Çeşmebaşı: Negotiating the Official Turkish Identity in Ballet[1]

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For the 1964-65 season, Ninette de Valois, an ex-*Ballets Russes* dancer and the Royal Ballet's creative and managerial founder, choreographed the first "Turkish ballet," *Çeşmebaşı*, for the emerging Ankara State Ballet Company. The title of the piece means "at the fountain" or "fountainhead," which refers to the well-established image of an Anatolian village square marked with a public fountain. Ferit Tüzün reworked his composition, *Anatolian Suite*, based on the demands of de Valois to make it suitable for ballet. Dramaturgy of *Çeşmebaşı* involved many Turkish collaborators, from established theatre scholar Metin And to twin ballet dancers Rezzan and Ümran Ürey, and character dancer Erhan Ergüler. When *Çeşmebaşı* premiered in 1964, it became a tremendous success, adored by audiences.

De Valois described her work in *Çeşmebaşı* to her Turkish collaborators and audiences as a "Turkish ballet fantasy" (Nutku 1965: para. 3), allowing for the superposition of incongruous cultural images of Turkey within the six sections of the ballet. For instance, one collection of references in the ballet are borrowed from nineteenth century İstanbul neighborhoods, such as the shadow puppet characters Hacivat and Karagöz, the neighborhood's news deliverer (or "town crier" as Metin And translated it – 1976: 241) with his large drum, and the circus players. Despite the urban origins of these elements, they were placed in a rural setting where they conventionally would not be-

1 A major part of this research took place as the final paper of *MUS1042H: The Ballets Russes*, which I took from the Faculty of Music in University of Toronto, with the careful guidance of Dr. Sarah Gutsche-Miller during the winter term of 2018. I reworked this research during my Ph.D. thesis and used the example of *Çeşmebaşı* as one of the major case studies. This is the third time I am working on *Çeşmebaşı*, and with each new rendering I am finding more sides to the story of the creation of this first "Turkish" ballet.

long. Meanwhile, rural motifs appear in gossiping women at the fountain, girls who come to it to fill their earthenware water jugs; and the "saz[2] poet," *Aşık*, and the dance of his imaginary lover, the village beauty (Baysal 2010: 104). Among the scarce written works about the *Çeşmebaşı*, Richard Glasstone noted that it concluded in a climactic ending, with dancers waving scarves at the audience (1999: 42-3). This action made the ballet more accessible to the people of Turkey, considering that direct address to the audience was a widely used technique in the traditional performance forms of Turkey.

Figure 1: The entire ballet group of Çeşmebaşı with Refik Eren-Hüseyin Mumcu's set design (de Valois: 1977)[3]

Çeşmebaşı toured with a certain claim to the representation of Turkish identity after it selectively adopted and patchworked the country's cultural heritages with the approval of state institutions. As it was produced at a moment when the Republican establishment was founding the national ballet scene, it eventually became a trademark piece to showcase Turkishness.[4] As such, *Çeşmebaşı* repeatedly toured with the Turkish government's support as a

2 An Anatolian string instrument.

3 Names of the set designers are noted in Nutku 1965.

4 Opera was established in Turkey in the 1930s, whereas it took a few more decades to establish ballet. Opera, even more so than ballet, was created as a Republican project to shape the new modern art field of the country. The politics of the creation of the "first Turkish Opera" can be read in Kathryn Woodard's article (2007: 552-562).

piece selected by the Turkish State Ballet to contribute to foreign diplomatic invitations or festivals. It was showcased to the then-USSR president, Alexei Kosygin, in 1967 during his diplomatic visit (Baysal 2010). It was also presented during the 1968 visit of the then-French president, General de Gaulle, to Ankara. French tri-color scarves were waved at de Gaulle at the end of the ballet to highlight the Turkish-French alliance, an image particularly orchestrated by de Valois (Glasstone 2015: 114-115). *Çeşmebaşı*, either in its entirety or in parts, toured to Pakistan (Yüceil 2007: 71), Bulgaria (And 1976: 170), and various North African countries (And 1976: 173), such as Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt, to represent the emerging success of Turkish ballet. Decades after its premiere, it continued to be performed in almost all the important tours of the Turkish State Ballet, including the 6th Asian Arts Festival in Hong Kong in 1981 (Şengezer 1999: 107). *Çeşmebaşı* became a foundational ballet piece that was revived in later institutional stages of the growth of the Turkish State Ballet, becoming the first ballet performance of İzmir State Ballet in 1982 (Deleon 1990: 91). In 1993 it was revived in full by the İstanbul State Ballet through the initiative of Richard Glasstone, the director of that institution at the time (Glasstone 2015: 203).

Many important conversations took place within the field of ballet and the broader artistic community of Turkey after the premiere of *Çeşmebaşı*. The first concern was how "Turkish" the ballet was: the music, the design, most of the dancers, and all the themes were Turkish, and Turkish audiences loved the performance. On the other hand, many performance scholars of the time, such as Metin And (1976) and Özdemir Nutku (1965), along with contemporary dance scholars, like Zeynep Günsür (2007), wrote that despite these local collaborators and the fact that the choreographer spent an extensive amount of time in Turkey, her approach was that of an outsider's, which left a shared reference to the "Turkishness" of the piece questionable.

In this article, I will question what kinds of hierarchically, even hegemonically structured forms of sharing were integral to the artistic relationships and in the production process of *Çeşmebaşı*. Therefore, it is necessary to briefly dissect the hegemonic status that British collaborators had while working with Turkish artists under these specific circumstances. In the founding period of the Turkish ballet, the field was singularly defined by the Anglophone canon, which de Valois herself established (Genné 2000: 132-162). Only after the mid-1970s did other national ballets start impacting the Turkish scene when the artistic control of de Valois on the field began fading away

(Başar 2021: 199-216). This hegemony was integral to the structure of the Turkish State Ballet and was bound to the role de Valois played in its founding years. De Valois visited İstanbul in 1947 to start a ballet school in Turkey through the invitation of then-Minister of Education, Hasan Âli Yücel. In 1957, the first graduates of the Turkish Ballet School established the Ankara State Ballet Company, which developed into a fully professional ballet troupe up until the mid-1960s, making it the pioneer professional ballet troupe of the country, which continues its work today along with many other branches of the State Ballet Company located in other cities. De Valois was particularly motivated by the Cold War politics of keeping Russian ballet masters, a.k.a. the "communists," out of Turkey with the backing of the British Council (de Valois 1992: 193). Indeed, this effort was extended to keeping all non-British influences out of the Turkish ballet field. [5]

5 Richard Glasstone, an important ballet teacher and choreographer who worked in the foundational phase of Turkish ballet extensively, documented how strictly de Valois controlled *all* non-British influence on Turkish ballet through her political power and influence on the field:

> It was during Rodrigues' first visit to Ankara that one of the most amusing and telling incidents of my time in Turkey occurred. Summoned to see the director of the Opera House, I was informed that Serge Lifar had arrived to stage a program of his own ballets for the company, in honor of an impending state visit by General de Gaulle. I was instructed to cancel all Mr. Rodrigues' rehearsals and to allocate the time and the dancers to Lifar. Without going into all the Byzantine intrigue which had led to this sudden change of plan, it turned out that someone had failed to realize that de Gaulle would not actually have appreciated it, as Lifar was rumored to have been a collaborator during the war. I telephoned de Valois for advice, and she flew out on the next plane. Not only was General de Gaulle treated to a program of our regular Anglo-Turkish repertoire (including *Pineapple Poll*), but for the finale of her *Çeşmebaşı*, Madam replaced the scarves waved by the dancers with French tricolors! Poor old Lifar had to be content to sit in the audience. We never did stage any of his ballets (Yüceil 2007: 131 cit.in Glasstone 1999: 42-43).

Glasstone's anecdote is peculiar because Serge Lifar was a colleague of de Valois in the *Ballets Russes*. She was aware of his artistic success at the *Paris Opera Ballet* and his innovations in ballet technique. Given this backdrop, de Valois made the most of the situation and eliminated Lifar from the scene of possible international influences.

Choreographic Negotiations: Selecting and Integrating Cultural Heritages of Turkey

How then did collaborations take place in the different parts of the ballet that represented Turkishness? For the choreography of the Anatolian folk dances in the ballet, de Valois had the help of her former students, particularly twin sisters Rezzan and Ümran Ürey from the Ankara State Ballet Company (Yüceil 2007: 172). For the devising of the Karagöz scene, dancer Erhan Ergüler gave the initial inspiration, and despite the oppositions of Metin And and other critics, the scene was constructed successfully. Here, I will discuss these components of the choreography of *Çeşmebaşı* that were rooted in the cultural heritages of Turkey.

a) Negotiating Folk Dances

During the 1960s in Turkey, folk dances gained popularity incomparable to that of previous decades through dissemination at state institutions, for instance in schools and amongst university students, and through the means of private institutions, national and international competitions, factory strikes, and more (Bayraktar 2019), as part of Turkey's multi-faceted and complex nation building process. This context helps to understand the debates concerning how to choreograph folk dances in *Çeşmebaşı*. The Ürey sisters were practitioners of traditional Anatolian dances and negotiated with de Valois about how dance moves should look while choreographing certain sections of the ballet. In an interview with Zeynep Günsür, Rezzan Ürey vividly recalled the making of the choreography:

> In 1965, Madame wanted to do a Turkish ballet, '*Fountainhead*'. She really liked us very much. Whatever we suggested she would eventually agree to [...] then the '*Fountainhead*' was realized. At times we fought. We used to say, 'not like that Madame, like this', [...] and she would have screamed 'no twins', we replied as 'no Madame'. She wanted a certain step in that way and we used to object to it, saying 'Madame you want it that way but this is [the] Black Sea region step and you have to add this shoulder movement here', she says 'no, I do not want that', 'no, you should want that', and in the end, she would have said 'ok then'. There was no 'no' to the twins (Yüceil 2007: 172).

This anecdote focuses on the making of one of the six sections of the ballet in which the Black Sea folk dance, *horon*, was used. According to Yüceil, "the guidance of twin sisters had helped de Valois in finding a balance between an outsider's view and an original approach with respect to the implementation of Turkish images and cultural codes" (2007: 172).[6] The negotiation of how to use folk dances within the ballet arguably took place between equally insistent partners who felt entitled over the choreography in different ways, which distinguishes it from other artistic negotiations in the making of *Çeşmebaşı*. De Valois justified the specialization of national ballets through folk dances primarily for practical reasons, such as marketing, easy reproduction, and branding. This was especially important for the international context of each national ballet production, as she explained:

> You will always find that your own choreographers, your own forward theatrical productions spring *from your own roots*; don't kill it off because it is loved outside your own country. You may get bored with it but other people are not bored with it (de Valois 2011: 20 – *emphasis* added).

Foreigners being interested in a nation's "roots" is the key factor for international branding, according to this formulation. What de Valois defines here is an attempt towards developing a style that is immediately noticeable as belonging to a certain nation for the people who are not associated with that nation. This inevitably also means that this noticeability is rooted in the expected norms of that nation as seen from outside: noticeability lies in clichés, stereotypes, and immediate connotations that are not always accurate for insiders. Concerning the use of folk dances in the context of national branding in ballet, de Valois writes:

> [National style is] something to do with character, style is something to do with the personalities that spring from the character of the country, style has a great deal to do with its national dances and people dance national danc-

6 Rezzan and Ümran Ürey were also used to develop a particular stage effect in the circus scene. They wore masks that hid their faces, and while they were dancing one of them would open her mask as the other one put it on and vice versa. This was to create an illusion through the identical faces of the sisters, as if the same performer was appearing in different parts of the stage at the same time (Baysal 2010: 101-102).

> es through themselves. They are *the invention of the native country* and so we go back to look at those things very carefully to realize what really our style springs from (de Valois 2011: 11 – *emphasis* added).

Therefore, "the invention of the native country" can only be possible through seeing oneself from outside, by noticing what is expected as the noticeability of a culture by foreigners. This also suggests that de Valois had almost a precise understanding of what she was doing when establishing "the canon" and bringing folk dances into the "national ballet" scene, first in the UK and then in Turkey.

Both de Valois and her unofficial Turkish dramaturg in *Çeşmebaşı*, Metin And, had similar opinions on how to utilize folk dances in ballet. And developed theories about how to set up a national ballet scene in his book *Turkish Village Dances* (1990 [1964]), published right before the production of *Çeşmebaşı*. And states that:

> [B]allet has close transactions with folk dances when we consider its few centuries long history. Within this transaction folk dances used ballet's poetic narrative style, its depth and technique, which made them more refined and polished; on the other hand, ballet become richer with folk dances. […] Therefore, after all these things, let's allow our ballet troupe, which progressed in such a short time, to use our folk dances on behalf of its own creations (1990 [1964]: 140).

And continues by discussing the potential methodologies to adapt folk dances onto the modern ballet stage:

> On this path, our villagers themselves can be quite helpful to guide us. Through dances that simulate a task or a work, such as Villager's Halay, Kürd's Daughter, Yannık, Terşi, Madımak; new dances can be created about the village life through examining how the villagers stylized those tasks. For this maybe the lyrics of a folk song that speaks about a certain topic can be used. Additionally, legends such as Köroğlu can be used, or wedding dances that emerged from certain events, or scenes such as abduction of a girl, [a man's] return from prison, or [a man's] return from the mandatory military service, [which all] come out of the village life (1990 [1964]: 142-143).

And meditates on how various folk dances or legends can be integrated for a distinctly Turkish ballet scene. What is perhaps interesting in And's collaboration with de Valois is that he tried out some of these methods on stage despite that he did not agree with everything about *Çeşmebaşı*. For example, And suggested the theme of the *pas de deux* section:

> I said, 'do you know what Aşık is?' to Madam. 'In Turkey there are saz poets, and they travel through hills and rivers with their saz in their hands. They have an ideal lover in their mind. But they never unite with that lover. Like Aşık Garip. Let's say that the man is a saz poet and the other is the lover in his imagination. Stage lights may be dimmed [in this section]'. [In the ballet] they come from two sides of the stage. One of them has the saz in his hand and the other comes in walking. [The male] puts down the saz. They do the *pas de deux*. Then they exit from different sides (Baysal 2010: 101-102).

The above quote reveals a multi-layered negotiation process with different insider-outsider positions of each collaborator. And influenced the creation of some of the scenes dramaturgically and conceptually in the way that he imagined in his writings from the same period. However, he could not shift de Valois' decision to use a Karagöz scene in a rural context.

Theatre scholar Özdemir Nutku wrote about the premier of *Çeşmebaşı* overall as a hopeful trial for establishing a Turkish ballet. In his newspaper column he noted that music and dance were not "organically" in dialogue with each other, yet the ballet succeeded in showing how "our folklore's rich dance steps can be merged with methodological dance" (Nutku 1965: para. 3). Perhaps, what is interesting and rather different in Özdemir Nutku's position from both And and de Valois is his proposal to also be selective about which methodological component of ballet should be put in dialogue with folk dances from Turkey, and why. Nutku writes:

> I think for a Turkish ballet to be born, folkloric elements should not be merged with classical steps of ballet, [but rather] with modern ballet which explores varieties of expression. Because our people's dances are more so dances of expression, and many of them dramatize an event [or a] story. In this manner, we can be positive that our people's dances' balance, movements and mimics would suit modern ballet [better] since it includes expressionist dances. To what extend can classical ballet, which prioritizes the use of dancer's body

> under certain limitations, be merged with our people's dances that are developed through using the body in versatility and with broad movements? I am in the opinion of examining the qualities of our people's dances, and not [trying to merge them with] classical ballet, [but rather] with expressionist dances (Nutku 1965: para. 7).

The expressionism that Nutku brings forward in this quote is in line with the memorial accounts of many British ballet teachers (such as Richard Glasstone, Ninette de Valois, Molly Lake and Travis Kemp) who particularly praised the expressivity of character dancers in Turkey (de Valois 1977; Benari 1990; Glasstone 2015). Indeed, the most praised scene in *Çeşmebaşı* was Karagöz and Hacivat's dance, which highlighted the expressivity of the character dancers.

b) Negotiating Karagöz

Dance scholar Zeynep Günsür notes in her research on Turkish ballet that many Turkish collaborators, especially Metin And, opposed the placement of Karagöz into *Çeşmebaşı* but they eventually accepted it due to their respect for her (Yüceil 2007: 172). The Karagöz scene borrowed the visual representation of the main characters of the Ottoman shadow puppet tradition. One way of seeing this scene is through its absences: without its verbal humor, political satire, and eroticism, what remained of the Karagöz tradition were its decontextualized visuals. On the other hand, this was the most praised scene of the ballet by all the contributors and critics. I find it worthy to dissect the process of making the Karagöz scene, as it was perhaps the most difficult of all the sharing processes throughout the development of *Çeşmebaşı*. While Turkish performance scholars, who were either involved in the production or critiqued it later, problematized the decontextualization of Karagöz; the one person who was closest to being a Karagöz puppeteer in the team, Erhan Ergüler, inspired de Valois to create this scene.

Figure 2: Village Beauty, Karagöz and Hacivat in Çeşmebaşı Ballet (Erhan Ergüler as Karagöz, Dudley Tomlinson as Hacivat) (Yüceil 2007: 282)

Hacivat was danced by the white South African dancer Dudley Tomlinson, who came to the Ankara State Ballet as a ballet teacher in 1964 and Karagöz was danced by Ergüler, the grandson of the famous Karagöz puppeteer Hayali Küçük Ali (Muhittin Sevilen) (Baysal 2010: 101). Moreover, Ergüler was one of the two (out of fifteen) grand children of Hayali Küçük Ali, who was trained as a Karagöz puppeteer by their grandfather (Sevilen 1969: 12). In his 2015 memoir, Glasstone fleshes out what exactly made de Valois include Karagöz shadow puppetry characters in her ballet:

> Erhan Ergüler, one of our finest character artists, told us that his grandfather was the last man[7] in Turkey still making these shadow puppets the traditional way, from camel gut – unlike cheap cardboard copies on sale as souvenirs

7 Hayali Küçük Ali was not the last or only person who made puppets in the traditional way but was the most famous shadow puppeteer of his generation. When this tradition was

> for tourists. Erhan took us along to a special performance of a shadow-puppet play, given by his grandfather, at the British Council. We were so captivated by this charming, ancient oriental version of our much cruder Punch and Judy shows, that we persuaded Erhan's grandfather to sell us a pair of his precious, authentic shadow puppets. They remained one of our most treasured reminders of our time in Turkey and, in particular, of the clever choreographic depiction of Dame Ninette's *Hacivat* and *Karagöz* duet in the first Turkish ballet, *Çeşme Başı* (Glasstone 2015: 91).

As the quote suggests, Ergüler was a unique person for the role of Karagöz because of his profound and organic knowledge of shadow puppetry and because he was a great character artist. And notes:

> Madame had some obsessions like *Karagöz* and *Hacivat*. She loved them very much and wanted to use them in the piece. Actually there is no place for *Karagöz* and *Hacivat* in the village, in a rural area, but out of respect for Madame, I also proposed to use them. Her ideas began to appear. I said, 'this is happening in a village but the people who come to the village are not suitable for a village; neither Karagöz and Hacivat, nor circus circles, nor the acrobats are suitable'. I told her these, 'but', she said, 'I want to put them in' (Yüceil 2007: 171–172).

The contents of this scene were documented in detail by Özdemir Nutku, who has done a great service to future researchers by writing the following passage:

> Especially the short trial that this great artist [de Valois] did with the figures of Karagöz and Hacivat is very successful. The artist did not make Karagöz and Hacivat figures [simply] walk on stage not to corrupt their two-dimensional visuals and the mechanics of [these shadow puppet figures' original] motions; [rather, she] made these two figures appear suddenly [and] moved them from the back to the front of the stage in a [profile-view] sideways manner through their reciprocal movements, [as these two figures do on the shadow screen facing each other in their profile views]. This [profile-view]

declining in the public sphere he made performances of Karagöz in State Radio and used People's Houses' publication and performance resources.

> sideways movement towards the front of the stage is not a walk; it is an enlargement [of the figures] without them losing their two-dimensionality. When at the end of the ballet the Karagöz-Hacivat duo's shadows are projected onto the background, this two-dimensional visual also approaches their traditional element (Nutku 1965: para. 6).

Despite the decontextualization of Karagöz, the choreography was praised by many, including the Turkish scholars who had been opposed to it, like Metin And or Özdemir Nutku, who also appreciated the choreographic proposal made in this scene in their later writings. For example, after the premier, And wrote, "we see [in *Çeşmebaşı*] what a great power Karagöz and Hacivat's articulated [angled] movements on two-dimensional surface gain through ballet" (Baysal 2010: 104). Similarly, Glasstone refers to this bit as a "choreographic gem" in his different writings (2015: 91, 200; 2012: 143; 1999: 41). The development of this scene is unique in the sense that many negotiations between different positionalities overlapped between locals and foreigners, theoreticians and practitioners, ballet masters and shadow puppeteers, where each agent chose a selective amount of their knowledge to share. In its reception, the scene became an ambiguous success, read by many critics as a proposal made to be further explored; however, Karagöz on the ballet stage remains an underexamined potential in Turkish ballet since this initial trial.

Hegemonic Landscapes of Sharing: Pressures and Gatekeeping

This section will discuss the negotiations around the creation of the elements of *Çeşmebaşı* that are regarded as integral to the medium of ballet. In the artistic negotiations around the representation of cultural heritages on the ballet stage, Turkish collaborators felt an entitlement to their positions; they could rightfully claim to know better than de Valois, even when they resigned to her opinions out of "respect." On the other hand, when the negotiations were about ballet, an element as integral as the music was not open to negotiation with the Turkish composer for example, as there seemed to be a mutual and unspoken belief in the superior position of de Valois by everyone involved in this artistic transaction. De Valois also benefitted from her own construction of the ballet field in Turkey in relation to the positive reception of *Çeşmebaşı*. This is why particular blind spots of balletomanes and ballet

professionals in 1960s Turkey are important to understand the history of the making of *Çeşmebaşı*. Therefore, this section looks into the negotiations around the music of the ballet, and the strategic construction of blind spots that influenced the reception of the work.

a) Music

De Valois' hegemonic position was revealed to the composer Ferit Tüzün, who was a young and successful musician at the time and part of the second generation of classical music composers emerging after the establishment of the early Republican generation of composers, even at their initial correspondence. Anatolian Suite was already a finished piece of work when Tüzün was contacted to use his work on the ballet stage. Tüzün gained significant success and acknowledgement through this composition prior to the *Çeşmebaşı* ballet. He wrote the initial version of *Anatolian Suite* for the 10th year anniversary contest of a bank, Yapı ve Kredi Bankası, in 1953-1954 and received the second prize. In 1958 the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Adolf Mennericb played the suite (Çokamay 2016: 86), and the Turkish Radio and the Television Institution recorded it when Hikmet Şimşek directed (Çokamay 2016: 87). Considering that these are major markers of success, especially among the emerging second generation of Turkish classical music composers of the Republic, one would expect Tüzün to have more pull at the artistic negotiation table with de Valois than he actually had. And was both a translator and moderator between de Valois and Tüzün during this uneven collaboration process. And provides details of this process:

> Madame wanted to do a Turkish ballet. What she understands from Turkish is that the content and the musical composition are to be Turkish. I, in order to help her, went to Ankara Radio Broadcasting Department and gathered all the music in the archives, so she could listen. Things like Adnan Saygun's First Symphony, Ferit Tüzün's *Anatolian Suite* … "That's it", she said, "this is what I've been looking for". We chose that one. […] *Anatolian Suite* of Ferit Tüzün as a musical composition is a masterpiece. […] I talked to Ferit Tüzün and put them in contact. I said, 'Ferit, look, Madame is asking for your *Anatolian Suite* to make a ballet, can we come to your home so you can play it for us? I mean she already listened to the music, but can you help us with the piano?', 'Of course', he said. That later became the most popular composition of Ferit

> Tüzün. We went; he sat in front of his piano; Madame is following the score and he is playing. She said – and I was translating – 'From here I need you to cut four measures', or 'We need to do this here'. Madame was asking for some changes to make it suitable for ballet. Ferit Tüzün was a great composer but he was super lazy. He is listening to Madame, and he is like 'Yeah, okay', but not inclined to work. We agreed, and Madame started working immediately. Madame is expecting from Ferit Tüzün the changes in the orchestration; the things that she wanted to cut out or add. Because Ferit Tüzün is lazy I confronted him and said, 'Look, a world-wide known choreographer wants to do something with your composition, she will make a ballet, a Turkish ballet'. We talked a little more and he said 'Okay' and made those things (Yüceil 2007: 171-172, 328-329).

What I find interesting in the above anecdote is the lack of an artistic negotiation; de Valois does not need to explain what she found worthy to choreograph about *Anatolian Suite* or why she needs these changes. Her unquestioned stance as the British ballet master in Turkey establishing the field of ballet in the country is quite visceral in this anecdote, as both Tüzün and And, out of respect, cannot question the legitimacy of these artistic decisions. In this sense this non-negotiable relationality is quite different than the previously explored dramaturgical and choreographic decisions about *Çeşmebaşı* that involved elements of Turkish culture, where debates concerned the ways in which such elements would be integrated on the ballet stage. And clearly notes that Tüzün was quite hesitant to make the changes imposed by de Valois, as demonstrated through his delaying of the working process. Tüzün's hesitancy, or his passive resistance is enigmatic, making his position open to interpretation. And dismisses Tüzün's hesitancy as mere "laziness," but arguably, as an acknowledged composer, Tüzün was perhaps not entirely on board with making these changes, especially since there was no negotiation space given to him on the changes to his own composition. In And's narrative, this was where he himself intervened and took the initiative to mediate the situation by talking to Tüzün to convince him that this was a great opportunity to showcase his work given that an international ballet choreographer was asking him to use his composition.

What was it about Tüzün's composition that made his work particularly suitable for ballet, especially for the kind of ballet that de Valois was trained in and wanted to recreate in Turkey? Tüzün was influenced by Igor Stravin-

sky (Şenel 2006: 35-36). I think, Tüzün's *Anatolian Suite*, with its playfulness underscored with a dark, mysterious, and uncanny side, might have connoted Stravinsky's compositions for de Valois. In addition, there were some sharp changes in tunes, suggesting references to Stravinsky. This choice arguably allowed de Valois to use visual and choreographic repertories of the *Ballets Russes* group, for which Stravinsky worked for a long time. Based on the above quote, it seems that de Valois did not explain what she found familiar in the piece that made it workable for ballet choreography to its composer. Despite this questionable work process, the positive reception of *Çeşmebaşı* ballet in Turkey was significantly due to the relatable composition of Ferit Tüzün. What de Valois chose to share and not share about her insights into the artistic process with her Turkish collaborators was structurally important to both the making and the reception of *Çeşmebaşı*.

b) Strategic Blind Spots: *Petrushka* and Others from the *Ballets Russes* Repertory

De Valois described *Çeşmebaşı* to her Turkish collaborators as a "Turkish ballet fantasy" (Nutku 1965: para. 3), but as "my bastard *Petrouchka*" (Glasstone 2012: 143) to her British colleagues. *Petrushka* (1911), the modern classic from the Sergei Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes* repertory (music by Igor Stravinsky, choreography by Michel Fokine), certainly inspired *Çeşmebaşı*, but as the above example with music demonstrates, this important reference was not shared or discussed with de Valois' Turkish collaborators. Moreover, *Petrushka* was not performed by the Turkish Ballet until 1975 (Deleon 1990: 191), which made the comparison with *Çeşmebaşı* difficult for Turkish intellectuals. This selective canon building presented *Çeşmebaşı* in a strategic way and helped its reception as an original and authentic ballet piece.

To analyze the structural similarities and differences between *Petrushka* and *Çeşmebaşı*, let me briefly summarize the former. *Petrushka* was defined as a "complete work of art," *Gesamkunswerk* in the Wagnerian sense, by Alexander Benois (Taruskin 1996: 661), who was the co-librettist, and stage and costume designer of the ballet. Benois was the major co-artist who created *Petrushka*, working side by side with Stravinsky. Richard Taruskin quotes from Benois: "[t]he success of Petrushka as a ballet is all the more remarkable in that it proves that by balletic means one can convey *dramatic* situations and sensations that are absolutely impossible in drama or opera" (Taruskin

1996: 661). This is a fundamentally different approach from the "pure dance" value claim of the medium that de Valois proposes (1953: 294). Therefore, unlike its inspiration, *Petrushka*, de Valois' *Çeşmebaşı* lacked a dramatic conflict as the driving source of the plot.

The setting of *Çeşmebaşı* at the Anatolian village square might also have been inspired from the setting of *Petrushka*, which was a nineteenth century Russian *masleniska* (Taruskin 1996: 672), a religious and folk holiday mainly celebrated through town festivals. This structural model perhaps inspired the use of Karagöz puppetry and circus players[8], which Metin And found irrelevant to Turkey's rural context. Traditional Russian puppets coming alive during the *masleniska* and getting out of their puppet booth to perform their tragic love triangle is the driving source of the plot in *Petrushka*. The example of *Petrushka* set a working frame for adapting puppet characters to ballet, which, arguably was a major inspiration for the creation of the Karagöz scene. Moreover, de Valois's inspiration for the two-dimensional movements of Karagöz and Hacivat came from the *Ballets Russes*' repertory. Two-dimensionality had been previously developed in ballets like Mikhail Fokine's orientalist *Cleopatra* (1909) or Vaslav Nijinsky's *L'Apres Midi d'un Faune* (1912), both of which de Valois knew very well from her formative years in the *Ballets Russes*.

De Valois was aware of the lack of knowledge in Turkey about the medium of ballet, which she struggled with personally on many fronts to challenge and change through her influence. With all due respect to her important efforts, how she selectively informed the Turkish performance scholars, musicians, and dancers not only influenced but truly shaped how her work was perceived. Through not mentioning her inspirations and selectively building a ballet canon, her work in *Çeşmebaşı* appeared as unique and original, making it difficult to frame and question the work within the norms of the medium itself. In this sense, critique of the choreography by Meriç Sümen, one of the primary dancers of the ballet, is important.

Even though the reception of the ballet was successful, Meriç Sümen, the lover of the Anatolian saz poet in the *pas de deux*, does not remember

8 This festive section is particularly interesting because Özdemir Nutku describes this element through ethnic village plays, whereas many other writers of the time described this scene as travelling circus players. Nutku writes that "[e]lements from village plays such as hoop players, traditional entertainment dancers, and acrobats were used in this performance, and found a new meaning through getting mixed with our folkloric dances and classical ballet steps." (Nutku, 1965: para. 6)

the choreography as satisfying for the dancers, unlike de Valois' other English ballets, such as *Checkmate*. Sümen recalls that it was fun for the audience to watch so many playful vignettes, but it was not a masterful dance piece. This is an important critique since, among all those commenting on the piece documented here, Sümen is the only one who has remarkable ballet literacy (Baysal 2010). Sümen also reveals another uneasiness: "[w]ith those spangled caps, with those *şalvar*s that become larger downwards, with those flounces that wave down our arms, how can we dance!" (Baysal 2010: 109) After noting that she never liked performing in Turkish peasant clothes, with *şalvar* and headcloth, Sümen mentions that she always wanted to see more contemporary forms on the Turkish Ballet stage (Baysal 2010: 108). This complaint is grounded in a major dilemma faced by many of the State Theatre-Ballet-Opera artists in the context of the fast modernization of Turkey. Many of these artists felt the dilemma of representing an appropriate Turkish identity on stage under the external bureaucratic pressure of state institutions, along with the internalized pressure of nation building in Turkey. The main dilemma was creating a modern presenting front, while not coming off as merely mimicking Western artistic styles. Perhaps, if the Turkish collaborators, including Sümen, had been better informed about the body of works that inspired de Valois, they could have oriented themselves more confidently in the ballet and contextualized *Çeşmebaşı* better within the international ballet repertoire. As such, I find Sümen's uneasiness with the costumes a bit ironic; considering that one of the most important pieces to mark the modernization of ballet, *Le Sacre du Printemps (Rite of Spring)*, composed by Stravinsky, choreographed by Nijinsky, and produced by *Ballets Russes* in 1913, had baggy costumes that almost completely covered the dancers.

Audience Reception

For the Turkish context, one can argue that the success of *Çeşmebaşı* was also bound to the choice of the setting, a fictional and romanticized Anatolian village. This iconic idea was widely reproduced and distributed domestically in all artistic mediums and represented the Republic of Turkey in its progressive state. Particularly prior to the mid-1940s, artists were encouraged by their fellows and bureaucrats to engage with themes of rural Anatolian

life. This is why, for example, Oytun Turfanda's 1977 ballet *Hürrem Sultan*,[9] was criticized by various columnists for romanticizing the Ottoman themes that Turkish modernization wanted to distance itself from, despite that the audience liked the work. It was also criticized by right-wing columnists for bringing the themes of an idealized Islamic-Ottoman past into the unsacred and secular fields of dance (Yüceil 2007: 183-184). However, when themes were derived from the romanticized image of the Anatolian village, an officially approved subject in arts, none of these ongoing ideological conflicts surfaced during or after the premier of the *Çeşmebaşı* ballet in 1965.

On its premier night, the audience was so moved that they continued the standing ovation until the entire second part of the ballet was re-performed. There were famous artists like Semih Sergen (who, at the time, was the husband of Serap [Sergen] Sezer; the soprano who sung the aria in the last part of the ballet) and singer Zeki Müren amongst the audience (Baysal 2010: 103). Özdemir Nutku wrote in his March 2nd, 1965, column, entitled "On the Way to National Turkish Ballet: *Çeşmebaşı*" in the newspaper *Milliyet*, that it was the first time in the history of the *Büyük Tiyatro* (Grand Theatre) in Ankara that a show needed to repeat its second act after an enthusiastic and long-lasting applause (Baysal 2010: 104). *Çeşmebaşı*'s İstanbul premier at the İstanbul State Opera during the same season was also very well received by the broad artistic community. Illustrator Bedri Koraman made an illustration of the *pas de deux* scene from *Çeşmebaşı* and noted under the drawing that "[s]uddenly you would hear the labour of the Turkish ballet, heralding the good news that it is soon to be born! Turkish dance steps and moves are reaching out of the stage!" (Koraman 1965) In the newspaper article Metin And wrote after the premier, he compared this ballet to Ahmet Kutsi Tecer's theatre play *Köşebaşı*,[10] which was considered as one of the pioneer plays for establishing a successful popular and national theatre style. The basis of And's comparison laid in the fact that both these works relied on creating the feeling of a setting, an atmosphere, rather than telling a coherent story (Baysal 2010: 104).

Çeşmebaşı set an example of a shared, an officially approved, representation of "Turkishness" on the contemporary stage beyond the ballet scene

9 A ballet based on the relationship between Hürrem Sultan (known to Western world as Roxelana) and the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent.

10 The term in Turkish means the "street corner" or "at the street corner".

(Başar 2021: 128-178). In the national realm, the piece found success amongst Turkish audiences because it provided them with a series of visual and musical references in an otherwise opaque medium, helping them to grasp and enjoy ballet. In the international realm, the piece became a signature ballet to represent "Turkishness" for decades to come, despite that the work itself was created under tensions of uneven artistic negotiations and intense bureaucratic control. Or, perhaps, because *Çeşmebaşı* was created under the colonial hegemony of the outsider and the bureaucratic control of the insider, it became the representation of "Turkishness" on the ballet stage. In the end, *Çeşmebaşı* succeeded in developing a style that is immediately noticeable as "Turkish", due to its unique creation process which involved the multifaceted landscapes of sharing knowledge, resources, and emotions.

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