

*From the History
of National Composer Schools*

Original article

UDC 782

<https://doi.org/10.56620/2587-9731-2024-3-086-103>



**Ahmed Adnan Saygun's Opera "Ózsoy" – a Cultural-
Political Project and an Artistic Event in 20th Century
Turkish Music**



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Abstract. In 1934 in Ankara the world premiere of Ahmed Adnan Saygun's opera *Ózsoy* took place. The initiator of its creation was the first president of the Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. He came forward as a peculiar curator who accompanied the project at various stages of its preparation:

Translated by Dr. Anton A. Rovner

from the choice of the poetical source (the Persian epos *Shahnameh* by Ferdowsi) and the definitions of the chief ideas in his interpretation to assigning the librettist (Münir Hayri Egeli) and the composer, whom 27-year-old Ahmed Adnan Saygun was chosen to be. The idea of the creation of national opera fit organically into the context of Atatürk's reformist endeavors, however the project of *Özsoy* was tinged not only with cultural, but also with political tones: the premiere of the opera, timed to the official visit of Iranian leader Reza Shah Pahlavi, was called to be conducive to the strengthening of Turkish-Iranian contacts. In the opera's plotline, the theme of the mutual relations of the Turkish and the Iranian peoples is played out.

Saygun, an adherent of Atatürk's reformative ideas, at that time a scholarship recipient of the Turkish Republic and a recent graduate of the Schola cantorum in Paris, turns in *Özsoy* to the experience of European opera, but interprets it individually. This is testified by the formal structure and the dramaturgy (a free, at times montage connection of the musical and the talking episodes, a through type of intonational development and a conditional "number" structure), and the style; at the same time, Turkish national features show themselves through the Western European foundation, which is especially perceptible in the rhythmic and the timbral aspects. Such an intercrossing of the traditions of the East and the West has become one of the characteristic tendencies in 20th century Turkish music.

Keywords: Ahmed Adnan Saygun, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Shahnameh*, *Özsoy*, Turkish national opera

For citation: Degtyareva, N.I., Dzhavadova, M.N. kyzy (2024). Ahmed Adnan Saygun's Opera *Özsoy* — a Cultural-Political Project and an Artistic Event in 20th Century Turkish Music. *Contemporary Musicology*, 8(3), 86–103. <https://doi.org/10.56620/2587-9731-2024-3-086-103>

*Из истории национальных
композиторских школ*

Научная статья

**Опера Ахмеда Аднана Сайгуна «Озсой» —
культурно-политический проект и художественное
событие в турецкой музыке XX века**

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Аннотация. В 1934 году в Анкаре состоялась премьера оперы Ахмеда Аднана Сайгуна «Озсой». Инициатором ее создания был первый президент Турецкой республики Мустафа Кемаль Ататюрк. Он выступил в качестве своеобразного куратора, сопровождавшего проект на разных стадиях подготовки: от выбора поэтического источника (персидский эпос «Шахнаме» Фирдоуси) и определения основных идей в его интерпретации до назначения либреттиста (Мюнир Хайри Эгели) и композитора, которым стал 27-летний Ахмед Аднан Сайгун. Идея создания национальной оперы органично вписывалась в контекст реформаторских начинаний Ататюрка, однако проект «Озсой» окрашен не только в культурные, но и в политические тона: премьера оперы, приуроченная к официальному визиту иранского лидера Резы-шаха Пехлеви, была призвана способствовать укреплению турецко-иранских связей. В сюжете оперы обыграна тема взаимоотношений турецкого и иранского народов.

Сайгун, приверженец реформаторских идей Ататюрка, стипендиат Республики и недавний выпускник парижской *Schola cantorum*, обращается в «Озсой» к опыту европейской оперы, но трактует его индивидуально. Об этом свидетельствуют композиция и драматургия (свободное, подчас монтажное

соединение музыкальных и разговорных эпизодов, сквозное интонационное развитие в условно «номерной» структуре), стилистика; при этом сквозь западноевропейскую основу проступают турецкие национальные черты, что особенно ощутимо в ритмическом и тембровом аспектах. Подобное пересечение традиций Востока и Запада становится одной из характерных тенденций в турецкой музыке XX века.

Ключевые слова: Ахмед Аднан Сайгун, Мустафа Кемаль Ататюрк, «Шахнаме», «Озсой», турецкая национальная опера.

Для цитирования: Дегтярева Н. И., Джавадова М. Н. кызы. Опера Ахмеда Аднана Сайгуна «Озсой» — культурно-политический проект и художественное событие в турецкой музыке XX века // Современные проблемы музыкознания. 2024. Т. 8, № 3. С. 86–103. <https://doi.org/10.56620/2587-9731-2024-3-086-103>

Introduction

On June 19, 1934 in Ankara the premiere of *Özsoy* took place — the first national opera produced in the young Turkish Republic, and the first opera by 27-year-old Ahmed Adnan Saygun, the future classic of 20th century Turkish music. The world premiere, timed to coincide with the state visit of the Iranian leader Reza Shah Pahlavi, took place in an official-ceremonial atmosphere, in the presence of Reza Shah and the head of the Turkish Republic Atatürk.



Illustration 1. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk greets the Shah of Persia Reza 1934

(Picture: Flickr/Levan Ramishvili)

Available at: <https://socialistworker.co.uk/socialist-review-archive/iran-shah-ayatollah/>
(accessed: 15.08.2024)

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938) went down in history as the leader of the Turkish national liberation movement, the founder and the first president of the Republic (1923–1938). The reforms of Atatürk, who took the course of transforming Turkey into a contemporary secular state, affected all the sides of social life — politics, economics and the inner patterns of life and thought. The priorities also included cultural organization, including that of music, the aspiration to bring the national musical culture onto the level of the contemporary achievements of Western European art. Invitations of important European musicians were encouraged (in the 1930s Bela Bartok and Paul Hindemith visited Turkey), new orchestras and new musical educational institutions were created, and steps were taken for renewing their programs. Governmental stipends were established for gifted young composers who were granted opportunities to receive their education in the leading conservatories of Europe.

The relations between Turkey and Iran, which were far from always being unclouded, having undergone bloody wars and constant tensions during the course of many centuries, in the 1920s entered a phase of contacts and cooperation. Reza Shah came on a visit to Turkey in order to become better acquainted with Atatürk's reforms. However, Atatürk pursued a special goal in connection with the Shah's visit. Ahmed Adnan Saygun discloses his intention, when remembering the time of his own work on *Özsoy*:

Apparently, Atatürk wished to extract the greatest amount of gain from the visit of the Shah of Iran and prepare the means for development of the political connections between Turkey and Iran in a positive vein. Of course, the Turkish army, the recently rebuilt factories, schools and the ongoing construction would enable the Shah to form a positive opinion of Turkey. However, all of this was also being carried out in Iran, albeit, having its own specific character. In this respect, it was doubtful that anything at all could have surprised the Shah (cit. from: [1, S. 51]).

So Atatürk decided to “win the heart” [ibid.] of the Shah of Iran by means of an opera, the plot of which would be based on an Iranian legend.

Ahmed Adnan Saygun's Özsoy: Art and Politics

Such a decision corresponded quite well to Atatürk's reformist aspirations — the genre of opera was supposed to have become the foundation of the national art of music. At the same time, in the case of *Özsoy*, he presented himself as a peculiar kind of curator, accompanying the project on all the stages of its preparation: chose the literary source — *The Story of Feridoun* from the famous Persian epos, Ferdowsi's poem *Shahnameh*, shaped the conception of the future opera, and chose the librettist and the composer. He entrusted Münir Hayri Egeli (1899–1970) to write the libretto and Ahmed Adnan Saygun (1907–1991) to compose the music.

The adaptation of the literary text turned out to be quite substantial in the opera: the plot devices, the number of characters and the interrelations between them changed immensely. What remained unaltered was the image of the valiant warrior, the wise and just ruler Feridoun, who invited associations with the personality of Atatürk himself.



Illustration 2. Ahmed Adnan Saigun

Available at: <http://bsc.bilkent.edu.tr/tr-index.html>
(accessed: 15.08.2024)

The libretto of Özsoy is based on the legend about two sons of Feridoun, the twins Tur (the ruler of the Turkic lands) and İraç¹ (the ruler of Iran), separated from each other by the scheming of the evil spirit Ahriman. The twins become reunited only in the opera's finale, moreover, this episode in the premiere production was symbolically demonstrated as the act of fraternization between the peoples of Turkey and Iran, who were akin to each other by their ethnic sources and culture. "Here is Tur and here is İraç," — one of the protagonists, the story narrator Oz Ozan declared, pointing at Atatürk and Reza Shah, who were sitting side by side in the presidential lodge. — "Each Turk is Tur, each

Iranian is İraç" [1, s. 51]. According to Saygun's memoirs, following these words, the Shah, embracing Atatürk, cried out with agitation: "My brother!" [ibid.]. While commenting the political implication of this scene, Turkish musicologist Emre Araci observes: in the libretto "Tur is the representative of the Turkish nation, while İraç is of the Iranians, and the plot is woven around the fact that these two nations have fought each other for centuries not knowing that they were actually brothers" [2, p. 41].

In *Özsoy* Saygun confronted with a complex musical and dramatic goal. The legend of Feridoun serves as the plotline source only for the first of the opera's three acts. Subsequently, the action passes to Turkey of the time of the breakup of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of the republic, and as a result features of political chronicles penetrate into the epic narration. An immense chronological rupture occurs between the first and second acts: the events of Act I occur in legendary times (40 000 years ago), Act II is devoted to the dark pages of Turkish

¹ The name of İreç, one of the brothers in *Shahnameh*, was transcribed particularly in that fashion — as İraç.

history in the early 20th century, while the events of Act III begin at the time of the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty of 1923.² But the connections with the legend are preserved during the entire course of the opera – in the events and the protagonists of the modern era, the collisions and the images of the epic of Feridoun are allegorically recreated.

After the world premiere of 1934, the opera was neglected for a long period of time. Only 48 years later, on February 3, 1982, *Özsoy* was produced at the Ankara State Theater of Opera and Ballet.³ At the performance, commemorating the centennial anniversary of Atatürk's birth (just as in all its subsequent revivals), the opera was performed in a one-act version. Such a version had been sanctioned

by the composer himself: Saygun excluded the last two acts from *Özsoy*, assuming that their content was too closely connected with the political conditions of the 1930s and had little in common with the legend from *Shahnameh*. The musical material of the second and third act is lost, so we can judge of the musical solutions of *Özsoy* only on the basis of the first act.⁴

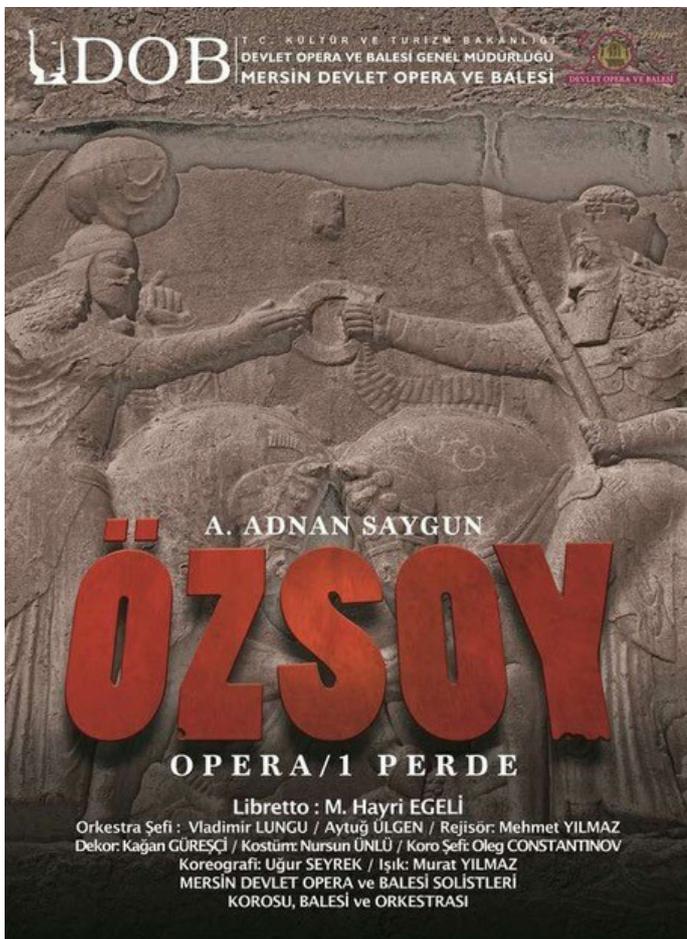


Illustration 3. Poster for the play *Özsoy* at the Mersin State Opera and Ballet Theater, 2012

Available at: <https://vladimirlungu.com/saygun-a-ozsoy-premiere-debut/> (accessed: 29.04.2024)

² The Lausanne Peace Treaty was enacted between Turkey and the Allies in 1923, it brought an end to the Greco-Turkish War. The treaty determined the borders between Turkey and Greece, establishing new territorial boundaries, and forming the present-day countries. It was of crucial significance for establishing a new order in the region and consolidating the independence of Turkey.

³ The recording of this performance has been released as a CD supplement to G. Refig's book *Atatürk and Adnan Saygun (a Legend in One Act)* [3].

⁴ It is important to consider that we are dealing with a renewed version of the music reconstructed “mostly from memory” (“the present version was mostly constructed from memory in 1981”) [2, p. 43] in the latest redaction (1981). According to Emre Aracı, (“In fact for this occasion Saygun re-wrote the entire opera, compressing it to a single act from the original three-act version”) [Ibid., p. 43].

The Opera's Formal Structure, Dramaturgy and Stylistic Particularities

Ahmed Adnan Saygun was the greatest modern Turkish composer, one of the members of the *The Turkish Five*,⁵ who made an invaluable contribution to the development of the Turkish national art of music, a conductor and pianist who wrote operas, ballets, orchestral and chamber compositions. At the same time, by 1934 his musical portfolio did not contain so many compositions — the latter were primarily choral and vocal pieces, the *Divertimento* for Saxophone, Percussion and Orchestra, the *Suite* for Piano and the *Book of Inci* for piano. He did not have any experiences in the genres related to musical theater, but, being an ardent devotee of Atatürk's reformative ideas, valiantly set to work, having written the music in a record short time span — 27 days. Having received his initial musical education in his homeland, Saygun won a competition for the stipend of the Turkish Republic and during the course perfected his skills at the Schola Cantorum in Paris as a student of Vincent d'Indy. Being equipped with a knowledge of counterpoint, Wagner's music dramas and the masterpieces of baroque, late romantic and contemporary art, the composer turns in *Özsoy* to the experience of European opera, but interprets it originally.

In the one-act version of this composition — with its solo monologues, dialogic, scenes, as well as its unfolded choral and orchestral episodes — the vocal parts and the spoken parts are combined together, altogether featuring four singing and several declaiming characters (some of them, in particular, Feridoun, do both). Conversational dialogues exist on equal terms with musical episodes, sometimes joining them by the principle of editing or superimposing speech on music. And musical episodes, especially solo and ensemble ones, can only be called “numbers” conditionally. They are constructed in a complex way, saturated with declamatory melodicism and mounted into freely flowing or talking scenes. On this basis, an original formal structure emerges, through in its type, in which structural components pertaining to different genres alternate, are combined together, and transform into one another. In one of the opera's sections, the speaking-conversational and the musical elements are joined with the element of dance (*The Magic Dance*). Such a combination of “the read, the played and the danced” (*lue, jouée et dansée*) can evoke associations with the European endeavors in the sphere of musical theater in the 1910s and the 1920s (Saygun may have encountered them during his sojourn in Paris). But the originality of *Özsoy* consists in the fact that this combination is carried out in a special vein. Essentially, Saygun creates in *Özsoy* the first national

⁵ Such a name, analogous to the Russian *Mighty Handful* was bestowed by critics to a group of five Turkish composers who received their education in European conservatories — Ahmet Adnan Saygun, Cemal Reşit Rey, Hasan Ferit Alnar, Ulvi Cemal Erkin and Necil Kazim Akses. For greater details about their contribution to the formation of the contemporary Turkish national school of composition, see [4, s. 159–500].

opera epos in the history of Turkish music. This is testified by the dramaturgy and the style, the technique and the structural layout unfolding in the unhurrying motion of the scenes succeeding each other.

The events and the peripetiae of the plotline are not shown in the action, but are presented in the narration, in the stories told by the protagonists. The only dramatic clash occurs in the final scene — in the dialogue between Ahriman and Hatun, Feridoun' wife, but it does not lead to a conflict, resolving in a choral apotheosis. The musical portraits of Feridoun and Hatun (only they have solo episodes in the opera) delineate integral, inwardly stable, uncontroversial images; in the melodic language associated with Feridoun there is a predominance of heroic intonations, and Hatun's part demonstrates a solemn lyricism. The points of reference in the dramaturgy of *Özsoy* turn out to be the choral scenes, as well as the ritual *Magic Dance*, during which the culmination of the entire opera takes place.

The opera is opened by an instrumental introduction, diversified in its musical material. After the statement of the initial gloomy theme, a fanfare complex is formed within it, which would sound in various different scenes of *Özsoy* as a leitmotif. Following the introduction, the monologue of Oz Ozan (a speaking role) presents an epical premonition of the events, a prologue to the action proper. In it Ozan proclaims by means of solemn poetry the main theme of the opera — the theme of the history of the Turkish people, the greatness of Turkic culture: “This tribe has come from Asia and has spread everywhere. This was the beginning of the ascent. <...> Let us see, whether time shall stop before this great tribe.” This is followed by eight scenes in which the rituals of the ancient Turks are recreated — *The Prayer / Yakarış* (the people pray to the ancient god Tengri that an heir would be sent to them), *The Magic Dance / Sibir Raksı*; the characteristics of the heroes are given in *The Great Khakan Feridoun / Ulu Hakan Feridun*, *The Appearance of Hatun / Hatun gelişi*; alternately festive and dramatic pictures are unfolded in *The Glad Tidings of the Birth of the Children / Doğum Müjdesi* and *The Disappearance of the Children / Bebeklerin kayboluşu*. In the last scene, which becomes the finale of the act, Ahriman appears, making an attempt to steal the children and in an intense dialogue with Hatun prophesying separation and obscurity among their descendants to the twins. Ahriman's prophecy is refuted at the conclusion of the scene — a brilliant, jubilant chorus and “voice from heaven”: “Hatun, do not worry; Ahriman's wish is granted only three times. If your children join hands with each other, the earth shall be filled with light” [5, s. 77].

Most remarkable is the scene of Feridoun with seven Feleks — the messengers of the Seven Heavens (almost entirely spoken). It reveals the deep meaning of the opera's title. *Özsoy / Öz Soy* may be translated as the existing people, in almost a biblical meaning of the word “existing” —

genuine, real, existing in a full and perfect way. Each one of the Feleks, when expressing his wishes to the newly-born, interprets the word *Özsoy* in his own way. For example, the wish *Özsoyu çoğaltsın* means “let their people multiply,” while the wish *Yurdu bulsum* means “let their people live on their own land.” The scene is concluded with Feridoun giving his children names – Tur and İraç, the names that are ingrained in the lands they shall rule and where their descendants shall live – Turkey and Iran.

The features of originality are perceptible not only in the genre profile, formal structure and dramaturgy, but also in the musical material of “*Özsoy*.” American musicologist Kathryn Woodard presumes that the opera is written in the style of Western European musical orientalism:

He [Saygun] relied on... the harmonic language of late nineteenth-century French Romanticism, Wagnerian chromaticism, and even the straightforward tonal harmony of eighteenth century Classicism. The only number which could be interpreted by the listener as a representation of non-Western music is *Sihir Raksı* [*The Magic Dance*] that is staged in the penultimate scene [6, p. 32].

In a later work, while elaborating on these ideas, Woodard observes that in the music of “*Özsoy*,” which succumbs to most effective analysis from the positions of the aesthetics and technique of pastiche, we may discern problematic traits in the inner connections of language, but “the multiple references inherent in Saygun’s pastiche style serve to create complex meanings that reflect his unique musical background and the shifting cultural and political landscape of the republic” [7, p. 554]. It is quite possible to agree with this opinion, albeit, supplementing it with a few particular concretizing positions.

Example 1. A. A. Saygun. *Özsoy*.
Introduction, mm. 1–8



The musical material of *Özsoy* arouses associations with European music of various time periods. Thus, the theme opening the orchestral introduction, in A. Tuzlu’s opinion [8, s. 20], bears resemblance with the first chorus of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* and the beginning of Brahms’ First Symphony (see: *Example 1*)⁶.

⁶ The facsimile of the manuscript of the piano-vocal score of the first act of “*Özsoy*” is placed in the supplement section of E. Işıldak’s dissertation. [5, s. 80–143]. Music examples Nos. 1–3 are brought from the indicated source.

This comparison is prompted by the melodic delineation of the upper voice, as well as the correlation between the outer voices — the intensive melody in the string instruments ascending with difficulty and the rhythmic ostinato of the pedal point of the basses (and in the case of Brahms, also the shared tonality of C minor).

The thematicism of the chorale *The Prayer* (see: *Example 2*) in its initial turn contains references to the melodicism of Gregorian chant, while the means of its elaboration and the transparency of the textural solution alludes to the style of Palestrina. Saygun had diligently studied both Gregorian chant and early polyphony during his Paris years under the guidance of Vincent D’Indy.⁷

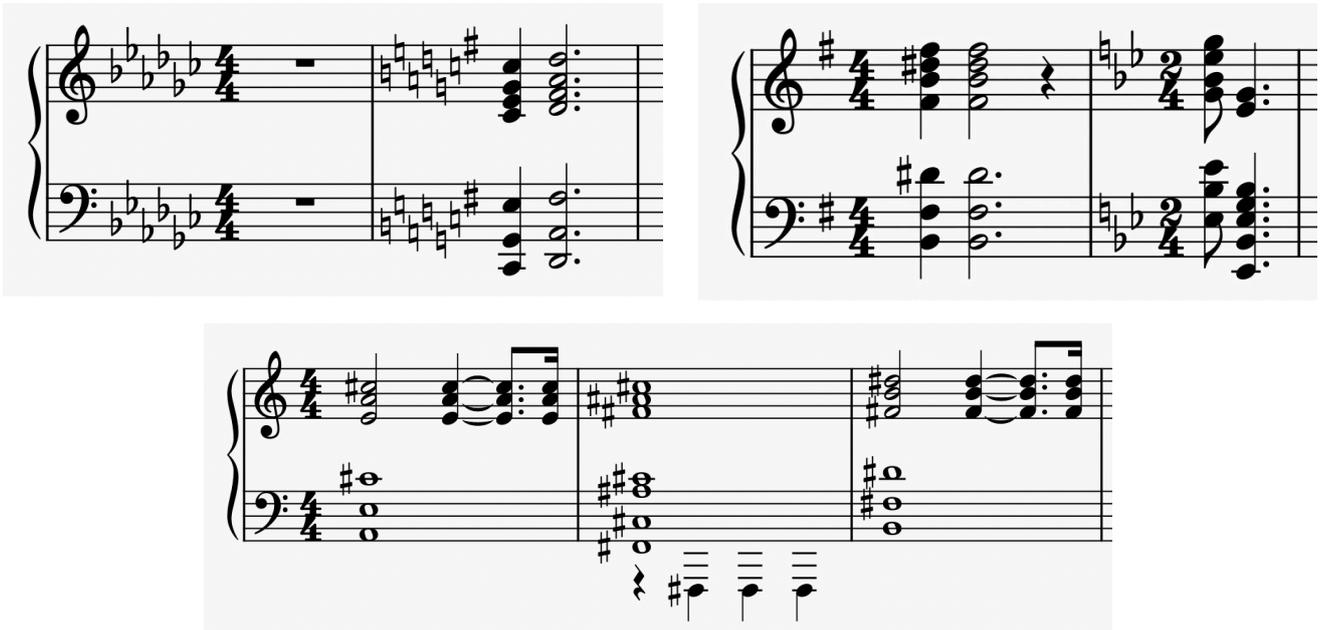
Example 2. A. A. Saygun. *Özsoy*.
Prayer, mm. 1–10

The choral parts in a number of the opera’s episodes, which are essentially salutatory hymns, framing Feridoun’s and Hatun’s arias, are of a chorale texture, while their rhythmic structure and harmonic language (the harmonic consonances, the chordal four-voice texture, the modulations into adjacent keys) remind of the style of the “communal” chorale.⁸

Overall, the harmony of *Özsoy* combines the purest kind of diatonicism and the resources of major-minor with the contemporary harmonic fabric — enharmonic modulation, chromaticization of the harmonic fabric, and dissonating vertical sonorities. The composer’s preferred techniques turn out to be lengthy pedal points and an almost impressionist parallelism of triads, frequently pertaining to tonalities remote from each other (see: *Example 3*).

⁷ Işıldak also indicates at the similarity to the style from the Renaissance era [8, s. 55]. However, as shall be noted below (see footnote 10), in the melodic writing of the “Palestrina style” *The Prayer*, we may also discern reminiscences of Turkish melodicism (Saygun made use in it of the material from his early composition — *Lamento / Ağıtlar* for solo tenor and a cappella male voices, 1932).

⁸ It is possible that the appeal to a tonally clear and harmonically simple language in the choral sections of *Ozsoy* was connected with the practical circumstances that arose during the preparation of the premiere: the choir, recruited from amateurs, could not cope with the difficulties. According to Saygun, it “consisted of people who could not even read music properly”. Quot. from: [2, p. 41].



Example 3 a, b, c. A. A. Saygun. *Özsoy*.

The Scene of Oz Ozan, the Introduction to the Scene of Feridun and the Feleks.⁹

The Scene of Oz Ozan (a – m.3, b – mm.5–6), The Scene of Feridun and the Feleks (mm. 1–3)

On the basis of the aforementioned, it may be stated that in the synthesis of the European late romantic means characterizing the style of *Özsoy* we can perceive the impact of the more recent tendencies of that time – impressionism and neoclassicism. Saygun was familiar with some of Stravinsky's neoclassical works, and his own early *Suite for Piano* opus 2 (1931), which included such pieces as the *Prelude*, *Canzona*, *Ostinato*, and *Canon*, testifies to the young Turkish composer's familiarization with the creative practice of baroque music.

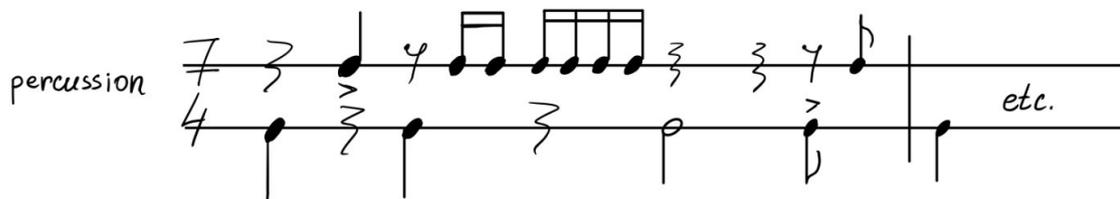
Through the Western-European foundation in *Özsoy* we perceive the penetration of Turkish national features, especially clearly expressed in the rhythmical, timbral and modal spheres.¹⁰ The use of changing meters, complex rhythmic groupings within the measures, European instruments in the line of character of the traditional Turkish ones (the harp, likened to the saz,

⁹ These long, almost entirely conversational scenes are interspersed with short musical fragments: 1, 2, 3 bars in Oz Ozan's monologue, 9 and 14 bars in the scene between Feridun and Feleks.

¹⁰ According to the assertion of Turkish musicologist Mahmud Ragip Gazimihal, a close friend of Saygun, who were well acquainted with the first version of the opera, the numerous "references" to the Turkish national tradition were also present in its melodic material: "The prayer chorus in Act I [...] is based on Anatolian motives. The same could also be said for the majority of places in Act II. The orchestral preludes, on the other hand, are in a more individualistic style. For the rest of the work, the musical language is constructed in a tonal idiom (because of lack of time and in order to make it easy for the singers to learn)" (cit. from: [2, p. 43]).

the instrument of the folk narrators the ozans and ashugs, the tocsin-like rhythms reminding of the sound atmosphere of the rituals of the ancient Turkic peoples) may be found in many episodes in the opera. An entire set of sections is written using the pentatonic scale, which at that time was perceived by Saygun as the modal basis of Turkish music (subsequently he reconsidered this opinion).

The peculiar national traits are represented most brightly in *Özsoy* by the *Magic Dance*, in which these features are demonstrated in a compound way. The basic principle of organization of the musical motion turns out to be the principle of ostinato – the rhythmic ostinato in the first and the third sections of the contrasting-compound form and the rhythmic-melodic in the second section. The ostinato principle is maintained unswervingly, at times concentrating itself in the lower strata of the texture (as it does in the first section), or spanning the entire orchestral texture (in the third section), and is accompanied by contrapuntal lines, syncopated isolated sounds and dissonant “clusters” in other textural layers. In the music there is a predominance of the colors of percussion instruments. An specially strong impression is created by the beginning of the *Magic Dance*: the exposition of the rhythmic ostinato performed on several drums and preceded as a ritual “feature opening” by three strikes on a gong (*Example 4*):



Example 4. A. A. Saygun. *Özsoy*. Ostinato rhythm from *Sihir Rakst*¹¹

Noting the peculiarities of the metro-rhythmic organization of the seven-beat measure (the structure of the measure with the 7/4 meter is: 2+2+3), Woodard assesses it as the *aksak* rhythm [6, p. 32]. The *aksak* (the word meaning “lame” in Turkish) is one of the most important rhythms in the Turkish musical tradition. Its essence consists of an asymmetrical alternation of short and long beats formed by the combination of *usuls* – “patterns formed of equal and unequal, as well as strong and weak beats in a certain order. They also could be described as rhythmical patterns consisting of combinations of various rhythms” [9, p. 9]. The Turkish *aksak* combines the *usuls* of binary and ternary division, which upon the mandatory preservation of a single tempo of metrical units incorporated in both binary and ternary groups, creates the effect of an irregular, “lame” meter.

¹¹ Musical examples Nos. 4 and 5 are cited from Kathryn Woodard’s dissertation [6, pp. 32–33, 98], the *Magic Dance* being absent from the facsimile of the piano-vocal score.

In another noteworthy fragment from the beginning of the second section of the *Magic Dance* demonstrated in the dissertation, the theme of the tenor saxophone (in the modal structure of which, according to Woodard's observation, it is possible to discern a partial coincidence with the scale of the makam *Karcıġar* [6, p. 33]), is accompanied by a two-voice counterpoint of the violins — an anhemitonic melody expounded in parallel fourths (*Example 5*):

The image shows three staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'tenor saxophone' and contains a melodic line in bass clef with a tempo marking of quarter note = 66. The middle staff is labeled 'violins' and shows two voices in treble clef playing parallel fourths. The bottom staff is labeled 'tenor sax.' and contains a melodic line in bass clef. Below the main notation is a scale for 'Karcıġar' in treble clef, consisting of the notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4.

*Example 5 a, b. A. A. Saygun. Özsoy. a — Excerpt of Sibir Raksı
b — Makam Karcıġar (in Western Notation)*

The *aksak*-rhythms, the *makam*, and the parallel intervals of fourths are all basic elements of the Turkish folk tradition widespread in the country's folk music. But these selfsame elements, adapted to the conditions of Western notation (and, as a result of this, modified), were also made use of by contemporary Turkish composers. Saygun, a native of Izmir, had been familiar from his childhood with this branch of national culture characteristic for the large Turkish cities and, most likely, drew some of his artistic ideas from them. At the same time, the systematic, planned professional work on the study of Turkish folk music — including ethnographic expeditions carried out jointly with Bela Bartok's participation and those without him, publications of musical materials and articles, as well as presentations in conferences — would begin already after the writing of *Özsoy*, starting from the second half of the 1930s. Not only it would bring brilliant scholarly results, but would also reflect itself in the composer's musical output.

This, a peculiar “artistic-research project” on the theme of the aksak-rhythms could be perceived in a whole series of his compositions for piano: *Ten Etudes in Aksak Rhythms* (opus 38, 1964), *Twelve Preludes in Aksak Rhythms* (opus 45, 1967), *Fifteen Pieces in Aksak Rhythms* (opus 47, 1967) and *Ten Sketches in Aksak Rhythms* (opus 58, 1976).

Conclusion

The premiere of *Özsoy* stimulated an awakening of interest towards opera on the part of the Turkish composers. During that same year, 1934, Necil Kazim Akses created *Bay Önder*, while Saygun created his second composition in this genre — *Taş Bebek (The Stone Doll)*. Nonetheless, *Özsoy* for obvious reasons could not exert a direct impact on the destiny of the Turkish national opera school. It was not merely because its productions had not been revived during the course of almost 50 years, but also because there were no fitting conditions for this in Turkey during the 1930s — there was a lack of stationary opera theaters with the corresponding infrastructure, as well as the performance ensembles. Egeli and Saygun had to exert a considerable amount of effort in order to produce *Özsoy*, and this being so with Atatürk’s support. Besides the President’s Orchestra, the String Orchestra of the Istanbul Municipal Conservatory, as well as well-known Turkish singers who sang the primary roles (Nurullah Taşkiran and Nimet Vahid Hanim, who taught at the conservatory in Istanbul), the performance included the participation of amateur musicians who passed the audition, the chorus was compiled of school children and students of institutes in Ankara, while the ballet group was comprised of people who acquired dance skills in circles affiliated with the People’s House¹² in Ankara.

This state of affairs changed by the middle of the 20th century. Opera and ballet departments were opened at the Ankara State Conservatory, the State Opera Theater began to function in Ankara, and work was carried out in preparing employees for musical-theatrical institutions. Operas were written by Akses (*Timur*, 1956), Cemal Reşit Rey (*Çelebi*, 1945, 1st version), Nevit Kodallı (*Van Gogh*, 1956), Sabahattin Kallender (*Nasrettin Hoca*, 1960) et al.¹³ Saygun also continued to work in this genre. The solemn inauguration of the building of the Ankara Opera Theater was marked by a production of the first act of his *Kerem* (1948, the production of the three-act version took place in 1953). During the 1970s, the operas *Köroğlu* (1971) and *Gilgameş* (1979) would be composed, the latter based on the historical Sumerian *Epos of Gilgamesh*. Saygun’s final compositions

¹² *People’s Houses* were the cultural enlightenment centers created during the 1930s and the 1940s in various regions of Turkey. These institutions, which pursued the goals of nurturing national self-consciousness in the Turkish people, were an important part of Atatürk’s reforms.

¹³ For more detail about this, see Şahin, K. “Opera Sanatının Türkiye’de Gelişimi ve Türkçe Operaların Tarihsel Süreci” [“The Development of the Art of Opera in Turkey and the Historical Process of Turkish Opera”] [10].

moved along the path inscribed by *Özsoy*: in *Kerem* the stage action is brought to a minimum, the opera demonstrate features of an oratorio (see: [2, p. 70]), while the genre *Gilgameş* was indicated by the composer as an *epic drama*.¹⁴

The political effect of the premiere of Saygun's opera firstling,¹⁵ inscribed into the ideological context of the 1930s, at that time outweighed the perception of the composition's artistic means and its significance in the development of Turkish musical culture, but the latter should not be underestimated.¹⁶ The interaction of Turkish national and European traditions delineated in *Özsoy* would become a significant trend in 20th century Turkish music.

Within the framework of the cultural reforms carried out by Atatürk, the aspiration to create a new, contemporary Turkish nation also required a reassessment of the art of music. *Özsoy* became one of the symbols of the stage of modernization of Turkish culture, the formation of a new cultural identity.

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¹⁴ The peculiarities of the dramaturgy of *Gilgameş*, the correlation between the opera and the literary source are studied in İ.Ş. Güleç and E.S. Güleç's article "Gilgameş Destanının Çağdaş Yorumu: Nevid Kodallı ve Ahmed Adnan Saygun'un Gilgameş Operaları" ["A Contemporary Interpretation of the Epos of Gilgamesh: the Operas about Gilgamesh by Nevid Kodallı and Ahmed Adnan Saygun"] [11].

¹⁵ *Özsoy* is examined particularly in this aspect in Kathryn Woodard's article "Music Mediating Politics in Turkey: The Case of Ahmed Adnan Saygun" [7].

¹⁶ The resiliency of *Özsoy* is also testified by the theatrical-musical practice: after its revival in 1982, the opera has been produced numerous times in Turkey on various theatrical and opera stages.

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Статья поступила в редакцию 29.05.2024;
одобрена после рецензирования 23.08.2024;
принята к публикации 03.09.2024.

The article was submitted 29.05.2024;
approved after reviewing 23.08.2024;
accepted for publication 03.09.2024.