

A Succession of Turkish Stops

Revealing hidden connections between history and the present through sound and space is central to Cevdet Ereğ's artistic practice. *A Succession of Turkish Stops* is no exception, steeped as it is in history: its title references the Turkish or Janissary stop or pedal on early pianos, which imitated the sounds of military bands, namely bells, cymbals and bass drums. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, composers such as Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven were integrating Turkish music – a style based on the sounds of Turkish military bands – in their compositions, and the style became so popular that many fortepianos were fitted with pedals such as the Janissary stop or the Bassoon pedal. At the time, the Viennese tended to congregate in indoor environments, and pianos fitted with such pedals enhanced the volume and rhythm of the music that was played, in a manner reminiscent of the marching bands outside. *A Succession of Turkish Stops* recontextualizes these historical events by connecting them with the present.

The piece was constructed from two serendipitous encounters: the first with a manufacturer of replicas of period instruments, one of whose replicas happened to be located in Cologne, and the second with a Graz-based expert in period instruments, who had an original piano at her disposal. A first online meeting took place between Cevdet and Julian Burdenko, a piano student in Cologne who was interested in sound technology and had access to the replica in question. Cevdet instructed the student to play single hits of drum and bell sounds as well as patterns and “explosive” piano chords on the replica, and record them so that they could listen to them together during their online conversation. A second online conversation subsequently took place between Cevdet and the performer of period instruments in Graz. The freshly-tuned period instrument was played in response to Cevdet's proposals and reactions, generating sounds that had a strangely contemporary feel. Indeed, as Cevdet points out, the Turkish stop and similar devices such as the Bassoon pedal, are reminiscent of 20th century prepared piano techniques: the former uses a bar to strike strings or bells, while the latter involves brushing the strings with parchment paper.

The finished piece in the TONSPUR_passage | Micro Museum for Sound at the MQ in Vienna is an amalgam of these inputs: the prerecorded samples realized by the pianist in Cologne on the one hand, and the live piano chords and percussive crashes/explosions from the improvised performance by Katharina Olivia Brand in Graz on the other, were inserted into an 8-channel noise composition by Cevdet himself. These different layers were all set to the same bpm (beats per minute) – apart from the explosive sounds, which occurred haphazardly – and so could easily be combined into a single cohesive soundscape. The resulting piece questions the differences between an original and a replica, as the sounds issuing from the 1830s period instrument in Graz merge seamlessly with those played on the replica by the student in Cologne. The work connects original and copy, Graz and Cologne, history and the present, the 1830s and 2022, but also military music, classical music and techno: the bass drum deployed by the military bands which went on to spawn the Turkish music parts in Mozart and Beethoven's classical works, is reworked by Cevdet into techno, the minimal dance music of our day, which likewise deploys the beat of a bass drum, or its digital replica.

That said, Cevdet's drum sounds are produced acoustically, as in his recent solo bass drum album *Davul*. Here, he uses a stick to create additional noises and ambiances, in the same way as the Turkish stop on the piano. Like the album, *A Succession of Turkish Stops* reminds us of the differences and similarities between the bass drum and the piano: whereas drums are unpitched instruments that generate rhythms, the piano is a pitched instrument that produces melodies. Yet they are both percussion instruments, since each produces sounds or rhythms when struck or hit.

A Succession of Turkish Stops also has affinities with Cevdet's previous works. Its focus on the notions of original and copy harks back to *Bergama Stereo* (Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin and Ruhrtriennale 2019), in which the original sculptural frieze of the Great Altar of Pergamon is replicated by a loudspeaker frieze, and functioning loudspeakers are juxtaposed with empty loudspeaker casings. Many of Cevdet's works also engage with architecture, whether literally or in a broad sense: *A Succession of Turkish Stops* does so too, modifying not only the architecture of the TONSPUR_passage, but also the inner structure or architecture of the piano, by means of the pedal.

Most of all however, *A Succession of Turkish Stops* recalls *ÇIN* (2017), a work Cevdet presented in the Pavilion of Turkey at the Venice Biennale. It features voices, mostly speaking Turkish, some of which refer to war scenes, and others to the Futurist sound poem *Zang Tumb Tumb* (2014), which is based on sounds of warfare, explosions and such like. Its author, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, famously glorified war. Finally, Cevdet's composition for TONSPUR can be linked to the historical war paintings on display in Venice, most notably those depicting the Ottoman-Venetian wars – which always had one or several drummers in them.

A Succession of Turkish Stops shows how a wartime musical style designed to impress and frighten the enemy was first transposed into classical music and subsequently evolved into a type of popular dance music, thereby demonstrating that the sounds and rhythms of war are integral both to their time and to ours. In his book *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (1992), Henri Lefebvre analyzed the rhythms of urban spaces and their effects on those inhabiting them. Cevdet goes a step further: he explores the rhythms and timbres of military music, charting their effects not only on the history of musical genres but also on the dance culture of today.

Rahma Khazam, November 2022