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***Istanbul: East Meets West
Europeans and Ottomans Listen to Each Other, 1500-1700***

Dünya Ensemble

Robert Labaree, *çeng/voice/percussion* **Emily Lau**, *voice*

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Zoe Weiss, *viola da gamba/voice*

Tom Zajac, *santur/miskal/recorders/renaissance flute/voice*

During the six centuries of Ottoman Turkish rule in the Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa, which ended in 1923, a steady but modest stream of travelers found their way to the lands east of Vienna. Most of them were occupied with commercial, ambassadorial, military or religious pursuits, and some even chose to stay in the East. Those who did stay attached themselves to existing native, non-Muslim communities in Ottoman trading cities, creating stable neighborhoods of Europeans which thrived for centuries, complete with their own churches and synagogues, markets and schools. (The absence of native Muslim populations in Europe made comparable communities less likely there.) The Venetians, the Ottomans' chief western trading partner between the 14th and 17th centuries, profited most from intimate relations with the Turks and brushed off accusations by their European competitors that they were "the Sultan's concubine." Regular outbursts of hostility marked the Ottoman centuries, but these were as often intra-communal—Christian against Christian and Muslim against Muslim—as they were cross against crescent, fired by crusade and jihad. Neither side had patience for long disruption of their lucrative trade relations, so ideology, while ever-present, tended to give way to pragmatism. On each side, the mutual investment in the other—including deep commercial ties, intermarriage of Eastern Christian royalty with Ottoman princes, and recognition of a common Abrahamic heritage in their scriptures—contributed to a situation which the historian Daniel Goffman has described as a "Euro-Ottoman symbiosis." This sustained contact and interdependence also fed a sustained mutual fascination.

How is it possible to convey through music something of the complex interactions and tangled identities of these two regions over even two centuries? As the repertoire on this program demonstrates, the concoction of fact, imagination, paranoia, dogma, pragmatism, fantasy, curiosity and misinformation which falls from the pages of letters, diaries and consular reports in this period is matched in the musical documents on both sides.

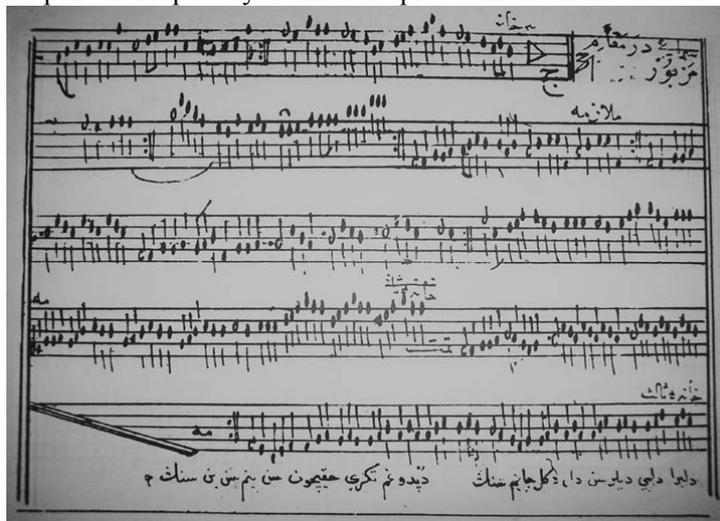


Ali Ufki, 1610-75.

A central figure of this program is the famous **Ali Ufki**, a character whose improbable life-story blazes with feats of intellectual brilliance. Born in the Ukraine as Albert Bobowski, a Polish Protestant, Ali Ufki was probably trained in church music. Crimean Tatars on a border raid abducted him as a young man and sold him to the Ottoman court in Istanbul, where he became a life-long convert to Islam. He quickly rose to positions of influence: he led the palace music ensemble, and he served as court treasurer and as a linguist. He mastered at least sixteen languages, including Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Arabic. Ali Ufki was the first to translate the Bible into Turkish, his greatest achievement. He produced a Turkish edition (words and music) of John Calvin's *Genevan Psalter*, and also wrote Muslim devotional songs and an explanation of

Islam in Latin. After about twenty years in captivity, he regained his liberty while on a journey to Egypt, stayed there for a time, and became a renowned *dragoman* (an official guide, interpreter, and translator in the Middle East).

Ali Ufki's manuscript collection, the *Mecmûa-i Sâz ü Söz* (c. 1650), records more than a thousand pieces in modified staff notation and Arabic letters—presumably his personal repertory. Numerous pieces are identified as “European.”



A page from Ali Ufki's manuscript collection, which reads from right to left.

We have put pieces excavated from his one-of-a-kind collection together with works from Western sources to reveal how, in these early modern centuries, The Other was deeply rooted in everyday lives and imaginations on both sides.

PROGRAM

Part I. *A Peşrev-Pavane, a Faux Turkish Air, a European Mustafa and Other Crossovers*

Here we have assorted glimpses of Europeans and Ottomans enjoying their own representations of each other, revealing a mutual curiosity fed with fragmentary knowledge. Ali Ufki labeled two pieces in his collection *efrenci* (European), and one—a *pişrev* (*peşrev*, or prelude)—he even called a “pavane.” Study of these pieces by Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol and Tom Zajac revealed that Ali Ufki’s European *peşrev* was none other than the melody of the well-known *Pavane de Spaigne* from Praetorius’s famous dance collection *Terpsichore* (1612). Charles Tessier’s piece *He vel a queur* has an unintelligible text purporting to be “Turkish,” comparable to the exotic babble in the song of the Mufti (“Hu la ba ba la chou ba la ba ba la da”) in Molière’s *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* in 1670. Another piece from the Ali Ufki collection is on a text by a mysterious Frenk Mustafa, or “Mustafa the European.” Was he a Muslim convert, like Ali Ufki himself? An Ottoman traveler in the West? A Turk with European parentage?

Taksim (instrumental improvisation)

Pişrev-i Efrenci yani Pavane (European *peşrev* or pavane) Music: anonymous
Source: Ali Ufki, *Mecmua-i saz ü söz* (1650)

Pavane de Spaigne Music: anonymous
Source: Michael Praetorius, *Terpsichore, Musarum Aoniarum Quinta*, 1612

He vel a queur

Charles Tessier (1550-1604?)

Source: *Airs et villanelles en fran., ital., espa., suice. et turcq. mises en musique a 3, 4 & 5 parties* [Airs and villanelles in French, Italian, Spanish, Swiss and Turkish set to music in 3, 4 and 5 parts], (Paris, 1604), edited by Tom Zajac.

Charles Tessier was a lutenist from a Breton family, perhaps a Huguenot, who served at the French court of Henry IV. His performances “enthralled” listeners. He had an international career: pursuit of patronage took him to England, Scotland, and Germany, and he was fluent in Italian. From his pen, we have nearly 100 light, courtly settings for voices and lute: satirical or bawdy, rustic or sophisticated. The Italian and Swiss-German languages are objects of fun in some songs; those in “Turkish”—which would have mystified Parisians—are actually in nonsense verse. Having rhyme but not reason, nonsense verse goes back as far as ancient Greece. Shakespeare knew it well, and it is still a delight of children and scholars alike. The greatest modern exemplar, Lewis Carroll’s “Jabberwocky,” from *Alice in Wonderland*, purports to be in ancient Anglo-Saxon, a language as exotic as Turkish. Here is Alice’s telling response to it:

“It seems very pretty . . . but it's rather hard to understand!” (You see she didn't like to confess, even to herself, that she couldn't make it out at all.)
 “Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas—only I don't exactly know what they are! However, somebody killed something: that's clear. . . .”

The joke is on the earnest listener, who looks for meaning in nonsense.

*He vel a queur si hu geau ne my
 Ba ha durly durly gie far:
 Guielere mi ci, guielere mi ci
 Cara guiu selly.*

[words unintelligible]

Nişabur MurabbaSource: Ali Ufki, *Mecmua-i saz ü söz* (1650)Music: anonymous
Text: Frenk Mustafa

*Olur melül-ü garib elem çeker aşık canım
 Düşürme sagarı elden şu nar saka seyi aşık
 Cihan bütün o da yansa elem çeker mi aşık*

Sweetheart, a lover will bear sorrow and become sad.
 Lover, do not put down that glass with the pomegranate stem.
 If the whole world is also burning, can a lover bear sorrow?

Semâi-i Efrenci (European *semai*)Source: Ali Ufki, *Mecmua-i saz ü söz* (1650)

Music: anonymous

Part II. Euro-Ottoman Devotional Music

The scriptures of Jews, Christians and Muslims overlapped in content, making them “people of the book” (*ahl al-kitab*) in Muslim theology. Here, three inter-communal links are explored: a common Abrahamic reverence for the Psalms, the bonds between Jewish and Muslim Ottomans, and Ali Ufki’s own ties with European Protestantism.

French and Turkish Versions of Psalm 13

In a manuscript of 1665 entitled *Mezmurlar* (The Psalms), Ali Ufki, the recent Muslim convert, made his own rhymed Turkish translations of Psalms 1-14 set to simple tunes preserved in western staff notation. Ali Ufki’s 14 tunes are, note-for-note, identical to Psalms 1-14 in the famous Genevan Psalter, assembled by Jean Calvin for use in the Reform congregations of Geneva, Switzerland. We will sing both Turkish and French versions.

Sources: *Genevan Psalter* (Geneva, 1562) and Ali Ufki’s *Mezmurlar* (Istanbul, 1665)

Rhyming French text by Clément Marot. Turkish translation by Ali Ufki.
Melody by Guillaume Franc.

French text:

*Jusques à quand as établi
Seigneur, de me mettre en oubli?
Est-ce à jamais? Par combien d’aage
Destourneras tu ton visage
De moy, las! D’angoisse rempli? . . .*

Turkish text:

*Ya Allah nice bu hamuş
İdersin beni feramuş
Daima böyle mi eylersin.
Nice dek benden yüzün gizlersin
Sana ümitvar kalmış her tümüş . . .*

Translation:

How long Lord wilt thou forget me?
For evermore? and wilt thou let my prayer
Be remembered never?
Lord, wilt thou hide thy face for ever
From me with woes and foes beset? . . .

Kyrie Ekekraksa (Greek Orthodox, Psalm 140/141)

Music: anonymous.

A traditional setting of a psalm in Greek, preserved in Greek Byzantine notation.

Kyrie ekekraksa pro se isakouson mou isakouson mou Kyrie / Kyrie ekekraksa pro se isakouson mou / proshesti phoni tis theiseos mou / en to enkrayene me pros se isakouson mou Kyrie / Katevthinthito e prosethi mou os thymiama enopion sou Eparis tou cheirou ma thusia esperini eisakouson mou Kyrie.

Lord, I have cried out to thee, hear me, O Lord / Hear me, O Lord, when I cry unto thee / Attend to the voice of my supplication / When I cry unto thee, O Lord / Let my prayer arise as incense before you / and the lifting of my hands as a sacrifice/ Hear me, O Lord.

An Ottoman-Jewish *maftirim* piece in Hebrew and Turkish

Since at least the 16th century, the *maftirim* repertoire—Hebrew devotional poetry (*piyyutim*) set to Ottoman/Turkish music for use in the synagogue—has demonstrated the close and continuing relationship between Jews and members of Muslim mystical brotherhoods in the Ottoman regions. The poet of this 16th-century *piyyut*, Israel Najara, specified that it was to be sung to the melody of a well-known song by the Bektaşî Sufi poet Pir Sultan Abdal. The original melody of Najara's poem has been lost. Here, his words have been adapted to a traditional Bektaşî melody, allowing us to sing both the Hebrew and Turkish versions.

Yesha El Hay Tohil

Music: anonymous. Words: Israel Najara (1555-1625).

Arr. Noam Sender. Source: Hebrew manuscript from Venice, 1599/1600.

Yesha el hay tohil lev soled behil

Living God, provide deliverance to an exulting heart

Ki od el hay eliyon yateh al tziyon

The Heavenly Living God will still favor Zion

Lev nishbar venidka pedut el hakeh

Broken and dismayed heart, expect heavenly redemption

Lev ashuk veratzutz od tashuv lasus

Weary and exhausted heart, you shall rejoice again!

Gel Gönül Sabreyle

Words: Pir Sultan Abdal (ca. 1480-1550).

Gel gönül sabreyle katlan bu çevre

Come, my heart, be patient and bear this pain

Elbet sen'ağlatan bir gün güldürür

Surely, who makes you cry, will make you smile one day

Niceleri konu göçtü bu hane

So many have come to, and left this inn

Elbet sen'ağlatan bir gün güldürür

Surely, who makes you cry, will make you smile one day.

Part III. *From Roger the European to Concerto Turco*

Here are more fragmentary clues to Euro-Ottoman interactions: a *peşrev* (prelude) by a composer named Roger the European, another of Charles Tessier's songs with a faux-Turkish text, and a Sufi ceremonial piece, first published in western notation in Venice (1787) by Giambatista Toderini. This we have matched with a well-known traditional piece for the whirling ceremony of the Mevlevi dervishes, which closely resembles the Toderini transcription.

Pişrev-i Rocer Amel Efrenci (Prelude by Roger the European)

Music: anonymous. Source: Ali Ufki, *Mecmua-i saz ü söz* (1650).

Tal lissi man

Charles Tessier (1550 – 1604?)

Source: *Airs et villanelles en fran., ital., espa., suice. et turcq. mises en musique a 3, 4 & 5 parties* (1604), edited by Tom Zajac.

Tal lissi man he ra his he hi der

Va ra lon bo hi hon da ul duc

[words unintelligible]

Iolona co hor ba ho la hon:

Al dic ca hic ol da celar ka ter galary.

Concerto Turco nominato izia samaisi (Turkish piece, called instrumental *semai*)

Source: G. Toderini, *Letteratura turchesca* (*Turkish literature*; Venice, 1787)

A Sufi ceremonial piece transcribed by (or for) Giambatista Toderini (1728-99). Abbot Toderini was an immensely erudite Venetian nobleman—Jesuit father, moral philosopher, writer—who lived in the Venetian Ambassador's palace in Istanbul for over four years (1781-86). His vast study of Turkish culture, *Letteratura turchesca*, has a chapter on music with only one musical example: this instrumental piece, from the Sama (or Sema), the musical whirling ceremony of the Mevlevi order.¹ Sufism (a mystical, ascetic movement), follows the ancient devotional practice of repeating the names of God, mostly in silence, to achieve ecstatic union with divinity. In the Sama ceremony, this act of mindfulness of God is performed as a “dance” of slow whirling, turning toward God, with symbolism of sun and moon, death and the grave.

Hicaz son yürük semai

Anonymous (18th c.)

A traditional Mevlevi Sufi instrumental piece similar to Toderini's transcription.

* * * *INTERMISSION* * * *

¹ The Mevlevi order (“whirling dervishes”) was founded in Anatolia in 1273 by followers of “Rumi,” the Persian poet and theologian. It had a lodge in Istanbul and many prominent members.

Part IV. *Dronish Chant and Confused Noise*

The two pieces in this set call attention to the particular qualities of European and Ottoman music which each side found most unattractive and incomprehensible in the other. To heighten the musical contrast, we have chosen pieces with similarly ambiguous Christian and Sufi love texts. In 1679 the English traveler Dr. John Covel observed that the “dronish chant” of the Ottomans “has only antiquity to recommend it,” a testimony to how Ottoman monophony struck Europeans as a distasteful throwback to their own middle ages. On the Ottoman side, in 1767 Charles Henri de Blainville reported a conversation with a Turkish informant who said that European polyphony first struck him as “a confused noise,” declaring that “they seemed to me to be trying to give the alarm of “fire!” Blainville himself professed to finding Turkish music “ridiculous at first, or rather unappreciable,” but “consequently to differ in finesse from Italian, as much as the latter differs from ours.” Blainville ends his story by claiming that his informant eventually came around to “a high esteem for our art, our method, and the true beauties that the fullness of our harmonies gives”—a concise summary of how Enlightenment Europeans increasingly felt that, given time, history would resolve the competition between Christian and Muslim civilizations in their favor.

Kaside (vocal improvisation on a sacred text) Text: Niyazi Misri (1618-93)

<i>Ey bülbül-i şeyda yine efgane mi geldin</i>	Oh love nightingale, have you come again to cry?
<i>Azm-i gül edip zar ile giryane mi geldin</i>	Has your intention, pure like the rose, driven you to tears?
<i>Pervane gibi ateşe daim can atarsın</i>	Like a moth you hurl your soul into the flame
<i>Evvelde bu aşk oduna sen yane mi geldin</i>	In the beginning, would you have come to this burning love?
<i>Yağmur gibi yağarsa bela sen baş açarsın</i>	If trouble descends like rain, you bare your head
<i>Can veremeye dost yoluna kurbane mi geldin</i>	Giving your soul to the way of The Friend, have you come to sacrifice?

Favus distillans Music: Johannes Ghiselin (Flemish, fl. 1491-1507)
Text: *Song of Songs* 4: 11. Edited by Tom Zajac.

<i>Favus distillans labia tua, sponsa; mel et lac sub lingua tua: et odor vestimentorum tuorum sicut odor thuris.</i>	Thy lips, O my spouse, distill wild honey: honey and milk are under thy tongue and the smell of thy garments is like Frankincense.
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V. Confrontation and Fascination

Like the fuller story of Euro-Ottoman relations, the flip-flop of attraction and revulsion is impossible to miss in the music on both sides. In this final set, a warlike 17th-century Turkish folk song, written down by Ali Ufki, minces no words about the Venetians' "drunken arrogant thievery." This is followed by a snippet of a Mevlevi Sufi ceremony transcribed independently by a French visitor and his contemporary in Istanbul, Ali Ufki. Another bloodthirsty utterance is next, this time by a Hungarian celebrating a famous Ottoman siege that failed. The poetry of Cem Sultan, pretender to the Ottoman throne, composed while in exile in Europe, serves as the basis for a vocal improvisation (*gazel*). It is a mix of complaint at the would-be sultan's fallen state and excitement about life in the land where (it seems) no pleasures are forbidden. We end with a pair of love songs: a Turkish song transmitted by a Venetian ambassador (1688), and a popular Italian song of the previous century, also printed in Venice. Each of them speak of—what else?—flirtation and the pain of love.

Muhayyer türki

Anonymous

Source: Ali Ufki, *Mecmua-i saz ü söz* (1650)

A 17th-century Turkish folk song describing conflict with the Venetians.

<i>Nicesin Venedik frengi</i>	How many of you are there, filthy Venetians?
<i>İdiüb Osmanlı'yla cengi</i>	Making war with the Ottomans,
<i>Kırdırdın kaç nice bin sengi</i>	You broke thousands of rocks
<i>Serhoş sirkat küstahların...</i>	Your drunken arrogant thievery...

Taksim (instrumental improvisation)

Devran-ı Dervişan Zeviyüşşan

Source: Jean Antoine du Loir (c. 1640; publ. 1654); Ali Ufki, *Mecmua-i saz ü söz* (1650). Arranged by Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol.

The two versions of the music for the Mevlevi whirling ceremony in the mid-17th century, one written down by the French merchant-traveler Jean Antoine du Loir, the other by Ali Ufki, resemble each other enough that we have combined them here and added the words normally sung to this part of the *ayin* (the Mevlevi rite).²

<i>Ey ki hezâr âferîn, bu nice sultân olur</i>	O the great Creator who is the Ruler,
<i>Kulu olan kisiler hüsrev ü hâkân olur...</i>	Servants of whom are His faithful...

² In 2010, Dr. Feza Tansug, an ethnomusicologist in Istanbul, announced that, according to his research, Jean Antoine du Loir's transcription served as the model for Beethoven's "Chorus of the Dervishes" in his monumental incidental music to *The Ruins of Athens* (op. 113, 1811). See <http://www.prlog.org/10747146-turkish-hymn-that-inspired-beethoven-found.html>; accessed 1/12/13.

Eger vár viadaláról való ének Words and music: Sebastyén Tinódi (1510-1554)

An epic poem on the siege of the Hungarian fortress of Eger in 1552.

*Ti Magyarok már is tent imádgjátok Jelösbén Tiszán innet kik lakosztok
És öneki nagy hálákat adgyátok Egri vitézeknek sok jót mongyátok...*

The Hungarians worship God and give thanks to Him for all He has done—especially in Eger against the Turks, which was not of human power—and for His six miracles, among them strange deaths, and for our mighty heroes, which we now recount. . . .

Gazel (vocal improvisation)

Words: Cem Sultan (1459-1495)

*Câm-ı Cem nûş eyle iy Cem bu Frengistândur
Her kulun başına yazılan gelir devrândur*

*Ka'betu'llâh'a varup bir gün tavâf eyledüğüün
Bin Karaman bin Arab bin mülket-i Osmândur*

*Şükr kıl Allâh'a kim geldün Frengistan'a sağ
Sağlığınca her kişi nefsince bir sultandır*

*Fursatı fevt eyleme ayş eyle sür zevk u safâ
Kimseye bâkî değül bu mülk-i dünyâ fândur. . . .*

Drink, oh Cem, from the cup of Cemşid here in France!
On every head falls what is intended to be.
The day you entered Mecca and circled the Kaba was equal to a thousand
Ottoman realms, a thousand Karamans and Arabs.
Thanks be to God that you have come safely to France.
He who has health is a sultan in the flesh.
Do not let the moment of pleasure and delight slip away.
The world's riches are passing and belong to no man alone...

Bus ederdim (Ottoman love song)

Anonymous

Transcribed by Giovanni Battista Donado (*Della Letteratura de' Turchi*, 1688).

<i>Bus ederdim elini zülf-i dütdan korkaram</i>	I kiss her hand but fear her locks
<i>Dir dir ten dir dir ten dir dir ten beli yarimen</i>	[nonsense refrain, like fa-la-la]
<i>Bir vefalı yarilen girsem muhabbet eylesem</i>	If I could only approach
[refrain]	a faithful lover, if I could speak
<i>Aşık olmak isterem emma cefadan korkaram</i>	How I long for love, but dread
[refrain]	the suffering.

Chi passa per sta strada

Filippo Azzaiolo (Italian, 16th c.)

Source: *Il primo libro de villote*, Venice, Gardane, 1557

“Chi passa per sta strada” is a “composed” 4-part street song or theatrical song, in dialect, with a refrain of nonsense syllables. It was one of the most popular love songs of its day, performed all over Europe, even in England, where it is mentioned in a play of 1613. William Byrd based a keyboard work on it, and many other composers drew on it for their own compositions. The tune was also used for dances. The composer, a singer from Bologna, is known only for his three-volume collection of such popular pieces, where “Chi passa” stands as no. 1.

*Chi passa per sta strada e non sospira,
beato s'è, falalilela*

He who goes down this street and
sighs not, blessed is he, *falalilela*

*Beato è chi lo puo, lo puote fare
per la regale*

Blessed is he who can do it.

*Affacciati mo, se non ch'io moro mo,
falalilela*

Show yourself at the window,
lest I die, *falalilela*

The Performers

Mehmet Ali Sanhkol (*voice, ud, saz, ney*) is a composer, jazz pianist and teacher with a doctorate in composition from the New England Conservatory, and is co-founder and president of Dün̄ya.

Robert Labaree (*çeng, voice, percussion*) is on the faculty of NEC's Music History Department, director of the NEC Intercultural Institute. He is co-founder and vice-president of Dün̄ya.

Cem Mutlu (*voice, percussion*) plays jazz and a variety of “world musics.” He is a founding member of the Dün̄ya board of directors.

Tom Zajac (*early wind instruments, santur, voice*) is an early music specialist with wide-ranging interests, including music of Latin America and pre-expulsion Spain. He is a faculty member at Wellesley College and Director of the Collegium Musicum there.

Emily Lau, mezzo-soprano and composer, has recently released an album of her original compositions, *Isle of Lucidity*.

Zoe Weiss (*viola da gamba, voice*) performs as soloist and continuo player on baroque cello and viola da gamba, and has also directed early opera and masque performances.

Some of the Instruments

The ***çeng*** is a Turkish harp, a popular Ottoman instrument until the late 17th century. It was revived in the late 20th century, with newer designs and tuning mechanisms. Tone bending is possible by pressing on the string behind the bridge.

The ***ud*** is very similar to the lute, and instruments like it have been played all over the Arab world for 1,000 years. The back is formed of up to 20 thin strips of crescent-shaped wood. The neck is short, and all but one of the strings are double-strung, played with a plectrum in the right hand, and also plucked with the left hand.

The ***saz*** is a long-necked lute.

The ***ney*** is an end-blown flute, like a recorder, and a main instrument in Mevlevi religious ceremony.

The ***santur*** is a kind of zither. Ancient versions were played with light mallets, and later versions with plectra.

The miskal is a panpipe.

The ***Kudüm*** is a pair of small, hemispheric drums of copper. It is one of the four main instruments in Mevlevi religious music, and is played with two sticks of soft wood.