

## THE EARLY PERFORMANCE OF JAZZ MUSIC IN TURKEY

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### Abstract

This article investigates the emergence of jazz music in Turkey and its early years of performance. The early years of jazz music in Turkey cover the time period between 1923 and 1941; the former represents the declaration of the Turkish Republic and the latter stands for the first performance of a 'real' jazz band, Swing Amatör, as stated by musicians and chroniclers of the period. This study is based on oral history interviews conducted with jazz musicians who experienced the 1930s and 40s. Another research method contributing to this study is the comparative evaluation of the previous literature. The pioneers of jazz music in Turkey, cultural connotations of jazz during the aforementioned years, and performance applications are among the main concerns of this research.

While jazz has been an integral part of Turkey's music scene from the founding days of the Turkish Republic, the cultural connotations of jazz music varied greatly in different eras and sociocultural conditions. This article aims to search for the emergence of jazz music in Turkey by paying attention to musical and cultural concerns, with the aid of an oral history<sup>1</sup> study and comparative evaluations of the previous literature. It intends to examine what jazz represented in Turkey during its early years of performance. For the early years of jazz music in Turkey, we accept the time period between 1923 and 1941; the former represents the declaration of Turkish Republic and the latter stands for the first performance of a 'real' jazz band, as stated by the musicians of the era.

Turkey's preliminary acquaintance with jazz music has been an issue in which a variety of claims have been staked. Diverse views on the subject reflect not only the approaches on how the history was written and transmitted, but also what jazz music used to represent in terms of music and culture. In that manner, first the reception of jazz music in the early years of the Turkish Republic and the pioneers of jazz in Turkey will be discussed. While taking secondary resources and informants' stories into account, it is crucial to bear in mind that reminiscing and writing about the history is a reflection of personal narratives that have been shaped by various ideologies.

Although jazz music was a trendy topic in newspapers and lifestyle magazines of the 1920s and 1930s, without archival research on the subject, İlhan Mimaroglu is claimed to be the first to write about jazz in Turkey, and his views on the matter have been frequently cited<sup>2</sup>. In his book *Caz Sanatı* (The Art of Jazz), he stated that the Armenian violinist Leon Avigdor, who directed a band that performed during the years 1925-26, brought jazz to Turkey (1958:122). According to his narration, Leon Avigdor decided to learn alto saxophone after hearing jazz during one of

1- This paper benefitted from oral history interviews with Cüneyt Sermet, Eray Turgay, İlham Gencer, Emin Findikoğlu, Selçuk Sun, Neşet Ruacan, and Hasan Kocamaz, conducted by Yaprak Melike Uyar.

2- See Akyol 2013; Davran 1995; Meriç 1999; Kahyaoğlu 2002; Tunçağ 2010; Tekelioğlu 2011.

his visits to Paris. He then formed a band called Ronald's with Belarusian pianist Kolya Yakovyef, (who had escaped to Istanbul after the Bolshevik Revolution) as well as an un-named drummer and banjo player. This band performed pieces such as "Alexander's Ragtime Band" and "Dardanella" at places such as the U.S. Embassy and the Union Française around Beyoğlu. According to İlhan Mimaroglu, this was a dance orchestra, and when they played tango, Leon Avigdor would take up his primary instrument, the violin (1958: 122).

Although Leon Avigdor has been declared the pioneer of jazz music in Turkey by almost all of the earlier literature, two other secondary resources state an earlier account of jazz music in Turkey. According to Vladimir Alexandrov, the African-American jazz impresario Frederick Bruce Thomas was the one who took the initiative in introducing jazz music to Istanbul (2013). Fikret Adil also confirms that Istanbul met jazz music through the initiations of *Tomas*<sup>3</sup>, and he states that the orchestra directed by Jewish musician Yonko conducted the first performance of jazz music by the local musicians of Turkey (1990:22). However, since the performance dates are not indicated, this claim remains ambiguous as well.

In Thomas's biography, Alexandrov states that Thomas was an African-American born in Mississippi in 1872, he emigrated to Russia, and eventually his life's journey brought him to Istanbul in 1919, after he escaped from the Bolshevik Revolution (2013:12). On January 20, 1920, he opened "The Royal Dancing Club" at *40 Rue de Brousse* in Pera, in which European style dances such as foxtrot and tango were performed alongside jazz by the orchestra (Alexandrov 2013: 177). The following year saw the opening of *Maksim Gazinosu*<sup>4</sup> on November 22, 1921, and Thomas hired the Shimmie Orchestra and drummer Harry A. Carter as the leader of the orchestra, who was a white American from Minnesota (Alexandrov 2003: 202). According to Alexandrov, following the opening night, Maxim received comments such as "greatest artistic event in Pera... extraordinary tour de force... grand luxury... modern comfort... richness that does not exist anywhere... a fairy-tale like atmosphere... a real jazz band from the echelons of the city's Westernized Turks, Levantines and foreigners" (2013: 202). Alexandrov adds that Maxim quickly rose to fame with the mix of first class cuisine and drinks, hot jazz, Russian waitresses and flashy variety acts (2013: 202). Fikret Adil also confirms the contribution of impresario Thomas on Turkey's early association with jazz music in his memoirs on the entertainment life of Istanbul in the 1920s:

Istanbul heard the first real jazz band in Maxim. This orchestra was called 7 Palm Beach and consisted of seven Negros who all were virtuosos.[...] Palm Beach jazz band, not only taught Istanbul what jazz means, but every musician learned the tempo of jazz from them. (Fikret Adil 1990: 21)

According to Adil's narration, Thomas gave their resident orchestra, which was made of local musicians, the duty of listening to 7 Palm Beach every night in order to learn the repertoire and the arrangements they played. However, solely listening was not enough for them to learn this 'sophisticated' music. Each night after the performance, the scores were locked up by the management in a safe box but Thomas allowed his resident musicians to make illegal copies. After 7 Palm Beach left, Maxim's resident orchestra, directed by Yanko, started to play their arrangements (Adil 1990: 22). According to Adil's claims, this resulted in Turkey's primary encounter with

3- Turkish pronunciation of the name of Thomas, as mentioned by Adil (1990).

4- *Gazino* represents nightclubs with stages and dance halls in Turkey. From now on, *Maksim Gazinosu* will be referred to by its English name: Maxim.

jazz music performed by local musicians. With a comparative analysis of the secondary sources, it can be concluded that this incident took place between the years of 1925-1927.

According to Mark Miller, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk had originally invited the Palm Beach Five<sup>5</sup> to Istanbul upon hearing them at a Paris café called *Café Rector's*, and the group accepted the invitation, then the group began performing regularly at Thomas's Maxim starting from 1925 (2005: 115). Leslie Hutchinson, pianist of the band who joined the 7 Palm Beach for the trip, suggested "Mustafa Kemal met the musicians personally on their arrival to Turkey, and had them play for himself publicly and privately before they began to work in Constantinople" (Miller 2005:115). By quoting Miller, Carol Wodall suggests that 7 Palm Beach regularly performed at Thomas's Maxim from 1924 through 1927 (2008: 193). Moreover, Leslie Hutchinson's claim on the dates coincides with Mustafa Kemal's political visit to Paris in 1925<sup>6</sup>. The Istanbul crew of 7 Palm Beach in 1925 consisted of pianist Leslie Hutchinson, saxophonists Rollin Smith and James Shaw, cornetist Green, banjo player Greeley Franklin, bassist Brom Desverney, and drummer Creighton Thompson (Miller 2005:188). Fikret Adil wrote about two African-American musicians, Tom and Bob, who were added to Palm Beach, and then the orchestra became 7 Palm Beach (1990: 21). Those names however, do not match with actual the band members as indicated by other sources.

Since none of my informants remember the second half of the 1920's, in which jazz started being performed, the articles found in the era's newspapers and culture & arts magazines suggest crucial evidence on the subject, in addition to previous literature on jazz music in Turkey. For instance, the earliest datable record of jazz music in Turkey points to 1926 (Fig. 1), in a daily newspaper, which was published in Ottoman:

In our day, a perfect jazz band would be preferred to classical music orchestras all over the world. With the influence of the primitive music of black Americans, the jazz band was first established in a ship, with the use of sleazy instruments due to unavailability of different types of musical instruments, and it has shortly proved that people needed a different variety of music<sup>7</sup>. "Modern Additions: Dancings, dances and jazzbands", *Meraklı Gazete* (Whimsical Newspaper), 16 September 1926, 2

In the same article, the writer evaluated the dancing hall as "the most modern establishment of the world", and mentioned that there were two dancing halls in the Beyoğlu region. The main intention of this article is to describe various dances such as the waltz, foxtrot, Charleston and tango. It is stated that those dances were accompanied by a *cazband*<sup>8</sup>. While describing the dance hall, the writer states that the tango orchestra was on one side of the room, while the *cazband* was on the other. In the section of the newspaper clipping that gave details about the tango steps and its accompanying music, it is stated that the tango orchestra was different than the *cazband*.

The writer defined the main instruments of the *cazband* as piano, violin, violoncello, drums, saxophone, banjo and oboe. The article concludes by stating that the need for listening to Western classical music was replaced by the *cazband* and satisfied the interest in European

5- The original group contained 5 members, with 2 extra members; the band took the name 7 Palm Beach.

6- Between Turkey and United Soviet Socialist Republic the Neutrality, Nonaggression Treaty, and the three protocols connected to this, were signed in Paris in 1925 (See Url-1).

7- Translation from Ottoman to Turkish by Özlem Bilge; translation from Turkish to English by the author of this article.

8- Turkish pronunciation and spelling of jazz band.

music in the East and among us. According to the article “our ears, which are numb to the classical orchestra, understand *cazband* easily” (1926).

While the oral history interviews were conducted, informants who experienced the 1930s and 40s shared various views on the pioneers of jazz music in Turkey. The issues that were specifically discussed during those interviews were the issue of ‘real’ jazz; who the pioneers were; and the topic of ethnicity. Since the oldest of the informants was born in 1925, no one recalls how jazz music actually originated in Turkey. As their memory of the first performance of jazz music, both Cüneyt Sermet and İlham Gencer mentioned Gregor Kelekyan (Fig.2). Cüneyt Sermet, jazz critic, double bassist and my oldest informant stated that an Armenian band leader and violinist Gregor Kelekyan was the first performer of the jazz music in Turkey, with his band playing at a restaurant called Canlı Balık, next to Sarıyer port side (2013). He said they used to go there to listen to Gregor’s Orchestra when he was almost 10 years old, since he was born in 1925, the approximate time that Gregor performed in Istanbul points to 1935. The informants next mention of a jazz performer in Turkey was the Jewish trombone player Gido Kornfield. Hülya Tunçağ states that the first musician of Turkish origin who was accepted into an orchestra with non-Muslim ethnic minorities of Istanbul was the drummer Şadan Çaylıgil; this was the 10 piece orchestra belonging to Gido Kornfield which was initiated in 1938 (2000: 14).

Gregor Kalekyan was an influential figure in the French jazz scene as well. Jeffrey H. Jackson also stated that the first widely famous French jazz bandleader of the 1920’s was Grégor, who was an “assimilated Armenian immigrant”. His band, Grégor et ses Grégorians, performed an orchestral style of jazz and debuted it at the Cirque de Paris in 1927 (2002:159). In 1936, Gregor Kelekyan, the Istanbul Armenian, started his band Gregor Jazz Band and gave concerts across Europe and the United States (Tunçağ 2010:14). He was mentioned as “the Istanbulian who brought jazz to Paris” (Yılmaz 1998). The picture of Gregor Kelekyan from *Gazete Pazar* reprinted in 1998 and Grégor et ses Grégorians’ performance record<sup>9</sup> from 1930 confirm that he was among the pioneering figures of jazz music both in Paris and in Istanbul.

It is crucial to understand the musical characteristics of what was being called ‘jazz’ back then, to be able to discuss ‘authenticity’ issues. İlhan Mimaröglü states that in 1920’s, the word ‘jazz’ was used to define all western derived popular music dance styles such as tango, samba, waltz and jazz; whereas *cazband* was used as a term to define orchestras playing entire Western dance music styles (1958:12). The words *cazband* and *cazbant* were used derivatively to signify the concept, and those actually signify the Turkish pronunciation of the word ‘jazz band’. Cemal Ünlü suggests that in the 1920’s, jazz music was also among the ‘*alafanga*<sup>10</sup> things’ of the era along with tea parties, dances and music scenes (2004: 312). Gökhan Akçura also states that all of the *alafanga* musics were defined as jazz music, and all of the orchestras playing dance music were called *cazband* (2002: 140).

There is a consensus that in Turkey, jazz was being used to represent all of the Western derived popular music style including ragtime, samba, Charleston, polka, samba, waltz, foxtrot and Tin Pan Alley repertoire, in addition to traditional early jazz. However, the usage of jazz as a generic term to denote the repertoire of dance musics was not something unique to Turkey. For instance, Bradford Robinson suggests that “Germany, like France and England, was seized with

9- See Url-2

10- European style and manner.

a jazz craze among its urban upper-middle-class population immediately after the cessation of hostilities” (1994: 4). According to Susan Cook, “jazz to Germany and the rest of Europe meant the functional music that accompanied the dancing of foxtrots, shimmys, Charlestons, and tangos- the modern dances that had supplanted the nineteenth-century waltz” (1989: 31). Jeffrey H. Jackson stated that “black and white American musicians arrived in Paris during the Great War and the post-war period, and they were welcomed by enthusiastic audiences in the city’s nightclubs and cabarets” (2002:150). He adds that, for the influence of the growing French jazz community, a periodical called “Jazz-Tango” (also named Jazz-Tango-Dancing at one point) began publication in October 1930 and became an important publication for French dance music (2002: 162). Jackson also claims “As that can be seen in the title, the editors did not perceive jazz to be entirely different from other kinds of dance music, like the still-popular tango, since bands were often expected to play all sorts of dance tunes at a performance, everyone could benefit from the periodical’s broader coverage” (2002: 162).

Compared to all of the other European countries, the cultural impact of the French on the early years of the Turkish Republic was the most significant. Carol Wodall wrote “with the advent of more western consumer products, lifestyle options, and given political affiliations between the Ottoman court and French delegations, the supposition has been that France provided the cultural referent for Ottoman society” (2008: 30). Regarding the discussion on the pioneers of jazz in Turkey, all of the individuals who took part in the story have connections with one significant location, which is Paris. So as to understand the French cultural influence on the Republic of Turkey, it is highly important to summarize their relationship as well as the politics of the government that defined the cultural and musical zeitgeist of the era.

Since the early days of the Turkish Republic, subjects such as the musical representation of the new Republic, and the specific qualities that this music should possess, had been among the major cultural politics of the government. During those years, a synthesis of Anatolian folk music with western classical music was considered to be the music of ‘modern Turkey’; a so-called ‘civilized nation’. Polyphony was regarded as an indication of being civilized, contrary to Ottoman *makam* music, which was monophonic. Regarding the construction of the ‘Turkish’ identity, the national leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk defined the cultural agenda mainly as a combination of European values and Anatolian culture. According to that approach, a patriotic Turk was suggested to benefit from the scientific and technological advancements of the West and internalize the spirituality of the East (Kadioğlu 1996).

Ziya Gökalp, among the most prominent intellectuals of the era, influenced Atatürk’s views by defining the West as the model of this new ‘civilization’. Music was in the foreground of the Republican reforms, as a promising new national genre, which could reflect the identity of this ‘civilized’ Turkish nation. Ziya Gökalp himself wrote on which particular musical culture should represent ‘Turkish’ identity, by classifying musical traditions under three headings (1923):

- (1) ‘Western’, to define the European polyphonic music,
- (2) ‘Eastern’ to denote Ottoman / Turkish modal *makam* music (rooted in Byzantine heritage) and,
- (3) ‘Original’, to indicate the traditional folk music of Anatolia.

The new regime defined the fusion of 'Western' and 'Original' music cultures as the music of the Turkish nation, while refusing the *makam* music of Ottoman heritage. Classical Ottoman music was even banned from the national radio during 1934-35 for 20 months. In order to achieve that musical ideal, Turkish composers were sent abroad to be trained in European classical music. All the while, they were expected to include folk melodies in their works as a reflection of the intended invention of nationalist culture. Five composers that were sent to European countries to study European polyphonic music, and who eventually became pioneers of Turkish polyphonic music, are referred to as "The Turkish Five". Among those, for instance, Ahmed Adnan Saygun was awarded a grant by the Turkish government for his studies in France; Ulvi Cemal Erkin, on the other hand, studied in the Paris Conservatory, whereas Cemal Reşit Rey resided in Paris for a period of time due to his father's political post.

French cultural influence was predominant since 16<sup>th</sup> century and spanning into the 1920's as a projection of Turkish modernity (Çınar 2005:16). Frederick Thomas's involvement within the Parisian nightlife as well as the introduction of 7 Palm Beach to the Turkish music scene played a crucial role in the French influence of early jazz in Turkey. In fact, Thomas first arrived in Paris in 1895 (Alexandrov 2003: 24). He was already quite experienced about managing a nightclub prior to his arrival in Istanbul. In one sense, he brought Parisian style entertainment to Istanbul, with the most popular dance music of the era, which was jazz. In addition, although 7 Palm Beach consisted of African-American musicians, they were actively performing in Paris in addition to several other European cities. İlhan Mimaroğlu suggests that Leon Avigdor, the pioneer of jazz music in Turkey, heard jazz in one of his visits to Paris (1958: 122). Since the parties who were stated as the pioneers of jazz in Turkey are closely associated with Paris, it can be concluded that the early years of jazz show a connection to European jazz instead of a direct American influence. The American influence on jazz in Turkey would start in the mid 1940s, as a side effect of the political interest of the United States in Turkey, declared in the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. During 1950's, the United States started to organize global tours for jazz musicians with the aim of shaping the American image worldwide and jazz had an important mission in serving to such a mission. The tours promoting jazz music globally, especially in the Middle East and Soviet Bloc created a concept called 'jazz ambassadors'. Turkey was a part of that project and Dave Brubeck and Dizzy Gillespie were among the musicians who visited Turkey as a part of those tours.

The oral history interviews have brought attention to the issue of authenticity, in regards to the early years of jazz music in Turkey. For instance, when Cüneyt Sermet stated that Gregor Kalekyan's Orchestra was one of the pioneers of jazz in Turkey, he concluded by saying "this wasn't real jazz" (2013). In fact, he defined their music as "prehistoric jazz". İlhan Mimaroğlu wrote that in the 1920's, jazz was used as a generic term to define all popular music dance styles such as tango, samba, waltz and jazz (1958:12). Gökhan Akçura shares the results of his research on the early years of jazz, under the title of 'Jazz Before Jazz in Turkey'<sup>11</sup> (2002). Three of my informants brought up the topic that what was called 'jazz' in the 1920's wasn't actually jazz, and that real jazz started with their own efforts. İlham Gencer claimed that he was the first jazz pianist of Turkey (2012). Cüneyt Şermet stated that: "The real jazz started with us, this is the reality. Ahmet, Hasan... Forget about them. They played everything else but jazz" (2013). Such declarations pro-

11- See Akçura (2002), translation of the name of the section "Türkiye'de Caz Öncesi Caz", pg. 130-151.

ve that ambiguities that derive from an oral history research might be misleading in some cases. Since the personal narratives are subjective, contradictory information is best confirmed through comparisons with secondary resources.

While taking all of this into account, there was a consensus among the informants that the Armenian brothers Dikran and Arto Haçaturyan were among the pioneering figures of jazz music in Turkey. The orchestra called *Swing Amatör*, which consisted of Dikran Haçaturyan (trombone), Arto Haçaturyan (alto saxophone) and Hrant Lusigyan (clarinet) gave their first concert in 1941 in Saray Cinema in Beyoğlu. The band of the Haçaturyan brothers and Lusigyan has been declared as the beginning of jazz by three separate informants. For instance Cüneyt Sermet stated, "We can say that jazz in the proper manner started with them" (2013). When he criticized Gregor Kalekyan's Orchestra for not performing proper jazz, he suggested "Sometimes a melody reminiscent of Dixieland style may appear or not".

It is also crucial to notice the musical characteristics of jazz music, and what jazz music represented in the late 1920's in the USA and Europe. This era also coincides with the first performances of jazz music in Turkey. Jazz was born as the entertainment music of the African-Americans of the United States with respect to the intertwined musical heritages of Europe and Africa. Jazz historians do not give a specific date or incident on the transition from the orchestrated ragtime music to jazz. Buddy Bolden is declared as the pioneer performer of jazz in many jazz history books; however, there is no recorded evidence of his performance style. The earliest jazz groups that were among the representatives of the traditional New Orleans style, such as King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band or Freddie Keppard Creole Band, also performed pieces from the dance music repertoire. As Scott DeVeaux suggested "New Orleans, by the early twentieth century, was a home to a new blues-based, highly rhythmic and improvisational way of playing music" (2009:48). The 1920's mark the years that jazz became a 'stage music' in the United States. The main function of jazz during those years was entertainment, especially considering the fact that many early jazz giants made a living by playing in the bars of the Storyville region of New Orleans. Brian Harker summarizes the hallmarks of early jazz as having a polyphonic texture created by independent melodies in the cornets, clarinet and trombone; instrumental roles inherited from brass bands such as cornet playing the melody, clarinet playing the obbligatos and trombone playing the counter melodies; ensemble oriented texture and a balance between solo and ensemble passages and two-beat metric feel (2005: 57). The transition from ragtime to jazz was defined by the musical characteristics of the Dixieland style from New Orleans. However during those years the genre classification of early jazz, urban blues and orchestrated ragtime was often blurry.

Returning to the debate of how to define jazz within its early years in Turkey, the previous literature states that it is foremost and crucial to describe the repertoire of the age. Murat Meriç states that the piece "Joseph Joseph" was adapted to Turkish with the title "*Yusuf Yusuf*" and Gregor Kelekyan's Orchestra played that song in the clubs; he added that this orchestra was mainly playing dance music (2006: 190). "Joseph Joseph" became a hit in 1938, after being performed by the swing and jump blues influenced singing group, the Andrew Sisters. According to Fikret Adil, "Tea for Two"<sup>12</sup> was a part of the repertoire played by 7 Palm Beach orchestra at Maxim (1990: 22). This piece was actually composed for a musical in 1925, and it later became a jazz standard.

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12-In the original texts, the name of the piece is mentioned with its Turkish pronunciation: *Ti for tu*.

İlhan Mimaroglu states that the Rolands Quartet performed pieces such “Dancing in the Dark”, “Alexander’s Ragtime Band”, and “Dardanella” during the years of 1925-26. Those pieces are a part of the ragtime, early jazz and Tin Pan Alley repertoire. However, there are inconsistencies in this statement. For instance, “Dancing in the Dark” was a Tin Pan Alley standard with music by Arthur Schwartz, lyrics by Howard Dietz which was published in 1931. “Alexander’s Ragtime Band” was a major hit by Irving Berlin, which became popular in 1911. “Dardanella” was published in 1919 also for the Tin Pan Alley industry. Many jazz orchestras of the 1920’s performed popular standards, which later became a part of the Great American Songbook.

Despite the best efforts while conducting the oral history interviews and archival research, Leon Avigdor’s name was not mentioned by the informants. While he was often quoted, it was regularly supported by conflicting statements and ambiguous facts, making it difficult to construct a true history. For instance, Mimaroglu stated that “Dancing in the Dark” was a part of Rolands Quartet’s repertoire (1958: 122). This reveals conflicting information considering the fact that the piece was first published in 1931. However, Mimaroglu stated that Leon Avigdor, the pioneer of jazz in Turkey performed those pieces during the years of 1925-26. İlhan Mimaroglu probably garnered the information about Leon Avigdor through the narratives of (his) elders. Although Leon Avigdor has become an urban legend, there is no other reference to his performing besides Mimaroglu’s reference. Carol Wodall also pointed out that Mimaroglu reduces early jazz in Istanbul to two local non-Muslim musicians<sup>13</sup> that had encountered the music while they were abroad and therefore he did not give the Istanbul jazz scene of the 20’s much significance (2008: 173).

Going back to the appreciation of jazz within the music politics of the Republican era, attention to jazz was a surprising result of the government’s cultural agenda reflecting the Westernization zeitgeist of the time. The politics of the Turkish Republic on fostering European classical musical influenced the integration of dance music to the musical sphere. Genres such as tango, waltz and foxtrot were quite popular among the cultural elite due to the ‘State Balls’, which were held for entertainment and socializing purposes. Just like jazz, European style dancing would also become culturally and politically important in 1920s Turkey because of the way it broke down the barriers that had previously separated men and women in the Ottoman society (Alexandrov 2013:178).

The results on the archival research of the era’s publications suggest that the lifestyle attached to jazz was criticized as “decadent” by many newspaper writers. For instance, one of the leading culture and arts magazines of the 1930’s, *Music and Art Movements*, in one of their articles with no specific author suggests:

This jazz craze didn’t influence the countries which have proper taste in music. However to us, it was like a germ eating us, since we are the head of the nations, which do not have a music culture. “Jazz and Cocaine”, 1934

Carol Wodall also discusses the “decadent modern” activities of the Republican era and explains those as jazz dancing, drug taking, gambling, and experiencing jazz (2008: 6). Wodall also stated that the impact of civilizing practices on a burgeoning Turkish cultural identity reached a fever pitch by the late-1920s: a “crisis” (2008: 280). İlhan Mimaroglu also pointed out and criticized the government’s intervention in music policies during the Republican period and said, “We

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13- Leon Avigdor and Kolya Yakovlef.

know how the campaign to enlighten the public's music appreciation started; the music presented the force to the public with unsuccessful and problematic methods" (1958: 121).

In order to understand what is being referred to as jazz during its early years of performance in Turkey, it is important to discuss the concept of 'Light Music' and its connections with jazz. Already explained in detail, the word *cazbant* was used to define orchestras playing European and American popular music while the term jazz was used derivatively to explain the popular musics of the era. Thus, during the early years of jazz in Turkey, the word *caz/jazz* represented a generic term covering anything other than European polyphonic or Turkish music. Anything else included in the jazz repertoire such as foxtrots, pop standards, marches, Tin Pan Alley songs, Charlestons, and so on, started to be referred to as Light Music, especially after the 1940's. However, considering the fact that jazz uses all of those genres as a base for its repertoire, and the concepts such as syncopation, phrasing and improvisation in the most basic sense are what makes a piece of music "jazz"; one can simply evaluate the lines between genre classifications are blurred. The earliest datable account of the paired usage of jazz and Light Music dates back to 1931, to the radio program listings of the *Cumhuriyet* Newspaper for the Warsaw Radio program which included a section called *Caz ve Hafif Musiki / Jazz and Light Music*. Later, during the 1940s and 50s, the jazz and light music concepts were associated with each other frequently in the popular music press. For instance, the cover of *Caz Ekspres / Jazz Express*, the second jazz magazine in Turkey which began publication in 1959, also supports the connotations of jazz as a synonym for popular music with its tagline: "Out every 15 days, the first popular music magazine of Turkey".

To sum up, the early years of jazz music in Turkey reflect the confusion deriving from the musical politics of the Republican era. For the early years that jazz represented a generic term embracing all European derived popular dance musics, the time frame covering 1923 and 1941 can be accepted. The former represents the declaration of the Turkish Republic, and the latter stands for the first performance of the Swing Amatör; the band that performed the music denoted as 'real' jazz. Although the first traces of jazz music in Istanbul started in 1921 with the opening of Maxim, we accept 1923 as the point of departure due to the creation of the Turkish Republic.

Both the participants of the era and the authors of the previous literature have reached a consensus on the different connotations of jazz at that time in comparison to recent times. As a result of the interviews and a review of written descriptions about music, it can be concluded that the concepts of swinging rhythms and syncopation have a profound influence on the perception of jazz music by local musicians. For instance, one informant explains the familiarity of the Dixieland style of jazz and swing, which were not prominent in performances before the trio of Haçaturyan brothers and Hrant Lusigyan. Many writers that have been quoted throughout this article seem to evaluate jazz with the demands of their own era's musical perception, rather than the connotation of jazz culture within the relevant era. It is important to note that terms associated with the 1940s bebop and modern jazz, such as the rise of the virtuoso, harmonic complexity, technical competency, and bold improvisational skills, should not be applied to the early jazz culture of the 1920s and 30s. This music primarily served as entertainment at the time.

In closing, perception of jazz in France influenced the early appreciation of jazz music in Turkey. The parties who were stated as the pioneers of jazz in Turkey (such as Leon Avigdor, Gregor Kalekyan and impresario Frederick Bruce Thomas) were intensely involved with Paris, so that it can be concluded that the early years of jazz reflect an European impact, instead of an American

one. During its early years of performance in Turkey, jazz music had embraced by several cultural spheres as an indication of modernization, while some others criticize it as 'decadent'. Such inconsistencies confirm the dichotomies stemmed from music politics of the Turkish Republic.

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