

Ekrem Zeki Ün ‘At The Tomb Of Yunus’: Form Analysis And Interpretation Suggestions

Burcin Barut Dikicigiller¹

*Assistant Professor, Music Department,
Anadolu University, Eskisehir, Turkey

Abstract: The aim of this study is to contribute to the flute players in interpreting the work by examining the Turkish composer Ekrem Zeki Ün's work ‘At the Tomb of Yunus’, written for flute and piano, technically and musically. "At The Tomb of Yunus" is one of the Turkish works written on the basis of the most familiar and frequently performed Anatolian folk melodies of today's flute repertoire. In the study, it is aimed to create a source for today's flute players by conveying the information obtained from Ekrem Zeki Ün's life and musical career, detailed analysis and interpretation of the work.

Keywords: Ekrem Zeki Ün, At the Tomb of Yunus, Flute, Turkish Work, 20th Century

Introduction

Ekrem Zeki Ün has an important role in Turkish Music History both with his works and his contributions to the educational repertoire. The work titled as ‘At The Tomb of Yunus’, written by the composer for Flute and Piano, is among the most well-known and most interpreted works of today's Turkish flute repertoire. This work, which he wrote in 1933, is also known as the first printed work of the composer.

In the sources written about Ekrem Zeki Ün's composing career, it is said that his composition style is constantly developing. Influences of French impressionist composers are seen in his early works. With the increase in his interest in philosophy in the following years, he focused on the melodic and rhythmic structures of Anatolian folk music and reflected these in his works. It is possible to see both effects in ‘At The Tomb of Yunus’.

Ekrem Zeki Ün's Life

Turkish composer, conductor, violinist and educator Ekrem Zeki Ün was born on 23rd November 1910 in Istanbul and died on 24th March 1987 in Dublin. The composer, who started his first music education by taking violin courses from his father, was sent to Paris at the age of 14 with a state scholarship, and studied at the Ecole Normale de Musique for six years. He studied violin with Marcel Chailley, Jacques Thibaud and Line Talluel, harmony with Alexander Cellier and L. Laurant, and took composition lessons from Dandelot.

After he completed his education, he returned to Turkey, started to give lectures as a violin instructor at Ankara teacher's school, and also took part as a violinist in the Presidential Symphony Orchestra in Ankara. Continuing his music career in Istanbul afterward, the composer started to work as a violin and viola instructor at the Istanbul Municipality Conservatory in 1945. At the same time, he started to conduct the student orchestra here. Besides his composition and teaching, he also wrote books on music education.

Ekrem Zeki Ün's Pieces

The composer has 6 orchestras, 5 concertos, 19 chamber music, 9 voice and piano, 4 choirs, 11 pianos and 6 solo instruments. According to the information obtained from the sources written about the works of the composer, it is seen that he composed mostly pieces in the field of chamber music. Since the work titled ‘At The Tomb of Yunus’, which is the subject of this study, was written in the chamber music genre, only the chamber music pieces of the composer are listed here.

Chamber Music Pieces

“At the Tomb of Yunus”(Yunus'un Mezarında) for flute and piano, 1933.

“My Country” (Ülkem) for cello and piano, 1933.

“Andante” for solo violin and string quartet, 1933.

“String Quartet No: 2”, 1935.

“String Quartet No: 3”, 1937.

“Pieces for Two Violins”, 1951.

“Trio” for strings, 1952.

"Oboe Quartet", 1954.

"Duo" for two violins, 1959.

"Sonata" for violin and piano, 1963.

"Balkan Music (Balkan Havalari)" for string quartet, 1964.

"Oynak" for string quartet.

"Sonata" for oboe and piano, 1971.

"Söyleşi" for oboe and clarinet, 1977.

"Sonatina" for oboe and piano, 1973.

"Trio" for oboe, clarinet and piano, 1979.

"Sözsüz Türkü" for cello and piano, 1980.

"Disharmony" for two guitars, 1982.

"Duo" for violin and viola, 1985.

At The Tomb of Yunus (*Yunus'un Mezarında*) Form Analysis

The piece is written in binary form, which is one of the most common forms in folk music. It can be said that the piece, which sounds like B minor, was actually written in the dorian mode or, more accurately, in the Huseyni maqam specific to Anatolian folk music, due to its structure based on Anatolian folk melodies. Most of the Anatolian folk songs were written in this tune. The improvisational character expression, which is influential throughout the piece, supports this modal approach. However, it is possible to observe traditional harmony and its functions, especially in the episodes played with piano accompaniment. This modal texture is more effective in free improvisational episodes in which the flute is played solo. Although the flute part of the piece is quite simple but rich, the piano part is written in an extremely rich and technically challenging way (especially some episodes), which is reminiscent of the piano writing of the French impressionist composers.



Example 1. Dorian mode ve Huseyni maqam.

The piece begins with an impromptu character theme presented by the flute, named *ad libitum*, as a solo to support free expression. It is a folk song, and with its pastoral features, it resembles a hoarse elegy. This introduction part, which is one of the sections where the modal effects are heard most, is divided into four parts with big breaths (*fermata*).

After the introduction part, *Lento* begins, in which the piano accompanies the music. This is the first section of the piece where the theme is started to be processed with more traditional genre instruments. Although the theme is the same, the rhythmic movement in the piano accompaniment offers a liveliness as if the tempo is accelerated. The effective use of the piano, its rich harmonic structure and timbral richness also play an important role in this effect.

The first section of the piece consists of traditional structures. The theme is first presented in the form of a period, then this period is repeated with variations. These periods, both of which end in an authentic cadence, are connected with the natural (minor) chord of the fifth degree of the scale, rather than with the dominant tonal chord. Still, this is enough to give the effect of cadence. Unlike the first period, the chords of the second period attract attention with their much richer and mysterious (missing seventh chords are common) tone colors.

This is followed by the second theme, which we can call the second theme of the piece, which gives the effect of moving away from the main theme, even though there is no tonal change and it basically preserves the melodic features of the main theme. This theme also consisted of two periods, but the second period expanded to a large extent compared to the size of the piece. It is noteworthy that a real dominant chord was used for the first time in the first period (See Example 2). One reason for this period to expand with extensions is that it will end the first division.



Example 2. Dominant Chord

After the first division, although it starts with piano accompaniment, there is an episode that we can call the solo cadence, in which the piano is drawn later and which is not very long. This cadence, which sounds like an extension of the first division, also prepares the second division and the new tone (re) presented in the second division.

The second division starts with the freshness of the theme presented on the re axis. Although the whole division is made up of a single period, the phrases of this period are quite large. The first phrase (25–29) expands the phrase by extending the last figure after presenting the theme in a new tone for two measures. Here (in vivo) the striking and expressive arpeggios of the piano add instant excitement to the music and unexpectedly remain in the dominant seventh chord of the si sound. On the basis of this chord, the flute both continues to extend the phrase by presenting again the solo melody at the very beginning of the piece and prepares the return to the main tone that occurs in the next phrase

The second phrase is entirely a diversified re-presentation of the theme in the main tone. But in this phrase it is lengthened by the repetition of the last figure.

Ekrem Zeki Ün, At The Tomb of Yunus (*Yunus'un Mezarında*)

<i>Metres</i>	<i>Division</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Basic Tonal Structure</i>	<i>Design Symbol</i>
1–21	Introduction	Solo presentation of the theme	I	
2	First Division		I	A
2–5	Period 1:	It consists of a two-measure premise and a final phrase.	Vn – I	a
6–9	Period 2:	The diversified repetition of the first period, but its chords have changed and enriched.		a'
10–13	Period 3:	The second theme that gives the effect of a messenger from the first theme. It consists of a two-measure premise and a two-measure final.	I–III–I	b
14 – 21	Period 4:	The longest period of the first division by extensions. It consists of a five-measure premise and a three-measure final phrase.	I–V–I	b'
22–24	Cadence	As an extension of the first division and a bridge to the second division.	V	
25–35	Second Division		III–I	B
24–35	Period 5:	A period consisting of two big phrases. Although its harmonic structure may seem unusual, this is due to the impromptu character episodes of the phrases.	III	a
			I	a'

Interpretation Suggestions

Yunus'un Mezarında 'At The Tomb of Yunus' begins in a pianissimo nuance, with the first octave bass notes of the solo flute. In order to correctly interpret the initial theme heard as an elegy, a broad and highly distinct vibrato supported by a dark tone should be used. Because such episodes are frequently encountered in the piece, it is recommended to study and practice intonation and vibrato in order to accurately reflect the emotion that the composer wants to convey. In addition, in the piece, which is generally structured with long phrases, it is very important to determine the breath positions correctly and to breathe by fully using the diaphragm in these positions so that the phrases are not interrupted and the integrity of the expression is not disrupted. Considering the notation of the piece, it can be seen that the sound limits of the flute partition are not forced, and it is structured with 1st and 2nd Octave notes.

The upper limit for high-pitched sounds is the 3rd octave "c sharp" and the lower limit for the bass sounds is the 1st octave "a" note. For this reason, it can be said that the piece will not force the performer in terms of sound limits.



Example 3. Musical Episodes Flute Partition

When we look at the work in general, it is seen that it is not very challenging in terms of finger technique, except for a few episodes. However, it is very difficult to say this for the breathing technique. Phrases that need to be completed in single breath in order to acquire the modal expression can force the performer both in terms of breathing and intonation. Sonority exercises are recommended to overcome these difficulties. The episodes that are challenging for the finger technique are again the part of the strings that require agility, which we can call the cadence played by the flute without accompaniment. Cellular practice is recommended in order to play these episodes fluently and accurately. It will be useful to practice by dividing the episodes then combining them and speed them up with the metronome, starting slowly.

Example 4. Technical Episodes Flute Partition

Conclusion

Ekrem Zeki Ün's work *Yunus'un Mezarında* 'At The Tomb of Yunus', composed for flute and piano on the basis of Anatolian folk melodies, is among the pieces most widely performed by Turkish flute players. The piece is very enjoyable for both the performers and the listeners, as it reflects the modal formal features of Turkish music. It is possible to easily reach the records of the piece created by important Turkish flute virtuosos through today's communication networks.

The piece, which offers a wide spectrum to the performer in terms of performance, does not stick to a certain style. This approach is important to understand the rich and emancipating texture of Turkish music. It is observed that, this understanding dominates for most of the pieces written by the composer, apart from his early works.

Ekrem Zeki Ün's piece named *Yunus'un Mezarında* 'At The Tomb of Yunus', which is the subject of the research, has been examined in detail, and the technical analysis and interpretation suggestions of the work have been presented in detail. Thus, the recognition of the work not only by Turkish flute players but also among international flute players is one of the expected results of the study.

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