
Solo Cello Pieces by Turkish Composers

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of this study is to raise knowledge among students in music education about Turkish composers of solo cello pieces; and to provide acknowledgement of these pieces by music scholars and performers in the world.

In the study, a total of ten pieces by seven composers who composed solo pieces for cello are introduced with their backgrounds; and the pieces are analyzed in terms of structure. A structural analysis has been conducted on a limited level, in an attempt to serve as a guideline for the trainer or performer. Besides, certain aspects of pieces included; such as the approximate duration and technical passages.

Following the repertoire research, composers of some pieces have been contacted and pieces are directly accessed. Some of the composers stated their opinions in writing; while the information on the pieces of composers is limited with the name and date only, as a result of not being able to access due to copyright issues.

All materials, notes, and voice records obtained for this research are of great importance for Turkish cello repertoire.

KEY WORDS: *Turkish Composers, Cello, Solo Piece*

1. INTRODUCTION

The education received by Turkish composers both in Turkey and abroad, supported the acquisition of a solid background in the process of composing, which started with the Republic period.

Our composers are observed to have an attempt to remain faithful to traditional music motives in their pieces, until the current century. On the other hand, pieces composed by most of today's composers in various trends in line with the time, identify the position of Turkey in contemporary music world. The performer is expected to be equipped with the necessary skills for an accurate performance of these pieces. This, therefore, requires a personal effort in addition to the education received at conservatories.

Limited number of sources that contain solo cello pieces by Turkish composers has been the starting point of this study. Based on this need, this study seeks to obtain the notes of pieces and provide information on their structural analyses. Since the structure analysis require a firm theoretical knowledge, these analyses are conducted on a limited level, with an aim to serve as a guideline.

Another purpose of this study is to promote solo cello pieces composed by Turkish composers, provide guidance for young generation training in the field of performing, and to sustain the currency of the existing pieces. The composers subject to this research will be

listed in the order of surnames and the content will be focusing on their lives, date of compositions, durations, and their technical and musical analysis.

2. MEHMET AKTUG (1959-)

Mehmet Aktug started his music education as the violin student of Hazar Alapinar in 1970. He was transferred to the Department of Composition six year later, studied with Muammer Sun, and graduated in 1980 with Master's Degree. He pursued his studies at Robert Schumann Institute in Germany in the same year and completed his music education in 1987 in the fields of composition and electronic music. He has been working as a lecturer at Dokuz Eylul University State Conservatory in Izmir since his return to Turkey. His compositions for cello are:

- For Solo Cello, Bis, 1986. Approximate duration, 1:45 min
- For Solo Cello, Scherzo, 1988. Approximate duration, 1:39 min

Bis

The piece was written in *senzamisura*, meaning without measure. It consists of varied sentences based on the note C. In an attempt to ease the performance, the composer made written explanations about playing the notes in the piece. According to these, the first part must be calm and extended until the *Allegro* part. *Sul ponticello* must be taken into consideration and therests must be prolonged. The *glissando* at the third line must have a broad and extensive impact; while two of the Cs at the end of the first part need to be wide. The differences in nuances must be heard clearly.

According to the composer, the second part until *Largo* must be fast yet in an unhurried pace. There can be a small breathin transition from *arco* to *pizzicato*. The *glissando* reaching the A note on the seventh measure can be started from any note. The part must be lively. It is possible to make slight changes on the nuances provided. Such changes may freshen up the performance. The rests must be ignored as far as possible and played without disrupting the integrity.

The third part following *Largo* must be calm, slow, and extended. The *pizzicato* must sound in C at the end of the piece.

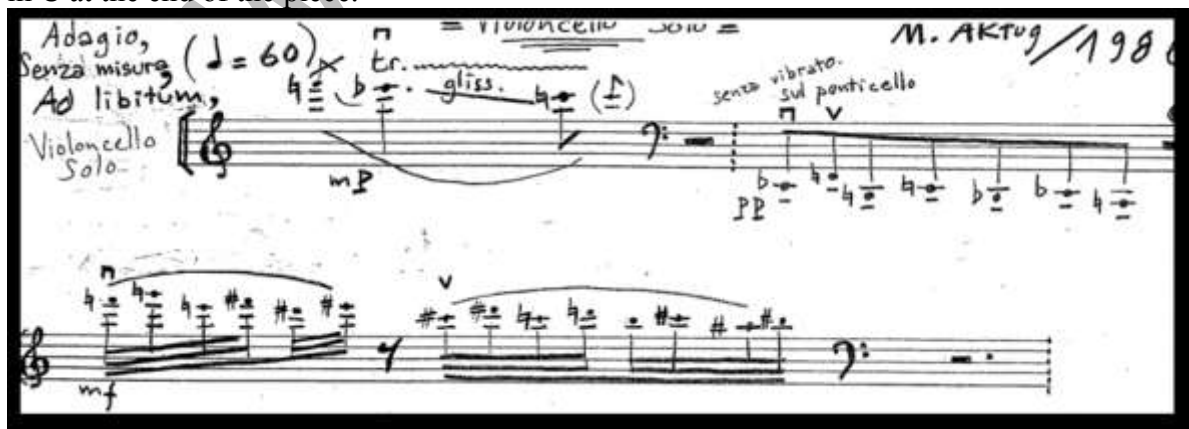


Figure 1. M. Aktug, for Solo Cello, Bis
Scherzo

It is a piece based on the note C. The composer used chromatic and glissando techniques in an attempt to avoid traditional sounds on purpose. Starting with a pentametric pesante intro, the piece starts the actual theme with a lively tempo in the scherzo character of the sixth measure, giving the piece its name. The form here can be suggested as A-B-A, as it is presented prior to a certain character, developed afterwards, and finalized with a representation. The striking part of the piece is that the perfect fifths are persistently heard throughout the piece.

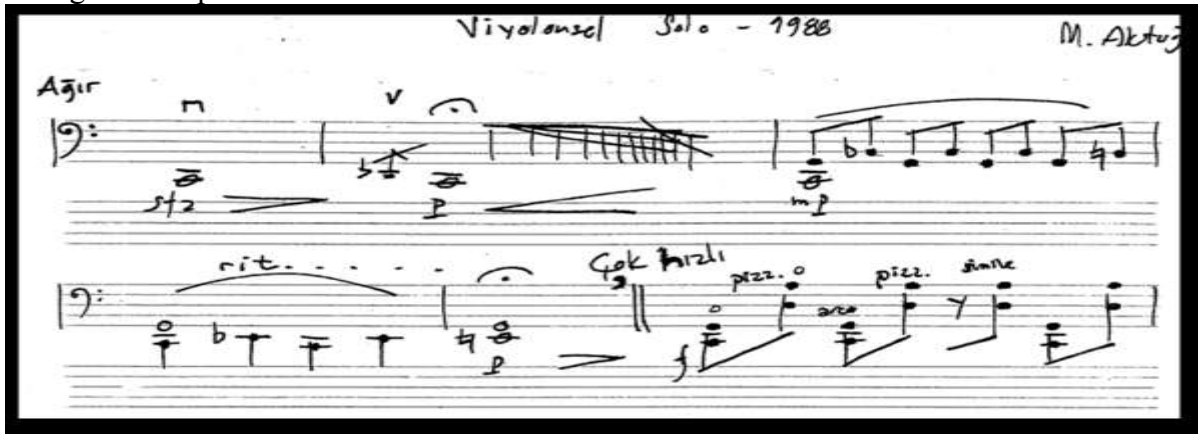


Figure 2. M. Aktug, for Solo Cello, Scherzo

3. EBRU GUNER CANBEY (1974-)

Following her three-year education at the department of piano at Dokuz Eylul University State Conservatory in 1986, Ebru Guner Canbey entered Hacettepe University Ankara State Conservatory department of Composition and Orchestra Conducting in 1990, and graduated in 1997. After her master degree education at the same department between 1998-2000, she completed her studies at Dokuz Eylul University Graduate School of Fine Arts Department of Composition and Orchestra Conducting with the Degree of Competency in Art and was awarded the title of Assistant Professor.

Having performed numerous orchestra and chamber music pieces both in Turkey and abroad, Canbey has been lecturing courses on Composition and Orchestration at Izmir Conservatory, since 1999. She is still the head of the division of Composition and Orchestra Conducting at the same institution. The piece she wrote for cello is:

- For Solo Cello, Hopeless, 2004. Approximate Duration, 2:23 min

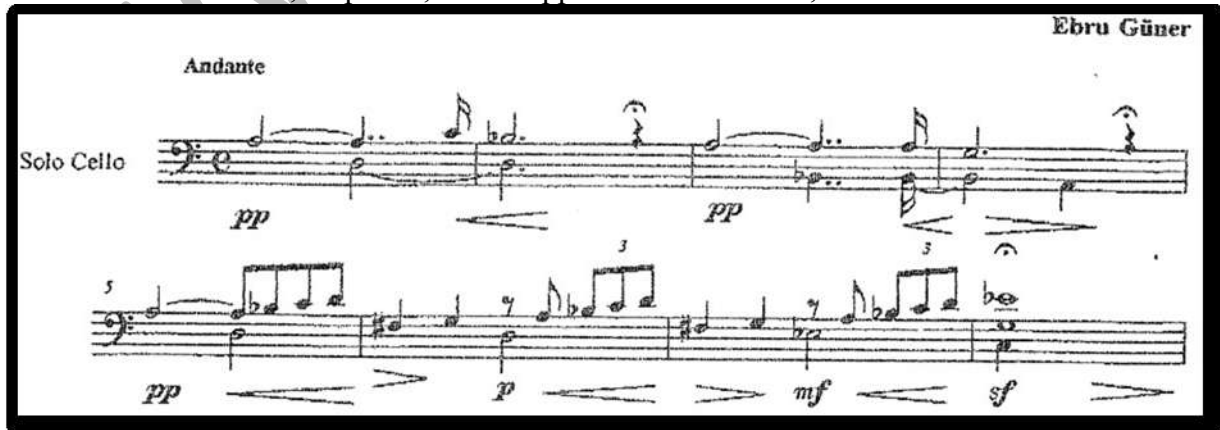


Figure 3. E. G. Canbey, for Solo Cello, Hoppless

Hopeless

Standing out with its short duration, the piece is one of Canbey's first works. The melancholic and pessimistic atmosphere in the piece relates to its name.

Her competency in cello can be easily deduced from the sounds and patterns she uses.

4. KAMRAN INCE (1960-)

Born in 1960, Ince started his music education with mandolin and cello. Following his trainings with Ilhan Baran and Muammer Sun in 1971-1977, he pursued his doctorate studies at New York Eastman Music School in 1980-1990. After his graduation, he worked as a trainer for Michigan University. When the pieces by Kamran Ince are analyzed according to periods, we can see that he remained faithful to the national music principles by involving Turkish motives in modal harmonies intonal manner until 1980. In his first years in the United States, on the other hand, he focused on abstract works, unlike his previous style, and used major contrasts, which gave different characteristics to different instruments. He adopted a positive approach towards tonal patterns and melodies in 1982-1990, which can be named as his final period, and used minimal effects in accompaniments. Kamran Ince was widely inspired by the *minimalism* (minimalism is a movement dating back to 1960s in music and modern art, and features the simplicity and subjectivity) trend that emerged at the end of 1950s.

- For Solo Cello, MKG Variations, 1998. Approximate duration, 11:16 min

MKG Variations

The piece is composed of the repetition of two motives and their variations under the influence of minimalism. Both themes evoke local sounds. Besides the use of a clear and simple style, there is a type of writing available in this piece which does not allow any kind of rhythmic complications. The fastest unit in the piece is the sixteenths. While the contrast between the nuances (*pp-fff*) require a firm bowing technique, the not-so-difficult structure of dual sounds – in other words, the bass sound being the open G string - eases the intonation. The repetitive character of the themes create a sedative impact.

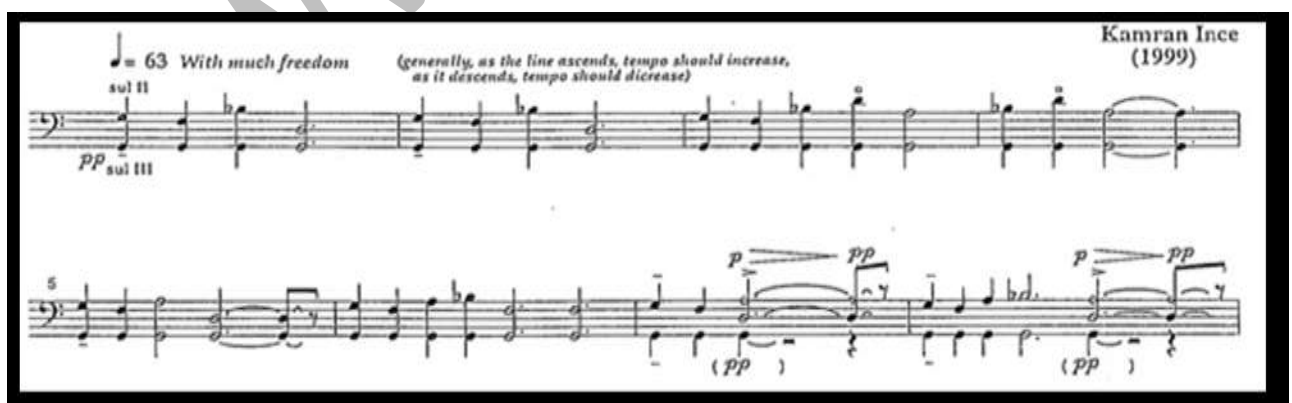


Figure 4. K. Ince, for Solo Cello, MKG Variations

5. AYSE ONDER (1973-)

Starting her music education at Ankara State Conservatory Department of Piano in 1985, Onder pursued her studies at the Department of Composition in 1991 and studied harmony with NecilKazımAkses and new music techniques with IlhanBaran. She graduated in 1997 and finished her master's degree in 2000. At the same year, Onder went to the United States for her Ph.D. degree. Upon completion of her studies in 2016, she came back to Turkey and started working for the University she had graduated from. She used her inspirations from Turkish Music in her compositions, abstractly.

- For Solo Cello, A Mid-Summer Day Dream InSeefeld, 2005. Approximate duration, 7 min.

A Mid-Summer Day Dream InSeefeld

The piece was composed in a modernist style. Although it looks complex and complicated, the piece arises from the development of the first two notes presented at the beginning (G and A flat). There are different combinations applied on these two notes by the composer in her own style throughout the piece. The piece requires an expressionist approach from the performer.

6. ALI RIZA SARAL (1960-)

Having graduated from KadikoyMaarif College in 1975, Saral studied at Istanbul Technical University Department of Electronics in 1982-1984. He reinforced his theoretical and composition training at Istanbul State Conservatory with his studies at Illinois University Department of Composition. He is basically a successful engineer who carried out significant projects in the field of aviation. His composition for cello is:

- For Solo Cello, The Musical Riddle, 1991. Approximate Duration, 7 min

The Musical Riddle

Saral dedicated his piece to Arthur Corra from Illinois University. Explicatory directives written on the notes by the composer provide guidance to the performer. In his notes, Saral describes the playing technique expected during the performance. He also adds the following information on the piece: “the 28th measure of the piece is a clue for the riddle, the answer of which is revealed in the second part. The answer on the surface is inadequate. What is sought is actually the answer to the question of “how to play cello without sounds?” The question is hidden in the first measure of the second part, while the answer is given in the footnote in the second part consisting of three lines.

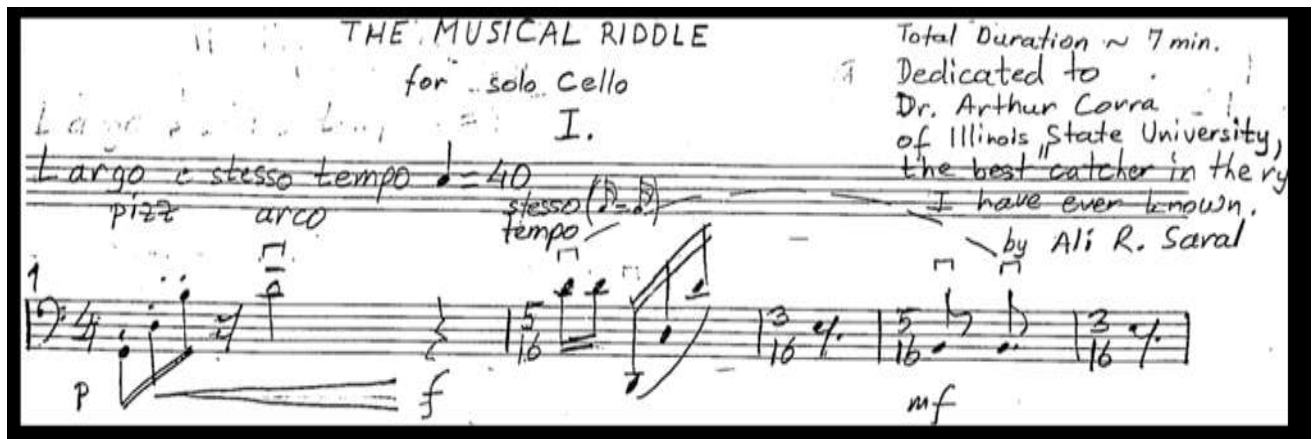


Figure 5. A. R. Saral, for Solo Cello, *The Musical Riddle*

7. AHMED ADNAN SAYGUN (1907-1991)

Saygun is a member of Turkish Five, which is a group consisting of Turkish composers from Republic Period. He started his music education at Ittihat and Terakki School (Union and Progress School) in 1918. After studying harmony with Huseyin Saadetdin Arel in 1923, he developed his studies with the help of French books and trained himself in the field of counterpoint.

In 1928, he went to Paris to study at Schola Cantorum. After his return to the country in 1931, he started working as a trainer at Musiki Muallim Mektebi (Music Teaching School), and carried out studies on ethnomusicology.

- For Solo Cello, Partita Op.31, 1958. Approximate Duration, 18:20 min

Partita, Op.31

The Partita for Op.31 in C major, which was composed by Saygun in 1958 in the memory of Friedrich Schiller, consists of five parts. These parts are listed as; Lento, Vivo, Adagio, Allegretto, and Allegro moderato.

Lento

It is based on the motif structure of the first two measures. Both the interval and rhythmic characteristic of this motif is used perfectly throughout the part in a modal structure and combined to the second part with *attaca* transition

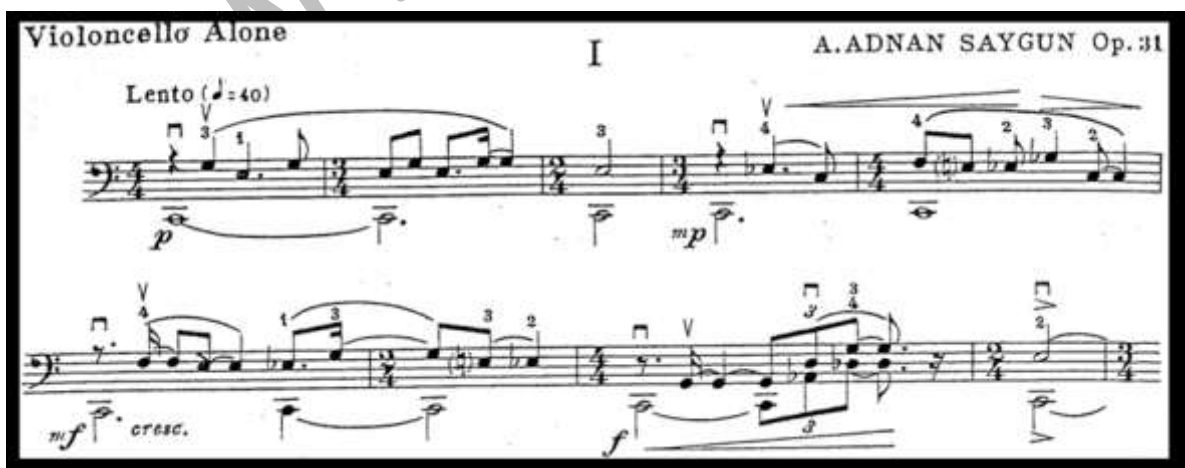


Figure 6. A. A. Saygun, for Solo Cello, *Partita-Lento*

Vivo

It consists of the development of rhythmic variations of modal scales formed by Saygun in his own style. To be more precise, there are five different rhythms in the part; however, 5/8 and 9/8 beats constitute the main structure.



Figure 7. A. A. Saygun, for Solo, Cello Partita-Vivo

Adagio

In adagio, the pattern heard at the beginning is flourished with modal and pentatonic scales, leading to a lasting expression. Ascending and descending scales composed of thirty-seconds for cello, require a careful intonation.



Figure 8. A. A. Saygun, for Solo Cello, Partita-Adagio

Allegretto

What makes this part interesting is the interval between G-C flat, used in a dotted rhythmical structure. The modal scales are distinctively used by Saygun in his own way of composition.



Figure 9. A. A. Saygun, for Solo Cello, Partita-Allegretto

Allegro Moderato

The motif structure presented in the first measure of the part is constantly repeated. The Lento available at the end of the part is the repetition of the motif structure in the first part. Like in the first part, Saygun built the whole structure on C again, and tried all variations. When the piece is considered as a whole, all parts are figured to have been built on the motif structure available in the intro. Thereby, all of them remain in close connection and present a harmonious structure.

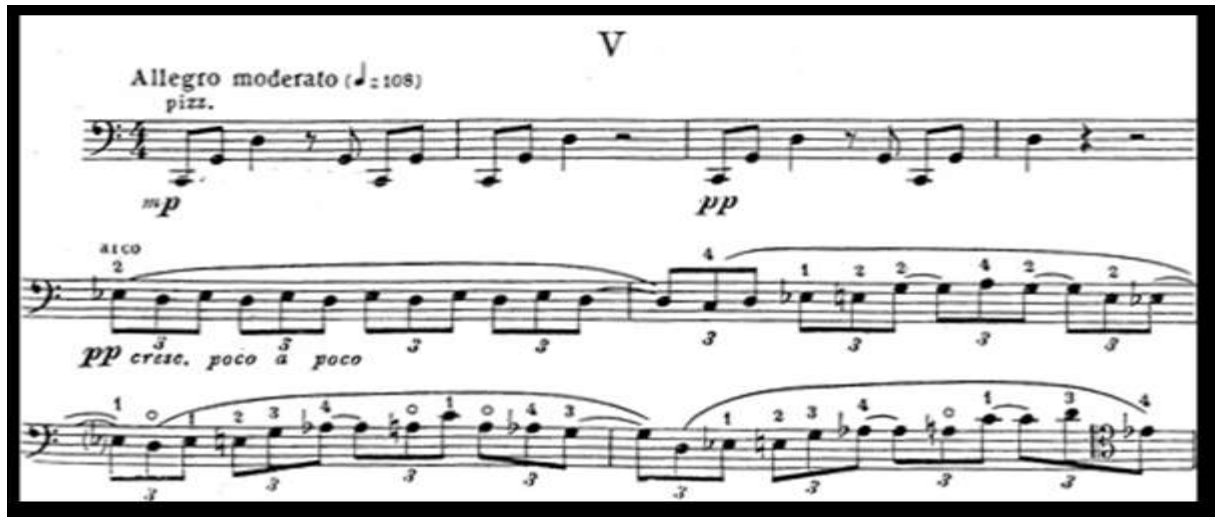


Figure 10. A. A. Saygun, for Solo Cello, Partita-Allegro moderato

8. ILHAN USMANBAS (1921-)

Born in 1921, Usmanbas is one of the composers from the second generation, following the Turkish Five. He proved himself to be a composer beyond his time by using new music techniques in his pieces.

Starting to play cello by himself at the age of twelve, the composer took lessons from Sezai Asal when he was in high school. While he was studying philosophy at university, he practiced harmony with Cemal Resit Rey, as well. He transferred to Ankara State Conservatory Department of Composition in 1942, where he practiced harmony and counterpoint with Alnar; cello with Zirkin; and composition with Saygun. He successfully graduated from the conservatory in 1948.

- Partita for Solo Cello 1985 Approximate Duration, 17 min
- Music for Solo Cello – 94 1994 Approximate Duration, 7 min
- Music for Solo Cello – 97 1997 The piece was not accessible.

Partita

Partita was composed in Baroque style as the year 1985 was dedicated to Bach. In this piece, Usmanbas went beyond the modernism impacts of 1950s, through constant repetitions. His persistent repetitions of certain sound groups formed an authentic musical expression. He deliberately developed a considerable attitude towards modernism.

Allemanda

There are different and fluent sounds constantly changing on C, which is the prevailing note in bass.



Figure 11. I. Usmanbas, for Solo Cello, Allemanda

Corrente

We see a rapid motion of a pattern that is in close interval relation within itself. This motion is preserved until the end of the piece.

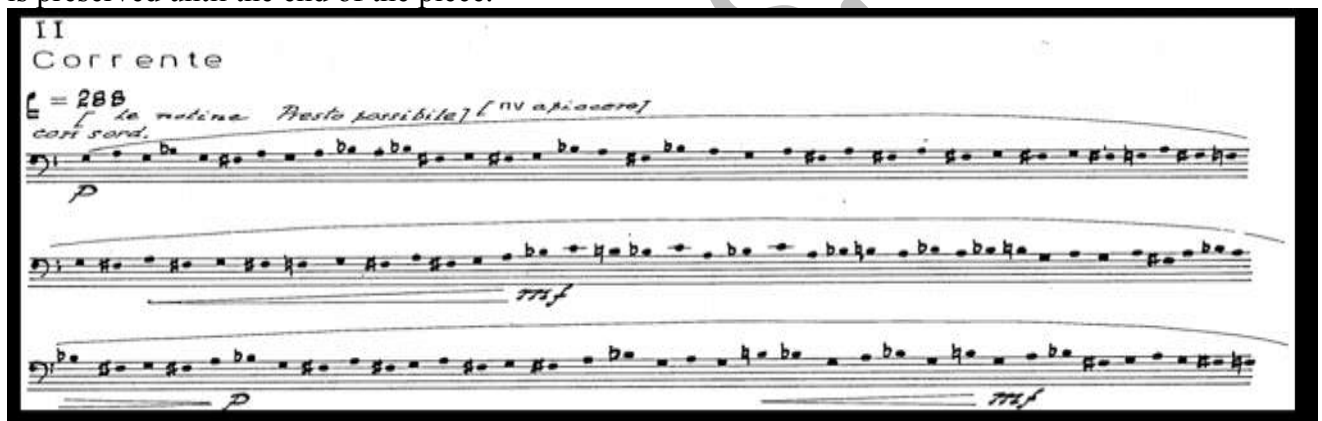


Figure 12. I. Usmanbas, for Solo Cello, Corrente

Aria

This part of the piece is rather slow and shaped around the notes A-G-B flat.



Figure 13. I. Usmanbas, for Solo Cello, Aria

Ciacona (sull'Aria)

In the final part, we see a persistent repetition of a motif consisting of four notes, and a musical structure based on these sounds.



Figure 14. I. Usmanbas, for Solo Cello, Ciacona (sull'Aria)

Music for Cello – 94

The piece was composed in the memory of Lutoslavski, and reveals the modernism characteristics of 1950s, in terms of sound and technique. It was composed in a *pointillist* (pointillist: a representative of pointillism movement approach). When it comes to notation, we see that Usmanbas did not ignore measure lines; however, when to play notes are uncertain, enabling different performances in each playing.

Emergence of *aleatoric* (aleatoric: Random style of writing style in the 20th century caused different perception of pieces and their lively structures). The most prominent characteristic of aleatoric style is that the composition is unable to be consumed, as the performer plays a direct role in the shaping of the composition. Therefore the piece gains a new identity in each performance.

Usmanbas ensured freeness of the piece through rhythmic elements. The notes remain the same and the performer is not given the opportunity to compose (except for the fourth line in page 9) as in other aleatoric compositions.



Figure 15. I. Usmanbas, for Solo Cello, Music for Cello – 94

9. CONCLUSION

Classic music education was started with the establishment of Music Teaching School in 1924 and Ankara State Conservatory in 1936, after the innovation movements seen in Turkish music life in 1826. Today, foundation of numerous conservatories, symphonies, and opera orchestras have become the pride of Turkey Republic.

It goes without saying that conducting catalog studies and piece introductions, and providing guidance for today's performers and the upcoming generation on solo pieces composed for cello, which is a member of strings family taught at the abovementioned art institutions, are of great importance.

In the light of the above mentioned, it can be suggested that the necessity of composing pieces for cello by Contemporary Turkish Music is a natural outcome of the considerable increase occurring in the number of cellists in our country.

The study concluded that cello repertoire, which constitutes a small piece of Contemporary Turkish Music, has been in the focus of Turkish composers on a considerable level. Another point is that these pieces composed by Contemporary Turkish Composers made contributions to the cello repertoire in the world. Such an enrichment is of high importance in terms of the integration of Turkish music culture with the world.

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