

Institution: University of Bristol		
Unit of Assessment: 33) Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies		
Title of case study: Advancing Transcultural Musical Practice, Composition and Understanding in Istanbul and Worldwide		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2015-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Michael Ellison	Professor of Composition Reader	01/08/2019 – present 01/02/2017 – 31/07/2019
Simon Jones	Reader	01/09/2010 – 14/11/2016
Argun Çakır	Professor of Performance Research Associate	01/01/1988 – 30/09/2020 05/04/2016 – 05/04/2020
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact

Bristol's *Beyond East and West* project has, for the first time, developed and promoted methodologies for integrating traditional Turkish *makam* music with Western classical and contemporary music, overcoming divergences in learning practices, tuning, and cultural understanding. Developed via an innovative and interactive workshop series over 2015 to 2020, these methodologies have inspired over 30 new musical works; changed the practices of musicians, composers and cultural programmers across Europe and internationally; raised awareness and understanding of undervalued Turkish music perspectives within Western institutions; and have inspired transcultural music initiatives involving underrepresented and disadvantaged groups in Turkey.

2. Underpinning research

Intercultural and *transcultural* have become catchwords within composition, performance, and festival curation in the early 21st century, representing sought after ideals for those aiming to bridge diverse musical traditions. One of the most difficult musico-cultural chasms to bridge has been that between near-East/Central Asian *makam* (*maqam*, *muqam* etc) and Western classical and contemporary music. Since 2015, the University of Bristol's Professor Michael Ellison, Professor Simon Jones, and Dr Argun Çakır have addressed this chasm via the ERC-funded *Beyond East and West* (BEW) project. Their research has addressed the following challenges via workshops held in Turkey and Germany:

Oral transmission of music versus written notation

BEW has addressed the divergence in learning practices between the Turkish tradition (focused on oral transmission, *meşk*), and Western tradition (focused on notation) through workshops aimed at taking musicians out of their comfort zones, consciously incorporating the 'other's' culture's learning process, making the task of learning music in a new way more navigable, and easing notation-based learners into oral practices and vice-versa. Specific tools developed include: 1) transcriptions of detailed ornamentation of *makam* music by Turkish players for Western players; 2) at other times, for the same musicians using *Meşk*, the direct oral transmission process of Turkish music applied to similar material; 3) addressing *makam* practitioners' inexperience with contemporary music notation by providing intense rhythmic drills and reading sessions led by Western musicians, as well as; 4) the reading and performance of highly detailed scores by contemporary composers, and; 5) encouraging composers to develop 'score' strategies, enabling structural interaction of strictly notated and loosely or non-notated

elements. These tools promote a more comprehensive, two-way approach to intercultural processes, enabling the creation of works for transcultural ensemble that are performable at increasingly high musical levels. Outputs included performances of new works in eight countries, the acclaimed transcultural opera, *Deniz Küstü* (premiered on Istanbul Music Festival in 2016) [3.1], as well as *Trommelsprachen* (*Languages of Drums*) which integrated Turkish, Karnatic, Kurdish, and Western instruments for *Acht Brücken* Festival, Cologne, 2017 [3.2].

Discrepancy in tuning systems

In order to address the discrepancy in tuning systems (i.e. equal temperament, with 12 notes per octave vs. non-tempered, 17-22 notes per octave), in 2018, Ellison invented a new notation system merging existing *makam* practices with contemporary (especially 'Spectral') Western composers' 'microtonal' notation, drawing from the best of Western and Turkish practices [3.5] in works such as *Derivations*. Additionally, in workshops held between May 2016 and March 2020, *makam*-derived tuning structures were practised extensively by ear to solidify their comprehension in the works in which they were notated.

Habitus and Hegemony

By bringing Turkish musical perspectives to the fore, BEW challenged the assumptions of those trained within the Western tradition. The project levelled structurally implicit hegemonies through workshops that promoted interactive and intensive exchange, leading to a more equal valuation, understanding, and mutual respect among participants. Post-workshop discussions and feedback sessions regularly examined culturally isolated assumptions in the context of learning, both to better understand the 'target' (unfamiliar) musical practice, as well as to reflect on the nature of one's own *habitus*. As new avenues of transmission opened; what began in some areas as a torturous exercise turned, over the course of BEW, into a joyful expansion of musical abilities, horizons, and perspectives, enriching all sides. This led to a new network for Transtraditional music in Istanbul (TTI), including participants ranging from children's choir to international music festival and art curators (IKSV).

In addition, BEW created the first international online source available for composition on Turkish Instruments, with twenty-five instruments and voice types covered, and a host of new insights into *makam* music itself [3.4]. The core of this open access site, which composers have used for writing new pieces since December 2018, is a practical instrumentation guide for Turkish instruments and voices, with chapters on aesthetic and technical issues, while including various composers' approaches to transcultural music making. Extensive video examples accompany text and notated examples. The model established here also led to the contracting of a forthcoming transcultural book series (Routledge) of global scope.

3. References to the research

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- 3.1 **Ellison M**, composition; **Jones S**, libretto and direction; Tanbay Z, choreography; NOHlab, video performance (2016), *Deniz Küstü - The Sea-Crossed Fisherman*, *Total Music Theatre in Four Scenes* (75') in English. https://research-information.bristol.ac.uk/files/170546359/Deniz_Ku_stu_Score_2018_PDF.pdf
 - 3.2 **Ellison M** (composition with Suresh V, Zohar F, Ahmet M, Thomé C, Sadovska M) (2017), *Trommelsprachen - Languages of Drums*; Neuhoff H, project concept and production, Acht Brücken Festival, Cologne [https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/explore/en/publications/trommelsprachen\(59480ce2-a413-4f76-af7d-6e956f375c6a\).html](https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/explore/en/publications/trommelsprachen(59480ce2-a413-4f76-af7d-6e956f375c6a).html)
 - 3.3 **Ellison M**, Türkmen O, Bayley A, Reigle R et al (2016-2019). *Beyond East and West: Developing and Documenting an Evolving Transcultural Musical Practice* website (online resources) <https://www.beyondeastandwest.org/media>
 - 3.4 **Ellison M** (2016), *Light into Shadows* and *Elif*, compositions for kemençe, ud, clarinet/bass clarinet and cello (12') [https://research-information.bristol.ac.uk/en/publications/light-into-shadows\(be253b21-15b9-45fb-b2c6-48c4d3a3ced3\).html](https://research-information.bristol.ac.uk/en/publications/light-into-shadows(be253b21-15b9-45fb-b2c6-48c4d3a3ced3).html)
 - 3.5 **Ellison M** (2018), *Derivations*, composition for viola and kemençe [introduces new notation]

[https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/explore/en/publications/derivations\(103466c7-0a51-4bd8-a38e-bda154052e2a\).html](https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/explore/en/publications/derivations(103466c7-0a51-4bd8-a38e-bda154052e2a).html)

Research Grants

- **Ellison M** (PI), **Jones S** (CI, University of Bristol), Bayley A (CI, Bath Spa University), Reigle R (CI, Istanbul Technical University), *Beyond East and West: Developing and Documenting an Evolving Transcultural Musical Practice*, ERC Horizon 2020 Consolidator Grant, 2015-2020, EUR2 million
- **Ellison M** (PI), Özgün S (CI), *Transtraditional Istanbul (TTI)*, AHRC-Istanbul Development Agency (UK/Turkey) Networking Grant, AH/V004131/1, May 2020-June 2021, GBP40,000

4. Details of the impact

The substantial activities, new works, commissions, and instrumentation resources of the University of Bristol's *Beyond East and West* (BEW) project have profoundly enriched contemporary music-making within Turkey as well as internationally, impacting three distinct groups: musicians, composers, and cultural programmers, while carrying broader transcultural and interdisciplinary impact worldwide.

Transforming Musicians' Practice and Teaching Methods

BEW developed transcultural music-making practice beyond its previous, nascent state, to a much higher level, by making a profound difference to performance practice itself. Western-trained musicians, even in Turkey, had never been given such tools for learning traditional *makam* music, its tunings, and highly complex ornamentation. Outsiders to *makam* practice face considerable difficulty penetrating the melodic intricacy, sound aesthetics, tuning, and patterns of *makam* language itself, understandings BEW deemed indispensable for establishing intercultural understanding, and therefore best practice. The learning processes of *makam* musicians usually include no provisions for reading and performing contemporary music scores; very few had developed skills for playing in polyphonic textures or working with conductors. Over five years, BEW trained *makam* musicians to achieve a new level of fluency in these areas [5.5]. Learning approximately a dozen ensemble works and two operas, working with composers directly, and hearing the techniques Western musicians use, engendered a new confidence in musicians [5.5, 5.5]. Transcription and Meşk (oral learning) methods also impacted musicians' daily music practice and their own teaching practices, with 100% of surveyed musicians saying they would use knowledge and skills gained in their own music practice [5.8].

Specific changes for European-trained musicians included better timbral production skills [5.5]; and writing solo flute pieces based on *makam* music to bring *makam*-based sounds into flute playing internationally. For *makam* musicians, BEW enabled one musician to test a new approach to teaching *makam* music, which he is now using in his own teaching in the conservatoire; the project and regular workshops helped to refine the use of transcriptions for teaching *makam* music and inspired a new transcription book [5.5].

Two BEW-sponsored conferences, *Creating Music Across Cultures* (2017, Istanbul) <https://www.beyondeastandwest.org/conference-creating-music> and *The Multivalent Voice in Transcultural Music-making* (2019, Istanbul) <https://nc16653.wixsite.com/themultivalentvoice> have helped pave the way to further impacts, including:

- Chinese Pipa collaboration with Pipa player Chung Yufeng, Hsieh Chieh-Ting (Taiwan) and Yingying Wen (China/Bristol) [5.2]
- Ulrich Mertin's transcultural Goethe Institute Project involving Indian and Turkish Musicians building on his experience in BEW
- IKSU *AltKat*: Transcultural Workshops for Youth, involving participants from disadvantaged backgrounds, beginning in May 2021, and led by Erdem Şimsek and Ulrich Mertin
- Transcultural Voice Research Group: group for teaching vocal repertoire and techniques across culture and genre, founded in 2019 by Aysegül Altıok-Juliana Snapper-Nina Eidsheim

Composers' Practices: BEW contributing to and inspiring over 30 new musical works

Before BEW, few composers in Turkey had incorporated *makam* instruments into contemporary music. Around 25 works had been composed since 1951 (Ilyasoglu, 2000). BEW stimulated a burst of new commissions and works involving *makam*, especially among the younger generation in Turkey, who, because of BEW, are now empowered to compose transtraditional pieces more freely. Since BEW began, at least 20 new works have been composed using *makam* instruments, by students in Ankara, Istanbul and Bristol. As one composer states: "It is important that this project has created a platform for debate...the biggest contribution the [BEW] project made for me was in changing the way I approached Turkish music instruments" [5.6]. A further 12 pieces were commissioned by the BEW project itself from Turkish and UK composers, including pieces performed on Guitar Plus, Germany (2017) and the BEW Commissioning Project: Makam²¹ – an ERC-supported programme produced by Bristol New Music festival and Ankara Music festival, presenting the first performances of seven new works by composers all utilising *makam* instruments and the BEW project's written and audiovisual resources [3.3] in their writing process (*ney*, *kemençe*, and *kanun*). Makam²¹ creates a transcultural palette for composers to include sounds rarely heard before in Western ensembles, presenting the leading compositional voices of Turkey and makam-influenced voices in the UK today.

Internationally, the BEW materials opened this area to composers with no prior transcultural experience [5.6]. Ellison composed a major new music-theatre work – *Deniz Küstü* (*The Sea-Crossed Fisherman*) [3.1], which premiered in June 2016 at Istanbul Music Festival, to acclaim: "Ellison's work has focused on the interaction between Western and Eastern music traditions, and it is striking how well he navigates the potentially disparate novel soundworlds here. Instruments break out of their traditional roles and mix to form novel sonorities, so that the sea music shimmers, a bed of strings below spangling oud and reedy ney" [5.4]. Video recordings of BEW instrumentalists, as well as the BEW online resources for *kanun*, *ney*, *bağlama*, and *kemençe* [3.3], were used by composers whilst creating these works [5.6]. One composer states the resources gave them "the information I needed to be able to comfortably write for the instrument [*kemençe*]" [5.6]. Since BEW began to provide composers with resources, more transcultural music is being composed with *makam* instruments now than at any previous time in Turkey. The Youth Choir for Peace in Istanbul, in collaboration with BEW and TTI, has joined in commissioning two new works by Turkish composers beginning October 2020. In 2017, Ellison's work [3.4] was performed across France by Istanbul BEW musicians and Ensemble Variances, whose founder stated: "it was a strong experience to witness through Michael Ellison's work how facing an Eastern strong tradition with live musicians-not only in its theoretical aspect-can open new perspectives for contemporary music. The BEW project seems to me of a great necessity...I believe that the future for 'art music' is in its capacity of making bridges, creating authentic dialogues between cultures and traditions" [5.7].

Influencing Cultural Programming

Ellison's compositions from BEW have been premiered and performed at leading festivals internationally, including: Istanbul Music Festival (2016) [3.1], Acht Brücken, Köln (2017) [3.2], Grenoble Music Festival, France (2016), and Detours de Babel, France (2016) [5.7]. The success of BEW's first opera *Deniz Küstü* [3.1] impacted the Istanbul Music Festival's programming decisions. The Festival Director describes Ellison's approach as "extraordinary...Both *Deniz Küstü* and *Binboğalar* projects [a 2022 project] have an important influence on our cultural programming as these sorts of projects enable also a wider understanding and appreciation of our country's social structure, regional traditions and cultural assets through music. We appreciate and share Hezarfen Ensemble's goal of integrating Turkish traditional instruments and voices into contemporary music" [5.1]. BEW has noticeably affected the level and viability of transcultural collaboration, resulting in an overall increase both in the number and the expected standards of such initiatives. The Director of ARTER, a non-profit arts space in Istanbul, comments "it has affected my choices of what to include in musical platforms at ARTER, complementing my level of awareness of the quality possible in such transcultural endeavours [...] it sets the standards for transcultural collaborations, especially in relation to new and contemporary music" [5.3]. Ellison's opera helped draw increasing audience numbers and a

wider demographic to this new musical phenomenon; his operas were the highlight of the Istanbul Music Festivals in 2012 and 2016, and represent landmark works seamlessly integrating Turkish makam instruments into a contemporary opera sound [5.3]. The Istanbul Music Festival Director notes how “*Deniz Küstü* had a very positive impact on the festival audience...[with] the valuable function of creating [an] understanding across cultures through music. Both Matinee to Soirée sessions were sold out and it received a huge critical acclaim nationally and internationally” [5.1].

Enhancing public understanding and inspiring new initiatives on transcultural music practice worldwide

BEW's performances in nine countries (Latvia, Germany, Serbia, Spain, France, UK, Italy, Turkey and India) between 2015 and 2020, together with presentations and keynotes at conferences in Germany, Spain, and the UK over 2017-2019, have enhanced public understanding of transcultural music practice, as well as public mutual understanding [5.1]. In 2016, three BEW researchers (Ellison, Bayley and Reigle) were invited to present at Bochum, Germany: *Platform/Ensemble for Transcultural New Music NRW*, speaking in a forum with cultural programmers and ensemble leaders from North-Rhine Westphalia on new directions for transcultural music-making.

Similarly, in its advocacy of deep research into *makam* music alongside new transcultural creation, BEW has influenced like-minded transcultural ensembles in Germany (Ensemble Extrakte), Uzbekistan (Omnibus Ensemble), and France (Ensemble Variances) [5.7]. *Deniz Küstü* was cited as a signature project of the Istanbul Music Festival at November Music in Holland in 2017 [5.1]. The reach of the project extended to East Asia when a dance/Nankuan arts scholar from Taiwan (Hsieh) travelled to Istanbul to observe BEW workshops, which he then applied to his own work with Chinese traditional music and art forms - “notation itself is never neutral and deserves more transcultural reflections...through the comparison and discussion of the different transcription systems which reflect different conceptions of music, it has become clearer how the different ideas of music from the different perspectives of musicians are able to be translated” [5.2]. Ensuing collaboration with Hsieh has resulted in a new work for pipa player Chung Yufeng (Taiwan) composed by Yingying Wen (China/Bristol) (premiere in Taipei postponed to 2021 due to Covid-19).

BEW will have ongoing impacts through both the *Transcultural Music* book series (2021) commissioned by Routledge and the *Transtraditional Istanbul* network (TTI) [5.9]. TTI brings together five key partners in Istanbul dedicated to the preservation and development of traditional Turkish musical cultures in danger of disappearing—namely *Bozlak* and women's throat songs from the *Teke* region—bringing this music into a contemporary, urban musical discourse. Based on BEW methodologies, TTI's workshops provide core activities that support development and empowerment of culturally underrepresented and disadvantaged groups within Istanbul and Turkey, youth, women and girls, to powerfully influence the musicians of tomorrow.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

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- 5.1 Istanbul Music Festival (October 2020) interview with Director
 - 5.2 Taiwan National Chengchi University (September 2020) interview with arts scholar
 - 5.3 ARTER, Istanbul (August 2020) interview with Director
 - 5.4 Opera Magazine (October 2016), review of *Deniz Küstü* (The Sea-Crossed Fisherman)
 - 5.5 Interviews with academic musicians in Turkey: 19 Mayıs University, violinist and lecturer (May 2020); Bilkent University, flautist and lecturer (May 2020); Turkish State Conservatory, kemençe player and lecturer (August 2020); Turkish State Conservatory, Turkish folk music practitioner (May 2020)
 - 5.6 Composers' feedback and interview (July 2020)
 - 5.7 Ensemble Variances, France (September 2020) interview with Director
 - 5.8 Survey results from workshop attendees (December 2019)
 - 5.9 Transtraditional Istanbul network website [Accessed 24 February 2021]
<https://nc16653.wixsite.com/ttiproject>