

LEARNING TO PLAY LOUD: A STUDY ON YOUNG TURKISH METAL PERFORMERS

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Abstract

This study describes and represents young metal music performers in Turkey, focusing on their musical training in terms of goals, tools and experiences. The intention is to find out about their learning process and evaluate the influence of conventional music education for metal musicianship. These young people's preferred genre, metal music, is seldom acknowledged as a "legitimate" type of music in Turkey, owing to its Anglo-American roots, its distinctive subculture and its performance practice which entails high volume, distorted sound and extended vocal techniques. Besides, the discourse and iconography connected to metal music feature themes such as a disregard for social norms, rebellion and to a certain extent, violence. When these factors are combined together, it is fathomable that metal-loving and performing Turkish youth find relatively little support or understanding, from either their music teachers at school, families and/or peers, during their acculturation process. When they pick up a metal band instrument and attempt to learn, they need to make do with stereotypical lessons and learning materials wrought for gaining skill towards performing culturally more accepted disciplines, such as Eurogenetic art music. Such approach and/or material is seldom useful or indeed understandable for metalheads. The absence of an educational framework to achieve metal music skill means that young performer candidates have to find their own path which is littered by obstacles that they need to overcome. This study is based on structured interviews with young adults who have learned to perform metal to some extent. As a method, netnography, a recent approach in the spectrum of social sciences whose medium is social media, is assumed. The researcher, as the front woman of an alternative-progressive metal band, has an insider stance concerning the field of underground metal music scene in Turkey, which is convenient in providing connections for gathering the data. The interviews were conducted with volunteering participants, using the social media platform Facebook. The questions are designed as open-ended questions and the participants were encouraged to respond in their own time and manner. The results, deduced from the interviewees' accounts, are handled in a qualitative, factor-centric manner. Transcriptions of interviews describe these informants' learning processes, with their motivations, frustrations, materials and milestones. Their journey to musicianship provide insights about the current status of general music education in Turkey and could be used to diagnose the shortcomings, thus complement and improve the often-neglected music education. Despite metal music seeming much less visible in the mainstream compared to its peak popularity in the 1980s, it is still present and vibrant in the young people's minds. Coordinating efforts and organizing available materials for learning metal would be vastly beneficial for both students and educators, who might adopt the incipient practices to eliminate the inadequacies of the present music education curriculum.

Introduction

'Eurogenetic'¹ art music, with its canon of major works, personages and paradigm, has crystallized into an academic discipline more than a century and half ago. This body of music operates within largely written rules, with both its performance practice and epistemology thoroughly established and deeply etched. If one can withstand the rigidity of most traditions belonging to the world of debatably mislabeled "Classical" music, one can indeed appreciate its claim for being an art form par excellence associated with refinement, supreme sophistication and extreme discipline, often acquired through years of studying it in an academic environment. In the postmodern world of the 2010's, this diligence and aestheticism is becoming ever further pronounced: It is largely unthinkable today for a performer such as the legendary Neapolitan tenor Enrico Caruso, who never received any institutional training, to perform the canonic art music repertoire, for example.

Western and Western-influenced popular music, on the other hand, still does not regard formal music education as a prerequisite. While some occupations in this domain, such as producing or sound engineering, require a degree besides hands-on experience, the established norm for performers is to pick up the training required to become a "professional" through a vocational education. Although it is tempting to use the expression "education", this learning process has little in common with Western art music's rigorous training requirements. Popular musicians often cite patchy, non-academic lessons, leisure-oriented practical experience and/or self-training as their musical background. These individuals acquire their skill through many different processes: some common to many, some unique to that particular musician. These informal learning procedures have been the subject of numerous studies in the past two decades (see Stephanie Pitts, 2005; Lucy Green, 2008; and Susan Hallam, 2015 among others), but in comparison to the research output on academic music education, this is a relatively small bulk.

The primary goal of this study is to represent the amateur musicians that are the current and future protagonists of Turkish underground heavy metal scene, focusing on their learning process. A central question is whether the conventional Turkish music education system facilitates this learning process, which is delineated by the practices of these learners of metal music. Comparing the trusted institutional methods and materials for gaining skill in music performance with the procedure of learning metal is estimated to provide insights from the pedagogical standpoint. Thus, the study seeks to define a paradigm of learning metal music through the accounts of its learners, which in turn could lead to a broadening of the conventional Turkish music education system.

Heavy metal music can be defined as a genre of popular music characterized by "loud, distorted guitars; prominent and aggressive drums; emotionally extreme singing techniques; and musical complexity and esotericism" (Wallach et al., 2011: 4). Even if metal is not as popular as it was in its heyday in the 1980's, it is still regarded as a robust and distinctive genre that has a very dedicated following worldwide. According to metal scholar Deena Weinstein, "Today, in terms of its sound, lyrics, audiences, and so much more, heavy metal is so diverse that it is best characterized as a meta-genre. Yet what now connects this wide variety of styles is that all are called heavy metal" (2014: 36). Thus, the word 'metal' is nowadays being used as an umbrella

¹ A term coined by Dr. Robert Reigle in 2004 and defined as, "to refer to music with one or all components originating in Europe, as a more precise and more neutral alternative to terms such as 'Western,' 'Eurocentric,' 'non-Eastern,' or 'pan-European.'" (2014: 234)

term, without its 'heavy' adjective for more extreme and/or underground subgenres (ibid: 49). There are many studies by musicologists, sociologists and anthropologists that analyze metal music and meaning in diverse contexts globally (Wallach et al., 2011) and globally (Çerezcioğlu, 2011; Hecker, 2012). Recently, the metal musicians themselves are finally becoming an object of academic interest (Poutiainen and Lilja, 2012), but compared to classical musicians, they are still underrepresented in the academic domain.

Poutiainen and Lilja find that, "Like any other type of popular music, heavy metal conveys fundamental parts of Western music tradition" (2012: 518). While some genres such as hip-hop or rap have a strong rhythmic presence and endless repetition of simple, monophonic melodic elements that accompany the vocal line; metal relies on the power trio or quartet (with a keyboardist and/or rhythm guitarist), performing sometimes polyphonic, complex parts, as a foreground element. The instruments are considered equally important, if not more important than the vocal line. This property of metal music has been rightfully compared to the practices of Western art music (Walser, 1992). Metal thus employs some complex elements of music theory such as scales (diatonic, pentatonic and modal), unorthodox harmonic progressions, (poly) modality, syncopation and polyrhythm as well as involving considerable timbral sophistication and dexterity. Consequently, there are highly versatile, virtuosic rock and metal performers around the world that work as full-time musicians, yet they could be considered music illiterate in the Eurogenetic art music sense of the term. Some claim that, for metal music performance, formal music education is unnecessary at best, but may be detrimental and kill creativity as stated by Joey Belladonna of the metal band Anthrax (personal interview, 29.03.2014).

It is affirmed by many studies, both domestic and international, that music education is immensely beneficial for young people, during and beyond their formative academic studies. Susan Hallam summarizes the desirable outcomes of effective musical studies thus: "They need to be highly interactive and enjoyable with opportunities for: developing new skills and performing; acquiring cultural capital; developing interpersonal bonds and solidarity in pursuing shared goals; on-going intensity and frequency of contact; developing mutual respect; and recognition and rewards for excellence" (2015: back cover). Stephanie Pitts finds that "Personal development and social interaction are closely connected in musical experience: participants do not make choices between these two aspects, but rather seek a balance which allows them to satisfy their personal motivations and musical needs" (2005: 33). Lucy Green, in her 2008 study, proposes that most students who pick up an instrument, learn outside school and in "informal" contexts. Stephanie Jaffurs' 2004 study finds that, rock fans among her study group have little opportunity to associate their choice of music to the school curriculum (2004: 191). Such young people are self-motivated and find that the school music education, unlike its ideal definition by Hallam, does not meet their expectations.

Many studies on music and music education in Turkey make a distinction between the general music education compulsory in all schools, whose curriculum is established by the Ministry of Education; amateur (*özengen*) music education which is more grounded by the general one, is offered by private institutions and involving the teaching of an instrument; and vocational music education which aims at training professional musicians and entails acquiring proficiency of at least one instrument (Uçar, 2005; Karakoç and Şendurur, 2015; Dilsiz, 2017). The general, non-specialist music education in Turkey is a source of constant debate and controversy, which

does not seem very effective in teaching the essentials of music. Consequently, for the vast majority of adults in Turkey who have received secondary and tertiary education, music remains an enigma. The institutional, vocational study of music in Turkey is an infrequently-threaded path for the Turkish youth, yet there is a dedicated minority who pursues the Eurogenetic conservatoire tradition as it is applied in Turkey and eventually reach the “world class” in terms of instrumental mastery and disciplinary knowledge. Fortunately, there is abundant study material available for learning music within the formal curriculum of the abovementioned secondary and tertiary music education. This material, consisting of translations of traditional pedagogical methods such as Lavignac’s ‘Solfège des Solfèges’ or Beyer’s ‘Elementary Piano School op. 101’, and invaluable original works by educators such as Oransay and Sun, is designed for the music-literate, specialist student in training for music as a profession. However, when the goal of the student is to eventually perform popular music, there are no paths to thread in Turkish schooling system, unless one picks up an instrument on his or her own and strives to learn. The aforementioned study material is often too technical for such students, and the general music education they receive does not hold enough appeal or is able to provide enough grounding for such an endeavor. Thus, receiving amateur (özengen) music education to lead to performing popular music in Turkey is not organized and/or validated in a solid sense to direct such young people towards their goal, and is dependent of the instructors and institutions where it is offered. Regarding rock and metal, every musician and musician candidate seems to have forged a path of their own. This study seeks to elucidate this process and provide outcomes.

Methodology

This article is a mixed-method study: combining participant observation and self-ethnography with Netnography: treating the social media platform Facebook as its field and collecting data through written interviews. Netnography is an expression for internet-based ethnographic research which is occupying increasing space in humanities and social sciences. Its definition by Kozinets is “a specialized form of ethnography adapted to the unique computer-mediated contingencies of today’s social worlds” (2013: 1). In the course of my dissertation, I have extensively used Facebook to reach many local and international professional musicians and even more amateur and/or semi-amateur metal musicians. According to Kozinets, using a social media platform to reach a broader audience is becoming a very popular research method and according to the amount of processed data, lends itself for both quantitative and qualitative research (ibid: 49). Although there are comparable studies with this one that use statistical methods for extremely small groups (see Karakoç and Şendurur, 2015), my decision is to handle this data qualitatively and interpret it in keeping with the methods of critical ethnography.

The study group of this article are amateur metal musicians that are the current and future protagonists of Turkish underground metal scene. According to Jeremy Wallach, Harris M. Berger and Paul D. Greene, the authors of the highly influential work *Metal Rules the Globe: Heavy Metal Music Around the World*, the distinguishing factor that sets metal music aside from other genres of the global popular music industry is that “all metalheads, regardless of their preferred subgenre or subgenres, view metal as opposite to light entertainment. To them, it is a form of serious music that endorses a particular set of values” (2014:8). The presented interviews reveal that young musicians, who take metal music seriously, have to overcome considerable difficulties and resistance in the Turkish society, while seeking to gain the necessary knowledge and skills

to perform metal. The long shadows of the moral panic that wrapped itself around metal music in 1990s Turkey are still tangible for these individuals (Hecker, 2012; Kutluk and Ata, 2015).

The data hereby presented is derived from structural interviews delivering eight questions in identical order and manner. To initiate the data accumulation process, I asked in a public post if there are volunteering metal performers among my Facebook contacts for an interview of about 10 minutes. These interviews were to be complemented with two longer, more detailed, semi-structured interviews with a professional musician and a high-school music teacher, which were done in advance. I already had made some interviews with young amateur metal performers from the years 2014 to 2016; but I felt that I had to ask specific questions to confirm my presupposition that, in the Turkish system, school music learning is totally irrelevant to picking up an instrument and learning to play rock and/or metal subgenres. Through the snowball method, I managed to reach 16 young people. 9 of these budding musicians are males, 7 are females, their average age is 20 and most are university students. They come from similar backgrounds and families of comparable economical standing: the majority are Anatolian High School graduates with some representatives of the fine arts high schools and vocational high schools. Surprisingly, among the participants of this study, there are no private high school graduates. Some further specialized types of high schools, such as Sağlık-Meslek (health vocational) the Imam-Hatip (religion vocational) are absent as well. 11 of these youngsters are in training for non-music-affiliated professions, two are training to be sound engineers and another two are pursuing studies to become music teachers. In order to study the collected data, I organized these parameters into a fact sheet as seen in Table 1.

NAME	AGE	SEX	HIGH SCHOOL	UNIVERSITY
Participant 1	21	M	Anatolian Science/Teacher Vocational	Karabük U. (Electrical Engineering)
Participant 2	21	M	Police Collage Vocational School	Okan U. (Psychological Counseling)
Participant 3	21	M	Anatolian High School	Cumhuriyet U. (Music Technologies)
Participant 4	18	M	Anatolian High School	Boğaziçi U. (Western Languages & Literature)
Participant 5	19	F	Anatolian High School	Gazi U. (Electrical Engineering)
Participant 6	19	F	Anatolian High School	Gazi U. (Architecture)
Participant 7	21	M	Anatolian High School	Namık Kemal U. (Mechanics Engineering)
Participant 8	20	M	Anatolian/Teacher Vocational	Gazi U. (Computer Engineering)
Participant 9	21	F	Anatolian Fine Arts High School	Cumhuriyet U. (Music Teacher Education)
Participant 10	21	F	Anatolian Trade/Vocational	Marmara U. (Bureau Management)
Participant 11	21	F	Anatolian Fine Arts High School	Marmara U. (Music Teacher Education)
Participant 12	20	F	Not Specified	Middle East Technical U. (Sociology)
Participant 13	17	M	Anatolian High School	High School Student
Participant 14	20	M	Vocational/Technical High School	High School Graduate
Participant 15	20	M	Not Specified	Adana Science and Technology U. (Translation)
Participant 16	19	F	Anatolian Fine Arts High School	Dokuz Eylül U. (Music Technologies)

AVERAGE 20

Table 1: Interviewees according to age, sex and education

Table 2 sketches the musical profile of these young musicians by instrument, music literacy, learning experience and proficiency level, according to their own account. I have not made any attempts at justifying the participants' statements, thus there are no metrics for "rudimentary" or "advanced" knowledge of notation besides the participants' own self-judgements. The mentioned

earlier interviews were made with Selim Işık: a professional musician and the author of an electric guitar method widely known and respected by many budding metalheads; and high school music teacher Serdar Dilekcan, who has taught in TED Ankara College High School for nearly 30 years, supervising many student projects, competitions and musical events. Their valuable insights hopefully provide a frame for the young musicians’ accounts as individuals who supervise them, arguably enabling authoritative statements and generalizations.

NAME	INSTRUMENT	LESSONS	LEARNING EXPERIENCE	NOTATION	LEVEL
Participant 1	E. Guitar	Y	Two attempts - one month each - MS	Y	Rudimentary
Participant 2	Drums	Y	since 2014 with breaks - MS	Y	Rhythm
Participant 3	E. Guitar, Drums	N	Self taught	Y	Medium
Participant 4	E. Guitar	Y	Guitar lessons for a years - MS	N	None
Participant 5	Bas Guitar	Y	Very brief - classical guitar lessons - MS	N	None
Participant 6	E. Guitar	Y	Two years - classical guitar lessons - PL	N	None
Participant 7	Drums	Y	Irregular - MS, PL	Y	Medium
Participant 8	Bas Guitar	N	Self taught - older brother	N	Tablature
Participant 9	E. Guitar	Y	Begun in group classical guitar lesson-MS	Y	Advanced
Participant 10	E. Guitar	N	Self taught - peers	Y	Rudimentary
Participant 11	Keyboards, Cello	Y	Keyboard, piano, violin - MS	Y	Advanced
Participant 12	E. Guitar, Violin	Y	3 years violin, 1 year E guitar - MS	Y	Medium
Participant 13	E. Guitar	N	No - self taught - older brother	N	None
Participant 14	Brutal Vocal, E. Guitar	Y	Very brief - guitar lessons - MS	Y	Rudimentary
Participant 15	Drums	Y	Two attempts - a few months - MS	N	None
Participant 16	Bass	Y	Had lessons all her life - MS, PL	Y	Advanced

MS= Music Scholl

PL= Private Lessons

Table 2: Interviewees according to music and learning experience

Netnography is, in Kozinets’s words, usefully efficient about “arranging personal introductions, travelling to and from sites, transcribing interview and handwritten fieldnote data” (2013: 56). These interviews are all done within a short period of time between 02.03.2018 to 06.03.2018. The original language is naturally Turkish, since all parties speak Turkish as their primary language. Following introductions and obtaining written clearance to use their names and information they choose to disclose, I administered the interviewees, by copy-pasting for consistency, the questions found below. Some participants chose to answer immediately and spontaneously (question by question, with minimum interjection on my behalf to encourage them), some instead took their time and responded with (a) prepared paragraph(s) afterwards. All participants responded within 48 hours and expressed interest in the outcome of the research.

- 1) Can you briefly introduce yourself? How old are you, which schools did you graduate from, and what are you currently studying?
- 2) When and how did music enter your life?
- 3) Have you ever taken instrumental lessons? Did you learn by yourself? How would you describe the procedure of learning your instrument, was it easy or difficult? Do you have any interesting stories to tell?
- 4) What kind of tools or learning material do you use while practicing? (Tabs, chord charts, videos, tutorials, anything else?)

- 5) What role did school life play in learning your instrument? Did you benefit from the music lessons at school?
- 6) What is your opinion about the music education you had at school?
- 7) Do you read notation? Are you familiar with music theory, do you need it at all?
- 8) What targets and/or goals do you have about music, how much of there could you achieve so far?

In order to be able to interpret and approach the data using the methods of critical ethnography, specific points each participant made regarding all questions are written out as paragraphs. Such a layout enables textual analysis emphasizing commonalities, and filters the information by taking out givens such as participants' age and sex and school names out of the way into fact sheets. The fact sheets are sorted alphabetically, but the paragraphs are ordered according to the participants' interrelations and similarities/contrasts and by order of responding, when such distinguishing factors are not present.

Interviews

Participant 1 spared this study a generous amount of his time as well as disclosing some blog drafts he made about the challenge of being a young rock and metal musician in Turkey. Music began to be a part of his life when he found the compulsory recorder education at secondary school very challenging but he kept on trying to play all pieces that he knew on the instrument outside school, unlike his friends who kept their efforts confined to school music classes. He was compelled to begin playing electric guitar at high school, influenced by his favorite band Slipknot. He particularly recalls a difficult period while he commiserated and associated himself with the "music fail" videos on YouTube. His first learning tool for music was a notebook he kept his chord positions and charts, but it was a squared notebook. He thinks school and school life has detrimental role in his music making experience since he cannot devote enough time for his instrument, and school music classes taught him nothing he found useful to learn his instrument. He had two brief spells of electric guitar lessons, but they were not much effective. He taught himself reading notation, but he is still not comfortable with using notation and/or musical jargon. He wishes that his university had better means and opportunities for music but there is only a rock music club with very limited capacities. His goals are gaining stage experience besides the sole concert at his university where he appeared, and keep music in his life till the very end.

Participant 3 has supported this article by recruiting friends besides answering the questions himself. His experience with music begun at the age of 7, since he is from Sivas, a smaller Anatolian city, he had to literally beg his father to buy him a guitar. He never had lessons and in his environment he had limited access to the internet. He had conflicts with the conservative minded citizens of the city: a high school concert that was disrupted by the students of the nearby vocational school who labeled their music "noise" and thugs attacking him and breaking his drumsticks on his head are the two incidents he related. He uses published methods for learning his instrument, but he makes use of tablatures and videos as well. As he had to take music courses as well in the university, he had to learn standard notation as well. He never had music lessons after primary school and does not regard the music lessons he had at the university sufficient and/or effective. He is upset that his major program does not regard the electric guitar as a legitimate instrument, and his undergraduate study only taught him some harmony and not more. He does

not think conventional music theory and Western musical notation is well suited to metal music, what makes music “metal” are the aspects between the notes. His aim is to pursuing postgraduate studies abroad and continuing his one-man project as a multi-instrumentalist and producer.

Participants 8 and 13 are also from Sivas, ushered to do this interview by Participant 3 who is Participant 13’s elder brother. Both of these boys are self-taught, since their school curricula did not include music and there is no one in Sivas to learn electric guitar from. Consequently, they turned to be tab and video oriented musicians who do not read notation or know music theory. Their Anatolian High School had absolutely no support during their learning process, except perhaps teaching the names of the notes, remarks Participant 8. He adds that he did not have high expectations about music, before coming to Ankara for his studies, but currently he is spending almost all of his time outside school in the studio “soaking up like a sponge whatever he sees”. Participant 13, who is only seventeen, understandably looks up to these two abi’s (elder brother in a colloquial, somewhat slang form of language) and plans to follow their footsteps to a metropolis where he can make music to his heart’s content.

Participants 9 and 11 used to play in an adolescent symphonic metal band with Participant 3 in Sivas. Music turned out to be so significant for these girls that they decided to be music teachers, thus learning conventional “schooled” practices to a higher degree than most participants of this study. Music teacher education in Turkey teaches students one main instrument and two secondary instruments to some level. Regarding musical upbringing, both girls began music in a private music school, with keyboard and guitar group lessons. Once they were admitted to Anatolian Fine Arts High School, their teachers followed the curriculum. Both Participant 9 and Participant 11 think highly of their high school music education, they had diligent teachers who put high stakes before them to achieve more. However, both are in turn disillusioned by their university education. For Participant 9, it was a big disappointment that the university study was identical with the high school study in many aspects, instead of improvement, she is experiencing regression. Participant 11 feels luckier because she is in Istanbul and has the opportunity to develop herself even when school falls short. Needless to say, they both are music literate and handle metal music through a similar process with the classical repertoire they are taught. Neither aspires to play metal in the future, but both express their desire to attain more skill with their instrument and become part of ensembles such as orchestras or chamber groups.

Participant 4 recalls that, compared to his peers, music was a stronger attraction for him even in kindergarten, but the real spark was his cousins exposing him to rock and metal songs during secondary school. During 6th and 7th grades, he was besotted with drumming, but since this interest was hard to accommodate in his environment, he turned to guitar, whose learning process he finds easier. What he finds remarkable during his learning experience is that he has developed some sort of phobia against standard notation. He still makes do with tablatures, cover videos and playing by ear. He finds that, schools in our country are unable to nourish any interest in music; his high school experience was a confirmation of this idea as well. They make students either give up their aspirations of learning an instrument or forge a path on their own because of simple and pedantic teaching methods. He does not have any knowledge of music theory or notation, and sometimes feels the absence when he yearns to compose his own numbers. He does dream to play with his band at Wacken (the oldest and biggest open air metal festival, annually held in Germany since 1990’s), but the first target is to be a part of a band that regularly plays and share his music with an audience.

Participant 5 and her twin sister Participant 6 are members of an all-female alternative metal band that won the Freezone High School Music Contest, an annual competition held for 21 years and approved by the Ministry of Education. The twins had classical guitar lessons for a short while, later on one picked up the electric guitar and the other the bass during their teenage years. They both state that they are largely self-taught using chord charts, method books and other internet sources, they are both used to playing by ear and sometimes watch live videos of their favorite bands to learn new songs and/or techniques. Their experience with music education at school was not remarkable at all till high school: the curriculum and their former teachers made them hate music. Music lessons were frequently “recycled” as revision time for exams by the school administration. Their visionary high school music teacher, on the other hand, taught them many useful things and encouraged them to record their music. Yet, both claim that they know nothing of music theory or notation. Participant 5 was afraid that they would be asked to transpose some parts during their recording sessions; luckily they did not have to. Participant 6 jokingly asserts she would not be able to recognize one of her own parts if it was transcribed on paper and put in front of her to play. Having already played on large stages at some domestic festivals, the twins hope to record their second album and reach a broader audience as a short term goal.

Participant 2 is from Istanbul with stage experience under his belt, having played at various concerts since 2010 with predominantly amateur bands. He has had private lessons since 2014, and is currently working with Can Sürmen, who plays the drums for the professional alternative rock band “Son Feci Bisiklet”. Asserting he is not a tablature and/or notation-oriented drummer, Participant 2 pays homage to the formal methodology of learning drums by claiming that he aims to use the metronome all the time. However, he admits to having learned a lot by watching other drummers through available videos on the internet. He is upset with the Turkish educational system and does not think that the music lessons he had at school contributed to his musicianship: a devoted teacher would have made a chance, he reckons, but instead one of his teachers said that he is interested in drumming because he lacks talent for music. He describes himself as music literate since he assists his band during composition. His driving force is to make whatever music that his heart calls for, excelling further in his instrument during the two more years of his university study and eventually releasing his own album.

Participant 7 believes he was lucky to grow up in Istanbul since his environment meant that he sang in choir at primary school, was given a keyboard and a classical guitar at secondary school, his interest finally settling in drumming. He had no notion about how to get proper training since there were not many sources in Turkish and his family was opposing his passion. His most remarkable memory is from 2013: While he was rehearsing in a studio, a man walked in and asked with whom Participant 7 was studying drumming. Learning that he was self-taught and did not have any fundamental knowledge on music theory, he kicked Participant 7 out of the studio, telling that he plays horribly and should not come back unless he had learned to play. Participant 7 now thanks that unknown man, whose face he still remembers: his detestation became a spur for Participant 7 to learn notation and music theory. He still uses videos to learn, but if he deems necessary to study a piece in detail, he transcribes the piece and works with sheet music. He also recalls his high school music teacher with respect who helped towards this end, dismissing the rest of the music classes he had at school: music lessons were regarded as void and most music teachers thus did not share their knowledge, to a disinterested audience. He believes notation and

music theory are necessary to develop a mutual language with the people he is making music with, the second important aspect is a lot of practice, he asserts. Each day, he puts himself a target to play better and with people he admires, famous or otherwise, and hopes to learn ever more about his instrument.

Participant 12 has not considered “getting serious with” electric guitar during her formative years in Izmir, but coming to Ankara to study at METU has inspired her to be closely acquainted with blues, rock and metal through getting to know many amateur and professional musicians. She studied the violin for three years at a music school and she feels this experience had been very helpful in developing her ear. Participant 12 feels that she could transfer the orthodox music theory and its applications she had learned through playing the violin, such as scales and arpeggios, to electric guitar by the help of her friends, tablatures and videos. However, she agrees with her peers stating that the school music education had nothing of interest and the music lessons she had at school were “like torture”.

Participant 10's family is a music-loving family and she grew up listening to artists such as Eric Clapton, and The Beatles, turning to metal and picking up the electric guitar during her high school years. She does not boast a thorough musical education, developing through playing by ear, supporting friends and of course internet resources. She reckons it is much easier when someone assists in the learning process, but being an autodidact means that one does not fear being wrong. She appreciates the sense of liberation she feels as a self-taught musician, that she does not feel pressured by the rules and regulations, yet she feels that music theory and notation is indispensable if one has the aim of becoming a composer and make “quality music”. She relates that she was always good at music classes, but now that she is more acquainted with “real music”, she finds school music education futile and superficial that did nothing for her musician identity or instrument playing. Her target about music is to graduate and start working to declare financial independence, then she intends to devote all the time she could to music making.

Participant 14 has graduated from high school but did not make it to the university and his parents are blaming music for that. He begun by playing the guitar at 13, but on the way he discovered that his call is more for extreme vocal techniques in metal. He meanwhile tried to follow orthodox music education, available in abundance since he lived in Kadıköy, İstanbul which is a hub of “harder” music in Turkey since the times of Barış Manço and Cem Karaca. Music classes were very boring for him, yet he was diligent enough to observe vocalists in rehearsal studios, watch concert videos and do vocal exercises for eight hours a day. He gratefully reveals that he was supported by his high school music teacher who granted him permission to use the school equipment. Nevertheless, he does not hold music education in Turkey in high esteem, he feels that it is “insufficient, indeed useless” His aim about music is to depict the world we live in from his unique perspective, and he wishes to share this perspective with an ever expanding audience: it is his aim, not merely his dream to be regarded “historically significant” by metal audience.

Participant 15 began to play drums in a music school with a teacher who does not seem proficient from his account. He tried another music school that at least attempted to teach him notation, to no avail. Therefore, he turned to the internet and discovered a wealth of resources which he used to improve his playing as much as he could. His experience with school music education is very negative: Their teachers kept changing and music lessons were disregarded by both students and teachers: they gave him no visions and prospects. Consequently, his knowledge

on the working mechanisms of music is sparse and he cannot fathom if music theory and notation would help him in any way. During our correspondence, he felt at low ebb about music and thought he did not have any prospects and/or aspirations about it.

Participant 16 has had instrument lessons all her life and also studied in a fine arts high school, thus she is articulate about music theory and notation. She picked up the bass guitar at 13 and first attempted to learn by herself, but the arduousness led her to take lessons. She worked for a period to overcome the difficulties posed by her smaller hands and extension of fingers: working long hours. To learn new numbers, her usual approach is to learn by videos, but if she locates an accurate sheet music, she prefers to use it. The courses she took at the fine arts high school did not provide a boon for her instrument: she found the school experience restricting and thought it did not bolster her musicality, but the theoretical lessons were helpful.

Many of these young people, especially the electric guitar players, recognize and admire Selim Işık, as the author of a highly successful electric guitar method. Selim is in his forties and has been teaching the guitar for about 20 years. He owes his wide reputation to his series of instruction videos for learning electric guitar and “Sahne Senin” (the Stage is Yours) concert series where he plays with young musicians in various cities. He has his own trash metal band project called 80 Kalibre that has established a dedicated fan base, especially among teenage metal aficionados. Besides, as a solo metal guitarist, he makes guest appearances, records his own compositions and covers in metal style. Selim himself is a self-taught musician, but during his early career, he was able to experience from the firsthand what kind of challenges young musicians must overcome to make a career of metal music. He states that the lesser opportunities a prospect student of metal music has, the more he or she dedicates himself/herself to practice. Even though these students might never have the opportunity to get in touch with Selim, he follows his method being shipped to every province of Turkey and occasionally publishes photos and videos of young people who send him feedback about learning through his method. Selim is adamant on teaching his students standard Western music theory and notation. Whenever he publishes a new track, he releases a package for those who would like to learn to play it that contains backing tracks for drums, bass and guitars, tablatures, note charts, standard notation sheet music and performance video of the song. He guesses that the most popular approach to learning by his virtual students that study his video lessons or book chapters is through Guitar Pro, a computer program designed for the rock/metal guitarists, whose save file of the song is also released along with the rest of the package contents. During our interview on 26.06.2017, Selim has confirmed what each participant so far has put forth: the music education in Turkey disregards popular music, and totally ignores a “marginal” genre of popular music such as metal. Most music teachers at secondary and high schools today have been trained with a lesser-quality and conservative education, and few further develop their skills once they are appointed music teachers. Many do not aim at trying to grasp their students’ genre choices or forming a bridge between the school curriculum and what students learn outside school. There are those less than adequate teachers who attempt at stamping their own musical tastes to their students, using the curriculum as a pretext: if, for example, a teacher is particularly into Western Art Music or Turkish Folk Music, the students are thus exposed to those genres as the ultimate forms of art. Some ambitious teachers might form ensembles, train choirs and/or guide students for competitions like the Freezone High School Music Contest, but such endeavors are restricted to larger cities and more established higher ranking high schools.

Selim reckons that the current system in Turkey, following instrument lessons outside school, is an effective strategy, but he believes that students should be careful to choose qualified teachers whose work should testify to their skill.

Serdar Dilekcan is a music teacher who studied in Gazi University Music Teacher Education Department, later pursuing postgraduate studies in choral conducting. During our online interview on the 27.03.2018, he stated that music's timeless quality should not lead to stagnation and narrow-mindedness and a music teacher should always listen to whatever his students are listening to and be aware of "their" music as aware as he or she is of Bach or Beethoven. Serdar does not have the responsibility to supervise all musical activities of TED Ankara College, for example, the school's small recording and rehearsal studio and the guitar, drums and bass lessons offered there are given by younger musicians who are adjunct staff. When he coordinates the end-of-the-year shows, Serdar makes sure that every good enough musician and every genre including metal is given stage time. Occasionally, a student that learns their instrument approaches him to ask about music theory, harmony or notation conventions, which he never turns down, if the question is outside his own knowledge, he would suggest individuals that could be of help. Serdar asserts that, being a high-caliber school, TED Ankara College had always sought to give its students more than the state-controlled music curriculum sets forth. According to the latest official syllabus changes issued by the Ministry of Education, music lessons at high schools are no more compulsory. Therefore, no school authority forces disinterested students to participate in music lessons, but the school's various student clubs are quite active. Music lessons or music activities such as choral singing could be taken as extra-curricular activities and count as graduation credits. Serdar admits that, such an ideal environment is seldom possible outside a well-established school like TED and criticizes the curriculum designed by the Ministry of Education as being "uninteresting, politically biased and not connected to students' real life music experiences".

Outcomes

All participants of this study have learned to play their instrument and genre choice of metal music outside their school music education. Concerning their instrument, most report to meeting with indifference, even disregard and disdain from peers and teachers at high school. A few were supported in their quest for metal by their music teachers, but most had to seek outside help since they were unable to relate the music curriculum they encountered at school or music school with the performance practices of their preferred genre.

Most of the participants expressed their admiration for the Eurocentric notation system and a desire to learn conventional music theory, but there are a number who never managed to do that. The reasons are various: one labels his liaison a "phobia" developed through negative learning experience, another claims he never had the opportunity, yet another expressed that she found music theory cumbersome and not very useful for her current purposes, but does want to learn in the future. Those who have learned (Participants 3, 9, 11 and 16) did so because their future professions required music literacy rather than their metal music learning and/or performing experience with their instruments. With the availability of learning tools listed below, lack of music theory and notation mastery does not seem to manifest a problem for these youths.

Playing by ear, arguably the oldest oral music learning method, takes on a new importance in the recording era. Digitized recorded tracks, accessed through streaming and downloading rather than hardcopy manifestations such as compact discs or LP are indispensable. They do not

only constitute the medium for the young performers of this study to get acculturated in their genre of choice, but also provide them with unlimited trial and error opportunity. Young metal aficionados these days discover new bands producing their favorite subgenre through Spotify playlists and YouTube and social media suggestions and immediately grab their playback equipment, which is seldom more sophisticated than their mobile phone and its factory issue headset to self-teach a favorite number. I have observed that this is seldom a solitary process: players by ear often need an outside ear to validate their progress. This outside ear could be a sibling, a peer or a mentor, whom they might not have in-person access, but digital communication. A heavily distorted, thickly-textured metal number might be hard to isolate and unravel track by track, but one's acculturation in the style and familiarity with similar gestures and musical elements ensures success.

Tablatures, shorthand for musical notation in use since the middle ages, have become popular tools of learning ever since guitar-dominated popular music rose into prominence in the 1960's. Guitar Pro, essentially a MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) sequencing program that is designed for electric guitarists, is unanimously the most popular computer interface for these young rock and/or metal players that form the universe of this article, as well as many other semi amateur performers I have interacted with throughout my dissertation period. The program produces tablatures and standard notation, visually representing the multi-track structure of a song in a bar-by-bar, accessible manner. It offers playback and looping capacities that could be expanded with sound libraries that could be used for performing these backing tracks. One of the best features is that, just like Digital Audio Workstation software, the user has the means to isolate a particular part and implement their musical intentions, but only using the computer's internal sound card and its ASIO (Audio Stream Input Output) driver. Most instrumentalists I have interviewed singled out Guitar Pro as their primary composition, practice and playback tool. There are databases on the internet, on which Guitar Pro files of almost all guitar-based music available are listed. There are often multiple versions of the same song, transcribed by members of rock/metal society with different skill levels; therefore, the accuracy and reliability of these files are varied. Also available on the internet are chord and tablature charts. For many of my interviewees, the biggest problem is that the notation system they access from the internet is based on note names rather than solmization syllables (the fixed-do system) that is habitually taught in school music lessons in Turkey. This preference of Turkish schooling system is regarded as perplexing by some participants, whereas some claimed that they only perceive the tablature as a string of numbers without any note names, so this discrepancy does not deter them.

In today's visually-oriented world, YouTube and similar video libraries seem to be a more effective tool for learning than any method. All my interviewees reported that they acquire help from tutorial videos and playthroughs, thus combining visual, aural and tactile learning processes. Some went insofar that, with the increasing availability of ever more detailed and advanced material, YouTube is their primary learning tool. For the Turkish youth, the greatest disadvantage with YouTube videos, besides the language barrier, is their frequent use of musical terminology. Considering that most videos stem from societies which have better access to music theory resources, and presumably more efficient music teaching strategies at schools, they are more informed and jargon wise correct. The participants of this study reported difficulties at times with using video material that takes for granted that the user is familiar with chord names and inversions, performing techniques and other jargon.

Conclusion

Music education at schools might not always be instrumental of effective to support young people to find their bearing with music. John Sloboda remarks that, in the developed world, “almost every child in school receives classroom music instruction from an early age...the general level of musical achievement in the school-age population is surely well below that of many other skills addressed by the school curriculum” (1996: 107). According to Lucy Green, “Many young people who go on to become skillful and successful popular musicians report that the music education they received at school was unhelpful, or worse, detrimental” (2008: 4). The research introduced and discussed above reveals that these statements hold true for Turkey as well. Although studies on younger students indicate that they perceive the music education they receive at school as beneficial (Karakoç and Şendurur, 2015; Noyan, 2012), the informants of this study described those same music lessons as “disconnected from their musical reality”, “in vain”, “uninteresting”, “boring”, “serving no purpose” and “waste of time”. Thus, a negative answer emerges for the research question, investigating whether, during their learning process, these individuals have benefitted from the conventional music education offered in Turkey.

A solution to this problem have been offered two decades ago in the Western world by pioneering educators such as Newsom (1998) or Boespflug (1999), namely introducing popular music and popular music learning strategies into school curricula. Studies such as Green (2008) and Poutiainen and Lilja (2014) prove that indeed the endeavor has been successful and consequently popular music and its practices are gradually becoming an integrated part of Western schooling system. As in the case of TED Ankara College, some schools in bigger cities of Turkey have embraced this approach as well. Although it is mostly dependent on the background and vision of the school’s administration, music staff in residence and funds available, some schools establish music studios designed for popular music, besides facilities for acoustic music such as Eurogenetic art music. The informants of this study claim that, the best support they had from their high schools was that they were allowed to use school equipment and/or studio, when present. A wider study with a statistical approach would elucidate if this new approach of exploiting the power of popular music for education purposes in Turkey should indeed lead to success.

Even when globally metal music as a genre seems to be waning (Olivier, 2017), it still inspires many young people in Turkey. The recent Vodafone Freezone competition for high school students, held annually for the 21st time, features performances of high school bands and does not have any limitations such as to which genres of music could be performed.² It might be expected that students would be inclined to perform more visible genres such as (Turkish) rock, (Turkish) pop, R&B, or indie or alternative music, but even a brief glance at the list of contestants show that about one quarter of the Istanbul participants choose to perform various genres of hard rock and metal. According to this study’s informants Participant 5 and Participant 6 who won the competition in 2016 with their high school band, there was much self-censorship for bands who leaned towards more extreme styles such as black metal varieties, and it was found surprising by their peers that their band with their alternative metal sound made it to the finals. Despite the social pressure that leads to this mentioned self-censorship, metal’s rebelliousness combined

² <http://fizy.org/sss> list the conditions of the contest and it is clearly indicated that there are no language and/or genre restrictions.

with its requirement of considerable skill and speed makes the genre appealing to these young musicians and will continue to do so.

There is a wealth of available material on internet resources such as YouTube, but some of this material includes wrong information, inadequate or falsely explained instrument techniques and inexplicable jargon. Even when the source is commendable in terms of its content and methods, there is the language barrier to discourage many of the participants of this study from benefiting. There is no established educational structure or indeed reliable consultancy available to direct the young metal aficionados to their targets. There are educators in Turkey who work to overcome these difficulties, but their efforts are not coordinated and thus, by far, young people must indeed find their own calling and bearing through trial and error. It would be immensely beneficial to set up an “official” internet library, where individuals such as Selim Işık might band together to aggregate pedagogically and musically optimized, reliable content.

Further Study

As a follow-up study, by collaborating with Participant 3, one of the interviewees who is currently abroad with a grant from Erasmus Student Exchange programs, I plan to compare the findings and deductions presented hereby to youth from Portugal. Another follow up study could be centered on female players. In the course of the data collection for this specific article, I managed to reach more female metal musicians than I expected or previously managed. “Previous academic research on gender interactions in the heavy metal scene reveals an imbalance of power between men and women” (Vasan, 2011: 333), and the female participants of this study mentioned feeling that imbalance at various stages of their experience. In the wake of impending social pressure in and outside of the metal scene, these young women expressed their defiance of the public perception that being a metal musician is a “male” domain. It would be academically worthwhile to study the current status of Turkish metal scene in terms of gender and issues and update from the viewpoint of the post-2000’s generation. Although there is some discussion in Hecker’s work, an update would be justifiable at this point.

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