

Polyphonic Pieties: Listening for the Global Bourgeois in Modern Turkey

Erol GM Köymen, College of Music
ekoymen@fsu.edu

Problem:

Listening to Western art music has long been a practice associated with bourgeois subjectivity. This has been the case In modern Turkey, too, where listening to Western art music has been associated with the country's secularist bourgeoisie and an orientation toward "universal" (i.e.: European) civilization. But recent decades have seen the rise of a pious Muslim bourgeoisie that has gained control of the state and cultivated listening practices oriented toward the Ottoman past.



Methodology

-total two years of ethnographic fieldwork entailing participant observation at hundreds of public and private concerts and over forty interviews

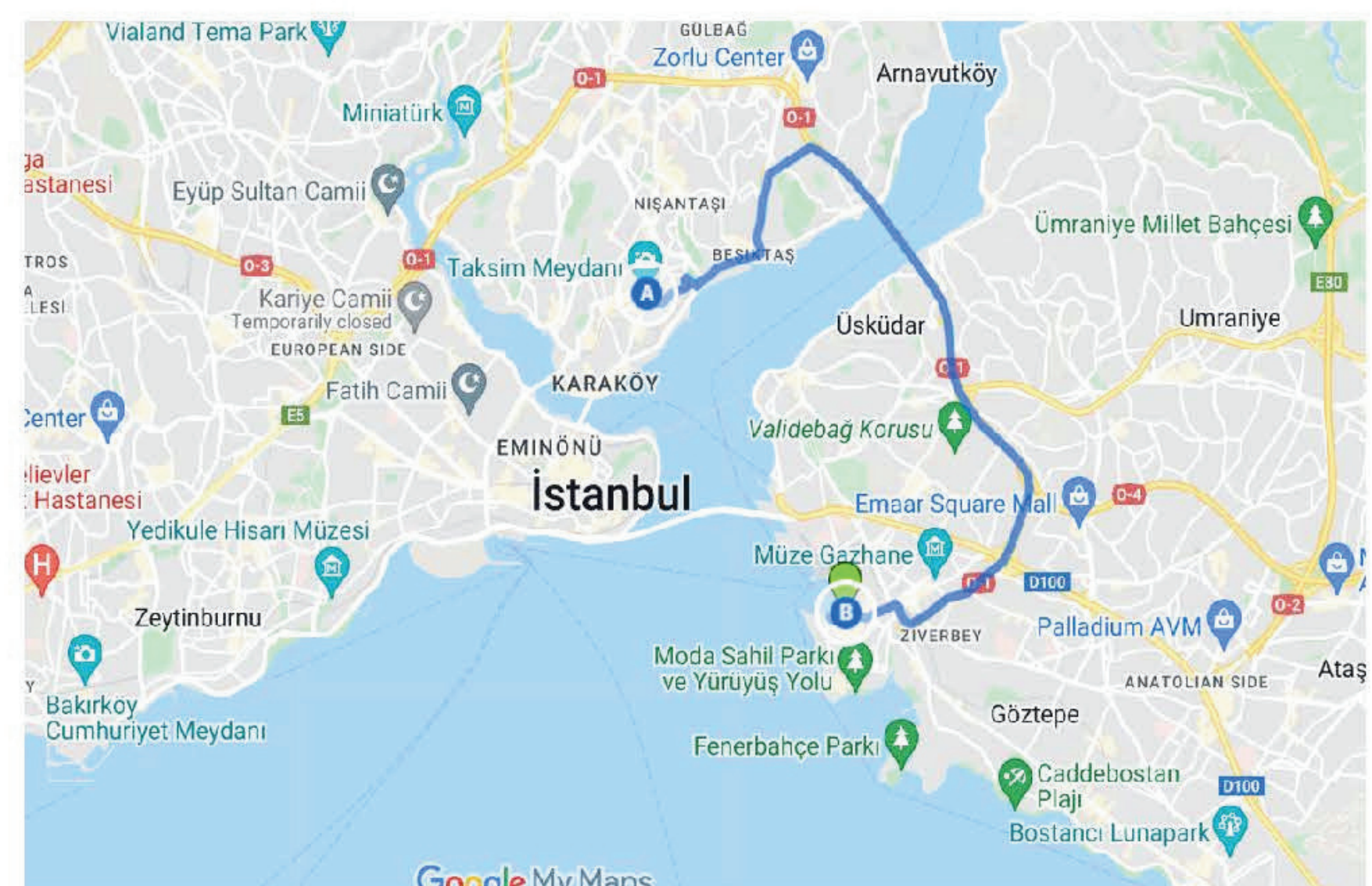
Argument:

- Listening to Western art music discursively shapes individual bodies in Turkey to have a "polyphonic" sensory and emotional configuration that undergirds bourgeois subjectivity
- This is characterized by a sense of sophisticated individual taste, rational distance, and capacity for measured democratic deliberation
- Listening cultivates patterns of belonging in Istanbul districts known for their European feel, cosmopolitan past, and secularist present-day profile.
- Listening becomes a site of contestation between European and Ottoman post-imperial bourgeois formations.



Research Questions:

- How has listening to Western art music shaped the habitus, spaces and modes of belonging undergirding bourgeois subjectivity?
- How has listening become a site of contestation over the boundaries between secularist and Muslim bourgeoisie since Turkey's Islamic populist turn?



Implications:

- Builds upon scholarly literatures in global musicology, cultural approaches to the study of the (global) bourgeoisie, and studies of listening and secularism.
- Brings together studies of listening, Western art music, and bourgeois subjectivity in a global framework
- Probes the question «what is the bourgeoisie?» from the perspective of a Turkish context of competing bourgeois formations rooted in alternative imperial legacies

