



## FIRST GENERATION TURKISH COMPOSER EKREM ZEKİ ÜN AND HIS PIECE “AT THE TOMB OF YUNUS”

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One of the first generation Turkish composer Ekrem Zeki Ün lived in the same time as the Turkish Fives (Ahmet Adnan Saygun, Ulvi Cemal Erkin, Hasan Ferit Alnar, Cemal Reşit Rey and Necil Kazım Akses). He began his music education at the age of four with his father Osman Zeki Üngör and he continued his music education in France at the age of 14. Ün was interested in paintings of especially impressionist painters in France. Therefore, the effects of impressionism are seen in his works. In 1930 he returned to Turkey and started to work in Musiki Muallim Mektebi (first music teacher school in Turkey) and Riyaseti Cumhur Symphony Orchestra (Presidential Orchestra). Ekrem Zeki Ün wrote the flute piano work “at the Tomb of Yunus” in 1933 for flute and piano. This piece is the most performed piece from the Turkish flute literature. The piece is modal in structure rather than being tonal. With this research, it is aimed to increase the recognition of Turkish composers and their pieces in international literature by giving information about the first generation Turkish composers Ekrem Zeki Ün and his piece *Yunus’un Mezarında* “At the Tomb of Yunus”. Data were collected through literature search in the study and also benefited sheet of “at the Tomb of Yunus”.

**Keywords:** Flute, Turkish composers, Ekrem Zeki Ün, At the Tomb of Yunus, Yunus’un Mezarında, Turkish pieces.

### Introduction

In 1925, after the foundation of the Turkish Republic (1923), some talented youths were sent to cultural centres of Europe for education. Upon coming back, these youths set up the group who were the founders of the new Turkish Music and known as the Turkish Five. The Turkish Five composers are Cemal Resit Rey, Hasan Ferit Alnar, Ulvi Cemal Erkin, Ahmet Adnan Saygun, Necil Kazim Akses (Ilyasoglu, 2009:280; Şenol&Demirbatır, 2012:174).

After the time of Ottoman Empire was over and the new Republic of Turkey was founded, a new strategy was accepted in musical life. Based on this policy, the intention was to mix monophonically structured Turkish music with Western tonality and to create a new type of Turkish music with this Western-poliphonic perspection. With the change of musical policy, these five talented composer were sent abroad by the government, and upon their return to Turkey, they brought Western musical ideas which they later mixed with Turkish traditional/modal music and produced a new type of music (Akbulut, 2011:355).

When they came back home, they started to form the modern Turkish composition form. The youths who studied composition in Europe came back to Turkey as from 1930, and they started to create samples of modern music. The Turkish Five primarily included melodic, mode, and rhythmical agents of Turkish Folk Music and Traditional Turkish Classical Music in their works (Yuvarlar, 2008; Şenol&Demirbatır, 2012:174).

Same generation composers with Turkish Five are Fuat Koray, Ferit Hilmi Atrek, Nuri Sami Koral, Samim Bilgen, Faik Canselen, Mithat Fenmen, Reşit Abet, Cezmi Erinç, Ekrem Zeki Ün (Yürük, 2006:8).

### **Purpose of the Research**

With this research, it is aimed to increase the recognition of Turkish composers and their works in international literature by giving information about the first generation Turkish composers Ekrem Zeki Ün and his piece “At the Tomb of Yunus”.

### **Method**

Data were collected through literature search in the study and also benefited sheet of “At the Tomb of Yunus”.

### **Ekrem Zeki Ün**

One of the first generation Turkish composer Ekrem Zeki Ün lived in the same time as the Turkish Fives. He was born on November 23, 1910 in İstanbul (Pancarçı, 2010:8). He began his music education at the age of four with his father Osman Zeki Üngör who was the composer of the Turkish national anthem (*İstiklal Marşı*) (Say, 2015:524).

Osman Zeki Üngör was born in 1880 in Üsküdar, İstanbul. When he was in Beşiktaş Military Middle School (*Beşiktaş Askeri Rüştiyesi*), he began music education at the age of 11 in music band in the Palace (*Saray Muzikası*). He worked beside foreign musicians who worked there and became the prime minister (chief violinist) afterwards. And then, he was appointed as the conductor of the palace music band. In 1917, he went on a tour of Europe with his orchestra and he gave concerts in major art centers. Osman Zeki (*Bey*) was the first Turk to perform in Europe. After the foundation of the Turkish Republic, Osman Zeki Üngör undertook the founding of the first music education school (*Musiki Muallim Mektebi*) and became the conductor of the presidential symphony orchestra (*Riyaseti Cumhur Symphony Orchestra*) (Toros, n.t).

Ekrem Zeki Ün continued his music education in France at the age of 14 in *Paris Ecole Normale de Musique*. He studied violin, composition and conductor training for 6 years in there (Kurtaslan, 2009:421).

In 1930 he returned to Turkey and started to work in *Musiki Muallim Mektebi* and *Riyaseti Cumhur Symphony Orchestra*. Until 1934, Ekrem Zeki Ün, who worked in Ankara, started to become interested in Anatolian folk melodies and made compositions by inspiration from these melodies. After he settled in İstanbul in 1934, Ün started to teach at İstanbul *Muallim Mektebi* (İstanbul Faculty of Education) and gave many concerts with Ferdi Ştatzler and Verda Kazım (Ün). Until 1975, Ekrem Zeki Ün worked in different institutions and until 1985 (by the age of 75) he continued to compose (Pancarçı, 2010:8). Ekrem Zeki Ün died on March 24, 1987 in Dublin, Ireland.

Ekrem Zeki Ün not only being a violinist but also with being an important educator, played a very important role in making music education in an academic dimension in Turkey. His students work in many arts and educational institutions. (Kurtaslan, 2009:421).

### Ekrem Zeki Ün's Pieces

Ekrem Zeki Ün, who advocated universalization in education, tried to compose works of polyphonic music and influential abroad by establishing a connection between monophonic Turkish music and polyphonic music. Basically, he benefited from Turkish Folk Music and Classical Turkish Music (Pancarçı, 2010:1). Ün was also interested in paintings of especially impressionist painters in France. Therefore, the effects of impressionism are seen in his first period pieces (Şahinalp, 2012:103; Say, 2015:524; Say, 2010:563). Ekrem Zeki Ün, in the second phase between 1935-1954, he heading for Turkish music and created a unique style. In the maturity period after 1955, he was European in terms of form and technique but in terms of content, he adopted eastern mysticism and sentimentality (Say, 2015:524).

During his student life in Paris, composer has composed small pieces such as *La flute De Jade* (1928) and *Bitlis'in Şarkıları* (1928) for singing and piano. Ekrem Zeki Ün's pieces inspired by Anatolian folk songs are *Kel Emin Türküsü* (1932), *Yosmanın Türküsü* (1932), *Yunus'un Mezarında* (1933) *Zile Türküsü* (1933). After these pieces, he started composing chamber music in 1934 (Pancarçı, 2010:9). Ekrem Zeki Ün composed orchestral pieces, concertos, chamber music, singing and piano pieces, choir pieces, piano pieces and pieces for solo instruments<sup>1</sup>.

Composed flute pieces by Ekrem Zeki Ün are *Yunus'un Mezarında* "At the Tomb of Yunus" for flute and piano (1933), *Sonata* for flute and piano, *Rhapsody* for flute and strings (1972), *Concerto* for flute and strings (1975) and *Dinle Neyden* (1978).

### Yunus'un Mezarında "At the Tomb of Yunus" (1933)

Ekrem Zeki Ün composed "At the tomb of Yunus" for flute and piano in 1933. Ekrem Zeki Ün's this piece was first printed piece (Şahinalp, 2012:105-106). Also this piece is one of the most performed pieces of Turkish flute literature. Kurtaslan declared in 2012 that Ün's "At the Tomb of Yunus" is the most performed pieces in the Fine Arts High Schools and Music Education Departments (Kurtaslan, 2012:183). The composer was inspired by Yunus Emre in his work "At the Tomb of Yunus" (Kurtaslan, 2002 as cited in Kurtaslan, 2010:34).

Known about Yunus Emre is very limited. It is thought to have lived between 1238-1321 (<http://w3.gazi.edu.tr/~ertan/yunus.html>, 03.11.2017). This period was the period when the Anatolian Seljuk State began to disintegrate and the Ottoman State was established. Yunus Emre is an islamic mysticism and folk poet who is the forerunner of Turkish poetry in Anatolia (<https://en.wikipedia.org>, 03.11.2017). The exact location of Yunus Emre's tomb is unknown (Kaya, 1984).

As well as creating a mysterious effect, Ekrem Zeki Ün's piece "At the Tomb of Yunus" is a kind of elegy written for religious purposes. This piece was composed with Turkish motifs and intervals to very slow tempo. The piece begins at free measure "*ad libitum*" (depending on the wish of the performer) (Kurtaslan, 2002 as cited in Kurtaslan, 2010:34). For this reason, it is possible that we can encounter very different performances of the piece. For example; Halit Turgay's performance (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IpsLpYi3ixg>), Bülent Evcil's performance (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FDvpM-7YjI>), Ceren Hepyücel's performance (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZmMGlnTPmw>) and Cem Önerürk's performance (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fITHVL3Xzc>). All these performances are very different from each other.

<sup>1</sup> The list of Ekrem Zeki Ün's pieces could be reached from these sources:

<http://www.kimkindir.gen.tr/kimkindir.php?id=2981> (01.11.2017).

Pancarçı, AB. (2010). Kemal Sünder, Flüt ve Piyano için Sonatine Op.18; Ekrem Zeki Ün, Flüt ve Piyano için Sonat; Ekrem Zeki Ün, Yunus'un Mezarında. (Unpublished Master text of the pieces). Mimar Sinan Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İstanbul.

“At the Tomb of Yunus” is modal in structure rather than being tonal. According to Kurtaslan (2010), this piece’s *maqam* is Hüseynî. The piece begins with a cadenza reminiscent of unmetered folk song “*uzun hava*” which is performed as a flute solo. The most striking point in this section is the use of ornamental notes and pauses. There are many pauses between the musical sentences and even between the voices (See Figure 1) (Pancarç, 2010:38).



**Figure 1.** The first page of flute part of piece “At the Tomb of Yunus”

In Figure 1, the ornamental notes are marked in red and the pauses are marked in blue.

After this section the solo of the flute ends and the piano is added together with the *Lento* section. This section time signature is 3/4. In this part, chromatic passages are frequently heard in the flute part. Generally in the piano part has been used long sounds with pedals (Pancarç, 2010:41). At the end of this section, there is cadenza of flute. Unlike the beginning of the piece, this section contains much more fast, descending and ascending musical passages (See figure 2-3).



**Figure 2.** A part of the “At the Tomb of Yunus”



Figure 3. A part of the “At the Tomb of Yunus”

When the flute cadenza is over, the last section with a different time signatures is starting. Time signatures in this section are 6/4, 3/4, and 4/4. This section show similarity to the section in which the flute begins as a solo. But in this part the piano is also accompanied by flute (See Figure 4).



Figure 4. Last pages of “At the Tomb of Yunus” flute and piano partition

### Conclusion and Discussion

Ekrem Zeki Ün, one of the first generation Turkish composers, made great contributions to the international recognition of the Turkish flute literature through his flute compositions. At national and international level, among the pieces of the composer, most widely performed flute piece is *Yunus'un Mezarında* “At the Tomb of Yunus”. This piece was composed for flute and piano in 1933. If we consider that musicians in Turkey are starting to receive classical music education in western standards in the early



1900's, with this work composed in 1933, we can see how shortly Turkish composers have achieved world standards.

This piece "At the Tomb of Yunus" contains items in cadenza, improvisation and mystical structure. As it is understood from the name of this piece, to perform this piece with the philosophical vision of Yunus Emre requires not only the musical skill but also philosophical mastery. It is necessary to use accumulation and long-term information in order to make pipe (shepherd's pipe) sound in somewhere in the piece and for the simple free interpretation to be credible (Pancarlı, 2010:53).

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## Internet Resources

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