A study related to the usage of contemporary Turkish piano music works in music teacher training

Nilüfer YILMAZ*

Abstract

The formation of Turkish music repertoire has been encouraged since the establishment of the Republic in Turkey, and Turkish composers’ intensive efforts have raised our tunes with national motifs to the universal music level. In this regard, many artistic and educational oriented works of art have been written, which take their source from classical Turkish music and rhythms for the piano repertoire. Music teachers in Turkey are trained in the departments of music education, department of fine arts education in faculties of education at universities. Piano education is very important in music teacher training. Students are given piano training during their undergraduate studies of 4 years, and graduate with the vocalization of a wide repertoire ranging from the works of art of the baroque period to the ones in the contemporary period. Contemporary Turkish piano music works carry a great importance within this repertoire. The purpose of this research is to put forward with a current point of view the position and importance of contemporary Turkish piano music works in music teacher training in our present day. Within the scope of the research, Turkish piano music works in terms of programs and repertoire in music teacher training will be analysed on account of their technical features and appropriateness in education, and by handling them with a model directed towards establishing a situation, encountered difficulties and resolution suggestions will be evaluated within the framework of a descriptive method.

Keywords: Piano education, contemporary Turkish music

1. Introduction

Turkey has a national culture just like all the countries have in the world. It could be said that culture consisting of various elements has spread out to every part of society life and has engraved itself in all the elements of life. One of the most important elements is definitely art and one of the most important branches of art is music.

Every society has a music in which they perceive their own individuality and consciousness, and it could be said that music is shaped according to the culture. The composer of the society lives in the conditions of a particular society and is shaped with that culture. He/She can think of works of art as explaining the culture and music of the society (Göğüş, 2007).

*Corresponding Author: Nilüfer YILMAZ. Tel.:+90-0532-767-1314
E-mail address: niluferpiyano@yahoo.co.uk
Maintaining its national core, music revolution in Turkish music life is a change from monophony towards polyphony through the integration of the west and the east. By maintaining being Turkish, music culture in the Republic of Turkey has become firmly established and organised and turned into an institution again towards the principle and aim of innovation, westernization, being contemporary and universal (Uçan, 2005).

Since the republic period with the music revolution, contemporary Turkish music has succeeded in making its own national motif polyphonic with the harmonizing techniques of Western music, and has taken its place within our educational system.

2. Polyphony and its development in Turkish music

The origin of contemporary Turkish music is based on Turkish music. Traditional Turkish music which is the combination of “Classical Music” and “Folk Music” and which includes distinctive makams and styles as well as small sound intervals smaller than full and half tones is monophthong. After the first half of the Twentieth Century, polyphonic Turkish music gained an identity as a new (école) with the important works in music institutions.

In Turkey, the appearance of polyphonic music in the Ottoman Empire began with becoming westernized since the first years of the 19th century when the foundations of Contemporary Turkish music were laid. The indispensability of polyphonic music during the period of the Ottoman Empire began with its institutionalisation in 1826. On this date, Mizika-i Hümayun, the first polyphonic music institution of the country was established and with government grant, the development of polyphonic music in Turkey has continued till our present day.

Turkish people who wanted to have Europe’s basis in music began to send talented artists to Europe while hosting European musicians in their own palaces. In the 19th century, our first composers who wrote works of art by using polyphonic music techniques were educated in the conservatories in Europe. In 1908, the nationalism trend in the Ottoman Empire started to show its effects. Foreign musicians who had a duty in Mizika-i Hümayun returned to their country, and Turkish musicians were appointed to their places.

Since the establishment of the Republic in Turkey, essential steps have been taken in order to have polyphonic music widespread and adopted. Moreover, symphony orchestras, opera and ballet institutions, conservatories and institutions training music teachers were formed and institutionalisation was rapidly headed for. In the period when the republic was established, our traditional music was approached with the basis in folk music after beginning music and stage arts.

In the first half of the twentieth century, composers in many countries wrote works of art with the effects of the nationalism trend. Also, composers in our country continued their works in this way with the support of Honourable Ataturk, and composed works of art in order to make Turkish music contemporary (Sönmezöz, 2004).

3. Music teaching and piano education

In our present day, the departments of music education in departments of fine arts education in faculties of education at universities are one of the institutions carrying out professional music education. Piano education in these institutions can be defined as: “The process in getting the individual to achieve behaviours in piano playing through piano teaching and through this way, developing the musical behaviour and accumulations required for the profession.”

The course in the description “Piano Education Course Definition” within the new organisation framework put into effect in 1998 by the National Higher Education Council covers the following: Forming the basis of the program in music teaching, gradual technique exercises and studies, samples from the works of Turkish and world composers, samples of educational music, identifying the main piano literature and such activities (Yılmaz, 2006). The piano course within the framework of this aim is carried out as 1 period weekly during prospective music teachers’ undergraduate program for 4 years. A repertoire formed during piano education provides the achievement of the mentioned aim. On the other hand, when programs in piano education carried out in the departments of music education are referred to, it is seen that works of art which cover mainly the specific periods (baroque, classical and romantic) of music history are used and that works of Contemporary Turkish music are not used as much.
Besides the works of art which provide the opportunity for students to identify closely every music period, using piano works originating from Contemporary Turkish music in piano education carried out in the departments of music education will contribute towards the students’ technical, musical and cultural development and towards the development of the music repertoire in the practice of the teaching profession. They will also contribute towards the advancement of our targeted music policy directed towards the views of Atatürk (Yokuş & Demirbaş, 2009).

Besides the educational advantages the vocalization of Turkish works in piano education in the departments of music education bring, they carry importance for the prospective teachers who will introduce these works to their students in their teaching life. Therefore, it is culturally significant as well. It is considered that the works given by our composers for the piano will be beneficial for the internalization of our national polyphonic music besides the advantages they have provided for repertoire and education (Aydnner, 2008).

It is a fact that the individual gives a stronger, more motivated and natural reaction to tunes originating from his/her own country and from his/her nation’s history, culture, traditions and social values. Accordingly, the importance of using materials from our national music in the different stages of instrument training should be enhanced. Thus, our national music language and admiration will develop and enrich (Çevik & Güven, 2012).

4. Structural features of Turkish piano works

Using more of Turkish works in piano education in the departments of music teaching will bring many educational benefits. The Turkish piano works in piano education in the undergraduate program which were included in the research of Bulut’s (2002) master thesis named “The Analysis of Contemporary Turkish Piano Music Works in Terms of Piano Education” have led to the results that they will contribute to the development of the dependent-independent movements of both hands with each other, the development of the vocalization of musical expression, homophonic and polyphonic works and will contribute to the recognition of the harmonic structure related to classical Turkish music.

The element dominating most of the works of our composers is the frequent use of the aksak rhythm which is an important rhythmic pattern in the structure of our traditional music. Also, it is possible to see the effects of makams/sound scales of our traditional music in their works. In these works, the makams/sound scales of our traditional music have been benefited from with the yedirimli sound scale (temperament scale). Yedirimli sound scale is used as “common sound scale” in an international music environment.

Contemporary Turkish piano music works are completely different from the works in other foreign resources in terms of harmonic structure, ways of pressing the key in the chord and in terms of sensation. Therefore, using Turkish works in piano education are considered to carry importance in terms of recognizing Turkish music makam scales, studying the polyphonic features of these makam scales and in terms of evaluating their role in reaching the objectives in piano education. Owing to these importances, it is believed that Turkish works should be used as much as works originating from foreign resources in piano education carried out in universities providing professional music education in Turkey (Bulut, 2002).

Also, it has been proved in other related researches that Turkish works have been efficient in the achievement of the main piano techniques (using both hands dependently and independently, using the right and left pedals, performing homophonic and polyphonic works, playing grace notes, achieving different tone colours from the piano, performing works with different rhythmic characters etc.) and in the development of musical expression (Bulut, 2002).

5. The reflection of contemporary Turkish music on piano works

Our composers, Cemal Reşit Rey, Hasan Ferid Alnar, Ulvi Cemal Erkin, Ahmed Adnan Saygun and Necil Kazım Akses who are referred to as the Turkish Five (with the intention of getting Turkish music to universal dimensions) initiated the formation of an international art environment in Turkey after they had completed their education in Europe. These five composers endeavoured to create a new synthesis by combining the accumulation in their own tradition and the technique they had learned in the West. The joint aim of the Turkish Five at the beginning was to
use the colours of traditional Turkish music within the structure of Western Music. By maintaining the traditional colours with the works they wrote in the 1950s and by keeping to the borders of tonality and modality, they began a new era in Turkish music. This innovation was continued and is being continued by very important composers who have brought it to our present day and who are still alive.

Traditional music in the works of the later generations was isolated and approached with a polyphonic structure and contemporary methods. Also, the traditional writing style was not used; the twelve-tone technique and serialism was adopted. There were those who endeavoured to create newness in traditional methods until the application of innovations which the twentieth century brought. However, in the works of today’s contemporary composer, an atmosphere peculiar to Turkish music and national elements are apparent even though he/she is affected by a trend and uses a particular method (İlyasoğlu, 1998).

6. Piano education in the departments of music teaching and using contemporary Turkish piano works in the course programs

Considering that many works written for the piano take place in the repertoire of our music institutions where piano education is carried out, it is important that besides the repertoire which is benefited from for piano education, works formed with our national music are used in order to properly carry out the music policy initiated since the republic period (Yokuş & Demirbağ, 2009). Playing a contemporary Turkish Music work is essential especially for students in the department of music education who will go to many areas of our country to teach. Also, piano education must be compulsory for all students, prospective students must play the piano at a good level and they need to be able to play a contemporary Turkish work during their education.

Dicle (2002) stated her views as follows regarding the inadequate use of Turkish works in piano education in the departments of music teaching: “When searching for an appropriate work of art, the biggest difficulty encountered which also brings insufficiency is having very few works originating from Turkish music which carry the motifs of our own music. We can benefit from the works of some of our composers, but they are not used much in education since the works of the composers are often written with high levels of techniques for artistic aims.” However, when the number of works in the repertoire and the piano education period a prospective music teacher has is taken into account, it is considered that works of our Turkish composers could be used more.

7. The views of lecturers

The view that using Contemporary Turkish piano music works in every class besides universal piano music will affect piano education positively comes into prominence in the interviews made with piano lecturers. However, it is believed that this view is not applied adequately. Lecturers stated that Contemporary Turkish piano music works are not used adequately in faculties of education due to the following: The technical level of the student, getting the quadral harmony to be comprehended, analysing the rhythms, the scope and content of works and the difficulties in obtaining works.

As works (particularly in piano education) of contemporary Turkish composers have too much virtuosity, they constitute a negative effect for students beginning piano education in adding Turkish works to their repertoire. Also, the uncertainty of when the piano works written for educational purposes should be used in piano education and the lack of a specific hierarchy in piano literature bring a difficulty for piano educators.

Piano educators believe that students have difficulty in terms of technicality in works originating from Contemporary Turkish Music and in terms of style in works due to not having much knowledge in interpretation related to the wording of the pieces.

Piano lecturers have the opinion that studies related to comprehending the Turkish scales which are directed towards enhancing the development of the student need to be formed first for piano education mostly about Contemporary Turkish music. Books about studies, practices and studies related to makam scales written by piano lecturers who especially know the instrument and composition well and repertoire formation related to education-oriented works in Contemporary Turkish piano music are considered to be necessary. It has been stated that for
piano education with contemporary Turkish music contributing to music educators who approve carrying out piano education with a repertoire appropriate to the learning principle from the environment to the universe will be a more intellectual and contemporary educational approach.

8. Conclusion

More permanent results could be achieved in a shorter time in piano teaching through the usage of works reflecting the cultural values the individual lives with. The success level of the students in this field could increase by especially using more of contemporary Turkish piano music works. In Turkey where art of music is based on a well-established foundation, there are important roles for the individuals especially composers and educators and for the society in order to bring contemporary Turkish piano music which has a traditional feature and carries the values of the society within its structure to the level it deserves with universal music. For this purpose, contemporary Turkish piano music works should be given place and the context should be formed in every level of piano education in institutions training music teachers.

When the learning principle from the environment to the universe and the knowledge accumulation the individual gains through his/her life is taken into consideration, contemporary Turkish music is very important in terms of training teachers our country needs. As much as being contemporary, the knowledge accumulation of a music teacher should be closely connected with the social and cultural life of the environment and the society he/she lives in. It is very important that the music teacher knows the cultures of his/her own and the world and that he/she presents this knowledge to his/her students. The higher development of the cultural richness of our country depends on artists who express themselves naturally with their art and also on the training of music teachers who receive a qualitative education.

These suggestions could be made within the framework of the obtained results:

In piano teaching programs applied by lecturers in institutions training music teachers, besides universal music works in piano literature, qualitative works written in a planned way for the stages in education and which are products of the contemporary Turkish culture should be used more according to the development level of students. An opportunity should be provided and supported for composers and educators related to creating resources in this field. Preparatory resources such as Turkish method and exercises prepared hierarchically according to the stages of education and which could be used by experts in piano education should be produced more.

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