

Monday  
May 30, 2022

Orient-Institut Istanbul  
Online Workshop Series

# Experience of a City: Multisensorial Approaches to Past and Present

Convened by Esther Voswinckel Filiz & Salih Demirtaş



## Experience of a City: Multisensorial Approaches to Past and Present

This workshop series aims to bring together approaches from musicology, historical ethnography, anthropology of religion and cultural studies in exploring experiences of the city. Moving away from ocularcentrism, we wish to enquire into the city's past and its present as a multisensorial experience. How do sound, smell, taste, touch, and the involvement of other senses, happen to be vital in cultural practices of dwelling and movement? How was the city heard in the past? How is it remembered in terms of smell? How can we hear or feel touched by what is present or absent? And what research practices can grasp such sensations?

Istanbul, for centuries known as »the City«, is both the place where this online workshop is hosted and a point of reference and return for the conversation we are looking forward to. The workshop series will open up a forum for exchange between eminent scholars and younger researchers. With a keynote by anthropologist and musicologist Peter McMurray (University of Cambridge), the first workshop of the series on May 30, 2022 will focus on auralities, senses and atmospheres in Istanbul, past and present.

## Programme UTC +3 (Istanbul Time)

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- 10:30 – 10.45** Welcome Remarks  
*Dr. Richard Wittmann (Orient-Institut Istanbul, Acting Director)*  
*PD Dr. Judith I. Haug (Orient-Institut Istanbul, Acting Deputy Director & Head of Research Field Music in the Ottoman Empire and in Turkey)*
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- 10.45 – 11.45** Keynote Lecture  
**Sound, Asleep: Listening to Istanbul Dreamscapes**  
*Peter Mc Murray (Faculty of Music, University of Cambridge)*
- 
- 11.45 – 12.00** Coffee Break
- 
- 12.00 – 12.30** **The Loss of Keramet: Changing Atmosphere of Alevi Rituals in Dersim and Istanbul**  
*Martin Greve (Orient-Institut Istanbul)*
- 
- 12.30 – 13.00** »Did We Come Here to Pray?«:  
**Sonic Atmospheres of Romani Wedding Ceremonies**  
*Burcu Yaşin (Concordia University, Edmonton /Canada)*
- 
- 13.00 – 14.00** Lunch Break
- 
- 14:00 – 14:30** »Fenni Bir Ucube – A Scientific Oddity«:  
**Talking Machines of Late Ottoman Istanbul**  
*Onur Engin (Koç University, Istanbul)*
- 
- 14.30 – 15.00** **Listening to Modernity in Late Ottoman Istanbul: Noise and Pleasure in the Urban Soundscape**  
*Jacob Olley (Faculty of Music, University of Cambridge)*
- 
- 15.00 – 15.30** Coffee Break
- 
- 15.30 – 16.00** **Sound and Temporality in Late Ottoman Urban Space**  
*Nazan Maksudyan (Centre Marc Bloch, Berlin)*
- 
- 16.00 – 17.00** Impulse Lecture  
**Soundscapes on the Ottoman Bosphorus**  
*Tülay Artan (Sabancı University, Istanbul)*
- 
- 17.00 – 17.30** Closing remarks & Wrap up  
*Esther Voswinkel Filiz, Salih Demirtaş (Orient-Institut Istanbul)*
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## Registration Information

The workshop will take place online via Zoom.

To attend this online workshop, prior registration is necessary: Please send an email specifying your name and academic affiliation to [events@oiist.net](mailto:events@oiist.net) by Wednesday, May 25, 2022 at the latest. For technical reasons, the number of participants is limited. You will be informed about the organizational and technical procedure before the beginning of the workshop.

10.45 – 11.45

### Sound, Asleep: Listening to Istanbul Dreamscapes

Peter Mc Murray (Faculty of Music, University of Cambridge)

One of the common assumptions of sound studies is that scholars share a rough conception of »sound« as a physical phenomenon traveling through the air which people typically experience through cochlear hearing. I hope to challenge that assumption (or rather, join those who are already challenging that assumption) by considering the role of sound – including music, speech, recitation, and listening – as experienced in dreams in early modern Istanbul. This focus draws together recent decades of interest from historians such as Cemal Kafadar and Aslı Niyazioğlu about dreaming in the Ottoman Empire, as well as perspectives from Western cognitive science and psychoanalysis. By seriously considering the sonic aspects of dreams of people like Sedefkar Mehmed Ağa and Evliya Çelebi, as well as a range of sultans, dervishes, sultans consulting dervishes, and everyday citizens, we begin to see a kind of audible dreamscape of Istanbul (and other urban spaces) in which sound, sleep, and the perception of urban life all fold together to produce new or otherwise impossible ways of inhabiting Istanbul.

**Peter McMurray** is Associate Professor of Music at University of Cambridge. His work focuses on intersections of sound and culture, especially in the context of Turkey and its diasporas, as well as the late Ottoman Empire. He is currently completing a book and media project, *Pathways to God: The Islamic Acoustics of Turkish Berlin*. In October, he will begin an ERC-funded project, »Ottoman Auralities,« focusing on sound and media in the late Ottoman period.



*Constantinople by night, 1886. Ivan Konstantinovich Aivazovsky (1817–1900), 25 x 37 cm, oil on canvas, © Regional Art Museum, Khanty-Mansiysk, Russia.*

12.00 – 12.30

## The Loss of *Keramet*: Changing Atmosphere of Alevi Rituals in Dersim and Istanbul

Martin Greve (*Orient-Institut Istanbul*)

While in Istanbul today most Alevi rituals (particularly *cems*) are organized in recently constructed *cemevis*, in Dersim until the 1970s almost all rituals took place in private houses in the villages. Although the only function of modern *cemevis* has been to provide a better space for religious ceremonies, older people remember how much more spiritual *cems* in ordinary village houses used to be including both trance and the performance of *keramet* (supernatural power). Based on this belief, the most important question emerges, how this spirituality could have gotten lost over such a short period of time? In this context, the atmosphere theory developed by Hermann Schmitz and Gernot Böhme might help analyze and trace profound changes that occurred in both the rituals and their music performances. Participation in those earlier *cems* used to affect all the senses, including temperature, smell, and sound, in addition to directly felt presence of all individuals in the room. Music was not perceived as something isolated, but rather was a part of the all-encompassing atmosphere, where musical elements such as intonation, melody, or the control of voices had no separate importance. Today, both musicians and instruments are much more technically elaborate than in the past, but the atmosphere has changed into a religious show that the believers observe with greater emotional distance and reduced embodied sensual impressions.



*Cem in Geyiksuyu, Tunceli (Dersim), 29 July, 2014.  
Photo by Martin Greve.*

**Martin Greve** is a German ethnomusicologist based in Istanbul, Turkey. His doctoral thesis deals with the history of Turkish Art Music in the 20th century. His habilitation thesis is a study of Turkish music in Germany. Dr. Greve has taught various courses on ethnomusicology and Turkish music, as well as offered cross-cultural training at several universities and music academies in Germany and Switzerland, including TU Berlin, FU Berlin, Universität Basel, Musikhochschule Köln, and Universität Heidelberg. He has written several booklets on Turkish and Korean life in Berlin for the Berlin municipal Integration Office (*Berliner Integrationsbeauftragter*). From 2005 – 2011 he was the coordinator of the Study Program of Turkish Music at the Rotterdam World Music Academy. From 2007 – 2011 he served as an advisor to the Berlin Philharmonic concert hall for the concert program »Alla Turca.« From May 2011 to September 2018, Martin Greve was a research associate at the Orient-Institut Istanbul responsible for the research field Music in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. Since December 2020, he has been directing the DFG-funded research project entitled »Music, Migration and Musical Expression« at the Orient-Institut Istanbul.

12.30 – 13.00

»Did We Come Here to Pray?«:  
Sonic Atmospheres of Romani Wedding Ceremonies

Burcu Yaşin (Concordia University, Edmonton /Canada)

This paper explores the sonic atmospheres (McGraw,2020) of the Romani outdoor wedding ceremonies, specifically in the Sarıgöl neighborhood of Istanbul. It aims to analyze how Sarıgöl Romanies use sonic tactics to reclaim their existence in urban space. Wedding ceremonies are interspersed with sonic displays of strength such as meticulously chosen songs which stress the wealth of the spouses' families, or recals (improvised poems performed mostly by women) praising the beauty of the bride, as well as s others. The music band becomes a crucial component of the ceremony. On a practical level, the lead singer, who usually demonstrates remarkable communication skills, animates the celebration through his playful remarks and instructions. While teasing the audience with »salla salla« (»shake it, shake it«) or »tebarekeye mi geldik?« (»did we come here to pray?«), the singer sets up a festive atmosphere, which relies on the dynamic communication between participants and performers, all coming together as the members of the same community. On a symbolic level, the sheer size of the band, along with their songs centered on the spouses' wealth and power, provide insights into the economic and symbolic status of the families as well as their positioning within the community, taking the form of sonic representations. This paper intends to explore the affective connections and sonic tactics displayed in Romani wedding ceremonies in order to pave the way for a novel engagement with sound as an embodied phenomenon. Building upon the concept of the sonic atmosphere, I analyze how the Romani community employs music and sound to reproduce social hierarchies, to strengthen intercultural relations, and to subvert gender roles within the uniformed kinesthesia imposed by the lead singer.



Cuma Çelik Archive, circa 1980.

**Burcu Yaşin** is a Ph. D. student and research assistant at Concordia University's doctoral program in Interdisciplinary Humanities. She works at the intersection of sound studies, sensory studies, and embodied research methodologies. Trained as a musician, she received her master's degree in musicology with a thesis entitled *A »Sonic« Transformation Story: Gaziosmanpaşa Sarıgöl Urban Renewal Project*, which sheds light on the sonic impact of the ongoing gentrification of the Romani neighborhood Sarıgöl, Gaziosmanpaşa /Istanbul. Her current research explores how the Romani communities living in Istanbul use wedding ceremonies to construct their identity, claim their existence in space, and constitute an »imagined now,« bringing the women's experiences into the center. She is a member of Center for Sensory Studies and Global Emergent Media Lab and the co-founder of the platform I AM NOT ALONE IN THIS SHIT that collects the sounds of protests related to women's and LGBTQ+ rights.

14:00 – 14:30

»Fenni Bir Ucube – A Scientific Oddity«:  
Talking Machines of Late Ottoman Istanbul

Onur Engin (Koç University, Istanbul)

The introduction of talking machines (the phonograph and the gramophone) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries created a whole new sensorial world and initiated novel cultural practices. Having produced a unique listening experience, talking machines also changed the everyday experience of modernization in late Ottoman Istanbul. This presentation focuses on the cultural impact of these machines from an auditory perspective and explores how these machines, related practices, and corresponding institutions contributed to the role of aural media within modernism. Generating new artistic, technical, and commercial practices, the phonograph and the gramophone led to the emergence of multi-cultural networks and an active music industry in the Ottoman capital. As their primary functions were crystallized in recorded music and light entertainment, a dynamic capitalist market began to affect entertainment culture of Istanbul towards 1900. Functioning as signs of progress, these talking machines also generated novel modes of listening. As the cultural practice of music listening became more personal and direct, it was gradually altering perceptive capacity and musical taste of the listeners. Fidelity in sound has, thus, become the condition for sensorial modernity. Record companies and stores felt the need to convince their customers of the sound quality of their products, promoting heavily the sonic particularities of their products in the advertisement campaigns. While accepted by all classes – from the Yıldız Palace to the streets – these technologies became more popular and led to the emergence of a »sound culture.« Consequently, as is the case of many media forms under the Hamidian government, a series of concerns, regulations, and restrictions emerged, targetting the production and distribution of Qur'anic and »immoral« recordings.



A record store advertisement in the Ottoman-Turkish daily newspaper İkdâm, no. 4137 (December 13, 1905): p. 4 (Source: Ankara University SBF Collection).

**Onur Engin** received his B.A. and M.A. in Political Sciences from the Marmara University and Panthéon-Assas University Paris II respectively. He had worked as DJ and music producer between 2006 and 2014. He has recently completed a Ph. D. in Art History at Koç University with a dissertation entitled *Church Bells, Cannons, and Talking Machines: Sounding Devices and the »Modernization« of Late Ottoman Istanbul*.

14.30 – 15.00

### Listening to Modernity in Late Ottoman Istanbul: Noise and Pleasure in the Urban Soundscape

Jacob Olley (Faculty of Music, University of Cambridge)

What did Istanbul sound like at the end of the nineteenth century? What kind of sources might we use to answer this question? In this paper, I explore descriptions of the urban soundscape published in Ottoman Turkish newspapers and journals between around 1870 and 1910. These accounts were written mainly by bourgeois Muslim intellectuals who were preoccupied with questions of progress and modernity. As they listened to the urban environment and translated their aural experiences into prose (itself a form of ethnography), they reflected on the status of Istanbul as a modern city, symbolized by new technologies as well as new social and cultural practices. Through irony and satire, they highlighted the tensions between the utopian ideals of modernity and the noisy realities of urban life, embodied in the multisensorial clamour of the gazino, the screeching of the tram, and the seemingly unintelligible songs of migrant street musicians. By paying attention to the positionality of the listeners as well as the sounds they heard, this paper argues that perceptions of noise and pleasure were embedded within hierarchical relationships between listening authors and sounding subjects, determined by multiple factors including ethnicity, religion and gender as well as socio-economic class. The textual representation of aural experiences of noise and pleasure were thus implicated in the deeply contested process of redefining Istanbul as a modern city in the late Ottoman period.



*The view of Pera, Istanbul. The entrance to the Russian embassy on the right, with the studio of the famous photographers Sebah and Joallier's next to it and in the distance the old basilica of Sant' Antonio, demolished in 1913, juts out. Levantine Heritage Foundation. (<http://www.levantineheritage.com/beyoglu.htm>)*

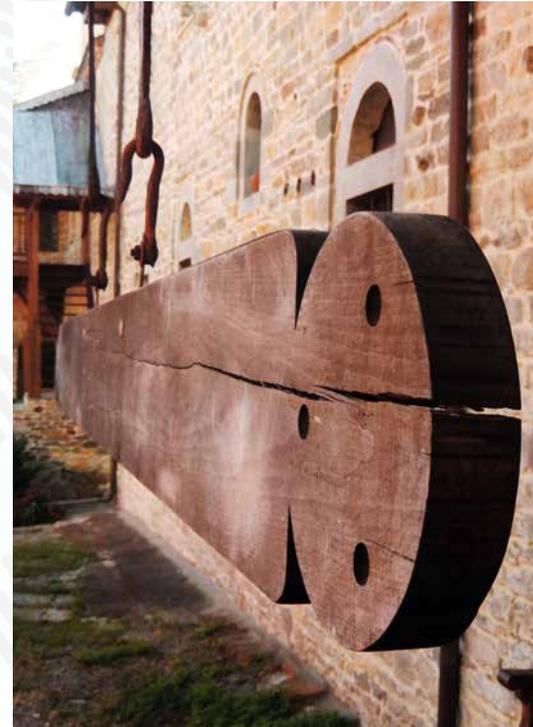
**Jacob Olley** is Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in Music at the University of Cambridge. He completed a Ph. D. in Music at King's College London in 2018. From 2015 to 2020 he was a research associate on the DFG project »Corpus Musicae Ottomanicae: Critical Editions of Near Eastern Music Manuscripts« at the University of Münster. He has published a two-volume critical edition of an early nineteenth-century collection of Ottoman music in modern Armenian (Hampartsum) notation (Münster, 2020), and is co-editor of *Rhythmic Cycles and Structures in the Art Music of the Middle East* (Würzburg, 2017). His current project, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, is titled *Debating Music in the Ottoman Press, 1876 – 1928*.

15.30 – 16.00

## Sound and Temporality in Late Ottoman Urban Space

Nazan Maksudyan (Centre Marc Bloch, Berlin)

Contrary to the »traditional« characterization of the Ottoman world as silent, there is a need to listen to the rich sonic life of Ottoman cities. One usually points to their most characteristic »sounding over the city« referring to the call to prayer that muezzins performed with their bare voices from the height of the minarets. This call to prayer largely shaped the Ottoman soundscape, and for that matter the soundscape of the Muslim city. Another function of this religious sound was to make time audible. Five calls to prayer divided the day and the residents of the city followed the hour with reference to these notifications. The houses of worship of other religions performed the same function, orienting their believers to the tempo of daily routine and religious life. In much of Eastern Europe and the Near East, the sound of Orthodox Christianity was not the pealing bell, but the pounding beats of a hammer striking wood. The *semantron* (*nâqûs*) was a wooden board a meter or two long, usually suspended horizontally from chains or ropes. While metal bells were outlawed, this plain wooden object came as a pragmatic response. Through this sonic intervention houses of worship performed a temporal function and continued to be integral to the organization of the day by the city's inhabitants until the middle of the nineteenth century, when clock towers appeared as novelties in the Ottoman urban centers. As secular monuments to Ottoman sovereignty these towers functioned according to standardized time, having brought a novel auditory layer to the urban sonic experience and a new temporal structure. This paper relies on traditional written sources – such as documents from the Ottoman Archives, literature in different Ottoman languages, egodocuments, travelogues, scientific writings, newspapers, letters, diaries, legal documents, musical notations, and court records – and contributes to the recent scholarship which engages with the uses and functions of sounds in Ottoman culture and society, and specifically explores how Ottoman subjectivities and temporalities were reflected in the lives of sounds.



*Semantron of Karakalou Monastery, Mount Athos, Greece. (Source: <https://athosweblog.com>).*

**Nazan Maksudyan** is Senior researcher at the Centre Marc Bloch (Berlin). She is currently working on the ERC-funded research project, »Ottoman Auralities and the Eastern Mediterranean: Sound, Media and Power, 1789 – 1914« (OTTOMAN AURALITIES; ERC Starting Grant 2021; Principal Investigator: Dr. Peter McMurray, University of Cambridge). From 2019 to 2021, Maksudyan was an Einstein guest professor in the Friedrich-Meinecke-Institut at the Freie Universität Berlin. She was a »Europe in the Middle East – The Middle East in Europe« (EUME) Fellow in 2009 and 2010 at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin and an Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung Postdoctoral Fellow at the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (Berlin) in 2010 – 2011 and in 2016 and 2018. From 2013 to 2016, she worked as a professor of history in Istanbul and received her habilitation degree in 2015. Her research mainly focuses on the social and cultural history of the late Ottoman Empire (from eighteenth to twentieth centuries) and modern Turkey, with special interest in children and youth, gender, sexuality, and the history of sciences. Maksudyan is the author of *Orphans and Destitute Children in the Late Ottoman Empire* (2014) and *Ottoman Children and Youth During World War I* (2019). She edited *Women and the City, Women in the City* (Berghahn, 2014) and co-edited, with Hilal Alkan, *Urban Neighbourhood Formations* (Routledge, 2020).

16.00 – 17.00

## Soundscapes on the Ottoman Bosphorus

Tülay Artan (Sabancı University, Istanbul)

Taking off from Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar's »Boğaziçi Mehtapları«, this paper will explore the experience of Bosphorus residents at a time when the water channel separating Asia from Europe was still a partly natural, partly man-made habitat of pre-modern sounds and silences – of the rain, of nightingales, of oars splashing and creaking, of busy landing places, of the hymns of dervishes, of gulls and other sea birds, of fishermen's songs, of calls to prayers, of the wind in the trees, of waves swirling around the wooden piles of piers and waterfront mansions. Reflected in the hues of the opposite shore, whether in sunlight or by the moon, and occasionally dotted by flickering candles, lanterns, torches, or fireflies, it was this soundscape that framed and enveloped contemplation, a way of life for those who, it was said, saw through the eye of the heart.

**Tülay Artan** is a professor of history at Sabancı University, Istanbul. She works on the prosopographical networks and households of the Ottoman elite; the history of material culture, consumption and standards of living; seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Ottoman arts, architecture and literature from a comparative perspective. Her most recent publications include: »Early-Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Women in Distress: Nev'izade Atayi's *Hamse*, Üskübi Pir Mehmed Efendi's Moral Code and the Response of the Inner Asian Artists«, *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World*, Vol. 39, (forthcoming, 2022); »Imaginary Voyages, Imagined Ottomans: a Gentleman Impostor, the Köprülüs, and 17th century French Oriental Romances«, in *Dimensions of Transformation in the Ottoman Empire from the late Medieval Age to Modernity*. In *Memoriam of Metin Kunt*, eds. Seyfi Kenan and



İstanbul, 1919. Hoca Ali Rıza (1858 – 1930), 43.5 x 61 cm, oil on canvas, 200-0010-HAR.  
© Sakıp Sabancı Museum.

Akşin Somel, Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2021, 54 – 96; »The First, Hesitant Steps of Ottoman Protocol and Diplomacy into Modernity (1676 – 1725)«, *The Court Historian* 26/1. Special Issue: Monarchy and Modernity since 1500, 2021, 29 – 43; »Horse Racing at the Ottoman Court, 1524 – 1728«, eds Sinclair Bell, Christian Jaser and Christian Mann, *International Journal of the History of Sport* 37/3 – 4, 2020, 246 – 271; and »Contemplation or Amusement? The Light Shed by Ruznames on an Ottoman Spectacle of 1740 – 1750«, in K. Fleet and E. Boyar (eds), *The Ottomans and Entertainment* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 22 – 42.

**Esther Voswinckel Filiz** is a research fellow at Orient-Institut Istanbul. She has previously studied Cultural Anthropology and Religious Studies in Munich, Bologna and Tübingen, with a focus on the anthropology of religion in the Mediterranean region. Having conducted field research in Üsküdar for several years she completed her Ph.D. thesis titled *Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi in Istanbul. Biography of a Place* at the Centre for Religious Studies (CERES) of Ruhr-Universität Bochum. Her research focuses on the material culture of Sufism in Istanbul, on the historical and contemporary aesthetics of saint's tombs (*türbe*) and on portable and textile paraphernalia therein. She joined Orient-Institut Istanbul in June 2020 and is responsible for the research field »The Religious History of Anatolia«. At present she is conducting field research for her project *Threads of Tradition: Cult Vestments and Sufi Material Culture in Istanbul*.

**Salih Demirtaş** is a Ph.D. candidate in Musicology and Music Theory at Istanbul Technical University (ITU). He works with various historical narratives of auditory experiences of Istanbul. He received his M.A. degree in Ethnomusicology from the Center for Advanced Studies in Music (MIAM) at ITU in 2019 with the thesis titled *Critical Edition of Hampartsum Manuscript YZPER2 in the Private Archive of Ali Rifat Çağatay*. He also holds a B.A. in Journalism and received a sound engineering education at SAE Amsterdam. He is an editor in the Turkish Music Academic Circle (TUMAC) and a researcher at ITU Ottoman-Turkish Music Research Group (OTMAG). Since September 2019 he has been working as a research associate at the Orient-Institut Istanbul for the Corpus Musicae Ottomanicae project.

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*Ahî Çelebi Mosque in Eminönü, Istanbul where Evliya Çelebi had his famous dream.  
(Salt Research, Ali Saim Ülgen Collection, Ref. TASUH2502).*



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