Context of Wellbeing of Syrian Migrants in Turkey.” Master thesis, University of Amsterdam.

Ertorer, Secil E. 2021. “Asylum Regimes and Refugee Experiences of Precarity: The Case of Syrian Refugees in Turkey.” *Journal of Refugee Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feaa089

Esen, Berk, and Sebnem Gumuscu. 2016. “Rising Competitive Authoritarianism in Turkey.” *Third World Quarterly* 37(9): 1581–1606. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1135732

Forbes Martin, Susan. [1992] 2004. *Refugee Women.* Lexington Books.

Glick Schiller, Nina, and Ulrike H. Meinhof. 2011. “Singing a New Song? Transnational Migration, Methodological Nationalism and Cosmopolitan Perspectives.” *Music and Arts in Action* 3(3): 21–39. Accessed August 27, 2021. http://musicandartsinaction.net/index.php/maia/article/view/singingnewsong

Gökarıksel , Saygun, and Z. Umut Türem. 2019. “The Banality of Exception? Law and Politics in ‘Post-Coup’ Turkey.” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 118(1): 175–187. https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-7281684

Grill, Jan. 2009. “Performing Street Music-cum-begging in Switzerland: the Negotiating and Shifting of Social Categories among Hungarian Speaking Roma Migrants from Slovakia.” *Slovenský Národopis* 57(5): 527–545.

Habash, Dunya. 2021. “‘Do Like You Did in Aleppo’: Negotiating Space and Place Among Syrian Musicians in Istanbul.” *Journal Of Refugee Studies* 34(2): 1370–1386. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feab013

Hajj, Hussain. 2016. “The Syrian Musicians in Istanbul: The Relationship Between Repertoire and Stage.” *Alternatif Politika* 8(3): 474–484.

İçduygu, Ahmet. 2016. *Turkey: Labour Market Integration and Social Inclusion of Refugees*. *Study for the EMPL Committee*. Burssels: European Union. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/595328/IPOL_STU(2016)595328_EN.pdf

Ilcan, Suzan., Kim Rygiel, and Fevzi Baban. 2018. “The Ambiguous Architecture of Precarity: Temporary Protection, Everyday Living and Migrant Journeys of Syrian Refugees.” *International Journal of Migration and Border Studies* 4(1–2): 51–70.

Jones, Dorian. 2021. “ Syrian Refugees Targeted in Ankara Night of Violence” *Voice of America*, August 12, 2021. Accessed September 8, 2021. https://www.voanews.com/europe/syrian-refugees-targeted-ankara-night-violence

Kavaklı, Nurhan. 2018. “Hate Speech Towards Syrian Refugees in Turkish Online Reader Comments.” In *Global Perspectives on Human Migration, Asylum, and Security*, edited by Christina M. Akrivopoulou, 127–142. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-2817-3.ch007

Kaya, Ayhan. 2016. “Syrian Refugees and Cultural Intimacy in Istanbul: ‘I Feel Safe Here!’” *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2870516

Körükmez, Lülüfer, İlhan Z. Karakılıç ve Didem Danış. 2020. *Mecburiyet Müzakere Değişim: Suriyeli Kadınların Çalışma Deneyimleri ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet İlişkileri*

[Exigency, Negotiation, Change: The Work Experiences of Refugee Women and Gender Relations]. Istanbul: GAR Kitaplık.

Kurtişoğlu, Belma, Selda Öztürk, and Hussain Hajj. 2016. "Performing Migration." *Refugee Watch* 48: 67–81.

Kytö, Meri, and Hytönen-Ng, Elina. 2016. "Busking and Negotiations of Urban Acoustic Space in South Bank, London." In *The Auditory Culture Reader*, 2nd, ed., edited by Michael Bull and Les Back, 229–242, London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003086895

Malkki, Liisa H. 1996. "Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization." *Cultural Anthropology* 11(3): 377–404. https://www.jstor.org/stable/656300

Öğüt, Evrim H. 2015. "Music in Transit: Musical Practices of the Chaldean-Iraqi Migrants in Istanbul." PhD thesis, Istanbul Technical University.

———. 2021. "Music, Migration and Public Space: Syrian Streetmusicianship in the Political Context." *Arts* 10(4). https://doi.org/10.3390/arts10040071

Öğüt, Evrim H., and Omar Alkilani. 2019. "Göç ve Müzik Üzerine Birlikte Düşünmek." [Thinking about Music and Migration Together] In "Mekanda Adalet ve Mültecilik," [Spatial Justice and Refugee] ed. Aslı İkizoğlu Erensü and Yunus Doğan Telliel, special issue, *Beyond Istanbul* 7: 76–83.

Ozduzen, Ozge, Umut Korkut, and Cansu Ozduzen. 2020. "'Refugees Are Not Welcome': Digital Racism, Online Place-Making and the Evolving Categorization of Syrians in Turkey." *New Media and Society*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820956341

Reuters Staff. "Turkey will no Longer Stop Syrian Migrant Flow to Europe: Turkish official." Reuters (website). Accessed January 29, 2021. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-security-turkey-migrants/turkey-will-no-longer-stop-syrian-migrant-flow-to-europe-turkish-official-idUSKCN20L33V

Shannon, Jonathan H. 2019. "From Silence into Song: Affective Horizons and Nostalgic Dwelling among Syrian Musicians in Istanbul." *Rast Müzikoloji Dergisi* 7(2): 2169–2180. Accessed August 27, 2021. https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/rastmd/issue/57350/813331

Simpson, Paul. 2011. "Street Performance and the City: Public Space, Sociality, and Intervening in the Everyday." *Space and Culture* 14(4): 415–430. https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331211412270

Şimşek, Doğuş. 2019. "Transnational Activities of Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Hindering or Supporting Integration." *International Migration* 57(2): 268–282. https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12489

Tanenbaum, Susie. 1995. *Underground Harmonies: Music and Politics in the Subways of New York*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Temporary Protection. n.d. Republic of Turkey Ministry of Interior: Directorate General of Migration Management (website). Accessed March 8, 2021. https://en.goc.gov.tr/temporary-protection27

Turan, Namık S. 2009. "Erken Cumhuriyetin Tarih Kitaplarında 'Arap' İmgesinin Oluşumuna Dair Notlar" [Notes on the Formation of 'The Arab' Image in the History Books of the Early Republic]. *Türk Kültürü*, 2(3):61–77.

Wimmer, Andreas, and Nina Glick Schiller. 2003. "Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology."

The International Migration Review 37(3): 576–610. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30037750

Multimedia Sources

Öğüt, Evrim Hikmet, workshop organizer. 2017. "Sesime Ses Ver: İstanbul'un Müzisyenleri" [Add Your Voice to Mine: Istanbul's Musicians]. A workshop at Istanbul Biennial 2017, YouTube. Accessed September 8, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzMk8pjJG8s; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swSY11J5N-g

———, producer. 2017–2018. *Göçmenin Müziği Müziğin Göçü* [Music of Migrant Migration of Music]. A radio program for Açık Radyo, 26 episodes, Spotify. Accessed September 7, 2021. https://open.spotify.com/show/2eMiQsvw4IN9f1pJTJeyik

———, producer. 2018. Interview with Hozan Othman. An episode of *Göçmenin Müziği Müziğin Göçü* [Music of Migrant Migration of Music], 26:28, Spotify. Accessed September 7, 2021. https://open.spotify.com/episode/3RawvFCOJNU1YxAuXOeq8Z

Öğüt, Evrim Hikmet, and Umut Sülün, producers. 2016a. Video interview with Munzer Sheikh Alkar. An episode of *Sounds Beyond the Border*, 10:42, YouTube. Accessed September 7, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6nvi6lYjOQ

———, producers. 2016b. Video interview with Alaa Alkateb. An episode of *Sounds Beyond the Border*, 8:57, YouTube. Accessed March 30, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uu8IRFM7yW0

———, producers. 2018a. Video interview with Mahdy Alkelany. An episode of *Sounds Beyond the Border*, 11:42, YouTube. Accessed March 30, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dArHLqsvKJ4

———, producers. 2018b. Video interview with Omar Alkilani. An episode of *Sounds Beyond the Border*, 10:59, YouTube. Accessed September 8, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQesRGeFmHY

———, producers. n.d. *Sounds Beyond the Border*. A video interview series with Syrian musicians in Istanbul, 6 interviews. Accessed September 7, 2021. https://soundsbeyondtheborder.org

Ethnographic Data

Abuhemeida, Nour. Interview by the author. Gaziantep, May 13, 2017.
Ahmad, Fawaz. Interview by the author. Istanbul, July 17, 2018.
Alkar, Munzer Sheikh. Interview by the author. Istanbul, November 3, 2016.
Alkateb, Alaa. Interview by the author. Istanbul, September 5, 2016.
Alkelany, Mahdy. Interview by the author. Istanbul, April 8, 2018.
Alkilani, Omar. Interview by the author. Istanbul, September 11, 2018.
Balleh, Bashar. Interview by the author. Istanbul, December 6, 2018.
Başdurak, Nil. Personal Communication. Istanbul, December 16, 2017.
Iranian musician. Personal Communication. Eskişehir. December 27, 2017.
Kurdî, Muhammad. Interview by the author. Istanbul, February 27, 2018.

Othman, Hozan. Interview by the author. Istanbul, June 3, 2018.
Syrian-American Student. Personal Communication. Online, May 7, 2021.
Syrian Women Choir. Focus group discussion by the author. Istanbul, August 9, 2017.

Author Biography

Evrim Hikmet Öğüt is teaching as an Associate Professor of ethnomusicology at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University in Istanbul. She has completed her Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology at Istanbul Technical University with a dissertation on the musical practices of the Chaldean-Iraqi migrants in Istanbul in 2015. Dr. Öğüt studies the music of the refugee and migrant communities, musical activism, and Arab and Middle Eastern musical cultures. Her current research projects focus on the musical practices of Syrian musicians in Istanbul and the Arab identity's re-formation through music in New York (visiting scholar, CUNY).