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[Armenian Musicians And Composers In Ottoman Music Tradition](http://armenians-1915.blogspot.com/2009/05/2853-armenian-musicians-and-composers.html)

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Although Armenian composers who arose and developed in the Ottoman music tradition and produced musical works in the circle of their religious beliefs, their connections with non-religious global music had almost all happened in the frame of Ottoman music that leaned toward Turkish-Islamic culture. One of the basic reasons is that Ottoman music opened its doors to all religions and traditions and that allowed a multi-cultural musical tradition to take form in Ottoman music. . .

Ottoman music not only leaned toward religious themes, it also leaned toward Turkish cultural themes. At the same time, it absorbed musical traditions accumulated from its past history. It mixed the music of the communities that joined the Ottoman Empire. Thanks to this perspective and possibilities, the members who weren't Turkish and Muslim had the opportunity to perform their art in Ottoman music without being alienated. The fact that they didn't try to form another music tradition apart from Ottoman music, shows how non-Muslim musicians were so clearly and so warmly welcomed and appreciated. It is possible to regard this as one of the most concrete proofs of the tolerance of the Ottoman Empire.

To take part in the Ottoman music tradition, it was not necessary to come from a distinguished or wealthy family or to be from a specific religious community. The only condition was to have music ability. When minority and non-Muslim musicians became masters in both Turkish musical instruments and in vocals, they not only shared their art with the people and the communities with whom they shared the same beliefs but also they shared it with the

general public, even holding meshks which means the oral transmission of the repertoire from teacher to student in palaces and taking part in fasıls which is based on that the works should have the same melodic structure, and they are then ordered according to shape or form. “In addition, because Armenian Church music used exactly the same Turkish musical mode and methods, Armenian musicians in church music were learning Turkish music at the same time. Kapriyel Ebeyan, who learnt Turk music from Levan Hancıyan, produced works in this form and used Nihani appellation in his works. His real profession was as priest and he is just one example” (Oztuna, 1974, 179).

The Minorities and non-Muslim musicians both learnt lessons from Turkish teachers and began to give lessons to Turks after they specialized in their art. There were even some who became teachers of that time’s statesmen.

As an example, Asdik Ağa, who is an Armenian taught Egyptian princes. In the pupil-teacher relationship, there were Armenian musicians who taught musicians among whom Mevlevihane sheikhs also take place and later on who helped other musicians; and, thus, directed the way for religious Turkish music to grow. “Nikagos Ağa, who was one of these, brought up many pupils on the classical lute. The most famous of his pupils was Celaledin Dede Efendi who was the Yenikapı Mevlevihane Sheikh. Nikagos Ağa was his teacher both in classical lute and in music theory. In this way, Nikagos transferred feyz, which means the affection and imitation in that way, that he had taken from his master Hammamizade İsmail Dede Efendi, who was in the same Mevlevihane, to Dede Efendi who was this community’s sheikh” (Ak, Tarih 151 s118). In this pupil-teacher relationship, both sides ignored each other’s beliefs ways and looked at their teachers as master and expert. These teachers were respected by nearly every person in the community, by rising up to the degree of hodja of the reed flute instrument, which is mostly seen in the Turkish-Islamic mysticism tradition. One of the most striking examples of this is that Ishak, who was a hebrew and the classical lute master of Sultan Selim III received great respect and love from the Sultan.

Non-Muslims in Ottoman music tradition not only improved their art but also found the opportunity to improve their status by producing music in this tradition. Thanks to the opportunity they developed a kind of prominence these non-Muslims took their place in Ottoman music tradition’s written sources rather than as a member of their own religion and religious community. Although the Non-Muslims in these written Ottoman music sources played and composed their own religious church music, they began to be recognized as famous composers and musicians of traditional Ottoman music rather than being known for their own music traditions. Among these, there were some who earned their living by teaching Turkish music or performing it. “There were also some of them like Arşak Çömlekçiyen who worked as music teachers in Turkish schools” (Öztuna, 1974, 72). In addition, there were some who worked as hanende, sazen – the former one means the one who sing in a chorus and the latter one means instrumentalist- and music teachers in the military marching band Mızıkay-ı Humayun (the second branch of the Mehter band), which performed Ottoman army music.

Many minority musicians, as well as Turkish musicians, made Ottoman music live to the present by writing out the works of their own and previous periods with the notation system used in those days and even invented their own notation system. The Turkish music community has never denied the gratitude they feel for their efforts. Hampartzum Limonciyan created one of the most widely used notation systems. Some of Turkish music originals and copies of Armenian composers’ and musicians’ compositions with the Hampartzum notation

system still exist in Istanbul University, the ITU State Turkish School of Music, TRT radio of Istanbul, Sadettin Arel library, and in other archives and libraries in Turkey. There were Armenian composers and musicians who also joined in forming a written source tradition that traces books of Ottoman music to the 9th century and that still exists today. For instance, “Tanburi Nikagos (Taşçıyan) Ağa and his brother Agop Taşçıyan published form of a periodical publication in 1861. Another example is that Fasil Mecmuaları, written in the market style by Arşak Çömlekiyan, was published by Lutanist Onnik Zahoryan between the years 1922 and 1924” (Öztuna, 1974, 83-72).

Almost all of the Armenian composers and musicians who adapted to the philosophy of the Turkish music tradition produced many works which were nearly equal to that of Islamic Turkish composers. It is almost impossible to distinguish these works, which were composed in nearly all the forms of Turkish music, from Turkish composers in terms of kind, style, manner, and interpretation. Turkish music deeply affected the styles of Armenian composers who gave music a universal meaning. For example, some Armenian composers writing western music forms, like Çuhacıyan, often used Turkish music modes rather than using western music tones in their works. This is a sign of how much these composers had adapted to Turkish music.

These benefits were sometimes mutual as a result of the good relations between the two cultures. In one example, an Armenian composer considered to be a master, whose real name was Bimen Dergazaryan but known as Bimen Şen in the Turkish music community, tried to learn Turkish music while writing psalms sung in the church choir. The composer took his surname “Şen” from his composition in the famed Kürdilihicazkar mode -in other words makam which provides a complex set of rules for composing and specifies a unique intervallic structure (cinsler) and melodic development (seyir)- the title of the song is “Yüzüm sen, hatıram sen, meclisim sen, mevkiim gülşen”. The composer followed master musicians, such as Tanburi Cemil Bey, Neyzen Aziz Dede, Şevki Bey, Kanuni Hacı Arif Bey, Hanende Nedim Bey, and especially Hacı Arif Bey carefully (Armenian Composers, CD). The composer adapted the method of Arif Bey and Rahmi Bey, taking the perfection of his form from these two composers and producing successful songs that expressed his own personality. Şen, who has nearly 250 compositions in our music repertory, died on August 26, 1943 and was buried in an Armenian graveyard in Feriköy. His funeral was held in Balık Pazarı Armenian Church and his instructor, Lemi Atlı, and many famous musicians, such as Sir Rıza, Dürrü Turan, Sadeddin Kaynak, Artoki Candan, İbnül Emin Mahmut Kemal Inal and Ali Rıza Sengel attended the funeral.

Having a special position among the musicians of Sultan Aziz Era and having been born in Istanbul – Hasköy in 1836, Nikagos Ağa is another example. Nikagos Ağa learnt music first from Karabet Ağa, then from Dede Efendi and later he profited from Mankor Ağa. Nikagos Ağa was also impressed by Dellalzade, and eventually, he reached such a high level that he worked as an instructor with Dellalzade and Haşim Bey in Enderun-ı Humayun which is a school in Ottoman Empire. In order to improve his language and dialect, he took lessons for three years from Ahmet Vefik Pasha who is one of the most well-known authors in Turkish literature. Although he was a Christian, he was interested in religious Turkish music and continued to go Mevlevihane in order to be able to sing the songs of the religious rites. with which he was impressed, such as na’t -a kind of musical form in Turkish music which is mostly used in religious music- and other religious works. As well as being an important composer and a wonderful musician, he is also known as an excellent instructor.

One of Nikagos Ağa's most famous students is Mehmet Celaleddin Dede, who is among the sheikhs of Yenikapı Mevlevihane. Nikagos Ağa, who worked for our music in many various areas, died on 9 September 1885 and he was buried in a Topkapı Armenian graveyard (Aksüt 1993). "Nikagos Ağa's struggle for the religious music enabled him to be a composer with a high quality in out-religious music, as well. In his works he reached melodic riches and a superb composition technique and he produced works that are wonderful in terms of esthetics (Armenian Composers CD).

Another important figure in Turkish music compositions is Hamparsum Limonciyan. He enriched our repertory by transcribing many Muslim or Armenian composers' works with his own invented notation system and enabled these compositions to survive to the present day. Limonciyan, who is also known as Father Hamparsum and Hamparsum Ağa, has distinction as the inventor of a notation system for Turkish music.

He was born in Istanbul – Beyoglu at Çukur Street, near Ağa mosque in 1768. His father's name is Serkis and his mother's name is Gaderina.

His family was originally from Harput but they emigrated and settled in Istanbul. Being a child of a poor family, Hamparsum couldn't continue his education after primary school and so he began to work with a tailor as an apprentice. However, because of his love of music, he would go to church to learn the music. He learnt Armenian church music from Kirkor Kabasakalyan from Kayseri (1736-1808) and Zenne Bagos.

Limonciyan was taken care by the Mint manager, a palace banker, and Hovannes Çelebi Düzyan (1749-1812), some of the wealthiest people of the era. Similar to Turkish traditions, rich Armenian families used to give places to artists or craftsmen on their estates. Living for a long time under the protection of this family, Hamparsum had contact with the music masters of his era and gradually improved his knowledge of music.

While he was working as a chorister in an Armenian Church, he continued to go to the Mevlevihane where he had the opportunity to learn Turkish art and music with the help of musical Mevlevies. Meeting Büyük Dede İsmail Efendi, who was working as kudümzem, the instrumentalist who plays kudüm which is one of the most fundamental rhythm instruments in classical Turkish music, in the Beşiktaş Mevlevihane, Hamparsum took lessons from him and was accepted before the Sultan, Selim III. Selim III who was an artist too, was concerned about the disappearance of thousands of musical works because of not having a notation system and ordered Hamparsum to find or develop one.

Hamparsum's notation system was popular until the western notation system became established. The most notable characteristic of this notation system is that the marks which show the sounds are his invention and are written from left to right, similar to our present day writing and notation system. (This system shows the beginning with the Yegah, below the first line of the stave to the high-pitched Huseyni and high-pitched Acem sounds, above the third additional line that comes after the fifth line). Hamparsum transcribed 18th century Turkish classical music in six books by using this system but four of these books have been lost. Two of them are in the Istanbul Municipal Library and the Istanbul Municipal Conservatory library. Most of the hundreds of Peşrev (overture) and Saz Semai were copied by Mandoli Yarutin Havadurin and can be found in a book (Do you mean musical scores?) which is on an Ankara Radio CD (Armenian Composers, CD).

Among the Armenian composers, the number of those who sang Turkish music with an advanced technique and language are many. One of them, Violinist Sebu (Simonyan) Aga is an artist known for his violin compositions. According to the Armenian Church registration his surname was Simonyan. Blind Sebu Aga had presented in Mızıkay-ı Humayun many times. He was also the violinist of the Sarayı Humayun (Imperial Palace). His bright and striking style while playing the violin reflected traditional dance music. Sultan Aziz, who loved him, increased his salary and gave him a house in Beşiktaş-Ihlamur. He died in 1894. His only successor was his son Sebuhyan (Armenian Composers, CD). Violinist Tatyos Efendi was a student of Sebu Aga. Along with his many compositions, Tatyos added many wonderful works to our repertory with his Peşrev and many Saz Semai in different modes. He is remembered with great respect and admiration as a master and valued musician. His having been registered as “Music Player” in the job section of the church register shows us that the most important reason for Armenian musicians’ having a place in Turkish music history, is mostly the result of the tolerance of and the possibilities offered by Ottoman – Turkish – Islamic philosophy and government policy.

It is impossible to discuss the work of all the Armenian composers. The following table gives a list of the Armenian composers and their works.

Table. Armenian Composers and Their Works

Afet Mısırlıyan (Ud)	He composed nearly 30 songs.
Agop Aga	—
Aga Eleksa Efendi (Violin)	A number of his songs are known in different modes.
Agdasar (Ekmekçi)	his appellation Nearly 65 of his works have survived to the present day in different modes and forms.
Aleksan Aga (Tanbur, a classical lute)	Nearly 10 songs of his have survived to the present day.
Arsak Çömlekçiyan (Ud)	Nineteen of his works have survived to the present day in different modes and forms.
Artaki Candan	He added many good works to our repertory.
Asdik	Forty-one of his works have survived to the present day in different modes and forms.
Bağdasar (Ekmekçi) (1880-?)	His nineteen works in different modes and forms have lived till today
Bimen Şen (1873-1943)	Nearly two hundred and fifty of his works have lived to today.
Bogos Hamamcıyan (1872-1945)	His nine works in different modes and forms have lived to today.
Çuhacıyan (Dikran) (1836-1898)	His seven works in different modes and forms have lived to today.
Ebeyan (A. Kapriyel) (1882-1958)	His two works in Kürdilihiczakar and uşşak modes have lived to today.
Gabris Efendi (Uzunyan) (?-1925)	One of his songs has lived to today
Hamparsum Limoncıyan (1768-1839)	His thirty-one works in different modes and forms have lived to today.
Hancıyan (Leon, Levon) (1857-1947)	His twenty-one works in different modes and forms have lived to today.
Hasadur Efendi (Ama)	—
Hristaki (Lavtacı Hristo) (?-1974)	His twentynine works have lived to today.
Karabet Efendi (Hanende Hacı) (1858-1913)	His three songs in Uşşak mode have lived to

today.

Karnik Garmiryan (1872-1974) His fiftyfour works in different modes and forms have lived to today.

Kemani Serkis Efendi (1885-1944) Thirty-one of his works have lived to today.

Kirkor Çulhayan (1868-1938) His thirty-five works in different modes and forms have lived to today.

Kirkor Efendi (Udi Berberyan) (1884-1959) He composed three songs.

Kirkor Mehteryan (1920-?) His two songs have lived to today.

Kapril Efendi (before 1872) His three works have lived to today.

Mandoli Artin (Hanede Yarutin Havadurin) (-1890) His sixteen peşrevve in different modes, thirty saz semai and one song have lived to today.

Markor (Hanende Çilingir) (?-1880) His nineteen songs in different modes have lived to today.

Merkel (-1920?) One of his Hüzam songs has lived to today.

Mestan (-1925?) One of his works has lived to today.

Mihran (Hanende Bursalı) (-1910?) Three works have lived to today.

Nikagos Ağa (1836-1885) His sixty-three works of him in different modes and forms have lived to today.

Nişan Taşçıyan (-1900?) One saz semai of him has lived to today.

Nubar (Kanuni) (1885-1954) His fourteen works in different modes and forms have lived to today.

Nubar Tekyay (Kemani) (1905-1955) He began composing songs when he was 21.

Ornik (Hanende Sarı) (-1885?) His two songs have lived to today.

Osep Ebeyan (1873-1959) He composed nearly twenty-five works.

Ovrik (Hovrik) Kazaysan (Lavtacı) (1872-1936) His three songs have lived to today.

Manol (Hanende) (-1902?) His two songs have lived to today.

Mihran Efendi (Bursalı) (?-1901) His three songs have lived to today.

Sahak Hocasar (Kemani) (1889-1946) Nearly thirty of his songs have lived to today.

Serkis Efendi (Udi) (?-1925) His two works in song form have lived to today.

Serkis Nurluyan (1836-1888) His four songs have lived to today.

Serkis Sucuyan No information about him could be found.

Surupe Efendi (Udi) (?-1925?) His eight songs have lived to today.

Udi Hirant Kenikoğlu (1901-1978) He is known to have composed many works.

Vital Efendi (Kanuni) (?-1935?) He is presumed to have composed few songs.

## CONCLUSION

Rather than producing works based on their own musical traditions, Armenian composers in the Ottoman Era composed works of Classical Ottoman music that they also performed. It shouldn't be forgotten that Armenian musicians were so adapted to the life style based on Ottoman music that it is not possible to separate their work and performance from the work and performance of Turkish-Islamic composers. This information shows us that the Ottoman philosophy of life and government policy managed to maintain a receptive environment for Armenian musicians as happened during the whole of Ottoman history. The following are some of the works of Armenian composers that have common characteristics with Turkish music. I hope you have a chance to listen to them.

1. "Kürdili – Hicazkar Saz Semaisi" .....Tatyos Efendi
2. "Firkatin Aldı Bütün Neşve-ü Tabım Bu Gece" ..Bimen Şen
3. "Varmı Hacet Söyleyeyim Ey Gül Tenim" .....Nikağos Ağa

#### 4. “Mani Oluyor Halimi Takdire Hicabım” ....Tatyos Efenddi

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