

Origin and Etymology of "Bar"

The word *bar* is believed to have originated from the term used by Turks in Central Asia for the drum, "Par." Some sources also link it to the Armenian word *par* (պար), meaning "dance."

Polyphony in Turkish Folk Music

Muzaffer Sarısözen, a prominent musicologist, categorized polyphony in Turkish folk music into two main forms:

1. **Urban Polyphony:** This type of polyphony follows a simple homophonic structure, where other sounds constantly accompany the melody.
2. **Rural Polyphony:** Found among folk musicians living away from urban centers, this form exhibits a diatonic character.

Sarısözen emphasized that polyphony exists among rural communities, independent of the influence of city music. He stated, "We have determined that it lives among the people who stay away from the influence of city music."

Polyphony in Turkish folk music is also observed in the bagpipes of Turkmen communities in Central Asia, such as the *Dutar* (known as *ikitelli* in Turkish). The structure of this polyphony, formed by parallel *kent* and *karts* (quintets and quartets), is similar to diaphonic music. Researchers have noted that the material collected from the musical traditions of Central Asian Turks and those of Asia Minor exhibit striking similarities.

Types of Polyphony in Turkish Folk Music

According to Sadi Yaver Ataman, polyphony in Turkish folk music manifests in various ways:

- **Random Polyphony (Improvised Polyphony):** This emerges when horizontal melodic phrases are spontaneously accompanied by voices or sound clusters. Such examples are frequently encountered in the playing of the *bağlama* by folk minstrels and in religious rituals like the Alevi *Cem* ceremonies.
- **Hidden Polyphony:** This occurs when polyphonic gestures are perceived as horizontal melodic movements, often through arpeggiation. As different sounds enter sequentially, the first played note subtly persists within the emerging melody, creating a layered effect.

Even when folk minstrels play the *bağlama* unconsciously, their individual aesthetic interpretations contribute to a rich and unique timbral texture.

Folk Music and Contemporary Influences

Today, traditional folk music performances have increasingly fallen under the influence of popular culture, causing a shift away from their authentic forms. Many studies on polyphony have not yet reached the desired level of depth. Folk music, rooted in the diverse lifestyles of various subcultures, holds an essential role in shaping a modern and civilized society.

The idea of "polyphonizing" folk music to modernize society has lost its validity. If modernization could be achieved merely by adding polyphony to folk melodies, the process would have been straightforward. However, this approach oversimplifies the complexity of musical and cultural transformation. Instead, folk music should be recognized for its intrinsic "Random Polyphonic/Improvised Polyphonic" characteristics and preserved within its traditional framework. Nevertheless, it can serve as an inspiration for new and original compositions.

Research and Academic Contributions

Since Sarisözen's pioneering work, numerous scholars have continued research on the *bağlama* and polyphony in Turkish folk music. Notable contributors include Erdal Tuğcular, Ertuğrul Bayrakta, Nevzat Altuğ, and many others. Their work has been instrumental in deepening the understanding of folk instruments and their polyphonic structures. Sarisözen's writings, in particular, have provided invaluable insights for academic studies, such as the "Polyphonic Use of Bağlama as a Solo Instrument."

Bar Dances in Erzurum

The *bar* dance is a significant cultural element in Erzurum, performed at events such as weddings and javelin games. It is traditionally accompanied by drums and the *zurna* (a type of woodwind instrument), which have been integral to Turkish history, from the Battle of Manzikert to Vienna (as referenced by Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar).

A heavy *bar* dance begins with performers standing shoulder to shoulder, a motion poetically described by Behçet Kemal Çağlar as "starting shoulder to shoulder with the hills."

The *bar* dance was first formally documented in 1929 by Mahmut Ragıp in *Şarki Anadolu Türküleri ve Oyunları* (Folk Songs and Games of Eastern Anatolia). Its musical notation was included in *Book 13 of Folk Songs* published by the Istanbul Conservatory in 1930. Additional descriptions and musical transcriptions can be found in Sırrı Numan's *Erzurum Oyunları ve Oyun Havaları* (Erzurum Dances and Dance Melodies), published in the same year.

Conclusion

Erzurum's folk dances and folk music represent a rich cultural heritage deeply rooted in tradition. While modern influences continue to shape musical practices, it is crucial to preserve the authentic elements that define this cultural expression. Polyphony in Turkish folk music, whether random or hidden, adds depth to the musical experience and offers valuable insight into the historical development of folk traditions.