

**“A GARDEN WITH MELLOW FRUITS OF REFINEMENT”
MUSIC THEATRES AND CULTURAL POLITICS IN CAIRO AND ISTANBUL,
1867-1892**

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Abstract

This is a study about cultural politics in the late Ottoman Empire, exploiting archival sources and periodicals. Bringing the state back into discussions of cultural history, I focus on the relations between administrations and music theatres in Cairo and Istanbul in the period of 1867 and 1892. I understand music theatre as an urban laboratory of various interconnected political, social, and artistic experiments. Via music theatres, I explore the creation of culture as a competition where the state appears both as an object to gain and as a participant to win.

In an entangled comparison between Cairo and Istanbul, describing theatre buildings, the activities of Ottoman/Egyptian impresarios and artists, the creative process of performances and the state policies towards these activities, this study reconstructs music theatre as a discursive space where official and non-official visions were articulated and new consumption habits were tested. In case of theatre in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish, this was a constant negotiation that led to alternative institutionalization in Cairo, while it failed in Istanbul, yet both cities became markets for Italian operas and French operettas. Taking a critical stance towards the dominant historiographical role of the state, this study demonstrates the active agency of individuals in the social transformation of the late Ottoman Empire and Egypt.

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This work is based on the conviction that scholarship is a mutual conversation. However, I am the sole responsible for any mistakes. Finally, I hope my sister, my mother, and Anna will forgive me one day.

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Notes on Transliteration, Use of Titles, and Currency

I use the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES) standard for Arabic. Ottoman Turkish is transliterated according to the modern Turkish “simplified Ottoman” standard, indicating only long vowels, the *‘ayn* and the *hamza* but to avoid confusion, these are transcribed with the transliteration characters of the IJMES (for instance, *ā* instead of *â*). In some cases, I provide both the modern Turkish and the original Arabic lettering (like Ömer [‘Umar]) to show the written image of the word. Colloquial expressions are indicated separately, with *.

Those Arab/Turkish words, which are standardized in English, are used accordingly (Koran, not *Qur‘ān*).

Armenian booktitles and authors are given according to the use of the Library of the University of Oxford, in its OLIS electronic catalogue.

Time:

Muslim months and days are transcribed according to their Arabic original in the IJMES standard, even in the case of Ottoman Turkish documents, to avoid further complications (*Rajab* and not Ottoman/Modern Turkish *Receb/Raceb*; *jum‘a*, not *cuma*).

Names of persons and titles:

If a person used his/her name in Latin script consistently, I respected that practice (like Tchouhadjian or Fahmy), however I made exceptions with some Arabic names (I write Khayyāt, not Kaïat, or, not Khedive Ismaïl/Ismail but Khedive Ismā‘il). Otherwise, in the case of names from Egypt I transcribe them according to the IJMES in Modern Standard Arabic (even if the person was of Turkish origin, like Muḥammad Sharīf). In the case of Ottoman Turkish names, I transcribe them according to the today’s Turkish usage (regardless their Arabic or Persian origin, like Abdülhamid instead of ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd).

If a (military or administrative) title has English equivalent I used that one (like Pasha and not Pacha or Paşa).

Names of places:

If a name of a place exists today and has English equivalent, I used that one (like Cairo instead of *al-Qāhira* or *Miṣr*). If it has no English equivalent, I used the today’s standard national Turkish or Egyptian/Arabic one (like Gedikpaşa). If the name ceased to be in current usage, I used the 19th century most common form (like Pera), but always indicate the name of today (Pera/Beyoğlu).

Rules of using titles in footnotes:

In the case of some often-used titles, both books and periodicals, I omit the definite article, like Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, or *Journal des débats*.

Currency:

1 French franc = 3,849 piaster in Egypt in 1878 (cf. Table 5.3).

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Introduction

[Theatrical plays] contain a knowledge that counts among the causes of progress and means of civilization since these plays are mirrors of various matters, and help us become familiar with ideas. These plays are a school for the people to learn what cannot be learned from the [old] education. From these plays seriousness derives in the form of entertainment. Indeed, the plays – and I do not exaggerate their definition – are one of the most important channels to educate the minds. These are the kindest teachers and the best scholars; they are a garden with mellow fruits of refinement that can be harvested by anyone.¹

Begging for funding in May 1882, Sulaymān Qardāhī, the leader of the Arab Opera troupe, wrote these words to Maḥmūd Fahmī, Minister of Public Works in Egypt. He wanted to persuade the revolutionary °Urābī government that theatre is useful. The same year, in Istanbul, the Ottoman Ministry of Interior suggested that the Censorship Office should supervise every theatrical play and a theatre inspector should be appointed because “if the actors are not the masters of modesty and careful attention, the public mind and morals will be rotted.”² The Theatre Inspectorship (*Tiyatrolar Müfettişliği*) was thus established in 1883.³

This is a comparative study of cultural politics in the late Ottoman Empire, based on archival sources and periodicals. I focus on the relations between administrations and music theatres in Cairo and Istanbul, bringing the state back into discussions of late Ottoman cultural history, and understanding cultural politics as a competition. I offer an inquiry into the hitherto understudied relations between Istanbul and Cairo between 1867 and 1892, showing these two cities as parts of an interconnected cultural market in an entangled comparison.

¹ Undated letter, (sealed as 3 May 1882, transferred to the Council of Ministers 7 May 1882), from Sulaymān Qardāhī to the Ministry of Public Works, 4003-037847, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ. See the whole letter and its translation in Appendix 1.

² “oyuncular ādāb ve dikkat sāhibi olmazlar ise ezhān ve ahlāk-ı °umūmiyyayı bozacakları.” Letter dated 13 Dhu’l-Ḥijja 1299 (26 October 1882), Y. PRKA. 4/2, BOA. See Appendix 2.

³ Letter dated 21 Rajab 1300 (28 May 1883) in ZB. 13/75 and cf. Y.PRK.A. 4/2, BOA.

In this Introduction I clarify my usage of cultural politics and I argue for the importance of music theatres in the study of the late 19th century. Establishing the concepts, the specific historiography is also analysed as paradigms in a critical frame. Istanbul and Cairo are shown in a comparative framework in conceptualizing the institutionalization of music theatres in these capitals as competing proposals of culture.

Music Theatres and the State

In the late 19th century music theatres, especially the opera house, developed into an institution that became associated with the emerging modern “state,”⁴ a very problematic concept.⁵ Various organizations thought the construction of new opera houses important in capitals or rich cities. Opera houses (with state or municipal support) and music theatres/scenes (comedies, French theatres, private operas,

⁴ Opera and royal power were already fused in the 16th century inception of the opera, but it is in the 18th century that the Italian absolutist monarchies or oligarchic states became connected with opera houses and used them for state ceremonies. Martha Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 6. The 19th century transformation of the framework of governance also brought changes in the relations between rulers/states and opera houses. Ruth Bereson, *The Operatic State: Cultural Policy and the Opera House* (London: Routledge, 2002), 14. Hervé Lacombe, “The Machine and the State,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera*, ed. David Charlton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 21-42.

⁵ I am uneasy in using the word “state,” not only because the state, constitutional or not, was redefined world-wide this time, but because the documents I use reflect individual administrators’, rulers’ or municipalities’ intentions. Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State – A Sociological Introduction* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1978), 95-101. I experimented with “sovereignty,” then I tried to substitute the state with “administration,” but, at the end of the day, this word, the state, remained. Furthermore, Christopher Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), argued that the state power of the 19th century is a myth and especially its hegemonic rise was not a linear process, 252-254. The late Ottoman Empire as a state equally poses many questions, on its historiography see Rifa‘at ‘Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State – The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries – Second Edition* (Syracusa, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2005), especially his Afterword concerning the studies on the 19th century developments. Donald Quataert argued that in this period “the central Ottoman state structure became more powerful, more rational, more specialized.” Halil İnalcık, Donald Quataert, eds. *An Economic and Social history of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 762. This view on centralization remains a guiding line here while the efforts of the central administrations should not be accepted as outcomes of official policies since in many cases personal vanities, gossip, pride, and revenge started new “state” initiatives. This will be further explored in Chapter 1.

operetta theatres, cafés chantants, politeamas, etc) made up diverse entertainment networks in cities all over the world.⁶ All types of music theatres figured in 19th century city transformations world-wide as elements of what Peter Hall called the “pleasure principle”: a conception of the city as a location of recreation and entertainment.⁷

In this urban context opera houses and other music theatres became predominantly public locations,⁸ and anyone who had the money and the interest could, in theory, attend them. The mechanisms of the late 19th century public sphere are debated (as a late stage of the Habermasian *Öffentlichkeit*),⁹ and since music theatres “transcend the line between state and public,”¹⁰ the sovereign often used them for representative occasions. The genre of opera and its building were convenient public stages for projecting political agendas by various individuals and organizations, too. The buildings themselves carried political significance. Erecting an opera house in a city could be seen as a political statement.

⁶ Cf. the transformation of (French) grand opera in *The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera*, ed. David Charlton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), part IV with the examples of Germany, Italy, Russia, Britain, Americas (including Brazil and Argentina), 321-422. Bereson, *The Operatic State*, 170-177 (with mistakes concerning Ottoman territories). For Europe: Sven Oliver Müller, Philipp Ther, Jutta Toelle, Gesa zur Nieden, eds. *Die Oper im Wandel der Gesellschaft – Kulturtransfers und Netzwerke des Musiktheaters in Europa* (Vienna: Böhlau, Oldenburg, 2010).

⁷ Hall coined this term to describe Vienna but I take it as a general urban feature of 19th century capitals. Peter Hall, *Cities in Civilization* (London: Phoenix Giant, 1998), 159-200.

⁸ There are some famous emancipation cases of opera houses, like the Bolshoi’s opening to the public in 1880 in Moscow. Bereson, *The Operatic State*, 124. Only a few mostly aristocratic or monarchical theatre remained closed to the general public, like the 1889 Dolmabahçe palace theatre of Sultan Abdülhamid II, or scenes in countryside castles, like in Habsburg Hungary. But I do not consider these as parts of the urban setting of theatres, rather as exceptions in this period.

⁹ Already Habermas thought that the public sphere (“Öffentlichkeit”), his ideal 18th century European phenomenon, is weakened by the late 19th century because the public as a “critically debating entity” of the bourgeois/aristocrat world of letters is weakened by the introduction of mass media and the participation of uneducated masses. Jürgen Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 162-163.

¹⁰ Philipp Ther, *Exposé der Konferenz: Kulturpolitik und Theater in europäischen Imperien. Der „Kulturstaat Österreich“ im internationalen Vergleich* (19/20.11.2010, Universität Wien, Institut für osteuropäische Geschichte), 8 (non-printed material).

Theatre in general as a location of expression in public¹¹ belonged to a set of social phenomena associated with the public sphere like the press, literature, public art (museums), and education whose financial support and political control posed challenges for 19th century secular governments. The expansion of the centralised state in Europe included the abolishment of previous religious or aristocratic patronage and undermined their authority, which in many cases had already been done by absolutist regimes.¹² The public sphere was no longer the location of debate by educated European aristocrats or bourgeois society but a worldwide scene of political struggle and propaganda in which the states increasingly carved out their share.

Today, state or global initiatives in these areas are called “cultural policies.”¹³ However, in the 19th century these affairs of “culture” were only gradually defined. Thus instead of policies (meaning subsequent, conscious central initiatives), it is more appropriate to employ the term “cultural politics.” I would like to clarify my use of this word junction of “culture” and “politics.”¹⁴

¹¹ Habermas based the strength of the public sphere on the free market, a bourgeois legal framework, and the emergence of the constitutional state. In his argumentation, the functions of the public sphere were included in the new constitutions (rights to debate, rights of individual freedom, and rights of property). Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere*, 79-83. Based on this, I conceptualize theatres as locations where citizens could exercise their right of debate and free expression.

¹² Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State*, 90-92.

¹³ Mario D’Angelo and Paul Vespérini, *Cultural Policies in Europe: A Comparative Approach* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 1998), 19 provide five criteria of cultural policy (not politics!), based on reports of different EU-members in 1998: explicit (1) and implicit (2) objectives of central government in connection with players in the cultural sphere, action (3) regarding the provision of culture, resources (4) allocated: financial, administrative, human, creative, structural, and planning (4) preparing of government involvement in cultural activities.

¹⁴ Cultural politics figures in the titles of many books and articles, ranging from “Bioethics and the Global Moral Economy: The Cultural Politics of Human Embryonic Stem Cell Science” to *The Cultural Politics of the Paralympic Movement*. There are surveys of how “culture” and “state” together shaped identities and loyalties, cf. for instance, George Lachmann Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses – Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991 [1975]).

Cultural Politics: Introducing Cultural Brokers

Culture (*die Kultur* in German, *la culture* in French, but usually included in *la civilisation*)¹⁵ played a crucial role in building national, imperial or imperial national loyalties and identities in the 19th century.¹⁶ Culture/civilization was related to the public sphere embracing education, belief in progress, order, literature and theatre, the fine arts, knowledge of public rituals, good clothing, and a sense of the past.¹⁷ These formulations of “culture” and “civilisation” were educative and embodied an often racial and elitist hierarchy of power in empires and nation states.¹⁸ In this study, based on the critique of Aziz al-Azmeh, I use “culture” as a concept from a particular

¹⁵ In 19th century French, *la culture* had mostly an agricultural meaning. Philippe Bénéton, *Histoire de mots: culture et civilisation* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques 1975), cf. for a 19th century definition Ernst, *Dictionnaire universel d'idées*, 3 vols. (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1877) s.v. “culture” 1:282.

¹⁶ Cf. the forthcoming publication of Philipp Ther, ed. *Die Geschichte der Kulturpolitik. Die kontinentalen Imperien in Europa im Vergleich* (Vienna: Oldenburg Verlag, 2011). Master texts about the role of culture in nationalism are Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981) and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities – Revised Edition* (London: Verso Books, 1991). Studies deal with state and “art” in general, and in particular in the 19th century in imperial/national “cultures” of France, German Kaiserreich, and the British Empire, mostly studying the ways these states/rulers used different kinds of artistic expressions to *represent* themselves, like Patricia Mainardi, *Art and politics of the Second Empire: the universal expositions of 1855 and 1867* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989) or specifically for the role of culture in 19th national identity building (Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses*). However, the exact state involvement and the self-definition of the state via the support of cultural institutions are rarely investigated.

¹⁷ To quote a French definition of “civilisation”: “La civilisation est la marche vers le progrès, vers la vertu et tous les développements des meilleures facultés de l’homme; c’est la science des gouvernements, de l’ordre, de l’administration, des richesses publiques et privées, l’élévation et la pureté des mœurs, l’éducation et l’instruction, toutes choses qui conduisent au confortable, à l’aisance, à la richesse et au luxe.” Ernst, *Dictionnaire universel d'idées*, “civilisation,” 1:222-224. In English, E.B. Tylor used “culture” and “civilization” synonymously: “culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole, which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom.” E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, art and custom*, 2 vols. (London: Murray, 1871), 2:1.

¹⁸ Taking the example of 19th century French, *la civilisation* meant a movement (a progress) and an ideal (perfection), a universal concept of human condition as opposed to nature. It could contain a moral, a religious (Catholic) aspect, and also a discursive constellation what some call “conquering civilisation” (*la civilisation conquérante*). This homogenizing concept was regarded as a monopoly of France (or Western Europe) that enabled it (or made its duty) the *mission civilisatrice*. This was the most important intellectual argument of colonisation: civilisation as a *duty*. Bénéton, *Histoire de mots: culture et civilisation*, 44-52. Edmond Marc Lipiansky, *L'identité française – représentations, mythes, idéologies* (La-Garonne-Colombes: Éditions de l’Espace Européen, 1991), 135-136. Projecting these to distant communities resulted, as Terry Eagleton summed up, that “culture, in short, is other people.” Terry Eagleton, “Versions of Culture,” in his *The Idea of Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 1-31, here: 26.

historical period when public discourses increasingly defined certain institutions of “culture” and “civilization” as the infrastructure of essentialist identities, as “nature.”¹⁹

Politics, to put it bluntly, is a process by which a decision is reached concerning common affairs, embodied in various types of discourses, not necessarily by the state but in connection with sovereignty.²⁰ Its distinct element is *competition*, since politics is a virtual space in which interests and proposals submitted either to the sovereign or to any type of popular judgement. Usually these proposals and interests are in conflict with each other because these can be only realized on the cost of the other.

As “culture/civilization” worldwide in the late 19th century was increasingly redefined with the emergence of the modern state, the centralised administrations took responsibility for more and more fields of human life, by the intention of politicians or at the demand of citizens. Some branches of “culture,” like education, counted among the state responsibilities early on.²¹ Most art institutions, however, were belatedly and reluctantly included in state budgets.²²

¹⁹ Aziz Al-Azmeh, “Culturalism, Grand Narrative of Capitalism Exultant,” in his *Islams and Modernities – Second Edition* (London: Verso Books, 1996), 17-40. In the creation nation-states, the internalization of “culture” produced a phenomenon called “cultural nationalism” or in empires “cultural imperialism.” In any case, “culture” as a set of values and pasts to which a person could connect itself or is connected by states or powers seems to become a substitute to the loyalty towards the ruler as the embodiment of divine providence and earthly hierarchy. Furthermore, I am fully aware that culture as a useful means in building identities is also a catchword for European Union politics, cf. Anna-Marie Autissier, *L'Europe de la culture* (Paris: Babel-Maison des Culture du Monde, 2005) or the idea of European “cultural citizenship” in Nick Stevenson, ed. *Culture and Citizenship* (London: Sage Publications, 2001).

²⁰ The definition of politics is so diverse that I decided to provide my own, which is, of course, built on general definitions, like David Miller et al, *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), s.v. “politics,” 390-391.

²¹ Paul Gerbod, “Relations with authority,” in *History of the University in Europe*, 4 vols., ed. Walter Rüegg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3:83-100.

²² Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 271-273, argues that these increased state responsibilities were due to “wealthy and powerful citizens who ... demanded something back in return” for their taxes. In terms of “art,” although the first cultural (rather *Kultus*) ministry in Prussia was established

Cultural politics is a set of relations, initiatives, projects, and discourses of administrations, organizations, and individuals towards practices embodying “culture,” here exemplified by music theatres, in a competition. While this definition is close to Ruth Bereson’s definition of the cultural policy of the operatic state as relations between opera and “power brokers,”²³ and thus cultural politics is used here to reintroduce the state into discussions of cultural history,²⁴ music theatre has also been an enterprise into which individuals invested capital in order to make profit.²⁵ Furthermore, by “administrations” I mean not only ministerial offices, but also the city municipalities that played an enormous role in influencing urban life worldwide.²⁶ Often rulers entertained difficult relations with their administrations; thus in some cases a “state” and its ruler should be acknowledged as separate bodies, introducing the ruler as an independent, fifth agent.

These five cultural brokers (ruler, state, municipality, organization, individuals), define, decide or negotiate what is the culture of a state and a people,

already in 1817, the state patronage of artistic activities, including music theatres, was a long process while a special state department was formed to regularize and subsidize them. Even the Prussian ministry, “Ministerium der geistlichen, Unterrichts- und Medizinal-Angelagenheiten” in 1817 (“Kultusministerium”), regulated/supervised religious, educational and medical activities and “art” joined only later. *Preussen als Kulturstaat* (Berlin: Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften 2007, 6-7). For the finances of German fine arts: Wilfrid Feldenkirchen, “Staatliche Kunstfinanzierung in 19. Jahrhundert,” in *Kunstpolitik und Kunstförderung im Kaiserreich*, eds. Ekkehard Mai et al (Berlin: Gabr. Mann Verlag, 1982), 35-54. In France, music education and music theatre, painting, ballet, was under royal patronage, just like in England or the Habsburg Empire for a certain extent. The switch from royal patronage to state responsibility or to private capital took place largely during the 19th century, a manifold process, of which the details should be the subject of other studies.

²³ Bereson, *The operatic state*, 3.

²⁴ First called upon by Terry Eagleton in his “The Flight to the Real,” in *Cultural Politics in the Fin de siècle*, eds. Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 11-21, here: 12.

²⁵ In general, Daniel Snowman, *The Gilded Stage – A Social History of Opera* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009), 121-129. On the business aspect of music theatre see more in Part II.

²⁶ For Ottoman and Arab urban governance and municipal politics, I will give a detailed analysis in Part II. As a comparison: Ralf Roth and Robert Beachy, eds. *Who Ran the Cities? City Elites and Urban Power Structures in Europe and North America, 1750-1940* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

imagined or not.²⁷ The state, its ruler, or the municipality by granting (or denying) financial support and by using certain institutions, intentionally or not, choose genres, models, institutions, and a taste that were often very far from what their audiences liked and enjoyed. On the other hand, private individuals and organizations considered various visions contributing to, opposing, or supplementing this officially supported culture. However, the competition for state resources did not mean that the state was not among the agents who competed for the audience. Cultural politics, ultimately, is also the negotiation about these competing visions.

Posing the Question

In the 19th century, music theatres were in the forefront of these negotiations about culture. Their significance, especially of the opera house, can be measured by how these were imagined by the people or supported by various administrations.

Late 19th century empires built opera houses not only for imperial representations but also as “compensation” to the citizens in return for their tax or labour. This is how Charles Garnier, architect of the Paris (Garnier) Opera, explained the necessity of state involvement in building opera houses in 1871.²⁸ In Britain, especially operas were used in imperial representations of the Victorian monarchy, and Mapleson’s “Grand National Opera-House” started to be built in London in 1875 using state money.²⁹

²⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities – Revised Edition*, 33. Choosing certain elements of art to be the official culture of the state certainly has much to do with the “imagined linkages,” and other means of securing a national identity. However, in my period supporting culture is not only about national but also imperial loyalties, etc, in an international competition.

²⁸ Charles Garnier, *Le Théâtre* (Paris: Hachette et Cie, 1871), 15-16.

²⁹ Bereson, *The operatic state*, 81-82.

In German cities, music theatres served as locations for the experience of the German *Kulturnation*.³⁰ The Hofoper in Vienna was leased but impresarios were subsidized in the first half of the 19th century, and the new Hofoper in the Ring (1869) was built again with state money.³¹ In the Brazilian Empire, the Emperor financed the principal theatres in Rio de Janeiro.³² The Russian court in Saint Petersburg administered the chief opera house, the Mariinsky, regarded generally as the property of the Czar, with nine other imperial theatres.³³

In the Habsburg provinces, music theatres were considered important in the visualization of national sentiments.³⁴ In Prague, a municipal Committee built the National Theatre on private funds; the public cheer over its foundation in 1868 expressed the discontent over Austro-Hungarian redistribution of power in 1867.³⁵ In Budapest, the emphatically *Royal Opera House* was built by private donations with state contributions via a municipal committee, and opened in 1884.³⁶ In Zagreb, the National Theatre was also a popular initiative via a municipal council, an opera house in fact.³⁷

³⁰ Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses*, 100-126; Philipp Ther, *In der Mitte der Gesellschaft – Operntheater in Zentraleuropa, 1815-1914* (Vienna: Oldenburg, 2006), 48. Cf. for the concept of *Kulturnation: Preussen als Kulturstaat*, 6-7; and Bénétou, *Histoire de mots: culture et civilisation*, 54-56. About the role of being a *Kulturnation* in German cultural diplomacy, Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, *Sound Diplomacy – Music and Emotions in Transatlantic Relations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 12. A typology of German theatres: Hoftheater (court theatre), Adelstheater (more or less private nobles' theatres), and Bürgerliches Theater (bourgeois theatre). Ther, *In der Mitte der Gesellschaft*, 70-95.

³¹ *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "Vienna," 19:724.

³² *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "Brazil," 3:222.

³³ Murray Frame, *The St. Petersburg Imperial Theatres – Stage and State in Revolutionary Russia, 1900-1920* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Co., Inc., 2000), 19-26.

³⁴ Ther, *In der Mitte der Gesellschaft*, 48-54; Snowman, *The Gilded Stage*, 187-201 (Snowman's conception of Central and Eastern Europe includes Germany and Russia).

³⁵ John Tyrrell, *Czech Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 38-41.

³⁶ *A Magyar Királyi Operaház, 1884-1909* (Budapest: Markovits és Barai, 1909), 4-6.

³⁷ Cf. the website of the Zagreb National Theatre:

http://www.hnk.hr/en/about_cnt/about_the_building/about_the_building (accessed July 11, 2011).

As a third category, not only were opera houses for imperial or national (or mixed) representation built in capitals, but some of the late 19th century theatres embodied the wealth of haute bourgeoisie, especially in the United States, in a conscious competition with Europe. In New York, the Metropolitan Opera House, expressing a new powerful class, and based on its money, was opened in 1883.³⁸ In Los Angeles, the Grand Opera House (Child's Opera House), was a theatre of private ownership, that of Ozro W. Childs.³⁹ All these data establish that music theatres, especially opera houses, were important elements in visualizing (state) power in the late 19th century worldwide. For a comparative chart of the opera houses, see Table 0.

³⁸ Bereson, *The Operatic State*, 132-135.

³⁹ Kenneth H. Marcus, *Musical Metropolis – Los Angeles and the Creation of a Music Culture* (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 17, n19.

Table 0.**List of 19th Century Public Opera Houses**

Various dates and ownerships are given, taking into consideration earlier establishments, changing ownerships, and collaborative projects. “Private” here means *private* ownership of *public* theatres. The data come from various sources; see the footnotes. Dates are given as inauguration premieres, *not* the beginning of construction.

City	Inauguration	Owner/maintenance
Milan	1776 (1589)	City/Queen
Venice	1789 (1637)	City/Aristocracy/Private
Brussels	1819 (since 1700)	King/Napoleon
Moscow	1825/56 (1776)	Tsar
Hamburg	1827 (1678)	City/Bourgeoisie
Warsaw	1833 (1774)	King
Dresden	1841 (17th century)	City/King
Berlin	1844 (1742)	King
London	1847/1858/1875 (1732)	King/Queen
Madrid	1850	King
Istanbul	1853/1880/1959/1970	Private/Municipal/State (1853-1870, Naum, private; used also by the Sultans)
St. Petersburg	1860 (1700s)	Tsar
Vienna	1869 (1700s)	City/Emperor
Cairo	1869	Khedive/after 1880 State
Paris	1875 (Garnier Opera) (Académie Royale de Music, 1669, etc)	Emperor/State
Prague	1881 (started in 1868)	City/ Bourgeoisie
New York	1883 (1853)	Bourgeoisie/City
Budapest	1884 (started in 1871)	City/ Emperor (King)
Los Angeles	1884	Private
Odessa	1887 (1810)	Private/City
Zagreb	1895 (started in 1880s)	City/Emperor
Stockholm	1898 (1782)	King
San Francisco	1932	City
Athens	1939	State/Private
Ankara	1948	State

Although the late 19th century cultural transformation of the Ottoman Empire and its Arab provinces is relatively well researched, including its representative images,⁴⁰ music theatres are omitted or mentioned only *in passim* in scholarly works,⁴¹ and often even missed in global surveys of theatres.⁴² Filling this gap, I inquire into the various ways the governing authorities dealt with music theatres in the late Ottoman Empire. Was there a cultural politics in the late Ottoman Empire? What was the position of the state in the cultural competition? What kind of proposals were offered, denied, and negotiated? Did the Empire's reforms include the subsidy of opera houses as new means of visualization of power? What kinds of solutions were invented to cope with the public character of these buildings? How were the Ottoman urban audiences included in public discourses and in state initiatives? How were Ottoman music theatres incorporated into the worldwide networks of culture as centres of cultural production?

⁴⁰ Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan – Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire from the Middle Ages until the beginning of the twentieth century* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2000); Fatma Müge Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient – Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth Century World's Fairs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains - ideology and the legitimation of power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998); etc; cf. cultural historiography of Arab provinces is abundant from Albert Hourani's classic, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (1962; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) to Nadia Al-Bagdadi, *Vorgestellte Öffentlichkeit* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2010).

⁴¹ Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); P.J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt* (1969; repr., London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991); Inalcık and Quataert, eds, *An economic and social history of the Ottoman Empire*; Robert Mantran, *Histoire de l'Empire Ottoman* ([Paris]: Fayard, 1989), Yūnān Labīb Rizq, ed. *al-Marjī' fī ta'rīkh Miṣr al-ḥadīth wa'l-mu'āṣir* (Cairo: Al-Majlis al-Ālā li'l-Thaqāfa, 2009), etc. For a comprehensive discussion of Egyptian historians, cf. Yoav di Capua, "The Thought and Practice of Modern Egyptian Historiography, 1890-1970," 2 vols., PhD-diss., Princeton, 2004.

⁴² Even the French theatres of the Ottoman Empire are mentioned only *in passim* in Jean-Claude Yon, *Le théâtre français à l'étranger au XIXe siècle – Histoire d'une suprématie culturelle* (Paris: Nouveau Monde editions, 2008).

Cairo and Istanbul: Entangled Comparison and the State(s)

I chose the imperial seat, Istanbul (at this time called administratively *Dersa^cādet ve Bilād-ı Selāse* in Ottoman Turkish or Constantinople in French) and a semi-independent capital, Cairo (rather called *Miṣr* or *al-Mahrūsa* in Arabic), to answer these questions. These two great centres defined the late 19th century discourses of “culture” in the context of Alexandria, Beirut, Izmir, etc, and provided the models and mirrors for other Ottoman and Ottoman Arab cities, and in many cases, for European cities, too.⁴³

For students of early 19th century Egypt, my comparison might be acceptable as an entangled history of Cairo and Istanbul, since the two cities were connected not only via their elites but also via education, money, war, and politics.⁴⁴ However, the later decades are usually framed in a colonial narrative,⁴⁵ due to informal French cultural imperialism⁴⁶ and formal British occupation from 1882. In the narratives of these indeed very strong European presences, with the usual focus on emerging Arab

⁴³ Historiography on provincial Ottoman Arab capitals and Istanbul (centre-periphery relations, etc) will be given in detail in Part I and II.

⁴⁴ Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991); Peter Gran, *Islamic roots of capitalism: Egypt, 1760-1840* (1979; repr., Syracuse, N. Y.: University of Syracuse Press, 1998); Ehud Toledano, *State and Society in mid-Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men. Mehmed Ali, his army, and the making of Modern Egypt* (1997; repr., Cairo: AUC, 2002); Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu, Şālih Sa^cdāwī Şālih, *Al-Thaqāfa al-Turkiyya fī Miṣr* (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2003); Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu, *Mısır'da Türkler ve Kültürel Mirasları* (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2006), 177-249.

⁴⁵ I believe the eminent work in this regard is Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (1989; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) which, in fact, reproduces the view embodied already in Lord Cromer's book about his imperialism in Egypt: Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt* (several editions since 1907), cf. Part I.

⁴⁶ David Todd recently discussed economic informal imperialism via France could keep its status as the second strongest economy in Europe. David Todd, “A French Imperial Meridian,” *Past and Present* (2011): 155-186. I take for granted that French works of art became fashionable in the late Ottoman Empire because not only an economic but an informal cultural imperialism worked in the 19th century, much in the same way as US-culture today.

and Turkish nationalism, the Ottoman framework often vanishes as if the previous 400 years never existed.⁴⁷

My comparison, which retains the method of entangled history,⁴⁸ but tries to keep the two variables of comparison as individual units,⁴⁹ is an attempt to regain a missing part of the late Ottoman/Egyptian years. Instead of a Cairo/Istanbul vs. Paris/London comparison, which constantly reproduces the East-West divide, this entangled comparison of Cairo and Istanbul helps to dissolve the limits of renewed nationalist approaches and to reframe patriotic movements within the so-called cosmopolitanism.

This study thus aims at a critical contribution to (Ottoman) imperial and colonial history concerning the role of the state. The “state” was and remains a problem because it was under contentious revision and construction both in Cairo and Istanbul, usually with a definite role in social differentiation. Out of Marxist theories, Göçek explained the end of the Ottoman Empire as a consequence of the rise of a “bifurcated bourgeoisie,” a bureaucratic (Turkish) and a commercial (“minority”), which, according to her, was an unintended consequence of state policies.⁵⁰ Concerning Arab provinces, after Hourani’s eminent work, showing the Ottoman central government and Arab provincial notables as shared power brokers,⁵¹ a number of post-Foucauldian scholars analysed change in Egypt as an outcome of state

⁴⁷ With notable exceptions, like Hourani’s works; Youssef M. Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism – A History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 65-72; Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 68-94; etc.

⁴⁸ Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann. “Beyond Comparison: *Histoire Croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity.” *History and Theory*, 45 (2006): 30-50.

⁴⁹ Charles C. Ragin, *The Comparative Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 34.

⁵⁰ Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire*, 1-19.

⁵¹ Albert Hourani, “Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables,” in *The Modern Middle East*, eds. Albert Hourani, Philip Khoury, Mary C. Wilson (London: I.B.Tauris, 2004, orig. 1993), 83-109.

(colonial) policy, perhaps the most impressively Mitchell and Fahmy,⁵² a view that might be criticized based on Ayubi.⁵³

Within this discourse, the state/the ruler, both in Cairo and in Istanbul, is described as a primordial mover behind social change, a policy named as “defensive developmentalism.”⁵⁴ While acknowledging the eminence of state initiatives (“change from above”), I would like to stress here the importance of individual agency, and the activities of individuals and organizations (“change from below”). Cultural politics as a competition is a virtual venue where these two touch each other.

My research shows the state two-faced: its resources embody the goals of the competition – the power brokers may behave as arbitrators – but at the end of the day, the state became one of the competitors that struggles to gain a defining role in cultural politics. Joining to the critics of the nation-state paradigm (like Abou-El-Haj),⁵⁵ my initiative does not aim to explain the “demise of the empire,” rather, it tries to describe a historical juncture where the imperial condition is still definitive.

⁵² Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*; Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men* (Cairo-New York: AUC, 2002 [1997]); a recent study, Mona L. Russell, *Creating the New Egyptian Woman: Consumerism, Education, and National Identity, 1863-1922* (New York: Palgrave, 2004); etc.

⁵³ Nazih N. Ayubi, *Over-stating the Arab State - Politics and Society in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), 4-10; 99-108.

⁵⁴ James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East – A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 73-87.

⁵⁵ Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, 74. Sami Zubaida, “Cosmopolitan citizenship in the Middle East,” *Open Democracy* (2010): <http://www.opendemocracy.net/sami-zubaida/cosmopolitan-citizenship-in-middle-east>. Last viewed: 29-05-2011. This is an excerpt of his new book, *Beyond Islam: A New Understanding of the Middle East* (I. B. Tauris, December 2010) that I had unfortunately no chance to read yet.

Music Theatre and Urban Culture in Istanbul and Cairo

The word “culture” (today in Arabic *thaqāfa*, in Turkish *kültür*), in fact, was not used in these languages in the period. As the opening passage by Sulaymān Qardāhī suggests, not culture, but *civilisation* and theatre were connected in Arab⁵⁶ and Ottoman Turkish perceptions,⁵⁷ and also in European observations (a French journal once remarked about the establishment of the Dolmabahçe Palace Theatre in Istanbul that “rien ne manquera plus à la civilisation turque”).⁵⁸ Theatres were considered as “means of success” in the process of modern civilization (Arabic *tamaddun*, *‘umrān*, many times connected to *adab* or *ādāb*,⁵⁹ Ottoman Turkish *medeniyyet*,⁶⁰ and *terakki*

⁵⁶ See al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s, Mārūn and Salīm Naqqāsh’s uses of *tamaddun* in connection with theatre and morals, in many places, latest Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 62-67.

⁵⁷ For instance, a plan for the Tiyatro-ı Sultāni included the argument of civilizing the morals, *Mümeyyiz*, 28 February 1870, 2.

⁵⁸ *Le Ménestrel*, 31 January 1858, 3.

⁵⁹ For “civilisation” 19th century Arabic dictionaries provide different entries: Bohtor and De Perceval (1828) gives *‘umrān*, *ḥaḍrāwiyya*, *adab*, 154. The Beiruti *Catholique Dictionary* (1857) recommends *ta’nīs*, *ta’dīb* also, 130. Catafago’s *English-Arabic Dictionary* (1873) provides for “civilized” *mu’addab*, *murabbā*, 544. Steingass’ *English-Arabic Dictionary* (1882) presents “civilization” as *adab*, *ta’dīb*, 61. Belot’s *Français-Arabe* (1890) gives *adab*, *ādāb*, *‘umrān*, *tamaddun*, 198. Bustani’s *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ* (written between 1867-1870) gives for *adab* a number of definitions, the first one being *ẓarf* (elegance, gracefulness) and the knowledge that is needed for that (good skills in Arabic language, reading and writing, etc.), 5. His *Muḥīṭ* also gives for the verb *tamaddana* “someone takes up the morals of the urban dwellers and from a state of roughness, barbary, and ignorance (*al-khushūna wa’l-barbariyya wa’l-jahl*) changes to a state of elegance (*ẓarf*), good manners, and knowledge.” This points out to an undecided terminological process to reconcile Arab traditions with the European mixture of culture and civilization.

⁶⁰ Redhouse’ *English-Turkish, Turkish-English Dictionary* (Second Edition, revised by Charles Wells, 1880) gives civilization as *terbiyye*, 67, but in turn *medeniyyet* as “civilized or town life, civilization,” 778. Sami Bey’s *Turkish-French Dictionary* (1883) provides *medeniyyet* as “civilisation,” 1001. Cf. for *medeniyyet* also Heidemarie Doganalp-Votzi and Claudia Römer, *Herrschaft und Staat: Politische Terminologie des Osmanischen Reiches Tanzimatzeit* (Wien: ÖAW, 2008), 225 and 227. Okay states that it is the French concept of civilisation what the Ottomans translated, not, for example, the British one. However, one needs further investigation since civilization was a long existing Arabic concept (*‘umrān* and *tamaddun*) famously used by Ibn Khaldūn, whose translation to Ottoman Turkish preceded the European adaptations. The word *medeniyyet* was often used in Ottoman political texts, even in the *Hatt* (Imperial Edict) of 1856, or the Constitution of 1876. In intellectual debates, *medeniyyet* was mixed with religious and racial dimensions, like in 1878 an Ottoman deputy from Janina could argue that “just as we the [Ottomans?] took civilization from the Greeks, Europe has taken it from us.” Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks - Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 36. The parenthesis with the question mark is from Kayalı. Here Ottomans are conceived as heirs of the Arab-Muslim empires.

“progress,” modern Turkish *uygarlık*), via learning.⁶¹ Understanding theatres as “gardens” means gardens of knowledge and it is a call for public education. This understanding surfaces histories of theatre in Turkish even in the 20th century, for instance, Metin And, the great Turkish historian handles theatres in 19th century Istanbul as signs of “cultural change” (*kültür değişimi*).⁶²

Perhaps the most important difference between theatre activities in Istanbul and Cairo was that, from the mid-1870s, theatre in Ottoman Turkish started to be depoliticized because of censorship, while in Cairo an originally politically neutral music theatre was used to express patriotic sentiments, or at least, this is how the press and the theatre-makers argued, as will be shown in the subsequent chapters. “Cultural Arabism” or “Arab Patriotism” in Cairo (and other Arab cities),⁶³ of which music theatre formed an important part, did not find a similar expression in Istanbul.⁶⁴

These differences between the two cities are further supplied by the role of the central administrations in the finances and maintenance of music theatres. As my dissertation will demonstrate, while Cairo witnessed the establishment of a representative opera house in 1869, maintained by the state budget, in Istanbul such a building was not established; and even in the midst of opera house fever in the 1870s, instead of an Ottoman imperial opera house, a municipal music theatre opened in 1880.

⁶¹ Like in the Russian Empire - the origins of this understanding in Russia are in the 18th century, but remained up to the 20th century. Murray Frame, *School for Citizens – Theatre and Civil Society in Imperial Russia* (New Haven, N.Y.: Yale University Press, 2006), 23. For the specific understanding in writings of Syrians, cf. esp. Chapter 13.

⁶² Metin And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu, 1839-1908* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 1972), 9.

⁶³ Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism – A History*, 65-70.

⁶⁴ Some would regard the last decades of the 19th century as the rise of Turkish nationalism, like David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism – 1876-1908* (London: Frank Cass, 1977) but in my eyes this is perhaps too far-fetched, misses the important difference between an empire and a nation state while certainly music theatre was not part of this cultural (?) ideology.

Within the Arab provincial capitals of the late Ottoman Empire, the status of Cairo is problematic. Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad, Acre were on the one hand “centres of regional, territorial integration,” on the other “sites of new and enforced manifestations of [Ottoman] state presence.”⁶⁵ Compared to these cities, Cairo in semi-autonomous Egypt represents a location where the governors could not be forced to build the Ottoman state *into* the city. This, however, did not mean that, as an Ottoman province, the Egyptian administration was not in constant negotiation with Istanbul, just like other Arab provinces.⁶⁶ Cairo could be seen in this period as an emerging independent capital vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire and after 1882, vis-à-vis the British Empire.⁶⁷

It would be tempting to push this comparison further in a global context and suggest the analogy of the Czech or Hungarian provinces of the Habsburg Empire, where at exactly the same time, the erection of opera houses in Budapest and Prague expressed a national sentiment vis-à-vis Vienna, the imperial centre, and each other. However, in Cairo the establishment of the 1869 opera house was not the embodiment of popular demand but a khedivial project. The khedivial opera, nonetheless, during the 1880s gradually became a symbol of Egyptian patriotism.

Via music theatres in these two cities their cultural entanglements are also emphasised. My attempt shows a still existing repository of common knowledge in/of

⁶⁵ Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp, Stefan Weber, eds. *The Empire in the City – Arab provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Beirut: Orient Institut, 2002), Introduction, 17. See more in Part II.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁷ This view was mixed with the idea of 19th century divided Cairo, a “colonial” (Westernized) and a “native” city, cf. Janet Abu-Lughod, *1001 Years of The City Victorious* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 98. See new paradigms, criticism and revisions in Part II.

the two cities in the 1870-1880s, sometimes highly critical towards the other.⁶⁸ But rivalry connects rather than separates. Music theatre was an expression of this political and cultural competition.

Music Theatre as an Institution

Music theatre, a general term,⁶⁹ here refers to a staged, live *performance* with music and a *building* specifically designed for this art. I argue in this study that music theatre (a genre, a building, and a symbol) was a laboratory of various interconnected political, social and artistic experiments.⁷⁰ The evolution of theatre into a public building containing a strictly divided space between audience and actors,⁷¹ involving hierarchies, a special administration, and relations to the ruler/authorities, was a specifically bizarre, European phenomenon. This edifice of power, containing etiquettes of public behaviour, was institutionalized in late Ottoman cities as well.

The word “institution”⁷² concerning music theatres is used here in three meanings. First, it refers to the theatre building itself as a rigid, divided interior space

⁶⁸ Cf. Ibrāhīm al-Muwaylihī’s narratives (his book *Mā hunālik*) about his Istanbul experience in the late 1880s/early 1890s in the translation of Roger Allan, *Spies, Scandals, and Sultans* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008).

⁶⁹ Such an entry is missing from the New Grove Dictionary of Music. In the Wikipedia we find only “Musical theatre” referring to the US-type musical. In different languages, *Musiktheatre* in German or *théâtre musical* in French can denote very different meanings. The most comprehensive discussion of music theatre as a general term is in Eric Salzman and Thomas Desi, *The New Music Theater* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3-10, although they generally mean the transformation of the fusion of theatre and music in the 20th century, out of traditions bringing new meanings and forms, 119-215.

⁷⁰ Narrowing music theatre to opera, for purposes of analysis, Ruth Bereson distinguished its artistic (the work), political (the function), and social (the experience) meaning (Bereson, *The operatic state*, 14), although, of course, these meanings in practice are inseparable. Pierre Bourdieu, “Social space and symbolic power,” in: *In Other Words – Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994) 122-139.

⁷¹ Theatre is “a live event in which the architectural setting [...] emphasizes the distinction between performers and audience.” Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst, *Audiences* (London: Sage, 1998), 40.

⁷² I acknowledge but not use the theory of political science or sociology of institutions. B. Guy Peters and Jon Pierre (eds.), *Institutionalism* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2007) or R.A. W. Rhodes, “Old Institutionalism: An Overview,” 141-158 and James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, “Elaborating the ‘New Institutionalism,’” 159-175, both chapters in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, ed.

with a usually magnificent exterior, façade, *and* its management. Second, it refers to the incorporation of this building with its special administration into the state body (state institution), that is, the theatre or/and its troupe and the staff are included in the state budget. Third, the process of becoming an institution or part of an institution, “institutionalization,” exemplifies the quest of theatre troupes to convince decision-makers that theatrical activity need a regular subsidy from the state.⁷³

Music Theatre in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish

This period is witness to the production of dramas in the languages of the Ottoman Empire: Greek, Armenian, Bulgarian, Italian, Judeo-Spanish,⁷⁴ Serbian, Albanian, French, Ottoman Turkish, and Arabic (and its dialects). Here I deal only with *performances* in French, Italian, Ottoman Turkish and Arabic, radically emphasizing the *live* and *musical* character of 19th century theatre in these languages. This radicalism is essential in order to break with the dominating view that focuses on theatre as text (see below its historiography).

Concerning theatre in Arabic, I want to emphasize, based on Naqqāsh,⁷⁵ Najm,⁷⁶ Moosa,⁷⁷ Khūrshīd,⁷⁸ Belleface,⁷⁹ Lagrange,⁸⁰ and Garfi,⁸¹ that the so-called

Robert E. Goodin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Nor I refer to the “institutional” theory of (fine) art by George Dickie, *Art Circle: A Theory of Art* (Chicago: Spectrum Press, 1997), neither to the literature-based theory of Peter Bürger about “The Institution of Art as a Category of the Sociology of Literature,” in Peter Bürger and Christa Bürger, *The Institutions of Art* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 3-31.

⁷³ Theatres may be conceived in many other ways an institution, like the way Nadia al-Bagdadi framed Arabic literature following Peter Bürger in her *Vorgestellte Öffentlichkeit* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2010) as an institution, a canon, a political weapon (*Waffe*), or media, 3-14. In this way, theatre might become a mixture of prose texts and live performances that, as Khuri-Makdisi argues, secured also a network in the dissemination of political ideas. Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean*, 62.

⁷⁴ Cf. Shmuel Moreh and Philip Sadgrove, *Jewish Contributions to Nineteenth-Century Arabic Theatre* (Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 6) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 7-8. <http://www.sephardicstudies.org/greek-t.html> (accessed July 11, 2011). Still, I have only one reference to theatre in Judeo-Spanish in Istanbul, *La Turquie*, 29 March 1888, 2.

⁷⁵ The first Arab theatre-maker, Mārūn Naqqāsh, made a distinction between two types of theatricals: *unsung* (comedy, tragedy, drama) and *sung* plays, operas. It is he who chose the second type (opera) as

“early Arabic drama,” when performed, designates *music theatre* in Arabic. To a lesser extent, theatre in Ottoman Turkish was also made popular with operettas sung in Ottoman Turkish.⁸² The words used for “theatrical piece” in Arabic (*riwāya*, *kūmūdīya*, *masraḥīya*) or in Ottoman Turkish in this period (*oyun*, *komedi/komedyā/komdi*, *dram*, *vodvil*, *āsār*, etc.) often signified a music theatrical with prose insertions or vice versa than a “pure” prose theatre. Musical plays were preferred over prose dramas for numerous reasons, for instance, taste and censorship.

While education⁸³ and museums⁸⁴ were officially supported with money both in Istanbul and Cairo, the authorities found the inclusion of music theatre troupes

suitable for the first Arabic play. Mārūn Naqqāsh, *Arzat Lubnān* (posthumous publication by his nephew Nikula Naqqāsh, Beirut: al-Maṭba‘a al-‘Umūmiyya, 1869), 16. See more in Chapter 9.

⁷⁶ Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm in the 1985 edition of his classic *al-Masraḥīyya fi’l-adab al-‘arabī al-ḥadīth* (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1985) wrote a new Introduction, “al-Masraḥ wa’l-Ghinā” (Theatre and Singing), in which he calls the attention that the first plays in Arabic, either in Beirut, Damascus, or Cairo were musical theatricals, designed mostly for singing. *Al-Masraḥīyya*, 13-14.

⁷⁷ Matti Moosa, “Naqqāsh and the Rise of the Native Arab Theatre in Syria,” *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 3 (1972): 106-117, here: 111. Matti Moosa, *The Origins of Arabic Fiction* (Second Edition) (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), 28.

⁷⁸ Ibrāhīm Zakī Khūrshīd, *al-Ughniya al-sha‘biyya wa’l-masraḥ al-ghinā’ī* (Al-Maktaba al-Thaqāfiyya 396) (Cairo: Al-Hay‘a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li’l-Kitāb, 1985), especially 45-49.

⁷⁹ “L’histoire musicale de la période 1880-1930 est indissociable de celle du théâtre.” Jean-François Belleface: “Turāth, classicisme et variétés: Les avatars de l’orchestre oriental au Caire au début du XXe siècle,” *Bulletin d’Etudes Orientales*, Tome XXXIX-XL, Années 1987-88 (1989): 39-65. Here: 41.

⁸⁰ Frédéric Lagrange, “Musiciens et poètes en Egypte au temps de la *Nahḍa*,” PhD diss., Université de Paris VIII à Saint Denis, 1994, 83.

⁸¹ Mohamed Garfi, *Musique et Spectacle – Le théâtre lyrique arabe, esquisse d’un itinéraire, 1847-1975* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2009).

⁸² This is a troublesome question, but we will see that between 1872 and 1876, a number of operettas were translated or written in Ottoman Turkish, that made enormous success. Metin And in his *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, separates the musical plays in a subheading, “müzikli oyunlar,” 417-438.

⁸³ Necdet Sakaoğlu, *Osmanlı eğitim tarihi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1993); Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908 - Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), especially interesting is the institutionalization: 83-138. A good overview: Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, “Ottoman Educational and Scholarly-Scientific Institutions,” in *History of the Ottoman State, Society, and Civilization*, 2 vols., ed. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2002), 2:361-495. For the specific problems with the reform of education Benjamin C. Fortna, *The Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002), 1-42. For Egyptian education, for my period the basic works are Aḥmad ‘Izzat ‘Abd al-Karīm, *Ta’rikh al-ta‘līm fi Miṣr min nihāyat ḥukm Muḥammad ‘Alī ilā awā‘il ḥukm Tawfiq, 1848-1882*, 3 vols. (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Naṣr, 1947), and James Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt* (1939; repr., London: Cass, 1969), a useful

performing in Arabic or Ottoman Turkish in state budgets even more problematic than in the case of the fine arts.⁸⁵ Simultaneously, in Cairo the Opera House became a (colonial) state institution, with separate funds, while in Istanbul, despite at least six plans for an Ottoman Imperial Theatre or Opera House during the 19th century, such state institutionalization failed while private theatres flourished.

This study, focusing on the negotiations between centralised administrations and individuals who lead theatre troupes playing in French, Italian, Arabic and Ottoman Turkish, reveals the complex ways in which music theatre in Arabic was negotiated and finally accepted while in Ottoman Turkish it was refused by politicians and rulers. This happened in the context of European theatre troupes that were not supported by the state in Istanbul while in Cairo the Opera House housed them usually with some state subsidy. Based on music theatres as complex institutions, I show the early cultural politics in Cairo and Istanbul: the ways competing visions of culture were integrated or refused by decision-makers and by this process they became not only power brokers but cultural brokers, too.

collection is ʿAbd Al-Manʿam Ibrāhīm al-Jamīʿī, ed, *Wathāʿiq al-taʿlīm al-ʿālī fī Miṣr khilāl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ ashār*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub waʾl-Wathāʿiq al-Qawmiyya, 2004).

⁸⁴ Wendy M. K. Shaw, *Possessors and Possessed - Museums, Archeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). Donald Malcom Reid, *Whose pharaohs? Archeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2002).

⁸⁵ For instance, in Egypt art institutions are usually investigated only from the early 20th century. Patrick Kane, “Egyptian Art Institutions and Art Education from 1908 to 1951, part 1,” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 44, no. 3 (2010): 43-68. Cf. Wijdan Ali, *Modern Islamic Art – Development and Continuity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 9-11. For the 19th century Ottoman reception and institutions of European painting, cf. Wendy M. K. Shaw, *Ottoman Painting – Reflections of Western Art from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011).

Historiography: Three Paradigms

Cultural history of the late Ottoman Empire is extremely fragmented. Music theatres are usually considered in specialized theatre histories or, to a lesser extent, in studies on music. These can be grouped into three paradigms: narrativist, anti-colonial, revisionist. These do not reflect necessarily chronological developments; rather, the three paradigms are particular styles of writing and are based on different sets of theories and agendas.

The first group are those texts that were written in the vein of “history of theatre,” or “history of music.” Simultaneously with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, Refik Ahmet Sevengil emerged as the leader of the academic study of Ottoman/Turkish theatre in Turkey,⁸⁶ while in the 1960s Metin And replaced him as the foremost authority.⁸⁷ With some research in English in the interwar period,⁸⁸ from the 1950s Arab/Egyptian theatre history got a large impetus from the Syrian scholar Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm who canonized Arab theatre and established a convenient

⁸⁶ Not only in Turkish, but early studies in French and in Armenian established narratives, usually without a scholarly method. Nonetheless, these are precious sources like Adolphe Thalasso, “Le théâtre turc contemporain,” *Revue Encyclopaedique*, 9 décembre 1899: 1037-1044, or the recently translated (from Armenian to Turkish) Şarasan (Sarkis Tütüncüyan), *Türkiye ermenileri sahnesi ve çalışanları (1839-1908)*. Apart from this, And’s eminent studies are “Türkiyede İtalyan Sahnesi,” *İtalyan Filoloji-Filologia Italiana* (1970): 127-142; “Eski İstanbulda Fransız Sahnesi,” *Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi* 2 (1971): 77-102; “Eski İstanbulda Yunan Sahnesi,” *Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi* 3 (1972): 87-106; and many other smaller articles. His *A History of Theatre and Popular Entertainment in Turkey* (Ankara: Forum Yayınları, 1964) is still unmatched in English and his monograph about the Ottoman Theatre was one of my most important sources: *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu* (1976; repr., Ankara: Dost Kitabevi, 1999).

⁸⁷ The oeuvre of Metin And includes the already cited *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu (1839-1908)*. Apart from this, And’s eminent studies are “Türkiyede İtalyan Sahnesi,” *İtalyan Filoloji-Filologia Italiana* (1970): 127-142; “Eski İstanbulda Fransız Sahnesi,” *Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi* 2 (1971): 77-102; “Eski İstanbulda Yunan Sahnesi,” *Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi* 3 (1972): 87-106; and many other smaller articles. His *A History of Theatre and Popular Entertainment in Turkey* (Ankara: Forum Yayınları, 1964) is still unmatched in English and his monograph about the Ottoman Theatre was one of my most important sources: *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu* (1976; repr., Ankara: Dost Kitabevi, 1999).

⁸⁸ Neville Barbour, “The Arabic Theatre in Egypt,” *Bulletin of the SOAS, University of London*, two instalments of three parts: 8, no. 1 (1935): 173-187, and no. 4 (1937): 991-1012.

chronology of pioneers (Naqqāsh-Qabbānī-Sanua)⁸⁹ which lasts until today.⁹⁰ Academic canonizations of late 19th century Arab music started in the last decades.⁹¹

These master texts are “annual-type” registers that can be characterized with a focus on linguistically defined theatre activity. The narratives are about theatre-makers, authors, and actors; political or social relations of theatre are occasionally registered. The plays as *texts* – dramas – are in the focus while the audience is mostly missing. The authors understood theatre as a part of literature⁹² and one of their main aims might have been that the “history of theatre” could be taught. Let me call this paradigm “the narrativist.”

Despite the fact that in Arabic many monographs were written,⁹³ with some efforts in English, French, or German,⁹⁴ the field of 19th century Egyptian theatre

⁸⁹ Najm, *al-Masraḥiyya fi'l-adab al-ʿarabī al-ḥadīth*, 29-93. Najm also published a number of important texts of the first theatre-makers including Mārūn Naqqāsh, Abū Khalīl al-Qabbānī, ʿUthmān Jalāl and Sanua. Of course, in Arabic theatre histories developed earlier, the earliest attempt to sketch such a chronology, to the best of my knowledge, was Sulaymān Ḥasan al-Qabbānī's Introduction into his collection: *Bughyat al-mumaththilīn* (Alexandria: Jurjī Gharzūzī, [after 1902]), 30-34.

⁹⁰ For instance, Miḍḥat al-Jayyār, *Al-masraḥ al-ʿarabī* (Cairo: Dār al-Jumhūriyya li'l-Ṣaḥāfa, 2006) still uses this chronology.

⁹¹ Reflection on Arab music was, of course, already published in the 19th century, Miḫāʿil Miṣḥāqa, *al-Risālat al-shihābiyya fi'l-ṣināʿat al-mūsiqiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1996); whose first English (partial) translation of the manuscript (!) is by Eli Smith, “A Treatise on Arab Music, Chiefly from a Work by Miḫāʿil Meshākah, of Damascus,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 1, 3 (1847): 171–217 (with an introduction by Smith). Of studies on 19th century music: Qastandī Rizq, *al-Mūsīqā al-sharqiyya wa'l-ghināʾ al-ʿarabī wa-nuṣrat al-Khidīwī Ismāʿīl li'l-funūn al-jamīla wa-ḥayāt ʿAbduh al-Ḥamūlī*, 4 vols. (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿat al-ʿAṣriyya, 1936-1943); Lagrange, “Musiciens et poètes en Egypte au temps de la *Nahḍa*,” Kamāl al-Najmī, *Turāth al-ghināʾ al-ʿarabī* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1993); Ali Jihad Racy, *Making music in the Arab world: the culture and the artistry of ʿarab* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Garfi, *Musique et Spectacle – Le théâtre lyrique arabe, esquisse d'un itinéraire*. I must confess that I am less familiar with literature on 19th century developments of Ottoman Turkish music but I used apart from numerous articles, as a general introduction, articles in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music*; EI2; Eliot Bates, *Music in Turkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Amnon Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1995); Ruhi Ayangil, “Turkish music in the seventeenth century,” *The Turks*, 4:79-88.

⁹² I believe the most characteristic is the title of *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya fi'l-adab al-ʿarabī al-ḥadīth* – “Theatricals in Modern Arabic Literature.” See also Badawi's chapter on early Arabic drama, in Badawi, ed. *Modern Arabic Literature*, 329-357 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Slightly less literature-oriented is Moosa, *The Origins of Modern Arab Fiction*.

⁹³ Of particular interest are Luwīs ʿAwaḍ, *Al-masraḥ al-miṣrī* (Cairo: Dār ʿIzzis, 1955); ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ghunaym, *Ṣanūʿ - Rāʾid al-masraḥ al-miṣrī* (Cairo: Dār al-Qawmiyya li'l-Ṭibāʿa wa'l-Nashr, 1966); etc. For the Opera House, important are the works of the last director of the Opera House, Ṣāliḥ ʿAbdūn, *ʿĀyida wa-miʿa shamʿa* (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li'l-Kitāb, 1975); Saleh

stagnated, just like the history of theatre in Ottoman Turkish. Although Metin And's groundbreaking *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu* was published first in 1972,⁹⁵ this book, as well as his articles, remained within the presets of the narrativist paradigm. Philip Sadgrove's *The Egyptian Theatre* was a breakthrough in 1996.⁹⁶ Even though written in the vein of the narrativists (but including theatre in European languages too), Sadgrove provided new data with an argument that the British occupation put an end to genuine Egyptian/Syrian experiments. Thus in a very cautious way, he politicized the writing of Arab theatre history and immediately caused some reactions in Egypt.⁹⁷

Meanwhile, starting in the 1960s, scholars analysed theatres in Cairo and Istanbul as symbols of European colonial presence. Concerning Cairo, following Janet Abu-Lughod's critique,⁹⁸ Edward Said claimed that there is an intimate relationship between European (British and French) imperialism and culture, that overseas rule was embodied in works of art, and that its best example is *Aida* "not about but *of* imperial domination."⁹⁹ One may call this second type of approach the "anti-colonial" paradigm.

Abdoun, ed. *Genesi dell' 'Aida', con documentazione inedita*, Quaderni dell'Istituto di Studi Verdiani 4 (1971); *Khamsūn 'āmān min al-mūsīqā wa'l-ūbirā* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2000).

⁹⁴ Jacob Landau, M. *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958); El Saïd Atia Abul Naga, *Les sources françaises du théâtre égyptien, 1870-1939* (Alger: SNED, 1972); M. M. Badawi, *Early Arabic Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Moosa, *The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction*; etc.

⁹⁵ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*.

⁹⁶ Philip Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century, 1799-1882* (1996; repr., Cairo: AUC Press, 2007).

⁹⁷ The next year when Sadgrove's book was published, the Egyptian theatre historian, Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il, published original materials with the clear intention to "Arabize" Egyptian theatre history – Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il, *Ta°rikh al-masrah fi Mişr fi'l-qarn tāsi° ashar* (Cairo: Maktab al-Usra, 2005, orig.: 1997). One of his most interesting attempts is the erasure of James Sanua from Egyptian theatre history in Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il, *Muḥākimat masrah Ya°qūb Şanū°* (Cairo: Al-Hay°a al-Mişriyya al-°Āmma li'l-Kitāb, 2001). Based on his previous books and articles, a public debate took place between him and Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm in the *Al-Ahrām* and the *Akhbār al-Adab* newspapers in 2001.

⁹⁸ Her theory (Janet Abu-Lughod, "Tale of Two Cities: The Origins of Modern Cairo," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 7, no. 4 [1965]: 429-457) was further expanded in her today classic book, *Cairo – 1001 Years of The City Victorious*.

⁹⁹ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 114.

In mixtures of nationalist approaches with postcolonial theory theatres became legitimate objects of new cultural history.¹⁰⁰ In English, Mas'ud Hamdan, recently Ilham Khuri-Makdisi and Ziad Fahmy use Arab/Egyptian theatres as political spaces that supported the spread of “radical leftist ideas” (Khuri-Makdisi) or “media-capitalism” (Fahmy),¹⁰¹ both embodying a teleological view of history. In Turkey, Fırat Güllü vigorously attacked Metin And with the aim to understand Ottoman Turkish theatre history (especially the Ottoman Theatre) as a political enterprise, too.¹⁰² We may call these studies the “revisionist” paradigm.

Revision means critically reopening the investigation about the ways modernization took place. Revisionists question the results of anti-colonial scholarship, seeing it as reproducing and accepting the essentialist presets of imperialist literature, while also building on some of its results emphasizing global, comparative, and social history, while mostly attributing an active role to the hitherto perceived passive colonized, and in some cases, ultimately dismissing the colonizer-colonized dichotomies.

¹⁰⁰ I understand new cultural history as a mode of history writing after the “cultural turn.” Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, “Introduction,” in Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, eds. *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture; with an afterword by Hayden White* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1999), 1-34. Cf. also Geoffrey Eley’s definition of the historical investigation of “culture” what, in his wording, means “a ground of politics beyond the space conventionally recognized by most political traditions as the appropriate context for policy-making in education and arts.” Geoffrey Eley, “What Is Cultural History?” *New German Critique*, 65, (1995): 19-36. Here: 26. In the Middle East studies, after the application of Foucauldian theory (Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*) representation and power was further explored (Çelik, *Displaying the Orient*), or recently gender focused researches, among them Russell, *Creating the New Egyptian Woman* or Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), etc.

¹⁰¹ Mas'ud Hamdan, *Poetics, Politics and Protest in Arab Theatre – The Bitter Cup and the Holy Rain* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2006). Khuri-Makdisi’s and Fahmy’s studies are two recent US PhD-dissertations. To date, Khuri-Makdisi’s was published as *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism* in 2010 as cited before, and Fahmy’s is just about to appear with the title *Ordinary Egyptians - Creating the Modern Nation through Popular Culture* (in June 2011, Stanford University Press). In this study, I refer to his PhD, Ziad Fahmy, “Popularizing Egyptian Nationalism – Colloquial Culture and Media Capitalism,” PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2007.

¹⁰² Fırat Güllü, *Vartovyan Kumpanyası ve Yeni Osmanlılar* (Istanbul: bgst Yayınları, 2008).

My research complements the revisionists since I use theatres to discover political/social change, too. Joining a recent initiative of urban historians,¹⁰³ I highlight a new dimension by bringing the state back; emphasising the administrative processes, the governmental use of theatres, the everyday dealings, and the diverse audience in Cairo and Istanbul; and to explore theatre as a *live performance*. This view, paradoxically, leads to an increased focus on individual agency and results in bringing the state down: showing it as one of the competitors in cultural politics. Unlike the revisionist paradigm, I do not aim to establish a grand narrative of “making” a nation, identities, or a network. Instead, I only show the ways cultural brokers imagined a new type of cultural collectivity that forced the state to react and to participate in a number of ways. With this inquiry I aim to demonstrate the importance of individual agency in a late imperial condition.

Sources: Periodicals, Documents, Memoirs

This study does not aim to provide a full narrative of theatre activity in Arabic or Ottoman Turkish in the late 19th century. It is not a history of theatre. However, especially reconstructing individual lives, my goal was to provide the most detailed analysis possible because only such details establish the full scope of relationships between the cultural brokers.

My primary sources are periodicals, state archival documents, and memoirs, all of problematic nature. In my period, in Cairo, Alexandria, Istanbul, or Izmir not only periodicals in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish but also in Greek, Italian, Armenian, French, and in English were published in an enormous quantity. The Istanbulite

¹⁰³ Hanssen, Philipp, Weber, “Introduction,” *The Empire in the City*, 4-6.

newspapers' information and interest about events in Cairo and vice versa is the best proof of their entanglements.¹⁰⁴

A favourite topic of the newspapers in Arabic was music theatre in Arabic; there was a “coalition” between journalists and theatre-makers, perhaps not unrelated to the fact that the leaders of the troupes and most early newspapers' owners were Syrians (like Salīm Naqqāsh); or Egyptians like James Sanua or ʿAbd Allāh Nadīm were playwrights and journalists in one person. In Istanbul there is also an overlap in some cases like Ahmed Midhat or Namik Kemal, again both journalists and playwrights, or a “coalition” between Ottoman Armenian theatre-makers (like Güllü Agop) and journalists (like Agop Baronyan). The French press in Istanbul also provides detailed information about theatrical activity in French, Italian, Greek and also Ottoman Turkish. Thus the press glued theatre-makers and audiences, and these three – press, theatre-makers, audiences – were intimately connected.

The French press in Cairo and Istanbul represents perhaps the most influential organ in this period because almost everyone with a certain education, regardless of their origin, could read this language. This is the reason why I sometimes call this language Ottoman French. The main representatives were *Journal de Constantinople*, *La Turquie*, *Le Bosphore Egyptien* (!), *Moniteur Oriental*, etc. Journalism in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish is equally important, especially the daily newspapers, *Al-Ahrām* or *Al-Qāhira al-Hurra* in Egypt, or *Basiret* and *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* in Istanbul, with

¹⁰⁴ A few titles concerning 19th century journalism in these cities: Amy Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East – A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Philip Sadgrove, “The Development of the Arabic Press and Its Role in the Literary Life of Egypt 1798-1882,” PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1983; Johann Strauss, “Le livre français d’Istanbul (1730-1908),” *Revue des mondes musulmanes et de la Méditerranée* 87-88 (1999): 277-301, <http://remmm.revues.org/index307.html> (accessed July 16, 2011); *Presse Turque et Presse de Turquie. Actes du colloque “La Turquie, les Turcs et la presse” 13-14 Mai 1986, Ecole Supérieure de Journalisme de l’Université de Marmara*. Istanbul-Paris: ISIS, 1992.

the official state organs and less frequently published magazines. In this world of letters, Arabic and Ottoman Turkish newspapers were not separated from French or English publications; the journalists read each other, even if they were attentive to different aspects. All papers were politically involved in one way or another. Journals sometimes were veiled surfaces via which, instead of personal free views, the ruler spoke.

The revival of the use of archives as factories of truth, Derrida's "archival fever,"¹⁰⁵ promises more than it gives. First, the documents in a state archive contain information *only* about an action in connection with the state. Second, often we do not know the outcome and the perception of a state-generated action, especially if we could only locate the initial order. The sheer existence of such an order does not correspond to its execution and tells nothing about the circumstances and the way it was realized. Still, archives help to understand the mechanisms of an administration and what it was capable of. Thus, state archival documents can provide access to the frames of life-worlds.

Both periodicals and archival documents contain information from individuals in an institutionalized form. My third type of primary source, the memoir (including travel descriptions), is a personal, private recollection. A memoir, written with various purposes, often contains nostalgia towards a lost world. Yet, nostalgia from a scholarly point of view can be very useful since later dreamers of a *belle époque* collect and preserve material that otherwise would be lost. Memoirs as sources of information, especially if written long time after the events (no less diaries!), do not

¹⁰⁵ This is how Jacques Derrida himself translated his *Mal d'archives*, quoted in Carolyn Steedman, *Dust – The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 9.

necessarily reflect even on its writer's momentary experience but are products of a reflective thought, consciously or unconsciously.

During the research, periodicals, state documents, and memoirs were contrasted with visual and audio material that I used often. Photography and painting have their own methods to depict reality and reconstructed musical recordings are also not trustworthy. Furthermore, by the power of senses these may overrule written argumentations and this is the reason that images are not included in this dissertation. However, in a future published edition these might be supplemented.

Orientation

Part I establishes the entangled comparison of Istanbul and Cairo in the late 19th century. In Chapter 1 I introduce the Egyptian-Ottoman political history, relocating Egypt within the late Ottoman imperial hub. This political history can be translated into cultural terms that retained certain common characteristics – I attempt to trace these as elements of urban modernity in Chapter 2. These political, social, and cultural ties within the framework of reforms secure the entangled comparison of the two cities.

In Part II, I push further this comparison via urban history showing how “the pleasure principle” was built in Cairo and Istanbul. In Chapter 3, I describe the reasons why certain areas were chosen for entertainment institutions and how these areas were administratively controlled. Introducing Pera/Beyoğlu and Azbakiyya, I show the decentralized control of private activity in Istanbul while in Cairo a direct state reform from above shaped the future of these areas. Here also the importance of theatres in 19th century urban theory and their significance as embodiments of power will be emphasized. This significance in the Ottoman context, that is, setting up stages

literally in Pera and Azbakiyya is described in Chapter 4 focusing on construction processes, ownerships, designs, and their local perceptions. Here I explain the creation of public playhouses in Cairo as khedivial possessions and in Istanbul chiefly as a private business.

Bringing troupes to these host playhouses is the subject of Part III, choosing the lives of four individuals who were in charge with theatres or troupes, or were theatrical entrepreneurs. Impresarios Paul Draneht, Seraphin Manasse (Chapter 5) Sulaymān Qardāhī, Séropé Benglian (Chapter 6) are more or less forgotten individuals, rarely associated with national cultural histories. However, I argue that their lives demonstrate not only the everyday life of cultural brokers but also establish the ways in which late Ottoman cities were incorporated into the world-wide entertainment. Furthermore, each had his own conception of how “culture” or “civilization” is connected to the theatres, to offer these both for the central administrations and for the audiences. Via their lives I argue for the importance of the individual agency in social change in the late Ottoman Empire.

Part IV deals with the production of musical plays in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish between 1867 and 1892. These embody the different types of “culture” organized and produced by the impresarios in the previous part. In Chapter 7 the life of the most famous Egyptian singer-actor, Salāma Ḥijāzī, exemplifies the creation of a patriotic star who, in the roles of Arab heroes, embodied political messages. In contrast, in Chapter 8 an Ottoman Armenian composer, Dikran Tchouhadjian’s works and life represent the depoliticization of theatre in Istanbul. The survey of musical plays and their performances in Chapter 9 demonstrate the various methods by which original works of art were produced mixing different traditions. I argue that Arab

theatre via employing music followed previous entertainment conventions, *tarab*, while Ottoman operettas represent a branch of Western European music fashions.

These performances took place mostly in the theatre buildings that offered convenient locations for the central authorities to interfere and use publicity in a number of ways. In Part V, I deal with the explicit political aspects involving representation, control, and the education of audiences. In Chapter 10 I show sovereigns (the Sultan and the Khedive) exploiting theatres to represent themselves to their people, to the Europeans, and to each other in a sometimes bitter competition of public ceremonies. Later, in Istanbul the sovereign did not use public theatres for ceremonies of power, while in Cairo, due to the British occupation, the Opera House became the main scene of Egyptian khedivial sovereignty. In Chapter 11, I inquire about the increased control in the music theatres, the state collecting information about the visitors and censoring the content of the plays. All cultural brokers were concerned with the audience, thus in Chapter 12 I ask who these audiences were actually composed of, investigating whether audiences possessed extra-theatrical collectivities and showing the ways people were informed and attracted to the theatre via the press and various organizations.

In the Conclusion about “mellow fruits,” I argue that cultural politics in these two cities included the state both as an owner of resources and as a competitor in this period. Bringing the state back into discussions of cultural history re-problematized the role of the state in social change. Agency is attributed mostly to individuals who actively used their knowledge and visions about cultural production in patriotic, imperial, and cosmopolitan frameworks. The popularization of music theatres was an outcome of intended and unintended processes. Ultimately it is in this competition

that the states in Cairo and Istanbul redefined their responsibilities and laid the patterns of future distinct cultural politics.

Part I. Entangled Comparison: Behind the Scenes in Cairo and Istanbul

One evening during the spring of 1871, Paul Draneht, the Greek-born Egyptian director of the Khedivial Opera House in Cairo, enjoying an Italian opera in his box, remarked to an Arab journalist that theatre (opera) provides “the relaxing side of civilization.” The journalist inserted this (most likely, French) conversation into a report about Egypt’s conditions in his Arabic newspaper, *Al-Jawā’ib*, published in Istanbul, and thus Draneht’s remark was disseminated in the Ottoman Empire.¹ In order to understand how such a today unimaginable conversation could take place, we need to know what happened behind the scenes.

In this part I intend to establish the Cairo-Istanbul entanglement in the framework of late Ottoman cities.² The basic problem is the multiple analysis of 19th century Cairo as a colonial city,³ as an independent capital,⁴ and as site of

¹ *Al-Jawā’ib*, 12 April 1871, 2, as translated in Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre*, 61-62. Here is the original: “li-anna-hum lammā dakhālū fī ābwāb al-tamaddun min jamī‘ wujūhi-hi kān mā yajrī fī’l-malāhī mutammihān la-hu.” In a rough translation: “so thus they [the Egyptians] entered the doors of civilization in all its aspects, since what happens in the theatres, accomplishes civilization.”

² An overview of historiography of Middle Eastern cities is in Peter Sluglett (ed.), *The Urban Social History of the Middle East* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 20-28. Refusing the weberian idea of the homogenous Muslim/Ottoman city, Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Alan Masters argue for the distinction between three types of Ottoman cities – an Arab, an Anatolian and “anomalous” Istanbul. “Introduction: Was There an Ottoman City?” in E. Eldem, D. Goffman, B.A. Masters (eds.), *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1-16, here: 13. Cf. also Jean-Luc Arnaud, “Modernization of the cities of the Ottoman Empire (1800-1920),” in Salma Khadra Jayyusi et al (eds.), *The City in the Islamic World*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 2:953-975. Here: 2:957. Concerning Ottoman Arab cities, Hanssen, Philipp, Weber, eds. *The Empire in the City*.

³ Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, 64-65. Abu-Lughod, *Cairo – 1001 years*, 98. Also Jean-Luc Arnaud, *Le Caire – mise en place d’une ville moderne 1867-1907* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1998). The critique of these views in Nezar AlSayyad, Irene A. Bierman, and Nasser Rabbat, eds. *Making Cairo Medieval* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005), especially Heba Farouk Ahmed, “Nineteenth Century Cairo: A Dual City?” 143-172 and Khaled Fahmy, “Modernizing Cairo: A Revisionist Narrative,” 173-200. Cf. also Mohamed Elshahed, “Facades of Modernity – Image, Performance, and transformation of the Egyptian Metropolis” (master’s thesis, MIT, 2007), 30-31.

⁴ This might be identified as the contemporary view of ‘Alī Mubārak in his *Khiṭat*.

cosmopolitanism.⁵ What these perceptions mostly missed is the Ottoman context, and the Cairo-Istanbul relations, which are nonetheless problematic since Cairo as a late Ottoman Arab capital is exceptional in its relative freedom from the reforms emanating from the imperial centre.⁶

The late Ottoman Empire and especially its port-cities are often related to discussions about the Eastern Mediterranean. Theatres were built in the major late Ottoman urban centres (notably in Belgrad, Bucharest, Saloniki, Istanbul, Bursa, Izmir, Damascus, Beirut, Alexandria, Cairo, Tunis) throughout the 19th century. This time is regarded, to quote Christopher Bayly, as “the birth of the modern world” where modernity means an already global history.⁷

The Mediterranean specifically has been the subject of different narratives within this global context.⁸ Recently, the 19th century was rediscovered as “the age of migration in the Mediterranean,” meaning the mobility of people, money, power, and ideas.⁹ Indeed, the Mediterranean basin became a well-navigated sea, a relatively

⁵ Perhaps the most characteristic of this view, also embodying the nostalgic literature, Trevor Mostyn, *Egypt's Belle Epoque: Cairo and the Age of the Hedonists* (1989; repr., London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2006 [1989]).

⁶ The Introduction of *The Empire in the City* misses the problematic status of Cairo within the context of other late Ottoman Arab capitals, just like Christoph K. Neumann in his “Ottoman Provincial Towns from the Eighteenth to the Nineteenth century – a Re-Assessment of their Place in the Transformation of the Empire,” 131-144 in the same volume.

⁷ Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 2.

⁸ The range of Mediterranean studies stretches from Braudel's classic via Goitein to Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea – A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford-Malden: Blackwell, 2000). For the ancient Mediterranean cf. W.V. Harris, ed, *Rethinking the Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), especially see the Mediterranean as a symbol of “empty space between the lands” in David Abulafia, “Mediterraneans,” 64-93. A new book that I had not yet access is Hein, Carola, ed. *Port Cities: Dynamic Landscapes and Global Networks* (London: Routledge, 2011).

⁹ Julia A. Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an age of migration, 1800-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). Unfortunately, I had no access yet to Ulrike Freitag; Malte Fuhrmann; Nora Lafi; Florian Riedler; eds., *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the making of urban modernity* (London ; New York, NY : Routledge, 2011). Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism*, 3-6.

small and safe distance due to steaming.¹⁰ Theatres were part of the incorporation of the Eastern Mediterranean into larger circulations of art and money.

Ottoman port-cities burst with foreign political and economic migrants, workforce from the hinterlands, bringing the people living along all the shores of the Mediterranean unprecedentedly close to each other but separated by linguistic, religious, racial, or class differences.¹¹ Especially from Greater Syria a considerable number of Arab Syrians, Greeks, and Armenians migrated to Egypt.¹² Poor European migrant workers also established themselves in port cities, like in Alexandria or Izmir/Smyrna.¹³ In this first part of the dissertation, my aim is to look behind the scenes, and relocate Egypt within the late Ottoman imperial hub, also as an effort to show the internal dynamics of power within this territory.

In Chapter 1 I argue that Egypt's future was not only decided by the way European powers dictated, but also was up to the ways the Egyptian Pashas defined their relationship with recentralized imperial Istanbul. In Chapter 2, I explore the ways that characterize this relationship via urban culture and the word "Ottoman."

¹⁰ Before steaming, in the Middle Ages, a Venice-Istanbul (Constantinople) distance could be covered sailing in fifteen days with favourable winds but even eighty days if not. Peter Mentzel, *Transportation Technology and Imperialism in the Ottoman Empire* (Washington, DC: American Historical Association, 2006), 13. In the 1840s, England-Istanbul distance was covered within four weeks.

Philip Ernest Schoenberg, "The Evolution of Transport in Turkey (Eastern Thrace and Asia Minor) under Ottoman Rule, 1856-1918" *Middle Eastern Studies* 13, no. 3 (1977): 359-372. In 1861, a quick ship of the Messageries Impériales covered the Istanbul (Constantinople)-Marseille distance in 8 days, leaving on a Wednesday at 4 pm, arriving to Marseille the next Thursday morning. From Marseille to Alexandria, the same company left on a Sunday morning and arrived next Sunday morning, in exactly 7 days. Adolph Joanne et Emile Isambert, *Itinéraire de l'Orient* (Paris: L. Hachette, 1861), xxxv-xxxvi.

¹¹ Malte Fuhrmann and Vangelis Kechriotis, "The late Ottoman port-cities and their inhabitants: subjectivity, urbanity, and conflicting orders," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 24, no. 2 (2009): 71-78.

¹² Albert Hourani, "The Middleman in a Changing Society: Syrians in Egypt in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century," in his *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 103-123.

¹³ Will Hanley, "Foreignness and localness in Alexandria," PhD diss., Princeton, 2007.

Ultimately, this first part establishes the basis of the entangled comparison of Cairo and Istanbul and situates Cairo within the policies of late Ottoman imperialism.

Chapter 1.

Ottoman-Egyptian Politics

When the French consul scornfully asked Khedive Ismāʿīl, threatened by financial catastrophe and constant humiliation during his last months of nearly autonomous rule in 1879 about how long he had been “a humble servant” of the Ottoman Empire, he replied that “since my birth, Monsieur.”¹ He was, with his dynasty, an Ottoman, in theory and in practice serving the imperial centre.

This chapter shows the political and financial relations between the Pashas of Egypt and the Sultans, recontextualizing 19th century (colonial) Egypt within the Ottoman Empire.² This view, following the imperative of Albert Hourani,³ offers the wider context of modernization in the late Ottoman Empire, and reexamines Ottoman imperialism in Egypt.⁴ Despite the growing independence of Egypt throughout the 19th century, its governors’ negotiations with the Porte illustrate the struggle between

¹ Pierre Crabitès, *Ismail – The Maligned Khedive* (London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1933), 286.

² Historical studies focusing on Egyptian-Ottoman relations in the late 19th century are surprisingly few. In Arabic, Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Muṣṭafā, *ʿIlāqāt Miṣr bi-Turkiyya fī ʿahd al-Khidīw Ismāʿīl* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1967) and in Turkish, Sevda Öykaza Özer, “Osmanlı Devleti İdaresinde Mısır (1839-1882),” PhD diss., Fırat Üniversitesi, 2007. In the standard narratives of 19th century Egyptian history, the Ottoman background usually vanishes after ʿAbbās Pasha. A particular view is seeing “Modern Egypt” as emerging from the interaction and colonialism of Western European imperial powers, where “modernity” referred to this one-way process, exemplified by Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt*, or, to consider the imperial centre, Istanbul, only as a place where Pashas had to be bribed by their Egyptian rivals, Goldschmidt, *Modern Egypt*, 28. These historical presets, I believe, origin in the most authoritative British text about Egypt: Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt* (several editions since 1907), the man who saw himself as the “manager” who created modern Egypt. Roger Owen, *Lord Cromer – Victorian Imperialist, Edwardian Proconsul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 357-358. Even such authoritative texts as the *Cambridge History of Modern Egypt*, concerning late 19th century rarely mention the Ottomans. Recent narratives about the Nahḍa in Egypt seemingly forget the Ottomans completely.

³ Albert Hourani, “The Ottoman Background of the Modern Middle East,” in his *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, 1-18, here: 17.

⁴ Ussama Makdisi, “Rethinking Ottoman Imperialism: Modernity, Violence, and the Cultural Logic of Ottoman Reform,” 29-48 and Jens Hanssen, “Practices of Integration – Centre Periphery Relations in the Ottoman Empire,” 49-74. Both in Hanssen, Philipp, Weber, eds. *The Empire in the City*.

European interests and Ottoman imperial politics and help to understand the patterns of change in the state infrastructures.

The Ottoman-Egyptian relation throughout the 19th century are characterized by the puzzle of Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha who *within* the Ottoman Empire created a proto-independent mini-empire; the enigma of the middle of the century, stubborn ʿAbbās Pasha and Ottoman Francophile Saʿīd Pasha, who borrowed large sums from Europe, quarrelling with the Porte; and the never clear intentions of Khedive Ismāʿīl who opened up the country to foreigners, but at the same time established national institutions, always negotiating with Istanbul. I argue that the decisive factor in Egyptian politics was the definition of the governors' relations with the Ottoman Empire until 1882, and even after this year, during the British occupation, this relationship remained crucial in politics.

Tanzīmāt – *Centre and Periphery?*

The architects of the Ottoman administrative reorganization, called *Tanzīmāt* (after several attempts prepared under Mahmud II, r.1808-1839, announced in 1839 with the *Hatt-ı Gülhane/Hatt-ı Şerīf/Tanzīmāt Fermanı*) were a small group of statesmen (Reşid, Ali, Fuad Pashas, etc) who held in rotation the positions of Grand Vizier, Foreign Minister, Minister of War, etc. A consequence was that the direct control of the imperial administration shifted from the Palace (the Sultan) to the Porte (the Grand Vizier, *Sadr-ı Aʿzam*) during the rule of Sultan Abdülmecid (r. 1839-1861) and Sultan Abdülaziz (r. 1861-1876).⁵

⁵ Findley calls the attention that the linkage of the Grand Vizirate with the position of Foreign Minister was one of the most important factors how these new bureaucrats could neutralize their older opponents and this became the central element in the new political system. Carter V. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire – The Sublime Port, 1789-1922* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton

The reforms were, in theory, compulsory for all Ottoman provincial governors but were executed with various success. Guarantee of the subjects' life, honour, and property, regularization of taxation, new methods for conscripting and maintaining the army⁶ were non-welcomed changes in many provinces where the power of the local *a'cān* (notables) and the *'ulama'* (scholars of religious law) was strong. Partly due to the lack of trained bureaucrats, Reşid Pasha's solution was to appoint the provincial armies' leaders as governors, to restore the power of local notables in provincial councils, and send only financial advisers from Istanbul. This new mixed provincial management reinforced the authority of the central government and proved to be more or less effective in securing the incomes of the Empire.⁷

By the time of the *Hatt* of 1839, the Ottoman governor (*wālī*) of the Egyptian *wilāyat/vilāyet*, Muḥammad 'Alī Pasha (Kavalalı Mehmed Ali, r. 1805-1848), achieved an almost independent rule. The Pasha used Egyptian peasants as soldiers, unprecedented in the history of the Empire. With this army, trained by European (French, Italian and Spanish) military experts, he managed to help but also to menace Sultan Mahmud II, and after 1839, Sultan Abdülmecid I. In an extremely complicated game with the French, the British, the Russians, the Habsburgs and the Porte (especially with his arch-enemy Hüsvrev Pasha), Muḥammad 'Alī gained for his family the right to inherit the post of the Egyptian governor (*wālī*, in the rank of pasha, for a time grand vizier, based on family seniority) in 1841, again an unusual achievement.⁸

University Press, 1980), 154. For the origins of the 1839 Decree, Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Islamic Roots of the Gülhane Rescript," *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, 34, no. 2 (1994): 173-203.

⁶ Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 2:60.

⁷ Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 2:84-91.

⁸ Khaled Fahmy, *Mehmed Ali – From Ottoman Governor to Ruler of Egypt* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 97-98. İsmail Hakki Uzunçarşılı and Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 8 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih

The Pasha implemented many changes in the life of the Egyptian province, securing his revenues and the education of various individuals (Turks, Albanians, Armenians, Greeks, and Arabs) for his own administration. In this regard, the *Tanzīmāt* was partly an answer to the Egyptian developments⁹ (as the Pasha himself emphasized when in 1840, in the midst of his war against the Sultan in Syria, replied to the *Hatt* that he already introduced many of the demanded reforms).¹⁰ Of course, he did not implement the changes that would strengthen the central control.¹¹ Thus although in his monetary regime¹² and regarding the legitimizing ideology, Egypt remained an Ottoman province (and in Istanbul it was never viewed as anything else), the Pasha's administration lingered outside of the revitalized central control (not even a financial adviser was allowed to supervise Egyptian finances).¹³ Still, Muḥammad °Alī never risked his future outside the Ottoman Empire.

Egypt remained Ottoman not only politically, but partly financially and linguistically too: the Pasha paid a yearly tribute to the Ottoman treasury (40 million *kuruş*), the administration continued largely in Ottoman Turkish, the ruling class was Ottoman Turco-Circassian. His elite consisted of his household (blood relatives or in-laws), freed slaves, or newly contracted foreigners.¹⁴ Many of them were born either in Kavala or some other parts of the Ottoman Empire (Greek islands, Anatolia, or

Kurumu Basimevi, 1982-83), 5:200-201, underlining that in theory, the firman contained that the foreign policy of the Ottoman Empire will be applied in Egypt.

⁹ Fahmy, *Mehmed Ali*, 113-114.

¹⁰ Gabriel Baer, "Tanzimat in Egypt - The Penal Code," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 26, no. 1 (1963): 29-49. Here: 30.

¹¹ Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy 1800-1914* (1981; London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 65-72.

¹² Şevket Pamuk, "Interaction between the Monetary Regimes of Istanbul, Cairo, and Tunis, 1700-1875," in *Money, Land and Trade – An Economic History of the Muslim Mediterranean*, ed. Nelly Hanna (London-New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 177-205.

¹³ Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 2:58.

¹⁴ F. Robert Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives: from Household Government to Modern Bureaucracy* (1984; repr. Cairo: AUC Press, 1999), 23-25.

Smyrna). This elite defined largely the administration of the country up until the 1860s and can be labelled, following Ehud Toledano, as “Ottoman-Egyptian.”¹⁵

It was up to the international concert, the Ottoman central bureaucracy, and the ruling governor how to manoeuvre this hereditary province within (or outside) the Empire. Although Europeans viewed the next Pashas – Ibrāhīm (1848), °Abbās Hilmī I. (1849-1854), Sa°id (1854-1863), Ismā°il (1863-1879), Tawfīq (1879-1892) – in different lights, in general the European press interpreted their negotiations with Sultans Abdülmecid and Abdülaziz as a quest for the independence of Egypt.¹⁶ But this was not exactly the case.

The ruling family knew that that the source of their legitimacy was the Sultan and the only defence against European imperial powers was the Ottoman umbrella.¹⁷ But even the usually labelled “Ottoman” °Abbās clashed with the Porte over the introduction of *Tanzīmāt* and the Cairo-Alexandria railway.¹⁸ The Grand Vizier Reşid Pasha, whose one relative was married into the Egyptian ruling family but was forced to divorce by °Abbās, wanted revenge and restore full Ottoman control over Egypt. After a crisis played out also involving the British and the French, °Abbās finally accepted the *Tanzīmāt* (in 1852, but never read out), with a promise that financial matters would remain independent. In turn, Sultan Abdülmecid (rather, Reşid Pasha) permitted the construction of the railway by the British (opened in 1856).¹⁹ In legal terms, the most sensitive issue was the Sultan’s right of the *qişāş* (death sentence of a

¹⁵ Ehud R. Toledano, *State and Society in Nineteenth Century Egypt*, 16.

¹⁶ Ismā°il was even called a “king” during his visit in Paris in 1867.

¹⁷ The most clear expression of this analysis is usually given by Khaled Fahmy in his lectures and books about Muḥammad °Alī. However, an early article clearly presents this view concerning °Abbās Pasha: Helen Anne B. Rivlin, “The Railway Question in the Ottoman-Egyptian Crisis of 1850-1852,” *Middle East Journal* 15, no. 4 (1961): 365-388. here 367.

¹⁸ Toledano, *State and Society in Nineteenth Century Egypt*, 96.

¹⁹ Rivlin, “The Railway Question,” 377.

murderer) that was delegated to ʿAbbās for seven years in return of an increase of the tribute.²⁰ Otherwise, Turkish historians see the relations of ʿAbbās and the Porte as “quite normal.”²¹

The middle of the 19th century brought a change in the definition of the Ottoman Egyptian relations with the imperial centre. Saʿīd Pasha, the Francophile successor of ʿAbbās, tried to act as a faithful subject of the Porte although an important text – the contract for digging the Suez Canal – was not submitted to the Sultan for approval before Saʿīd Pasha’s signature in 1854.²² Egypt started to borrow money and asked for European credit as if it were an independent state. In fact, the borrower was not Egypt but Saʿīd, as *Wālī*, who needed money for the public works and proved to be too weak to resist the French imperial pressure in the negotiations about the Suez Canal Company.²³

War and Consequences

Around this time in Istanbul Sultan Abdülmecid had just finished the new imperial representative building, the Dolmabahçe Palace, which consumed enormous financial resources.²⁴ Furthermore, in 1853 the international roulette between the British, the French, the Russians, and the Ottomans brought the Crimean war (1853-1856).

²⁰ Baer, “Tanzimat in Egypt,” 33-34.

²¹ “Osmanlı-Mısır münasebetleri Abbas Paşanın ölümüne kadar bir normal şekilde geçti.” Uzunçarşılı and Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 6:90.

²² A favourable contemporary French description of Saʿīd’s initial years, Paul Merruau, “L’Egypte sous le gouvernement de Muhammad-Said Pacha,” *Revue des deux mondes* (1857): 323-366.

²³ David S. Landes, *Bankers and Pashas* (London-Melbourne-Toronto: Heinemann, 1958), 106-107. Landes suggests that Saʿīd was able to circumvent Sultanic permission for loans by issuing bearer bonds of short maturities (of the Egyptian treasury). But the main part of the debt was “private” loans, F. Robert Hunter, “Egypt under the successors of Muḥammad ʿAlī,” in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, ed. Martin W. Daly, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2:180-197. Here: 2:188. Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy*, 124-126.

²⁴ It is said that it was 5 million gold mecdiyye, equivalent of 35 tonnes of gold, cf. the references in Wikipedia’s article: http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dolmabah%C3%A7e_Saray%C4%B1#cite_note-9 (accessed July 11, 2011).

Although in this war the French and the British allied with the Ottomans, the Empire's treasury was emptied and the Empire asked for European loans (interestingly the first, 1854 loan was guaranteed by the increased Egyptian tribute)²⁵ while the ambassadors demanded even a higher price – new reforms.

The *Islāhāt Fermanı* of 1856 was partly intended to give guarantees to the Russians (and all other powers), before the final peace negotiations in Paris.²⁶ Unlike the *Hatt-ı Gülhane* of 1839, this Edict was the result of the agreement between European powers and the work of their ambassadors at the Porte, with British leadership. It included many European interests: reinforcement of the equality of subjects, establishment of banks, free investment of European capital, local representation in higher governmental levels, codification of penal and commercial law, even an annex containing that apostasy from Islam would not be punished by death.²⁷

As a loyal province, Egypt sent troupes to the Crimean war.²⁸ Yet the new *Hatt*, which was heavily criticized by many (including Reşid Pasha) while Ottoman Christians looked upon it as a “mixed blessing,”²⁹ was again slowly implemented in Egypt. Sa‘īd Pasha issued a new penal code based on the older Ottoman code of 1851 (that was, however, “of no great importance”).³⁰ While in Istanbul “the Age of

²⁵ Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy*, 100-101.

²⁶ Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 140. Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire (1856-1876)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 52-53.

²⁷ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 55.

²⁸ John P. Dunn, *Khedive Ismail's Army* (London: Routledge, 2005), 13-21. Toledano remarks that after Muḥammad °Alī, no Egyptian help was asked by the Porte in provincial wars, only for the international conflicts, when the Empire as a whole was in war. Toledano, *State and society in nineteenth century Egypt*, 74. However, Ismā‘īl's army was involved in Arabia in 1863 and then in the Cretan war.

²⁹ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 59.

³⁰ Baer, “Tanzimat in Egypt,” 38.

Ambassadors” arrived, in Egypt the Rule of Consuls was established.³¹ Sa^cid Pasha was especially afraid of the absurd consular demands,³² but helped Napoleon III sending Egyptian troupes to the Mexican War in 1862.³³ After Sa^cid’s death, Ismā^cil Pasha accessed the title of *Wālī* in January 1863, and sailed to Istanbul to receive the *firman*, like all the Egyptian Pashas (except Muḥammad ^cAlī).

Closer to Istanbul?

The first year of Ismā^cil, like his predecessors’,³⁴ can be characterized by a re-affirmation of the Ottoman status of Egypt. In 1863, he wanted to implement the new Ottoman penal code of 1858 (later in 1875, it was indeed implemented with some important adaptations, *without* mentioning the Sultan).³⁵ Between the Egyptian/Khedivial interests and the Ottoman centre an important person was Yusuf Kiamil (Kāmil) Pasha, the husband of a daughter of Muḥammad ^cAlī, who exactly in the spring of 1863 held the post of Grand Vizier.³⁶ Sultan Abdūlaziz visited Egypt this time, being the first and last Sultan who ever made such a symbolic journey.³⁷

During the Sultan’s visit, Ismā^cil might have recognized that despite all pretension, in the imperial hierarchy he was only one *wālī* among the others.³⁸

³¹ F. Robert Hunter, “Egypt under the successors of Muḥammad ^cAlī,” 187-188.

³² Mirrit Butrus Ghali, ed. *Mémoires de Nubar Pacha* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1983), 152-156.

³³ Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim, “The Egyptian Empire,” in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, 2:198-216, here 2:206. Cf. Ravaret et Dellard, “Historique du Bataillon Nègre Egyptien au Mexique, 1863-1867,” *Revue d’Egypte* 1 (1 June 1894): 43-53.

³⁴ ^cAbbās was extremely friendly and painful to gain the benevolence of Istanbuli Pashas and the Sultan when getting his *firman*. Rivlin, “The Railway Question,” 366.

³⁵ Baer, “Tanzimat in Egypt,” 45.

³⁶ *Mémoires de Nubar Pacha*, 215.

³⁷ L. Gardey, *Voyage de Sultan Abd-UI-Aziz de Stamboul au Caire* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1865). Muṣṭafā, *‘Ilāqāt Miṣr bi-Turkiyya fi ‘Ahd al-Khidīw Ismā^cil*, 29-35.

³⁸ One story says that Fuad Pasha publicly humiliated Ismā^cil because he – as Minister of War – refused the offered horse and walked by the Sultan thus forcing the *Wālī*, who hold a similar rank as vizier in the Ottoman hierarchy, to follow the example. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 143-144. However, in one of the most detailed descriptions of the imperial visit this detail is absent.

Perhaps because of this recognition, too, he navigated closer to the European powers, especially the French Empire. Yet, Ismāʿīl implicitly accepted Ottoman authority when requested a new title *from* the Sultan (*khidīw*, Khedive, with the right to negotiate with foreign powers)³⁹ in 1867 and a new succession order (from seniority to primogeniture), ratified in 1873.

Far from Istanbul?

Both *firman*s cost lots of money but gave the ruling family the guise of an independent dynasty, just like some of the public institutions installed in Cairo (Egyptian Museum – Būlāq, 1863; Khedivial Opera House, 1869; Egyptian Library, 1870). It must be underlined that for Ismāʿīl it was important to negotiate first with the Sultan and to invest large sums of money in convincing him and the Pashas of the Porte about a current major issue, rather than acting without any consent. Ottoman Egyptian relations with the imperial centre, however, were especially tense during the years 1867-1871, while Ismāʿīl perhaps hoped for the protection of the French Second Empire.

Instead, a curious momentum is when visiting the Pyramids, the Sultan got a carriage with four horses while Fuad and Ismāʿīl equally got carriages with two horses. Gardey, *Voyage de Sultan*, 140.

³⁹ Muḥammad ʿAlī's *firmān* in 1841 fixed his rank as a vizier. Ismāʿīl considered first the title *al-ʿazīz* (mighty) as a possible name for his new rank. This is the epithet (*laqab*) of Yūsuf, the governor of the Pharaoh in the Koran. Yet, there were two objections: first, that it is not splendid enough (after all, Yūsuf was the servant of the Pharaoh) and second, that in turn, the actual Sultan's name (ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, Abdūlaziz) could have been read as the servant of Ismāʿīl. The solution was an old semi-official practice in the chancellery: since the time of Muḥammad ʿAlī the *dīwān* (chancellery) was called *al-dīwān al-khidīwī* and occasionally ʿAbbās I and Saʿīd also used *khidīw* as unofficial title. *Khidīw* in Persian means "ruler/lord/prince," and was used in the Ottoman hierarchy as an epithet of ministers (viziers) and the Grand Vizier: cf. A. C. Barbier de Meynard, *Dictionnaire Turc-Français*, 2 vols (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1881), 1:691; and Ihsanoğlu, Şālih, *Al-Thaqāfa al-Turkiyya fī Miṣr*, 358. However, such a *rank* never existed in the Ottoman hierarchy, thus within the Empire Ismāʿīl indeed possessed a unique place. EI2, s.v. "khidīw" [khedive] (P. J. Vatikiotis). Cf. Ilyās al-Ayyūbī, *Taʾrīkh Miṣr fī ʿahd al-khidīw Ismāʿīl bāshā min sanat 1863 ilā sanat 1879*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūli, 1996), 2:384-387. *Mémoires de Nubar Pacha*, 301 says that after Ali Pasha, that time grand vizier, refused the title *al-ʿazīz*, it was he, Nubar, who chose *khidīw* from the titles offered by Ali as alternatives.

Khedive Ismāʿīl often visited Istanbul and when he was not there, he influenced Ottoman central politics via his *Kapı-Kethüda* (*qabū katkhudā-sı*, in this case, “representative”), who in the 1870s was Abraham (Eramyan) Bey (later Pasha), an Armenian,⁴⁰ just like Nubar (Nubarian) Pasha, an old servant of the Egyptian governors, now the Foreign Minister. The two Armenians, Abraham and Nubar, were sometimes quite successful in lobbying for the interest of the Khedive both in Europe and at the Porte.

Officially sanctified naming himself Khedive Ismāʿīl, his independence was more and more visible, including Egypt’s representation independent from the Ottoman Empire in the 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris. The preparations of the Opening Ceremonies of the Suez Canal (November 1869) caused a major international and Ottoman diplomatic turbulence⁴¹ – although all European (and non-European) monarchs were invited, Sultan Abdülaziz was not present in the pompous festivities. Tension was, however, lifted due to Abraham and Nubar’s mastery at the Porte,⁴² but still Istanbul had important demands, like the application of *Tanzīmāt* in Egypt,⁴³ and the Empire requested help from Egypt in 1877 for the Balkan wars.⁴⁴

Debts and Constitution

Such extravaganza, war, lavish expedients, expensive public works, bankers’ tricks, and bad management of previous debts contributed to financial crises both in Egypt

⁴⁰ Crabitès, *Ismail – The Maligned Khedive*, 161-170. See for the finances and final ruin of Abraham Pasha in the Ottoman Bank Archives: <http://www.obarsiv.com/english/as-abraham-pasha.html> (accessed July 11, 2011).

⁴¹ Al-Ayyūbī, *Taʾrīkh Miṣr fī ʿahd al-khidīw Ismāʿīl bāshā*, 1: 410-418, and he particularly emphasizes that Ismāʿīl looked down the Sultan Abdülaziz, 417. Cf. Muṣṭafā, *ʿIlāqāt Miṣr bi-Turkiyya fī ʿAhd al-Khidīw Ismāʿīl*, 136-138.

⁴² About the relation of Ismāʿīl and Abdülaziz in the 1870s, cf. Sommerville Story, ed. *The Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Bey* (London: Constable and Co., 1920), 94.

⁴³ Cf. the seven conditions in “Miṣr wa Dār al-Khilāfa,” *Al-Jinān* 1, no.1 (1870): 2-3.

⁴⁴ Dunn, *Khedive Ismail’s Army*, 78-79.

and (with a different structure) at the Ottoman centre around 1876.⁴⁵ Due to the aftermath of the Crimean war and bad management, in Istanbul the Imperial Treasury (and the Ottoman Bank) struggled with financial difficulties,⁴⁶ while in Egypt, by the mid-1870s finances were a constant worry.

In fact, there were three debtors to European bankers in Egypt: the “State,” *al-Dāʿira al-Saniyya* (Administration of State Domains), and *al-Dāʿira al-Khāṣṣa* or *Dāʿira-ı Khāṣṣa* (Ismāʿīl’s Private Administration). Khedivial and “state” possessions were usually not separated clearly. Furthermore, financial accounts by Coptic clerks in Arabic or Ottoman Turkish, and khedivial reluctance were among the reasons why the financial matters, responsibilities remained unclear to European moneylenders, and sometimes to the Egyptian administration as well. Finally, the two *Dāʿiras*’ debts were united but kept separately from the “State.”⁴⁷

This coincided with the enthronement of a new Sultan, Abdülhamid II (r. 1876-1909). Although Egypt was regarded as an independent country this time

⁴⁵ The Ottoman Empire first became bankrupt in October 1875. Christopher Clay, *Gold for the Sultan – Western Bankers and Ottoman Finance, 1856-1881* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 297-313. Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy*, 108-109. The Egyptian Khedive could not meet his obligations in 1876, but the official bankruptcy of the “state” was postponed until 1880 (Law of Liquidation). I am grateful to Roger Owen for calling my attention to this detail.

⁴⁶ Clay, *Gold for the Sultan*, 73-76 about the responsibilities of the Ottoman Bank as state bank and its final failure to act to do so (only from 1874 the BIO was accepted as a supervisory body over the empire’s finances). The history of the Ottoman debt is extremely complicated but it was always the Ottoman Government’s debt, and although the Sultan Abdülaziz expenditure is one of the elements. Clay, *Gold for the Sultan*, 87-88 and 282.

⁴⁷ The debts of the *Dāʿira* and the debts of the “State” were unified according to the Cave report in May 1876, but then were separated again in November 1876. *Conversion des Dettes de la Daïra Sanieh de S.A. le Khédive d’Egypte – Mission de MM. Jozon et Sandars* (Paris: Paul Dupont, 1878), 1-2. Ismāʿīl on 18 November 1876 accepted that his personal possessions (*al-Khāṣṣa*), or at least a large part, go to the *al-Dāʿira al-Saniyya* (thus became state possession) but this remains as a separate special, independent administration. *Ibid.*, 12. This structure was preserved until 1880. Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy*, 130-135. Cf. Ghislaine Alleaume, “Monetary Causes of the Financial Crisis and Bankruptcy of Egypt, 1875-1878,” in *Money, Land and Trade – An Economic History of the Muslim Mediterranean*, 206-222 about the monetary situation during Muḥammad ʿAlī, but still illuminating for later developments.

explicitly by the Europeans,⁴⁸ this was still not recognized in Istanbul.⁴⁹ After Muḥammad °Alī, Khedive Ismā°il received the most *firman*s from the Sultans (total 131 during his sixteen year rule).⁵⁰ The Egyptian events were closely monitored in Istanbul, and Ismā°il's *Majlis* (National Assembly) was taken into consideration (although sarcastically) as a good example.⁵¹

Due to the popular pressure, the ideology of the Young Ottomans,⁵² and Midhat Pasha's manoeuvres, in 1876 Abdülhamid II proclaimed a Constitution (*Kānūn-ı Esāsı*, its main author was Midhat Pasha).⁵³ Soon another Russian-Ottoman war broke out (1877-78) as an outcome of the continuous crises in the Balkans. Abdülhamid II, himself sceptic of the Constitution (suspended in 1878), had no means (no time and no intention) to enforce it in Egypt. At this time, the first Ottoman parliament was also suspended. It did not contain an Egyptian delegation, which alludes to the Ottoman central understanding of Khedivial Egypt as a vassal state⁵⁴ rather as an autonomous province.

Subsequently, Sultan Abdülhamid II or his statesmen could not circumvent the direct control of Egyptian financial matters by the French and the British, with the involvement of other international powers (especially the Austro-Hungarian

⁴⁸ A famous tableau in 1869, entitled *Ouverture du Canal de Suez – Nationalité Universelle* shows Ismā°il and De Lesseps, representing the East and the West in the framework of sovereigns, on the top the French Imperial Family, including also Sultan Abdülaziz, as the sovereign of "Turquie."

⁴⁹ Istanbulite journals in Ottoman Turkish still published Egyptian news under the "Internal affairs" (*Mawwād Dākhilīya*) section, even the Suez Canal was considered in this section, like in *Tekvim-i Vekayi*, 29 Rajab 1289 (14 October 1871), 2.

⁵⁰ In the 19th century, total 1064 Sultanic firmans were addressed to the Egyptian Wālis, alone Muḥammad °Alī got 709. Even Tawfīq got 39 and °Abbās Hilmī II. received 5. Undated list by unknown author, Carton 655, CA, DWQ.

⁵¹ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 366.

⁵² Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought – A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (1962; repr., Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

⁵³ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 366-383.

⁵⁴ Juan R. I. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East – Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's °Urābī movement* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 121.

Monarchy) in various forms.⁵⁵ In Istanbul an *Administration/Caisse de la Dette Publique Ottomane* was established in 1881, after the war of 1876-1878 (the “Decree of Muharram,” December 1881).⁵⁶ In both cities, Cairo and Istanbul, foreigners controlled the administrative expenses.

Since the Khedive was uncomfortable with the financial, and indirectly political, restrictions of his rule (he had to accept to establish a Government – Council of Ministers, *Majlis al-Nazzār* in 1878, too), he was forced to abdicate by the joint efforts of the French and British ambassadors in Istanbul. Abdülhamid II sent Ismā‘īl a short telegram, addressed to the “ex-Khedive,” in June 1879.⁵⁷ His son, the new Khedive Tawfīq was not successful in negotiating with the different Egyptian elites and forces (Turco-Circassian elite, Egyptian military men, Syrians, various people under consular protection) while maintaining the rule of French and British financial advisers (*Dual Control*). Concerning Egypt, Abdülhamid II remained passive until 1881, although in summer 1879 Tawfīq Pasha, just like his predecessors, sailed to Istanbul to receive the *firman* of investiture personally.

Occupation – Severing from the Ottomans?

In Cairo the financial problems resulted in public protests by the army leading to the so-called ‘Urābī-revolution (1880-1882), the main symbol being officer Aḥmad ‘Urābī.⁵⁸ Sultan Abdülhamid II paid close, “almost polite” attention⁵⁹ to the events

⁵⁵ In large, Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy*, 131-132. In particular, Owen, *Lord Cromer*, 117-137 for the period of 1879-1880. For these years, AbdelAziz EzzelArab, “The experiment of Sharif Pasha’s cabinet (1879): an inquiry into the historiography of Egypt’s elite movement,” *IJMES* 36 (2004): 561-589.

⁵⁶ Clay, *Gold for the Sultan*, 546-559.

⁵⁷ Crabitès, *Ismail*, 290.

⁵⁸ Aḥmad ‘Urābī, *Mudhakkirāt al-za‘īm Aḥmad ‘Urābī* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1983); a contemporary account: Khalīl Salīm al-Naqqāsh, *Miṣr li’l-Miṣrīyīn* 4 vols. (1884; repr., Cairo: al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li’l-Kitāb, 1998). Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East*; Donald Malcolm

sending various commissions from 1881 to Egypt in order to restore the means of communication with the Khedive, to preserve Egypt within the Empire thus prevent the creation of an independent Arab state.⁶⁰ Even Aḥmad °Urābī himself had in mind an Egyptian future within the Ottoman Empire⁶¹ – although finally the revolutionaries might have decided to break with the “the Turks.”⁶²

The Khedive, instead of using the Ottoman imperial negotiator (Derviş Pasha refused the involvement of Ottoman soldiers fighting against Arabs),⁶³ suppressed a spontaneous revolt in Alexandria with the help of the British, and outlawed °Urābī. Thus the British army landed in July 1882, destroyed the resistance, and restored the authority of Khedive Tawfiq. It seems that the British did not want to administer Egypt, only to secure order and the safety of the Suez Canal,⁶⁴ and in fact, every party – the British, the Sultan, the Khedive, the French and other powers – was confused about what to do. One thing was sure, Egyptian and non-Egyptian troublemakers were banned, imprisoned, exiled, or executed.

Reid, “The °Urabi revolution and the British conquest, 1879-1882,” in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, 2:217-238.

⁵⁹ Selim Deringil, “The Ottoman Response to the Egyptian Crisis of 1881-82,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 24, no. 1 (1988): 3-24. Here: 4.

⁶⁰ François Georgeon, *Abdulhamid II – le sultan calife* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), 222, based on a telegramme of Abdülhamid II in May 1882. In his memoirs Aḥmad °Urābī narrates that the Sultan sent decorations to the army officers. °Urābī, *Mudhakkirāt al-za°im Aḥmad °Urābī*, 56. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East*, 125.

⁶¹ Deringil, “The Ottoman Response to the Egyptian Crisis,” 5.

⁶² Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East*, 240. Even Egyptian Copts wanted to act only against the British, if the Sultan sanctifies this, 247. However, it seems that at one point in June 1882 the revolutionaries had enough of the Sultan: Wilfrid Scaven Blunt, *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922), 261, and wanted to establish an independent state.

⁶³ It is possible that Tawfiq feared that the Ottoman imperial envoy would depose him, an event, that was “in the air” as some witnesses wrote. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East*, 125 and for the sympathy of Derviş Pasha’s towards °Urābī, 247. But Blunt, *Secret History*, 228-234 says that Tawfiq bought Derviş Pasha’s loyalty for 50000 pounds. Deringil about Derviş’ negotiations, “The Ottoman Response to the Egyptian Crisis,” 9. See the telegraph of Tawfiq to the Sultan in (Prince) °Umar Tūsūn, *Yawm 11 Juliyya, 1882* (Alexandria: Maṭba°at Şalāh al-Dīn, 1934), 56.

⁶⁴ Owen, *Lord Cromer*, 177, 186.

Egypt remained part of the Ottoman Empire only in its legal and symbolic status,⁶⁵ since the British defined all financial, political and military matters, first with the intention of an early evacuation, but after around 1887, in the framework of a long-term imperial rule.⁶⁶ The most important aim was to secure the integrity of the “State” and the Khedive in order to pay back the loans and interests to the European creditors. The yearly tribute to the Porte continued to be paid also.⁶⁷ In order to manage these large payments, many earlier processes continued: out of the remains of an Ottoman provincial administration and of a khedivial, private administration, the new Egyptian State was created, with clearly defined state possessions and hierarchies. This structure, and the British Consul-General, Lord Cromer himself (governing between 1883-1907) secured the payments. After some experiments, finally it is the debt that finished the creation of a modern state in Egypt, along European standards, in order to serve the interests of creditors. The 1880s are defined by the political and symbolic cooperation between Lord Cromer and always at hand Nubar Pasha (Prime Minister between 1884-1888).

Egypt and the Ottoman Empire were not totally separated, however much was this separation was in the interest of the British in order to secure the control over the Suez Canal.⁶⁸ Even British diplomacy involved sometimes the imperial Ottomans in

⁶⁵ During the 1880s, the Ottoman journals either in French or in Ottoman Turkish, still communicated news from Egypt in the „Internal affairs” section, or, by the end of the decade, Egypt got a separate heading between the „Internal affairs” and „Foreign affairs.”

⁶⁶ Owen, *Lord Cromer*, 243-248.

⁶⁷ Even in the decree of Tawfiq of February 1882, in Blunt’s translation (from the French) it is said that the Chamber of Deputies cannot discuss two issues in a debate: 1. the annual tribute to the Porte and 2. the Public Debt (art. 34). Blunt, *Secret History*, Appendix III., “Text of the Constitution of 1882,” 387-396. However, this is hardly a constitution, rather an Organic Law. During the British occupation, the regular payment of the Ottoman tribute was finally agreed in 1885. Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 2:194.

⁶⁸ Owen, *Lord Cromer*, 177-178.

Egyptian or Sudanese affairs.⁶⁹ Ghazi Ahmed Mukhtar Pasha arrived to Egypt as the representative of the Sultan in 1885 and remained there until 1908.⁷⁰ Members of the khedivial family continued to visit (some of them even living in) Istanbul as before.⁷¹ Many Ottomans, be they Turks, Armenians or Greeks, living in Istanbul had financial interests or business investments, or, simply enough, relatives in Egypt.

Questions of Loyalty

The ruling family and Khedive Tawfiq might have recognized that their legitimacy as the representatives of the Sultan would be lost (or was lost already) so they should decide if the British army or something else would legitimate them in the eyes of the Egyptians. Meanwhile, the imperial doctrine shifted towards a more Turkic essentialism. During the rule of Abdülhamid II, with his support, ideologies reaching back for “Turkish” or rather “Turanian” pasts were updated with imperial interests, resulting in sometimes bizarre ideological mixtures, extending from Hungary to Mongolia.⁷²

Thus the Khedivial dynasty had to find new means for legitimizing themselves, either as Ottomans who are not Turks *per se* or as Egyptians. The only possible way, in the absence of a religious legitimacy (the Caliph was, of course, the

⁶⁹ Owen, *Lord Cromer*, 215-216.

⁷⁰ Owen, *Lord Cromer*, 217.

⁷¹ Members of the dynasty lived even in Republican Turkey, like Princess Iffet who died there in 1962. Hassan Hassan, *In the House of Muhammad Ali – A Family Album, 1805-1952* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2000), 18. See more about Khedivial family members in Istanbul in the next chapter.

⁷² Kemal H. Karpat, *The politicization of Islam: reconstructing identity, state, faith, and community in the late Ottoman state* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 68-87. Cf. Judith Winternitz. “The ‘Turanian’ Hypothesis and Magyar Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Culture and nationalism in nineteenth-century Eastern Europe*, eds. Roland Sussex and J. C. Eade (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, Inc., 1983), 143-158. Here: 152-153. Also cf., Somi Éva (szerk). *Budenz-emlékkönyv* (Budapest: Item Könyvkiadó, 2002), 50-52.

Sultan),⁷³ was an alliance with Egyptian Arabs. This alliance, in many ways, started during Muḥammad °Alī with the army and the °ulamā°, and continued by Ismā°īl in his patronage of Arabic literary activities. In terms of bureaucracy, the Egyptian rulers (in 1856 Sa°īd, later Ismā°īl) employed Egyptians in higher administrative positions, on the cost of the Turkish elite (but *not* in the army).⁷⁴

Thus the ruling family was forced to invent itself as an Egyptian dynasty without losing their Ottoman ties but just not too close to Abdülhamid II. A certain Egyptianization can be observed, including studying good Arabic by the sons of Tawfiq, like Prince °Abbās (later °Abbās Ḥilmī II). Post-Ismā°īl rulers contributed more and more to patriotic activities and patronized Egyptian institutions like the press or theatre in Arabic. The ruling family had consolidated itself since the mid-century *as* a dynasty,⁷⁵ but it is these years (1880s) that they started to become visibly an *Egyptian* dynasty. This nationalization, however, did not exclude the magnificent (protest?) celebrations of Sultan Abdülhamid II's anniversaries by the Khedives.⁷⁶ Such events show that for the Egyptian ruler and elite, the definition of their relations to the Ottoman centre still played an important role during the British occupation.

Although Abdülhamid II tightened its grasp on the Arab provinces,⁷⁷ which resulted in misery for patriotic Arab intellectuals, the double obstacle of khedival

⁷³ Although back in the 1860s, there was gossip that Ismā°īl wanted to be the Caliph – a very likely misunderstanding by the Istanbulite French press. *Levant Herald*, 4 March 1867, 2. In fact, the Egyptian ruler was sometimes a good candidate for the caliphate, which became a far likely possibility after the abolition of the caliphate by the new Turkish parliament in 1924. Cf. Elie Kedourie, *The Chatham House Version and other Middle –Eastern Studies* (1970; repr., Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1984), 182-188.

⁷⁴ Hunter, "Egypt under the successors of Muḥammad °Alī," 192.

⁷⁵ Toledano, *State and society in nineteenth century Egypt*, 47.

⁷⁶ Both the birthday and the enthronement of the Sultan Abdülhamid II was carefully celebrated throughout the 1880s, and the description of the celebration was always in the title page of the Arabic newspapers, like *Al-Ahrām*.

⁷⁷ Engin Akarlı, "Abdülhamid II's Attempt to Integrate Arabs into the Ottoman System," in *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period*, ed. David Kushner (Jerusalem: Yad-Izhak Ben-Zvi Press, 1986), 74-89.

autonomy and the British blocked Egypt. Yet, Abdülhamid's strong Muslim politics offered a new type of ideology for Egyptians under British rule. Thus paradoxically the Ottoman imperial representative in Egypt, Ghazi Mukhtar Pasha, became again an important symbol by the end of the 1880s. On the other hand, in this period, colonial Egypt was considered as a "free" place where intellectuals could flee from Sultanic oppression. The Ottoman-Egyptian question was present in Istanbul, where important Egyptian statesmen, like Ḥalīm Pasha, Muṣṭafā Fāḍil (Mustafa Fazıl) Pasha, or later ex-Khedive Ismā'īl himself were in exile with their Egyptian entourage.⁷⁸

When in 1892 °Abbās Hilmi II ascended "the throne" (receives the firman from the Sultan) new elements appeared in the political concert: pan-Arab, pan-Islam ideologies, and Egyptian nationalism in full blossom. Still, Ottoman ties remained important in Egyptian politics until 1914 and Ottomanism served as a possible option to express resistance to the British. Visibly, the Ottoman fez remained on the head of Egyptians until the WW2.

Conclusion

The political history of Egypt within the Ottoman Empire shows that her fate was decided by the way the Pashas defined their relationship with the Porte. The Ottoman imperial hub, within the narrower Arab Mediterranean and in the wider global imperialist context, provided possibilities and protection, but also restrictions and control. The rulers secured their own power militarily, legally, and financially but the Sultan guaranteed their legitimacy up to the 1880s. This view reclaims Egyptian

⁷⁸ The best example is Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī, cf. his *Spies, Scandals, and Sultans – Istanbul in the Twilight of the Ottoman Empire*, Roger Allen trans. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008). Cf. Emine Fuat Tugay, *Three centuries – Family Chronicles of Turkey and Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 203.

history as a constant negotiation not only with the European powers but first of all with the imperial centre. The Egyptian elite remained part of the Ottoman imperial elite by language, habits, blood, and connects. In the next chapter, I will introduce the cultural patterns of Ottoman ties that remained in Egypt even long after its British Occupation.

Chapter 2.

Citizenship and Urban Modernity in Cairo and Istanbul

After introducing the political negotiations between Ottoman Egyptian rulers and the central imperial administration, this chapter aims to further argue for the entanglements of Istanbul and Cairo that can be characterized as Ottoman. Since until 1867 theoretically only Ottoman citizens could own property in the Ottoman Empire, it is important to explore what this legal identity means, because the owners of theatres before this date were – presumably – all Ottoman citizens. I argue also that the basis for comparing Cairo and Istanbul is that they shared certain “Ottoman” features, embodied in centralized reforms and mixed lifestyles, being part of the same discourses, and partly tried the same solutions.

Admittedly, identifying the “Ottoman” is impossible or leads to essentialist definitions.¹ The meanings of Ottoman enormously changed during the 19th century and alluded to very diverse issues in different contexts, even transformed year by year. I explain this word as a legal category and as a cultural context in Istanbul and in Cairo in the late 19th century. This description is important because after politics and armies, law and culture bounded the two cities together and ultimately law and culture would separate them.

Ottoman, *Osmanlı* [°Uthmān-lı] was the name of the ruling dynasty of the Sultanic family, the descendants of Osman, and their language. After the 15th century “Ottoman” denoted also the members of the imperial elite, who increasingly were non-Turkish, often Christian, young slave boys. They became Muslims, studied the

¹ Hanssen, Philipp, Weber, “Introduction,” *The Empire in the City*, 10.

refined language, acquired administrative skills, and established themselves as ruling servants of the empire.² In Europe, the name “Turk” was improperly applied to them, as well as to the Sultan and the Empire as a whole. Apart from important administrative positions, Ottomans were also *re^ʿāyā* (*ra^ʿāyā*, flocks), tax-paying subjects of the Sultan (as opposed to the *ʿaskerī* class: military non-taxpayer subjects).³

Ottoman as a Legal Category in the 19th Century

In the imperial edict of Gülhane (1839) the subjects of the empire became equal in paying the tax, thus the difference between *re^ʿāyā* and *ʿaskerī* in this field was abolished. For the subjects as a whole, the edict used the word *teba^ʿa* (*tab^ʿa*, follower, subordinate), while religious groups were differentiated as “people of Islam and other religious communities” (*ahālī-i islām ve milel-i sâʿire*).⁴ The 1853 *Islāhāt Fermānu* reconfirmed the equality of the subjects of the Sultan and their legal status as guaranteed by the law.⁵ This was a step towards the legal definition of Ottoman citizenship.

An imperial law, usually called the Ottoman Nationality Law, – *ʿOsmanlı tābi^ʿyet kānūnu* (13 January 1869)⁶ – clarified that “every person, who was born of an Ottoman father and an Ottoman mother, or only of an Ottoman father, was an

² EI2, s.v. “Othmanlı” (C.E. Bosworth, J.H.Kramers, Suraiya Faroqhi, M.F. Köprülü et al). Cf. Pál Fodor, “Az oszmántól a törökig – a török nemzeti gondolat megszületése,” *Magyar Tudomány* 171, no. 4 (2011): 389-399.

³ EI2, s.v. “Ra^ʿiyya - 2. in the Ottoman Empire” (Suraiya Faroqhi).

⁴ The Hatt’s Turkish transliteration is in Uzunçarşılı and Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 5:255-258.

⁵ T. X. Bianchi, *Khaththy Humaioun ou Charte Impériale Ottomane du 18 Février 1856 en Français et en Turc* (Paris: Typographie Oriental de Madame Veuve Dondey-Dupré, 1856), 3-4.

⁶ Uzunçarşılı and Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 7:174-178.

Ottoman subject.”⁷ (Note the echoes of *sharī‘a* concerning the children’s religion in a mixed marriage!) The 8th article of the 1876 Constitution reinforced that “all subjects of the Ottoman State, without distinction, are called Ottomans.”⁸ These laws show that Ottoman was first of all a *legal* category: an individual under the Sultan’s protection who could be punished only with his agreement or in accordance with the Ottoman penal law. This category was embodied in a *passport*.⁹

The legal application of *Osmanlı* as the adjective of individuals under the law of the Sultan embodied also a search for an effective ideology that would secure the loyalty of various Ottoman communities towards the Sultan vis-à-vis emerging nationalisms. This is called, as a political ideology, Ottomanism (*Osmanlılık*), which was again and again redefined in intellectual debates and political communiqués until the end of the Empire.¹⁰ Ottomanism as a word was rarely used before the 1880s; rather, more frequent was *millet-i ‘Osmanlı* (*‘Osmanlı milleti/millet ‘Osmaniyye*), the Ottoman “nation,” a master concept of an imperial nation,¹¹ intended to include all peoples of all Ottoman provinces in one unity. Even such later nationalists as Ziya Gökalp remarked (in 1911) that “*Osmanlılık* (Ottomanism) is certainly a nation.”¹²

In this regard, the subjects of the Egyptian governor were all Ottomans because, in theory, they were all subjects of the Sultan. Yet, the penal code of

⁷ Cited in Anour Abdel-Malek, *L’Egypte Moderne – Idéologie et renaissance nationale* (1975; repr., Paris: L’Harmattan, 2004), 223. Specifically, Gianluca P. Parolin, *Citizenship in the Arab World – Kin, Religion, and Nation State* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 71-74.

⁸ “Devlet-i ‘Osmāniyye tābi‘yetinde bulunan afrādin cumlasine her hangi dīn ve mezhebden olur ise olsun bilā istisnā ‘Osmanlı ta‘bīr olunur.” I quote after the published version in *Basiret*, 8 Dhu’l-Hijja, 1293 (25 December 1876), 1.

⁹ Uzunçarşılı and Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 7:178. Hanssen, Philipp, Weber, “Introduction,” *The Empire in the City*, 10.

¹⁰ Uzunçarşılı and Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 8:229, 260-261.

¹¹ For the concept of “imperial nation” see Alexey Miller, “The Value and the Limits of A Comparative Approach to the History of Contiguous Empires,” in *Imperiology: From Empirical Knowledge to Discussing the Russian Empire*, Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University 2007. E-book: http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no13_ses/contents.html, 22-23 (accessed July 11, 2011).

¹² Quoted in Ebru Boyar, *Ottomans, Turks, and the Balkans – Empire lost, relations altered* (London: Tauris, 2007), 54.

Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha rendered Egyptians “Egyptian subjects” because they were judged according to his laws. Egyptian legal codes were time to time updated with the imperial penal codes, but the independence of the Egyptian governor, as the final source of secular judgement, remained.¹³ Thus the “indigénat égyptien” (*al-raʿawiyya/al-jinsiyya al-maḥalliyya*), Egyptian indigenous nationality, was in the making at the courts that had an ambiguous relation to the overarching legal status of an ʿOsmanlı subject.¹⁴ This status concerning Egyptians was never officially abolished, yet surely in the 1880s, Ottoman subjects were already distinguished from Egyptian subjects.¹⁵ As late as 1917, one author remarked: “unless a new law about Egyptian nationality is promulgated, it is practically impossible to distinguish who is Ottoman and who is Egyptian.”¹⁶

The overall legal setting in the Empire was even more complex, taking into consideration the old Capitulations by which the European powers protected their citizens and those originally Ottoman individuals who managed to get under their wings (especially rich merchants).¹⁷ Furthermore, in Egypt the establishment of the Mixed Courts after 1876 created a similarly complicated legal environment.¹⁸ Still, the concept of Ottoman can be understood as a legal, although *not activated*, category in Egypt just like in any other Ottoman province.

¹³ Rudolph Peters, “Administrators and Magistrates: The Development of a Secular Judiciary in Egypt, 1842-1871,” *Die Welt des Islams* 39, no. 3 (1999): 378-397.

¹⁴ In the view of some, the Egyptian is an exemplary case of provincial indigenous nationality, Parolin, *Citizenship in the Arab World*, 74-75, and n5.

¹⁵ *La Turquie*, 19 October 1886, 2.

¹⁶ C. Dahan is cited in Abdel-Malek, *L’Égypte Moderne*, 223, footnote 32. An important book I could not access is *Les questions de nationalité en Égypte* (Cairo: Imprimerie Misr, 1926).

¹⁷ Will Hanley, “Foreignness and Localness in Alexandria, 1880-1914,” PhD diss., Princeton, 2007.

¹⁸ The consular courts’ activity was reduced and the Mixed Courts took their place, where not only written codes but also natural law. Gabriel M. Wilner, “The Mixed Courts of Egypt: A Study of The Use of Natural Law and Equity,” *Scholarly Works* paper 210 (1975): http://digitalcommons.law.uga.edu/fac_artchop/210 (accessed July 11, 2011).

Ottoman Urban Modernity in Istanbul

Apart from the legal meanings of being an Ottoman, since “the passport was a necessary but not a sufficient criterion for being Ottoman,”¹⁹ other aspects of this word should be investigated. In the 19th century, an enormous change in education, lifestyles, tastes, and consumption habits took place in the wider context of the *Tanzīmāt* in all large Ottoman cities, an exemplary one being the imperial centre.²⁰ A “modern Ottoman” individual in a city remains a very complex category.

A typical Ottoman bureaucrat, a teacher and translator like Said Bey,²¹ or a merchant living in Istanbul, perhaps graduated from the *Mekteb-i Mülkiye* (Civil Service School), the Imperial College of Galatsaray, or from any of the new schools (if not abroad), could read French and Ottoman Turkish, was by birth for instance a Catholic Armenian or a Muslim Turk, possessed a wood or stone apartment, scan everyday the newspapers *Tekvim-i Vekayi*, *The Levant Herald*, *La Turquie*, or *Ceride-i Havadis*, discussed the news at the office and in the coffeehouse, prayed regularly, donated money to his religion’s charitable society, might long for (Ottoman) Turkish street-music and *Karagöz*, but also sometimes attended the Istanbulite theatres with his wife and daughters, who, by the way, played the piano and followed the Parisian fashion.²²

¹⁹ Hanssen, Philipp, Weber, “Introduction,” *The Empire in the City*, 10.

²⁰ François Geogon, “Le dernier sursaut,” in *Histoire de l’Empire Ottoman*, 523-576, here 554-558. Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultans*, 247-271. Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire*.

²¹ The diaries of Said Bey was analyzed by Paul Dumont, „Said Bey – The Everyday Life of an Istanbul Townsman at the Beginning of the XXth Century,” in *Osmanistische Studien zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte - In memoriam Vančo Boškov*, ed. Hans Georg Majer (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1986), 1-16. Dumont claims that Said Bey is an „ideal representative of a certain strata of the Istanbul society,” 15.

²² For Said Bey’s entertainments, cf. *ibid.*, 6-7; 12 visiting theatres with wives. Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire*, 42; Nora Şeni, “La Mode et le vêtement féminin dans la presse satirique d’Istanbul à la fin du XIXe siècle,” in *Presse Turque et Presse de Turquie Actes du colloque “La Turquie, les Turcs et la presse” 13 14 Mai 1986, Ecole Supérieure de Journalisme de l’Université de Marmara* (Istanbul-Paris: ISIS, 1992), 189-210;

The language he used in the office, *Osmanlıca*, was not the same he used to buy coffee in the street. *Osmanlı* also meant, at least in Istanbul, the bureaucrats, the effendis who “looked down on peasants,” thus expressing a class, or rather, an “urban” consciousness. An Ottoman bureaucrat in high position would distinguish his elevated language from *kaba türkçe*, the vernacular of everyday usage.²³ Still, the ‘*Osmanlı* language was simplified, centrally,²⁴ and debates about the difference between this language and “Turkish” started, sometimes naming simplified *Osmanlı* already “Turkish,” for instance in the 1876 Constitution (art. 18: “the official language of the State is Turkish”).²⁵

The transformation of *Osmanlıca* included translations, new literature, and journalism that introduced a large number of (French) loan-words and concepts.²⁶ Between the 1850s and 1870s large-scale literary activity spread, and famous writers, like Namık Kemal, were active also among the constitutional Young Ottomans (who were mostly excluded from power in the 1860s).²⁷ One of their main fields of activity was the theatre, consciously perfecting even the pronunciation of the (mostly Ottoman Armenian) actors.²⁸ Ottoman readership was large in the 19th century (including the oral transmission of the written word in *kirā’athānes* and coffeehouses), dependent on

²³ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 62-63. Cf. also Fodor, “Az oszmántól a törökig.”

²⁴ In 1855, an imperial decree ordered that official documents should use “clear, easy, and concise terms.” Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 177-178.

²⁵ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 182. Geoffrey Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform – A Catastrophic Success* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 13-18. More precisely: Art. 8.: *tab‘a-ı ‘Osmāniyyenin hidmāt devletde istihdām olunmak için devletin lisān-i resmīsi olan Türkçeyi bilmeleri şartdır* (“In order that Ottoman citizens could be employed in the services of the State, they must know the official language of the State, Turkish”). *Basiret*, 8 Dhu’l-Hijja, 1293 (25 December 1876), 1.

²⁶ Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire*, 120-122. Johann Strauss, “Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire (19th-20th centuries)?” *Middle Eastern Literatures* 6, no. 1 (2003): 39-76.

²⁷ Shaw and Shaw, 2:130-133, Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 212-221.

²⁸ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 167-184 for Turkish (?) and Armenian writers. Cf. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 297.

training,²⁹ and thus one important segment of the readership was certainly the bureaucrats who were specifically trained for the administrative service.³⁰

The Western clothes of the typical effendi and his wife and daughters today are framed in a debate connected to the rise of (bureaucratic and commercial) Ottoman bourgeoisie.³¹ However, it would be “naive to suggest that attaching a Westernized meaning to consumption automatically implies a mechanical mimicking of European ways,”³² although there were “superwesternized” individuals too.³³ The role of the Palace in this Westernization is controversial. Some Ottoman Christian communities and the imperial harem were among the earliest to introduce European music education among themselves.³⁴

These are only some aspects of Ottoman urban modernity that Istanbul provided for the provinces as a symbol.³⁵ Istanbul was also one, perhaps the most important, *gate* via which European goods/ideas/people arrived to the Empire, and propagated modern Ottoman lifestyle and urbanity in the framework of Ottoman

²⁹ Strauss, “Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire (19th-20th centuries)?” 41.

³⁰ The training of Ottoman bureaucrats and military men was a crucial question, cf. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 159-160. Jens Hanssen, “‘Malhamé-Malfamé’: Levantine Elites And Transimperial Networks On The Eve Of The Young Turk Revolution,” *IJMES*, 43 (2011): 25-48. Here: 31.

³¹ Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire*, 35-43.

³² Haris Exertzoglou, “The Cultural Uses of Consumption: Negotiating Class, Gender, and Nation in the Ottoman Urban Centers during the 19th Century,” *IJMES* 35, no. 1 (2003): 77-101.

³³ Şerif Mardin, “Super Westernization in urban life in the Ottoman Empire in the last quarter of the nineteenth century,” in *Turkey: Geography and Social Perspectives*, eds. P. Benedict et al (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 403-442.

³⁴ Osman Bey (Major Vladimir Andrejevich) estimated that (by the 1870s?) around two hundred girls were trained in the imperial harem. Osman Bey, *Les Femmes en Turquie* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1883), 313-316. For music in the imperial harem: Leyla (Saz) Hanımefendi, *The Imperial Harem of the Sultans – Daily Life at the Çırağan Palace during the 19th Century* (1925 in French; trans. Istanbul: Hil Yayın, 2001), 53-71. Emre Aracı, *Donizetti Paşa – Osmanlı Sarayının İtalyan Maestrosu* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi, 2006).

³⁵ For instance, images of Istanbul were in wall paintings Ottoman provincial towns and Istanbul, together with Paris or Venice, became part of the modern world in the imagination of for instance Damascus elite families. Stefan Weber, “Images of Imagined Worlds – Self-image and Worldview in Late Ottoman Wall Paintings in Damascus,” in Hanssen, Philipp, Weber, *The Empire in the City*, 145-171.

imperialism.³⁶ In turn, local provincial notables and intellectuals started to live according new standards, too, not necessarily by the insistence of the centre but to some degree by direct contact with European fashions and goods. The imperial metropolis many times asked for help from the (Arab) provinces whose elite was surprisingly loyal to the Ottoman dynasty and thus centre and (Arab) provinces were mutually engaged in practices of integration.³⁷

Urban Modernity in Cairo

Ottoman imperialism was not applied in Cairo the same way as in other Ottoman Arab provincial capitals where an Ottoman form of “*mission civilisatrice*” was rather at work.³⁸ The Egyptian governors had direct access to new technologies and fashions, and they were in direct negotiation with European powers, thus Istanbul mediated only in a few cases. Yet, the definition of a “modern Egyptian” in Cairo is equally problematic as a “modern Ottoman” in Istanbul.³⁹

A typical Egyptian bureaucrat or a merchant living in Cairo perhaps graduated in the School of Languages (*Madrasat al-Alsina*) or any of the Missionaries’ schools (if not abroad), could read French and Ottoman Turkish, was by birth for instance a Copt or a Muslim Egyptian, possessed a wood or stone apartment, scan everyday the

³⁶ According to Ussama Makdisi, Ottoman imperialism is “a set of imperial practices and discourses which were premised on the need to induct forcibly supposedly recalcitrant peripheries into an age of modernity.” Makdisi, “Rethinking Ottoman imperialism,” Hanssen, Philipp, Weber, *The Empire in the City*, 30.

³⁷ Jens Hanssen, “Practices of Integration – Center-Periphery Relations in the Ottoman Empire,” in Hanssen, Philipp, Weber, *The Empire in the City*, 49-74.

³⁸ Edhem Eldem, “Introduction,” in *Un Ottoman en Orient* (Paris: Actes Sud – Sinbad, 2010), 17-68, here: 40-42.

³⁹ Perhaps characteristic is the imperialist and racist description of the Baedeker of 1885, deviding “modern Egyptians” into ten categories mixing racial, social, and religious condition: *fellāh*, Copts, Beduins, Arabs in towns, Berbers, Negroes, Turks, Levantines, Armenians and Jews, Europeans (including Ottoman Greeks!). *Baedeker Egypt - Handbook for Travellers* (London: Karl Baedeker, 1885), 39-54.

newspapers *Le Bosphore Egyptian*, *Al-Ahrām*, or *Al-Mahrūsa*, even the *Ceride-i Havadis*, discussed the news at the office and in the coffeehouse, prayed regularly, donated money to his religion's charitable society, might long for Egyptian *takhts*, and also sometimes attended the Opera or the Azbakiyya Garden Theatre with his wife and daughters, who, by the way, played the piano and followed the Parisian fashion.⁴⁰ This class was considerable smaller than in Istanbul, and more characteristic of later decades (from the late 1890s).⁴¹

New written texts in Arabic boomed since the end of the 1860s, and journalism in Cairo became a main field of political and social activity. The *diglossia* of Classical Arabic and Egyptian colloquial posed fewer problems than that of *Osmanlıca* and *kaba Türkçe* but new literary expression was composed frequently in the colloquial.⁴² New theatricals were certainly among these artistic expressions, whose audience was very diverse. Cairo became one major centre of this new literary boom, retrospectively called *Nahḍa*, Arabic renewal, “awakening.”⁴³ Just like in Istanbul, Arab Egyptian and Syrian intellectuals were especially active from the late 1870s in politics in Cairo (and Alexandria), many, like ʿAbd Allāh Nadīm, also contributed to theatre.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Russell, *Creating the New Egyptian Women*, 38-46. For low-class and rural women cf. Judith Tucker, *Women in 19th Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

⁴¹ Although already Stanley Lane-Pool observed that in Cairo half of the population wears European dress “in case of the native officials modified by the red fez,” including ladies of the harems, *Social Life in Egypt* (London: J.S. Virtue, [1884]), 122. In the 1870s/80s, the Khedive still did not bring his wife(s) to public gatherings or receptions, so it is unlikely that other Muslim Egyptians would bring their ladies to public occasions.

⁴² Fahmy, “Popularizing Egyptian Nationalism – Colloquial Culture and Media Capitalism,” cf. his Introduction and especially 88-103.

⁴³ See the problems with this term EI2, s.v. “Nahḍa” (N. Tomiche); Badawi, *Modern Arabic Literature*; Al-Bagdadi, *Vorgestellte Öffentlichkeit*; Moosa, *The Origins of Modern Arab Fiction*.

⁴⁴ For ʿAbd Allāh Nadīm, cf. Moosa, *The Origins of Modern Arab Fiction*, 67-89; Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 145-153; Fahmy, “Popularizing Egyptian Nationalism – Colloquial Culture and Media Capitalism,” 95-103, 127-132; Al-Bagdadi, *Vorgestellte Öffentlichkeit* 156-161, and see Part V.

Clothes and consumption habits changed significantly, just like the built environment of Cairo.⁴⁵ Elite family structures were Egyptianized by the abolishment of harem slavery.⁴⁶ Change in consumption habits during these years (1860s-1870s) is harder to decipher than in Istanbul or compared to the relatively well-researched 1890s-1920s. Certainly by the end of 1880s, many urban Egyptian families adopted new habits and participated in new types of social activities, consumed European goods, clothes and mass luxury articles. In addition, during the rules of Ismā'īl and Tawfīq new schools were established, also supervised by the British, which extensively contributed to the rise of the so-called Egyptian “effendiyya,” a bureaucratic middle class from the 1890s.⁴⁷

Like Istanbul by its being the imperial centre, Cairo and its urban modernity embodied from the late 1860s a model of a modern Arab capital. Khedive Ismā'īl's reforms and new establishments were viewed as achievements in civilization and progress, as the Beirut *Al-Jinān* regularly wrote⁴⁸ – a journal that was financially supported by Ismā'īl.⁴⁹ This view, however, was not only the result of successful propaganda but it mirrored the enormous change in the city, which equally astonished Arab and European visitors.

⁴⁵ Cf. a very helpful overview the change of Cairo based on travellers' note in W. Fraser Rae, *Egypt To-day* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1892), 59-99; see for scholarly works on Cairo's urban transformation the next part.

⁴⁶ Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 22.

⁴⁷ Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, 342-436.

⁴⁸ *Al-Jinān* regularly reported on Egypt in the 1870s, the first one being reports about the Suez Canal opening in 1879, then in 1870 already praising the Khedive and Nubar Pasha, “Miṣr,” *Al-Jinān*, March 1870, 196-197; or in January 1872, 3-6, an article whose title indeed tells: “Egypt or the Progress in the Orient” (*Miṣr aw al-taqaddum fi'l-sharq*).

⁴⁹ Letter dated 20 January 1879, Carton 1/2, *Niḡarat al-Dākhiliyya*, CMW, DWQ.

Istanbul in Cairo, Cairo in Istanbul

Cairo had its own history of modernization/Westernization, similarly to and entangled with Istanbul, but not directed from there. What was, then, Ottoman in Cairo? In other words, how was Istanbul present in Cairo?

During 400 years of Ottoman rule and previously under other Turkic rulers, Egyptian Arabic was penetrated with Turkish/Persian words, Ottoman architecture in Egypt flourished, large land-owners were Turco-Circassians, on the streets Turkish *Karagöz* theatre was played as entertainment,⁵⁰ Arab Egyptian music took melodies and songs from Ottoman Turkish music,⁵¹ the Sultan's name was mentioned in the *khutba*, and Egyptians were sent to Istanbul to study, for instance, medicine.⁵²

In the late 19th century, one channel of the imperial presence in Cairo was the written word. The weekly *Al-Jawā'ib* not only informed the Arab (including Egyptian) public about the news in the capital but also transmitted a certain imperial vocabulary. Young Ottoman ideas in the 1870s about a constitution were widely distributed in Cairo/Egypt.⁵³ Ottoman Turkish/French newspapers were also read in the government offices,⁵⁴ and later Arabic newspapers (like *Al-Qāhira al-Hurrā* of

⁵⁰ Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre*, 14-17.

⁵¹ Scott L. Marcus, *Music in Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 108.

⁵² Ihsanoğlu, Şālih, *Al-Thaqāfa al-Turkiyya fī Miṣr*. This book mostly understands "Ottoman Egypt" until 1805, for arts esp. 68-76, but the most helpful part is the linguistic and a dictionary of Turkish (and Persian) words in the Egyptian colloquial, 201-510.

⁵³ Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East*, 119-122.

⁵⁴ Khedive Ismā'īl patronaged some of these journals published in Istanbul in French, like *La Turquie*. Carton 44, CAI, DWQ. The subscription for the official Egyptian journal (*Al-Waqā'i' al-Miṣriyya*) was compulsory for government officials until 1879. Letter dated ? January 1879. DWQ, Majlis al-Wuzarā', Nizarat al-Dākhiliyya, Carton 1/2. In 1881, the Egyptian Government paid 2505 subscriptions, mostly for Egyptian and Ottoman journals in Arabic, French, and Italian. Letter dated 8 January 1882 in French and Arabic, Ministre de l'Interieur – Direction de la Presse "Etat des 2505 abonnements payés par le Gouvernement Egyptien en 1881 au publications suivants." Carton 1/2, *Niẓārat al-Dākhiliyya*, CMW, DWQ.

Salīm Fāris) propagated Ottoman ideology.⁵⁵ The distribution of Ottoman ideas and the production of Ottoman Turkish printed books in Cairo⁵⁶ shows that Egypt was very much part of the Ottoman intellectual debates.

Istanbul was present in Cairo through individuals, too, firstly via the ruling family. Symbolic choices in architecture,⁵⁷ circumcisions, public ceremonies, and family weddings indicated that Egyptian governors became parts of the Ottoman elite in Istanbul. For instance, the 1869 wedding of Khedive Ismāʿīl's daughter, Tawhīda Hanım with Manşūr Pasha included a French circus (of Theodor Rancy) in the theatre of the palace al-Qaṣr al-ʿĀlī and also Egyptian musicians.⁵⁸ However, during this wedding the greatest star was the Turkish Muḥammad (Mehmed) Shukrī, a *ḥāwī* (magician) from Istanbul.⁵⁹ Even more “fastueux” weddings took place in 1873 when four of Ismāʿīl's children were married, among them his heir, Tawfīq.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Even the *Al-Ahrām* for some time was pro-Ottoman, Bishāra Taqlā, the editor in chief being an “Ottoman.” Leon Zolondek, “Al-Ahrām and Westernization: Socio-Political Thought of Bishārah Taqlā,” *Die Welt des Islams*, 12, no. 4 (1969): 182-195, here: 186.

⁵⁶ Between 1849 and 1893, 108 Ottoman Turkish books were printed only in Būlāq, but there were numerous other presses in Egypt, Ihsanoğlu, *Mısır'da Türkler ve Kültürel Mirasları*, 177-249.

⁵⁷ Doris Behrens-Abouseif, “The visual transformation of Egypt during the reign of Muḥammad ʿAlī,” in *Islamic Art in the 19th Century: Tradition, Innovation, and Eclecticism*, eds. Doris Behrens-Abouseif and Stephen Vernoit (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 109-129 (with images). Here: 109. Symbolic decisions, as Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha's choice for his mosque in the Citadel (of an older Istanbulite taste), perhaps were not conscious political statements but were made as the only available model to visualize power.

⁵⁸ Reliable information comes from *Al-Waqāʿiʿ al-Miṣriyya*, 31 March 1869, 2-3 and *Wādī al-Nīl*, 23 April 1869, 11-12. The marriage party lasted for three days. *Al-Waqāʿiʿ al-Miṣriyya* published the program of the Cirque Rancy for the three days (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday) separately from the program of the khedivial party. Among the many spectacles at the party the journals published, there is a certain *Jākmū* (Jacques Mous?) which is described as “*nawʿ tiyātrū frankī*,” perhaps this is also Rancy's circus. If not, then it was perhaps missing from the official program exactly because Rancy played for the harem. However, *Progrès d'Égypte* also published a program and it contains the name of the Cirque Rancy, republished in 16 April 1869, *Levant Herald*. The *Monde Illustré* published an image of this event on its title page 24 April 1869 and a short description of the Theatre of the Harem. This image has the title “En Égypte – Fête du mariage de la princesse fille du vice-roi. – Représentation donnée au théâtre de Kars-el-Aali [sic!] pour les femmes du harem.” This image dated falsely as 1873 in Caroline Gaultier-Kurhan, *Princesses d'Égypte* (Paris: Riveneuve Editions, 2009), 95 and mistakenly attributed to the marriage of Princess Fatma Ismail. From the Arabic journals it is clear that it is the marriage of Princess Tawhīda. Consequently, the date of 1868 as the marriage of Tawhīda is also false, Gaultier-Kurhan, *Princesses d'Égypte*, 92-93.

⁵⁹ *Al-Waqāʿiʿ al-Miṣriyya*, 31 March 1869, 2-3 and *Wādī al-Nīl*, 23 April 1869, 11-12. Much later, in 1882, Shukrī played also in the Zizinia Theatre. *Al-Maḥrūsa*, 30 January 1882, 3.

⁶⁰ *L'Orient Illustré*, 8 February 1873, 403, 408-409.

The Ottoman Egyptian elite especially cherished Ottoman Turkish music and European music, in the same mixture as the Sultanic household (*alaturka*, *alafiranga*).⁶¹ Egyptian musicians, like the singer °Abduh al-Ḥamūlī, were sent to Istanbul,⁶² perhaps numerous times.⁶³ Surely °Abduh al-Ḥamūlī was Ottomanized to a certain extent, for instance, he no longer wore an Arab *gilbāb* but took on an Ottoman *tarbūsh*.⁶⁴ During the reign of Ismāʿīl (who was Francophil) Ottoman Turkish plays were played in the court also, perhaps, for his harem.⁶⁵ The rich Egyptian Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī was attentive to Turkish-Egyptian musical exchange and integration, according to a quotation by Jurjī Zaydān.⁶⁶ In the 1880s, symbolic events included the celebration of the Sultan Abdülhamid II's birthday when again al-Ḥamūlī sang,⁶⁷ just like Cairo became a target of the Ottoman Operetta Troupe's tour as will be shown.

It was in the Khedivial Opera House that the political aspect of Ottomanism in Egypt and culture was connected in a double speech of praising the Sultan Abdülhamid II and the Khedive Tawfiq in the spring of 1889, which, regarding that

⁶¹ Ihsanoğlu, *Misir'da Türkler ve Kültürel Mirasları*, 37-43. Members of the khedivial family were themselves musicians (lutists) and protected Ottoman Turkish musicians, while others even married with musicians like Zahra hanım. Bernard Moussali, "L'Ecole khediviale," *Les Cahiers de l'Orient*, no. 24 (1991): 175-185, here: 176.

⁶² Some narrate that he was sent by Ismāʿīl, others that °Abduh was at the head of a "musicians's" mission to Istanbul which was put together Husayn Kāmil Pasha (the future Sultan of Egypt). Lagrange, "Musiciens et poètes," 70. It is not clear if he studied in Istanbul (Samia Akel, "Hamouli – La voix royale de la Nahda," *Arabies* [December, 1991]: 78-83, here 80) or entertained the Sultan (and if so, which one?).

⁶³ Lagrange says that after being selected as a member of a troupe sent to Istanbul, to the Yıldız palace, he also "accompanied Ismāʿīl" several times on his Stambouli visits. Lagrange, "Musiciens et poètes," 70. But in fact, the Yıldız Palace which is associated with the rule of Abdülhamid II only starts to play a role after 1876 which is quite late.

⁶⁴ Lagrange, "Musiciens et poètes," 68. Rizq, *Al-mūsīqā al-sharqiyya*, 1:42-43.

⁶⁵ Alfred J. Butler, *Court life in Egypt* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1887), 279-281.

⁶⁶ Jurjī Zaydān, *Taʾrīkh ādāb al-lughā al-ʿarabiyya*, 4 parts in 2 vols. (Beirut: Manshūrāt Maktabat al-Hayāt, 1967), 2:4:407-408. Cf. Lagrange, "Musiciens et poètes," 100.

⁶⁷ For instance, *Al-Ahrām*, 1 September 1888, 2.

the country was under British occupation, was certainly a very emphatic public statement.⁶⁸ (See more in Chapter 10.)

On the other hand, Cairo was present in Istanbul not only by elite exiles like Ḥalīm or Muṣṭafā Fāḍil (Mustafa Fazıl) Pashas but also by ordinary Egyptians.⁶⁹ Egyptian intellectuals were exiled too, like °Abd Allāh Nadīm, or lived in Istanbul and participated in the imperial intrigues, sometimes highly critically of Abdülhamid II. but also supporting Ottomanism to a certain extent, like Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī.⁷⁰ Merchants and landowners in Istanbul looked with keen eyes on the Egyptian news.⁷¹ The Egyptian Ottoman princesses owned palaces and *yalıs* in Istanbul and on the Bosphorus, and sometimes acted politically on behalf of their fathers or husbands in the imperial center.⁷² The wālīs from Muḥammad °Alī brought property in Istanbul, and especially Ismā°il’s Emirghan Palace is notable.

All these data point to the fact that Cairo was not only politically in a constant engagement with the Istanbul but many ties bounded the two cities, from legal questions via print culture to music.

Conclusion

Cairo and Istanbul as two independent centres and models of reform in the Ottoman Empire were entangled legally and socially. Cairo was *contemporary* – meaning an equality in the 19th century present - with Istanbul, it was within Istanbul’s imperial

⁶⁸ *Al-Ahrām*, 26 March 1889, 2.

⁶⁹ “Miṣrī fi’l-Asitāna,” *Al-Maḥrūsa*, 14 October 1886, 1.

⁷⁰ For al-Muwayliḥī, cf. Allen, *Spies, Scandals, and Sultans*, 2-4. For Nadīm, dying in Istanbul, Moosa, *The Origins of Modern Arab Fiction*, 69.

⁷¹ The best proof for this is the innumerable press accounts and continuous news about Egypt in the Istanbulite press.

⁷² Like Tawḥīda who was sent to Istanbul in 1865 by Khedive Ismā°il to get the benevolence of the Valide Sultan, Pertev Niyal, who was very influential on her son, Sultan Abdülaziz. Tugay, *Three centuries*, 133.

aura, and, as we have seen, there was a political competition between their rulers. The two cities' urban modernity, the emergence of new bureaucratic and economic groups was an outcome of the reforms – on the one hand, the centralization and reintegration of the Empire and on the other, the manoevers to keep the semi-autonomous status of Egypt.

Ottoman modernity is the urban context of the *Tanzīmāt*, associated with the transformation of education, consumption, and emergence of the press in the languages of the Empire, here Ottoman Turkish and Arabic. In Cairo, certain elements of this context were present but not by the direct initiatives of the centre. Urban modernity in Cairo directly filtered European models but also directly the Ottoman patterns. The elites of the two capitals looked constantly upon the other. Late 19th century Cairo and Istanbul became two distinct but entangled examples of urban modernity and social life, sharing many elements and in a negotiation with each other.

Part II. Urban Pleasure: Pera and Azbakiyya

After establishing Cairo and Istanbul as units of entangled comparison via politics, their social and cultural ties in the framework of Ottoman imperialism and reforms, this part explains how the built environment in these cities included what Draneht Bey named “the relaxing side of civilization,” music theatres. This corresponds to what Peter Hall called the “pleasure principle,” the 19th century European concept of the city as a place of recreation and pleasure. Here the emergence of the pleasure principle’s *infrastructure* is shown that later became the spots of cultural proposals.

In the late Ottoman port-cities new population and technologies together with new tastes and dwelling habits lead to an enormously complex process of urbanization in the late 19th century. Its example is mostly Alexandria as a cosmopolitan city, and this is the reason why usually Alexandria is compered to Istanbul, and not Cairo.¹ Acknowledging Alexandria’s importance, and – as will be shown – using this city (and many others, foremost Smyrna/Izmir) as a context, I still attempt to emphesize the rise of the municipalities and new urban representations in the two capitals. Music theatres and, foremost, opera houses, as I explained in the Introduction, were part of the urban politics of the state and these were realized in capitals.

In this second part, I describe the formation of two areas in these capitals, Pera (today Beyoğlu) in Istanbul and Azbakiyya in Cairo that I call entertainment areas. I

¹ Two studies drew a comparison between the Alexandria and Istanbul/Pera municipalities: Gabriel Baer, “The Beginnings of Municipal Government in Egypt,” in his *Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 190–209 and its critique, Steven Rosenthal, “Urban Elites and the Foundation of Municipalities in Alexandria and Istanbul,” in *Modern Egypt – Studies in Politics and Society*, eds. Elie Kedurie and Sylvia G. Haim (London: Frank Class, 1980), 128-136, here: 129. Rosenthal published his views as “Foreigners and Municipal Reform in Istanbul: 1855-1865,” *IJMES* 11, no. 2 (1980): 227-245.

argue that their emergence was crucial to later city developments. In chapter 3, I explain the administrative background of the cities and these areas, the connection between these areas and theatre architecture, and the importance of theatres in city transformations. In Chapter 5 I describe the actual constructions, their finances, and ownerships. To repeat, these processes established the infrastructure of pleasure and were potential locations for institutions of culture.

Chapter 3.

Administrations and Entertainment Areas: Why a Theatre?

Entertainment institutions of all kinds were nuclei of later theatres in Istanbul and Cairo. Open fields and squares (Tebebaşı [Petits Champs des Morts], Taksim, Azbakiyya) at the outskirts of cities/districts were the locations that became sites of entertainment. That is, given geographical potentials comprised certain possibilities for entertainers thus *predestined* the future of these locations.

Two areas became central to entertainment establishments: in Istanbul the district of Pera-Galata (Beyoğlu),¹ and in Cairo Azbakiyya and its environs.² Both were locations where foreign tourists usually lodged, and European embassies or consulates were set up (in both cases, foreign presence was centuries-old) but also were on the outskirts of the traditional city centres. The resident inhabitants had been extremely mixed since centuries, too, and the elite members of the local ruling class used the locations as well. These outskirts became integrated into the expansion of Istanbul and Cairo as capitals during the 19th century.

¹ Major contributions to the history of Pera and Galata: Celal Esad Arseven, *Eski Galata ve Binaları* (Istanbul: Çelik Gülersoy Vakfı, 1989); Mustafa Cezar, *19. yüzyıl Beyoğlu'su* (Istanbul: Akbank, 1991); Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul*; Nur Akın, *19. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında Galata ve Pera* (1998; repr., Istanbul: Literatür: Yayıncılık, 2002); Akyas Millas, *Pera – The Crossroads of Constantinople* (Athens: Militos Editions, 2006), Vahdettin Engin, *Sultan II. Abdülhamid ve İstanbul'u* (Istanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2001).

² Between 1867 and 1892 both in Cairo and in Istanbul other areas hosted theatres as well, only in Istanbul these were scattered between Hasköy, Kadıköy, or Gedikpaşa districts. Major contributions to the history of Azbakiyya: °Alī Pasha Mubārak, *al-Khiṭaṭ al-tawfīqiyya al-jadīda*, 20 vols. (1886-89; repr., Cairo: Dār al-Kutub wa'l-Wathā'iq, 1980-2007); Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya and its environments from Azbak to Ismail, 1476-1879* (Cairo: IFAO, 1985); Abu-Lughod, *Cairo – 1001 Years of The City Victorious*; Arnaud, *Le Caire – mise en place d'une ville moderne 1867-1907*; AlSayyad, Bierman, and Rabbat, eds. *Making Cairo Medieval* (Lanham, 2005), especially Heba F. Ahmed, "Nineteenth Century Cairo: A Dual City?" 143-172; Mercedes Volait, *Architectes et Architectures de l'Égypte Moderne 1830-1950 – Genèse et essor d'une expertise locale* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2005); Fathī Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḥadīdī, *Dirāsāt fi'l-taṭawwur al-°umrānī li-madīnat al-Qāhira* (Cairo: Al-Hay'ā al-Miṣriyya al-°amma li'l-Kitāb, 2010), etc.

Pera

Various administrative units supervised these urban spaces. In Istanbul, in the first half of the 19th century, the imperial administration was directly responsible for the issues connected to major buildings in Istanbul, or at least the issues of theatres were transferred to them, notably to the *Meclis-i Vālā*³ or the *Meclis-i Ebniyā* (Commission of Public Buildings),⁴ later the Ministry of Public Works.⁵ A cadastral system was completed in 1853 and this necessitated the establishment of a new central authority to control the taxes. This authority became the (old function of) *Şehir Emîni*, the mayor of Istanbul in 1854 (*Şehir Emaneti*).⁶

Most of the 19th century theatres were concentrated in Galata-Pera, which was the historically foreign part of Constantinople, be it under Byzantine or Ottoman rule.⁷ The buildings were located along, or close to, the Grand Rue de Péra (in Ottoman Turkish this street was called Ağa Cāmi° or Büyük Caddesi, today's İstiklal Caddesi). In order to understand the establishment of theatres in Pera, one must also take into account that in the 1850s more than half of the residents had non-Ottoman citizenship, and Pera's properties became extremely expensive.⁸ Furthermore, Reşid Pasha and Ali Pasha, the two most important Ottoman statesmen of the *Tanzīmāt*, also lived in the district.⁹

³ It is *Meclis-i Vālā-ı Ahkām-ı Adliyye*, "Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances," legislative council, established in 1837 by Sultan Mahmud II.

⁴ Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 2: 91.

⁵ Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul*, 43-44. For the work of the *Meclis-i Vālā* in general, İlber Ortaylı, *Tanzimat Devrinde Osmanlı Mahallî İdareleri (1840-1880)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2000), 33-34.

⁶ Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 2: 92.

⁷ Millas, *Pera – The Crossroads of Constantinople*, 16. Peraia-Pera means in Greek "beyond", "the opposite". Arseven, *Eski Galata ve Binaları*, 25-26.

⁸ Steven Rosenthal, "Urban Elites and the Foundation of Municipalities in Alexandria and Istanbul", 129.

⁹ Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 2: 92.

It is no wonder that the Ottoman authorities decided to design Pera and Galata as an “experimental area for urban reform.” Thus the Municipality of the 6th District (“La Municipalité de VIe Cercle” in French and *Altıncı Dâ'ire-i Beledîye* in Ottoman Turkish) was established in 1858.¹⁰ This authority was responsible for the urban development of Pera/Galata (Beyoğlu) and also for maintaining order and public health.

Three huge and terrible fires formed this district: in 1831, 1848 and 1870. As Zeynep Çelik pointed out, after each fire new houses were built and the urban infrastructure improved.¹¹ In the 1820s and 1830s, Pera's streets were in bad conditions, dirty and dangerous.¹² Regulations concerning the prohibition of flammable construction material were again and again introduced in Istanbul, extended in 1863 to all cities of the Empire.¹³ With the growing number of citizens, and the growing power of ambassadors, not only the authorities but also the citizens - “the public” of Pera as the Ottoman French press reported – contributed to the formation of the urban landscape with various suggestions.¹⁴

¹⁰ Ortaylı, *Tanzimat Devrinde Osmanlı Mahallî Idareleri*, 142-156. In fact, it was the *first* municipal district to be organized along contemporary European standards (one must note that, of course, previously there was also an Ottoman tradition for city development and urban control, see Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul*, 42-43; or that throughout the 19th century there were various experiments with new urban control, Ortaylı, *Tanzimat Devrinde Osmanlı Mahallî Idareleri*) and it served as an “experimental area for urban reform.” Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul*, 45. Akın, *19. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında Galata ve Pera*, 97-125. Rosenthal, “Foreigners and Municipal Reform in Istanbul: 1855-1865,” 233-239, Baer, “The Beginnings of Municipal Government,” 190-209.

¹¹ Apart from these huge fires, other “smaller” fires were also regularly in Pera. There were also huge fires in other parts of the city. Zeynep Çelik enumerates that between 1853 and 1906 there were 229 fires in the city. Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul*, 53.

¹² A. Brayer, *Neuf années à Constantinople*, 2 vols. (Paris: Bellizard, Barthès, Dufour et Lowell, 1836), 1:11-12.

¹³ Jean-Luc Arnaud, “Modernization of the cities of the Ottoman Empire (1800-1920),” in *The City in the Islamic World*, 2:953-975. Here: 957.

¹⁴ For instance, in the spring of 1869 “the public” demanded a public garden from the Municipality which was postponed (and never realised). Instead, the Municipality had to promise a resort in Kabataş *Levant Herald*, 27 May 1869, 2.

In order to establish a theatre, to erect a building, one needs land and permission. Theoretically, Ottoman citizenship was a requirement in order to acquire property in Istanbul until 1867.¹⁵ Foreigners bought land so far through nominal representatives.¹⁶ Before this date, private investors with Ottoman citizenship owned the theatre buildings in Istanbul but were not necessary identical to the owners of the land on which the building was built or looked upon their investment as a purely economic enterprise.

This is why proprietors of the land or the building were many times not identical to the impresarios who rented the buildings, or got concessions. When the tenants abruptly left, the proprietors were “forced” to deal with artistic-management issues. By the 1880s, the various municipalities in Istanbul took over/established many theatre buildings as municipal possessions but still rented them. Thus a system of private enterprise with municipal background came about to exist in Istanbul. (Cf. the details in Chapter 4).

By the beginning of the 1870s, more and more “Turks of good position and of the more modern school” moved to Pera. This, as will be shown, prompted theatre groups performing in Ottoman Turkish to play also in the Pera theatres.¹⁷ By the end of the 19th century, as Metin And remarked, this area became a real “theatre centre” (“tiyatrosu merkezi”),¹⁸ or, as a contemporary Italian traveller noted, “le West-End de la colonie européenne.”¹⁹

¹⁵ Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 2:119.

¹⁶ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 260-261.

¹⁷ The move of modernizing Ottoman Turks to Pera and their attendance to theatre in Ottoman Turkish is directly connected in the article of the *Levant Herald – Daily Bulletin*, 5 February 1872, 2 [994].

¹⁸ And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 213.

¹⁹ Edmondo de Amicis, *Constantinople* (1878 in Italian; trans., Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie, 1883), 64.

Azbakiyya

In contrast, the history of Azbakiyya in Cairo symbolizes the direct involvement of the ruler in urban affairs. Urban transformation and the representation of political independence were closely connected in the politics of Ismāʿīl Pasha.

Modern urban administration has its own history in Cairo.²⁰ In 1844 an organization called *Majlis Tanzīm al-Mahrūsa* (Commission of Cairo's Planning/Reorganization, *Tanzīm*) was established and was later renewed several times. Around the mid-1850s an office called *Muḥāfaẓat Miṣr* was set up which became the City Governorate.²¹ According to the 1868 suggestion of ʿAlī Mubārak, the *Tanzīm* came under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Works (*Nizārat al-Ashghāl al-ʿUmūmiyya*, established in 1864)²² as a sign of the new centralization.²³

In addition, many buildings were bought, destroyed or rebuilt by the Khedive's *al-Dāʿira al-Khāṣṣa* (Personal Administration).²⁴ Simultaneously, the khedivial administration looked for models of new urban governance in connection with legal reform. Already during Saʿīd Pasha the model of Istanbul served as a blueprint.²⁵ In 1867, the municipal laws of Paris were too complicated for Nubar Pasha.²⁶ In 1868,

²⁰ For Alexandria, cf. Volait, *Architectes et architectures*, 90-91.

²¹ Cf. Ghislaine Alleaume, "Politiques urbaines et contrôle de l'entreprise: une loi inédite de ʿAlī Mubārak sur les corporations du bâtiment," *Annales Islamologiques*, 21 (1985): 147-188, here: 154-155. The Arabic *daftars* (register books) of the *Muḥāfaẓat Miṣr* are the most valuable sources of the transformation of the city, in DWQ.

²² For later developments, cf. Volait, *Architectes et Architectures*, 93-97.

²³ Alleaume, "Politiques urbaines," 155-156. Cf. also André Raymond, *Le Caire* ([Paris]: Fayard, 1993), 310.

²⁴ For the formation of "private" viceregal administrations, cf. Hunter, *Egypt Under the Khedives*, 64-66.

²⁵ Volait, *Architectes et Architectures*, 91.

²⁶ Letter dated 8 November 1867, from Nubar to a Bey (?), Carton 2d48, CAI, DWQ. Nubar got the collection of laws of the Municipality of Paris, but it was too much so he asked them to abridge: "C'est un travail qui ne se trouve pas dans les livres; c'est la collection des lois que son Altesse demande." No data what happened after with this collection. Certainly, Nubar saw it as a possibility to establish his dream of the Mixed Tribunals.

the municipality (unclear which one) in Istanbul again served as an example, but Nubar judged it “imperfect.”²⁷

Unlike Pera in Istanbul, Azbakiyya in Cairo was not entrusted to a municipal council that controlled the private activity but was planned by the Khedive and his men. Immediately after his succession in 1863 he chose this area because being a favourite location of European tourists and Egyptian recreation, already housing a Europeanized garden, a private theatre, and public festivals,²⁸ it offered lucrative possibilities for investment. Ismāʿīl Pasha bought two old palaces at the southern side,²⁹ and wanted to sell the land to private investors.³⁰ French businessmen established a society to create a new park with houses for sale.³¹ This society could not finish the works and dissolved,³² so around 1866 one part of Azbakiyya remained as an abandoned construction site,³³ a “*cloaque affreux*.”³⁴

²⁷ “A Constantinople ils ont une municipalité mais c’est une municipalité imparfaite en ce que l’ambassade intervient, ils ont sur nous l’avantage d’un tribunal unique.” Letter dated Paris, 27 October 1868, from unsigned (Nubar) to unknown (Khedive Ismail), Carton 2d48, CAI, DWQ.

²⁸ For a full description of Azbakiyya of pre-Ismāʿīl period, cf. Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya and its environments from Azbak to Ismail*, and Chapter 5.

²⁹ Amīn Sāmī Pasha, *Taqwīm al-Nīl*, 3 vols. (1936; repr., Cairo: Dār al-Kutub wa’l-Wathāʾiq al-Qawmiyya, 2003-2004) 3:2:534. Firman of Ismāʿīl purchasing Ḥalīm Pasha’s palace for 15000 pounds and the *munākh* of Aḥmad Pasha for 35000, dated 3 Shaʿbān 1280 (13 January 1864).

³⁰ Nubar Pasha, the Foreign Minister of Egypt that time, mentions that Ismāʿīl at the evening of his succession brought forward a long cherished idea of “dépecer et vendre l’Ezbékiah.” *Mémoires du Nubar Pacha*, 211.

³¹ Behrens-Abouseif suggests that the plan was presented to Saʿīd Pasha in 1863, based on Linant de Bellefonds, *Mémoires sur les principaux travaux d’utilité publique exécutés en Égypte, depuis la plus haute antiquité jusqu’à nos jours* (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1872), 396 ff. (but in these pages there is no info about this), perhaps rather based on 599, although Bellefonds did not mention the name of the Viceroy.

³² Perhaps due to the financial crisis of Egypt in the summer of 1866 or to the 1865 European financial crises. Cf. Gérald Arboit, “L’arme financière dans les relations internationales: l’affaire Cernuschi sous le Second Empire,” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 46, no. 3 (1999): 545-559. Here: 546.

³³ Eugène Gellion-Danglar, *Lettres sur l’Égypte, 1865-1875* (Paris: Sandoz et Fischbacher, 1876), 13-14.

³⁴ Le Vicomte de Basterot, *Le Liban, la Galilée, et Rome* (Paris: Charles Dounoil, 1869), 272. The Vicomte spent November-December 1867 in Cairo and complains about these works compared to the previous garden.

After this failure to involve private capital, a new project developed, a “master plan for the entire city” of Cairo,³⁵ usually attributed to the impressions of Ismā‘īl at the *Exposition Universelle* of Paris in June 1867 and the success of the Egyptian exhibit, the first international independent representation of Egypt.³⁶ However, it is not the exhibition but the urban development of Paris that Ismā‘īl wanted to implement in Cairo, and demanded several experts from Baron Haussmann.³⁷

One may doubt if the so-called “master plan” ever existed.³⁸ The decision to establish a public garden in Azbakiyya was entirely the idea of Ismā‘īl, as one of the chief French engineers remembered.³⁹ According to Khaled Fahmy, ‘Alī Pasha Mubārak and Khedive Ismā‘īl agreed to start at Azbakiyya,⁴⁰ and such an agreement can be easily imagined, with the proper weight given to the khedivial intention.

Public parks were considered to be a duty of municipalities towards their citizens in Europe and elsewhere. In Istanbul at this time new types of public parks were introduced, one of the most important being the Taksim Garden, which took five years to construct, and was completed in 1869.⁴¹ Capital cities went crazy for new

³⁵ Abu-Lughod, *Cairo – 1001 Years*, 109.

³⁶ Çelik, *Displaying the Orient*, 32, 111-112. For the representational aspect, Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*.

³⁷ *Mémoires du Nubar Pacha*, 312; Raymond, *Le Caire*, 309; Abu-Lughod, *Cairo – 1001 Years*; 104-105; Volait, *Architectes et Architectures*, 103-106.

³⁸ Fahmy states that although a “plan” (rather a “project” – *lā‘iḥa* in its original text) was submitted in 1868 by ‘Alī Pasha Mubārak (an old schoolmate of Ismā‘īl in Paris, appointed in April 1868 as Minister of Public Works), it was not accepted and not implemented as it was. Fahmy, “Modernizing Cairo: A Revisionist Narrative,” 180. The text was published first in Alleaume, “Politiques urbaines,” the facsimile is 174-184. This draft of a project to reorganize the administrative structure and the legal background of the construction work in Cairo (and other cities) is dated 17 Rabī‘ al-Awwal 1285 (8 July 1868). Abu-Lughod admits that Azbakiyya’s new plan was first discussed and only after this was the new district of Ismā‘īliyya drawn (she dated both as of 1867 [!]), Abu-Lughod, *Cairo – 1001 Years*, 106. Although, for instance, the gas was introduced to Cairo already in 1865, no large-scale work started before 1868. Furthermore, Volait calls the attention that “not a single trace of such a plan of re-development was located until now.” Volait, *Architectes et Architectures*, 107. Volait is right since the *lā‘iḥa* does not contain a drawn plan but a series of administrative and legal suggestions.

³⁹ Bellefonds, *Mémoires*, 599. Volait, *Architectes et Architectures*, 111.

⁴⁰ Fahmy, “Modernizing Cairo: A Revisionist Narrative,” 177.

⁴¹ Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul*, 69.

parks as part of the rethinking a city; in the Ottoman, Habsburg, and French Empires as well as in the USA.⁴² Public parks represented not only entertainment spots but also locations for the pursuit of public health.

There is no evidence whether or not Ismāʿīl followed any of these examples, however, as he was educated in Vienna and Paris, lived as an exile in Istanbul, returned to that city almost yearly,⁴³ and, as a diplomat, revisited Rome and Paris, he may well have been very familiar with new urban fashions *before* his ascendancy.⁴⁴ Another strong motive behind Ismāʿīl's garden(s) might be that his venerated father, Ibrāhīm Pasha, established some great gardens and planted trees in Cairo back in the 1840s.⁴⁵ Ismāʿīl from the time of his ascension employed European architects to build palaces, especially the al-Jazīra Palace.⁴⁶

The usual reason given for “the master plan” or the “embellishment of Cairo” is the already mentioned event of the Suez Canal Opening Ceremony (finally scheduled on 17 November 1869). This was certainly an important event, perhaps decisive, but the already established nature of Azbakiyya as an entertainment location (both European and non-European), the early and reported intention of Ismāʿīl to do *something* with this spot,⁴⁷ may let me risk the statement that the plan to turn the area

⁴² Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992).

⁴³ A perhaps important detail might be an article about the citizens of Pera/Beyoğlu demanding a new promenade or public garden, published in September 1868, when the Khedive dwelled in Istanbul. *Levant Herald*, 4 September 1868, 1.

⁴⁴ Al-Ayyūbī, *Taʾrīkh Miṣr fī ʿahd al-Khidīw Ismāʿīl*, 1:8-16.

⁴⁵ Cf. the map of Cairo by Szultz (after Baur) dated 1846, indicating the territory of roughly today's Garden City and Tahrīr Square as “Les Plantations d'Ibrahim Pacha.” Also, Al-Ayyūbī, *Taʾrīkh Miṣr fī ʿahd al-Khidīw Ismāʿīl*, 1:143.

⁴⁶ Elke Pflugradt-Abdel Aziz, “Islamisierte Architektur in Kairo. Karl von Diebitsch und der Hofarchitekt Julius Franz – Preußisches Unternehmertum im Ägypten des 19. Jahrhunderts,” PhD diss., Rheinisch Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 2003.

⁴⁷ Not only the Azbakiyya, but one of the new quarters, later called Ismāʿīliyya, was perhaps also already conceived in 1865 by donating lands for buildings. Abu-Lughod, *Cairo: 1001 years*, 106, dismisses the foundation of Ismāʿīliyya at such an early date – which might be grounded, but one can

into an entertainment centre was the continuation of a failed privatization in a public square which was already a traditional entertainment territory just like Taksim of Pera/Beyoğlu in Istanbul.

Music Theatres and Cities

Theatre, in its 19th century European modality as a building, was a central element in the expansion and transformation of the urban areas themselves. The physical building of the theatre, especially an Opera House, required a new concept of urban space and was considered a material expression of various ideologies. The material form of a theatre building embodied an idea a collectivity thus theatres became representations of culture. In short, theatre buildings were vehicles of cultural politics.

Theatres and opera houses were not only parts of restructured cities, but in many examples were *causes* of the destruction of former arrangements of districts, best exemplified by the brutal demolition of the area around the Garnier Opera in Paris. Theatre and city achieved a new symbiosis in the late 19th century as a complex political, artistic, and social unity. This understanding was applied in Cairo but not in Istanbul.

In Europe 19th century theatre architecture developed into a special branch notwithstanding with the fact that the royal monopoly of building/establishing theatres – at least in France – was lifted temporarily in 1791,⁴⁸ and then in 1831 the symbolic order of turning the Opera in Paris into a semi-private institution helped to

still maintain that the intention of the urban reordering of Cairo was a continuous idea of Ismā‘īl, well before 1867.

⁴⁸ See the text of the decree of the l’Assemblée Nationale, dated 23 January 1791, in Jacques-Auguste Kaufmann, *Architectonographie des Théâtres ou Parallèle Historique et Critique de ces Édifices Considérés sous le Rapport de l’Architecture et de la Décoration* (Paris: L. Mathias, 1840), 290-292. Cf. also Alexis Donnet, *Architectonographie Des Théâtres De Paris ou Parallèle Historique et Critique De Ces Édifices* (Paris: De Lacroix-Comon, 1857), vij.

free theatres from state monopolies and, at that same time, paved the way to the understanding of theatres as locations of business.⁴⁹ This is why later theatre-buildings could become also the embodiments of bourgeois enterprise and urban spirit.

Since the location and the “character” of a theatre building had to be chosen very carefully because “it would be one of the principal monuments of the city,”⁵⁰ the urban significance of the theatre increased. New squares, new avenues, etc were built for theatres, and the whole city infrastructure would serve as a preparation especially for an imperial Opera House. Charles Garnier’s formulation by the end of the 1860s summarized impeccably the then contemporary understanding of what a theatre/opera building is.⁵¹

On the one hand, a theatre is a principal building because only two edifices were designed to host “if not everybody, but the possible greatest number of people: the church and the theatre.”⁵² On the other hand, it is a “public” building in numerous senses: it expresses the dignity of the theatrical art; it must be built by the State or the City on the money of the public for the public interest; it is, as cited already, a “compensation” by the State/City for the citizen’s work and tax,⁵³ it is a work of art itself, a building which expresses *sentiments*.⁵⁴ A theatre building was an embodiment of the relation between the State/City and its citizens, hence, at least for Garnier, it

⁴⁹ William L. Corsten, *French Grand Opera – an Art and a Business* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 17-18.

⁵⁰ Alexis Donnet, *Architectonographie*, 11.

⁵¹ Garnier claims that he visited all the major theatres of Europe and certainly exchanged letters of the directors of various theatres around the world as he gives in the appendix. Garnier, *Le Théâtre*, iv. I am grateful to Emre Aracı for calling my attention to this book.

⁵² Garnier, *Le Théâtre*, 7-8.

⁵³ Garnier, *Le Théâtre*, 11-12, 15-16.

⁵⁴ Garnier, *Le Théâtre*, 405.

was a symbol of their mutual cooperation: a guarantee that the tax is used for the benefit of the tax-payers.

The place of a theatre, because of its symbolic potential, thus had to be well chosen according to two criteria: the external circulation of the people and the proportions of the neighbouring buildings in order to elevate its dignity, its “grandeur.”⁵⁵ The environment of a theatre should form a part of the building and must be harmonising. It is especially blessing if the building is close to the grand boulevards and easily accessible.⁵⁶ In a certain sense the theatre/Opera emits a certain *aura* around itself and the city/quarter should be (re)built in order to emphasise and help this radiation.

Although Garnier does not mention it, there was one more, perhaps the most important aspect of choosing a central but somehow isolated location of the building and this is *security*. Theatre fires were quite common that time and thus easy access and relative isolation were considered as “logique.”⁵⁷ By the 1890s, most state/city regulations required that a theatre must be isolated or at least should look onto an open space (and connected to a water supply and with the police).⁵⁸ As we will see, of the theatres in the present work, a large number burned down and especially one – the Cairo Opera House – was continuously a subject of concern about fire.

⁵⁵ Garnier, *Le Théâtre*, 390.

⁵⁶ Garnier, *Le Théâtre*, 399.

⁵⁷ Alphonse Gosset, *Traité de la Construction des Théâtres* (Paris: Libraire Polytechnique, Baudry et Cie, 1886), 27.

⁵⁸ Edwin O. Sachs and Ernest A. E. Woodrow, *Modern Opera Houses and Theatres*, 3 vols. (1896, 1897, 1898; repr., New York: Benjamin Bloom, 1968), 3:143-162. Sachs publishes the regulations of Austria-Lower Austria, Belgium-Brussels, Denmark-Copenhagen, England-London, France-Paris, Germany-Prussia, Holland-Amsterdam, Russia-St. Petersburg.

The Types of Theatre Buildings and Musical Spaces

Different architectural types of theatres existed in the 19th century but there were no real distinctions between the architectural plan of an Opera House (usually called Italian), specifically designed for music and dance, and of a prose/lighter music theatre (usually called French theatre), or better to say, this is exactly the period when this type of distinction is born. Although French and Italian styles of music/opera were an object of debate since the 17th century, the first official (French) distinction between prose (for tragedy and comedy = French Theatre), music (singing and dancing = Opera), and mixed theatres (comedies and dramas mixed with music = Opéra-Comique) dated from 1807.⁵⁹ At the same time, these three were considered as “grands théâtres” in opposition with “secondaire” theatres (Vaudeville, Variétés, etc.).⁶⁰ Genres and buildings were thus bound together, also mixing aesthetic values with class interests.

It is worth underlining that theatre buildings were only one type of location among many where music theatricals could be played or spectacles could be presented. Private performances, open-air festivities, parks, temporary buildings, or special locations like cafés chantants, café-theatres, café-houses, pubs, or even boats/yachts, not to mention carnivals, parades, or balls must be taken into consideration. Having said this, theatre buildings - which were intended, designed, used, and perceived as such - carry special importance because they were *public* and usually intended to remain *permanent*.

⁵⁹ The regulation of the French Ministry of Interior concerning the theatres in Paris, dated 25 April 1807 is published in Kaufmann, *Architectonographie des Théâtres*, 302-310.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 303.

Building Arab and Ottoman Turkish Theatres

Was there any specificity of a theatre building in Cairo or Istanbul in the 19th century, compared to this, mostly French, understanding? Pre-1850 theatre buildings in both capitals, just like in Alexandria, were wooden constructions, as will be shown. All were in private ownership, where we have data, although occasionally subsidized by the rulers. The buildings were usually poor, having not much internal decoration, and their location – if known – had no special importance in the given city in any sense.

Later, Europeans wanted to establish specific theatres for Arabs and “Turks” in Istanbul and Cairo *and/or* theatres that were designed for theatrical activity in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic. In the next chapter we will see the actual theatrical constructions and the discourses around them, here I survey those plans and arguments that were *never* established. Speaking strictly in terms of architecture, there is no data what would be specific in an Arab or Ottoman Turkish theatre, compared to the theatres housing performances in European languages in the same cities. A recent experiment to identify a “genuine architectural language” in 19th century theatres of Istanbul results in identifying a special assemblage of environmental elements and exemplifying the Gedikpaşa Theatre as “an organic case.”⁶¹

In Istanbul in 1850 a certain Henri Houquet wrote a letter to (Mustafa) Reşid Pasha (at this time Grand Vizier) with a request to build a theatre in the Old City. Houquet explicitly alludes to the permission of a Théâtre de Pera (must be the Naum Theatre) and as a good businessman he wanted to create a rival theatre in the opposite city, in Istanbul, especially for the inhabitants in this part. Houquet offered a theatre “des representations de pantomimes mêlées de musique, de danses, de combats (sic!)”

⁶¹ Ezgi Yazıcı, “Theatre in Nineteenth Century Istanbul: Cases for the Translation of an Architectural Type,” (master’s thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2010), 3.

which would narrate events from the Ottoman history and thus “exciter l’ardeur guerriere chez le soldat.”⁶² It seems that Houquet tried to establish a theatre with the argument of *education* and *military morals*.

In Egypt, the Italian architect/entrepreneur, Pietro Avoscani, already proposed a theatre for Muḥammad °Alī sometime in the 1840s, and later, in 1857, another one in a competition for the theatre of Alexandria.⁶³ These were intended for the European audience. A celebrated French architect, Hector Horeau (1801-1872), claimed that already in 1838 he proposed to build a huge Theatre Arab with gas lightning.⁶⁴ In 1869/spring 1870, being invited to the Suez Canal ceremonies⁶⁵ Horeau was asked to submit plans for urban improvement that were too futuristic and were not accepted.⁶⁶ While in Cairo, during the spring of 1870, he held lectures which were advertised in Arabic as well,⁶⁷ possibly visited by Egyptians.⁶⁸ This time he had drawn a plan for a “théâtre arabe,” dated April 1870. Horeau imagined a wonderful futuristic, very

⁶² Letter dated 1 February 1850, from Henri Houquet to “Rechid Pacha,” (Mustafa Reşid Pasha, Grand Vizier that time), HR.TO. 410/66, BOA. A letter was written in the case of Houquet, dated 18 Jumādhi’l-Ākhir 1266 (1 April 1850), A.MKT.MVL. 26/33, BOA. But there is no letter which would indicate what was the final decision.

⁶³ Ezio Godoli, “Architetti e ingegneri in Egitto: una emigrazione politica di lunga durata – Italian architects and engineers in Egypt: a long-lasting political emigration,” in *Architetti e ingegneri italiani in Egitto dal diciannovesimo al ventunesimo secolo - Italian architects and engineers in Egypt from the nineteenth to the twentyfirst century*, ed. Ezio Godoli and Milva Giacomelli (Firenze: Machietto Editore, 2008), 13-72.

⁶⁴ Hector Horeau, *L’Avenir du Caire au point de vue de l’édilité et de la civilisation* (brochure without date, editor, place), 5. I am grateful to Mercedes Volait for referring me to Horeau.

⁶⁵ Florian Pharaon, *Le Caire et la Haute Egypte* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1872), 14.

⁶⁶ Paul Dufournet, *Hector Horeau précurseur – Idées, Techniques, Architecture* (Paris: Editions Ch. Massin, [1980]), 16.

⁶⁷ *Wādī al-Nīl*, 4 March 1870 (on the title page 1869 is wrongly printed), 1347-1348. Repeated in *Wādī al-Nīl*, 7 March 1870 (on the title page 1869 is wrongly printed), 1363-1364.

⁶⁸ Agent Z’s report mentions that in 1870 in the Hotel d’Orient a lecture was held about Arabic theatres. Letter dated Le Caire le 27 janvier 1871, to Monsieur Nardi, Inspecteur de Police au Caire from Agent Z. 5013-003022, Usrat Muḥammad °Alī, DWQ. See more about this document in Chapter 11. Although the *Wādī al-Nīl*’s advertisement does not mention theatres among the topics of Horeau, his lecture was indeed held in the Hotel d’Orient on 7 March 1870. Cf. previous footnote. Since we know that he made his drawings for an Arab/Egyptian National Theatre in April 1870, it is not unlikely that Agent Z reports about his lecture as one of the inspiring sources. Horeau indeed knew about Syrian theatrical activities as well.

impressive building which was never realized.⁶⁹ In his lectures Horeau argued for the establishment of Arab theatres because, first, there is one in Syria, second, that it would be just if “we have three theatres, then the Arabs, who have their part, would have one for themselves.”⁷⁰

The idea to establish a specific Arab theatre was almost at the same time coined by the Syrian journal *Al-Jinān*, in 1871.⁷¹ However, this idea was not taken until 1875, when the Khedive Ismā‘īl wanted to erect two theatres; one in Cairo, and the other one in Manṣūra for Arabic troupes, that is, Arab Theatres, but no data is available about the planned (?) buildings.⁷² We have no data what would be specifically “Arab” or Egyptian in these two buildings, apart from hosting only performances in Arabic.

Many descriptions are available in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic about theatres (both in Western Europe and in Istanbul and Cairo, respectively)⁷³ but these descriptions do not contain any requirement for a specific architectural feature that would relate to an essentialist view of an Arab or Ottoman theatre building. The first description of the requirements of a theatre building in Arabic derives from the 1900s by Sulaymān Ḥasan al-Qabbānī but he does not specify these as something essentially Arab.

⁶⁹ The total view is published in Dufournet, *Hector Horeau précurseur*, 124-125, the original is kept in the Victoria and Albert Museum. For the sketches of the details cf., *ibid.*, 126-128.

⁷⁰ Horeau, *L’Avenir*, 30.

⁷¹ *Al-Jinān*, 1871 as quoted in *Al-Jawā‘ib*, 10 May 1871, 2.

⁷² *Revue de Constantinople*, 13 June 1875, 594. The *Revue* cites the *Phare d’Alexandrie* as a source. Sadgrove refers to *Al-Jawā‘ib*, 16 June 1875.

⁷³ Muḥammad Kāmil al-Khatīb, ed. *Naẓariyyāt al-masrah* (Damascus: Manshūrāt Wizārat al-Thaqāfa, 1994). Reinhard Schulze, “Schauspiel oder Nachahmung? Zum Theaterbegriff Arabischer Reiseschriftsteller im 19. Jahrhundert,” *Welt des Islams* 34, no. 1 (1994): 67-84. For an Arabic press account about the Politeama in Alexandria cf. *Al-Ahrām*, 24 January 1884, 3.

More precisely, Sulaymān Ḥasan al-Qabbānī⁷⁴ described the requirements of a stage (*marsah!*). It must be raised with an arm (*dhirāʿ*) or an arm and a half above the ground and must be well proportioned, and firm (*matīn*). The front of the stage must be lower than its back so that the audience could see properly everything. It can be covered with carpets and textiles. When the actors step or sit on stage (*marsah*) they must be careful to remain visible to the audience and never forget that a successful performance partly achieved by the good composition, the skill of the actors, and the proper place.⁷⁵

Although in Qabbānī's description perhaps the carpets and textiles are the only non-European elements, we cannot find any Egyptian or Arab architectural specificity that would lead to a definition of an Arab theatre building. However, although I am not convinced that in terms of theatre buildings in Istanbul or Cairo any type of "architectural translation" took place, there was certainly one element which was unique in these buildings, and this is the so-called harem-boxes. These special boxes were built in the Comédie, the Circus, and the Opera House in Cairo with thin wire so that no one could see the ladies behind. In Istanbul in the Gedikpaşa Theatre there were some harem-boxes too and the Sultan's box was also wired (cf. next chapter for details). Although not a public theatre, the Yıldız Palace Theatre also contained similar harem-boxes.

Visiting Europeans curiously mention the harem-boxes and tried to spy on the ladies, although these boxes were forbidden even to the police (cf. chapter 11). The

⁷⁴ Khuri-Makdisi, in her index is mistaken that Ḥasan al-Qabbānī is identical with the famous theatre-maker al-Qabbānī since he was Aḥmad Abū Khalīl. Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean*, 274. Thus, she cannot be sure that the "Abbani Bey" who protested (!) the establishment of a municipality theatre for Arab performances in Alexandria between 1892-19912 is identical with Ḥasan Sulaymān al-Qabbānī, 199, n50.

⁷⁵ Sulaymān Ḥasan al-Qabbānī, *Bughyat al-Mumaththilīn*, 35-36.

existence of hidden presences in a public theatre – where visibility was the most important element – added new meanings to this type of building, because in this way, the interior architecture was partly adjusted to the needs of Muslim rulers. This element, however small a detail it is, might count as a special feature of theatre buildings in Cairo and in Istanbul, although harem-boxes were never added, as far as I know, to any new theatre building in these cities after 1870.

Conclusion – the Importance of Theatre Buildings in Cairo and Istanbul

By the end of the 1860s both in Istanbul and Cairo, along with the general urban transformation and redefinition of their status as modern capitals, a new administrative and ownership structure had been set up. While in Istanbul, the control and development of Pera was exercised by its Municipality as it evolved via private enterprise from the 1850s, later in Cairo the Khedive took the development of Azbakiyya as his personal project, and arranged the ground, literally, through the *Muḥāfazat Miṣr* and the Ministry of Public Works, for the erection of theatres and new European style houses. These two different policies of initiating reform show paradoxically in the imperial centre a decentralized urban administration while in Cairo a construction and transformation introduced from above.

Theatres, as I demonstrated above, played important roles in the worldwide patterns of modern city transformation. Theatres were closely associated with various conceptions of the city, the empire, the nation or the citizens and thus were embodiments of cultural politics. Opera Houses structured the cities, especially Paris and Vienna, as if cities, in a way, should be reorganized/rebuilt in order to secure more space and suitable conditions to emphasize the magnificence of these buildings.

Theatres formed part of the transformation Ottoman cities, too, in line with the worldwide trends (as European contemporaries observed).⁷⁶ Sometimes theatres are examples of European colonial power, like in Tunis or Algeria,⁷⁷ other examples, among them Istanbul and Cairo, show much complicated cases as we shall see in the next chapter.

⁷⁶ No one can testify it better than Garnier himself who in his 1871 book lists the Cairo Opera House and the Naum Theatre in Constantinople (Istanbul) among other European and non-European theatres. Garnier, *Le Théâtre*, 418-419.

⁷⁷ The most visible is the case of public squares often accompanied with theatres in Algiers and Tunis. Zeynep Çelik, *Empire, Architecture and the City – French-Ottoman Encounters, 1830-1914* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 116-132.

Table 4.1

Stages in Istanbul, a selection (1839-1892)

Minor scenes, cafés chantants (among them Café Oriental, Café Luxembourg, Café Alhambra, Café Eldorado, Alcazar, Trocadéro, Jardin de Taxim etc), clubs (Teutonia, Italians' Society, Salle Adam, etc) are not indicated. In chronological order.

Sources: Ceride-i Havadis, Revue de Constantinople, Metin And, Journal de Constantinople, The Levant Herald, AO, BOA, etc.

Name	Owner/Director	Foundation	Location	Final abolishment	Remarks
“Opera House”	Gaetano Mele	1838/1840?	Taksim field	burned down in 1841	
Naum Theatre	Michel Naum, Joseph Naum	1839-1847-1853	Grand Rue de Péra	7 June 1870, fire	Aracı, Naum.
Theatre in Ortaköy	?	1858/1879	Ortaköy	still in 1885	perhaps rebuilt, or not the same building
Dolmabahçe Palace Theatre	Sultan Abdülmecid	1858	next to Dolmabahçe Palace	1860s? I. Kemal, Memoirs, 94.	where now the stadion is?
Theatre in Hasköy	Migirdic Cezayirliyan?	1859?	Hasköy	?	A.MKT.MVL 114/40, BOA
“Istanbul Theatre”	?	1859	Close to Tatlı Kuyu	?	likely the Gedikpaşa
Gedikpaşa Theatre=Gedikpaşa wāqi° tiyatrosu / Osmanlı Tiyatrosu Théâtre Osmanié	Ömer Bey, Yavur Pasha; in AO 1881 and 1883 the owner is still Ömer Bey!	1859?	Gedikpaşa district, also close to Tatlı Kuyu	1884 december	perhaps identical with the “Istanbul Theatre”
Palais de Cristal=Théâtre Français=Fransız Tiyatrosu1.	Barthélemy Giustiniani	1862	320 Grand Rue de Péra	not functioning as a theatre after 1902	entertainment complex with a scene and restaurant

					also, Grand Concert International
Théâtre Concordia/ Jardin de Concordia (summer scene)	Andréa Xenatos, later together with A. Livada, later only A. Livada	1872	331 Grand Rue de Péra	1906	today its place is the Church of St. Anthony
Jardin de Téké	Agostini	1872	Grand Rue de Péra	still in 1875	(still works in the 1880s under the name Hotel et Jardin du Teke)
Croissant	Léonard Billorian = Billorioğlu	1874		destroyed in 1881	<i>La Turquie</i> , 27 April 1881
Théâtre des Variétés = Fransız Tiyatrosu II.	Bossy and Brun	1875, architect: Barborini	??? Grand Rue de Péra	1877 /	Under this name a new theatre, sometime between 1904 and 1909 in the Cite d'Alep, 158 Grand Rue de Péra, until 192?
Theatre in Kadıköy	perhaps the Greek church?, perhaps subsequent buildings	18??		until the 1910s	After the 1910s perhaps rebuilt, different names like "Hallé"
Théâtre Verdi (from 1896 becomes the Odeon Theatre)	J. (G.) Dandolo; then from 1896 G. Raftopoulos	1879?	134 Grand Rue de Péra	until 1896 Verdi, then Odeon, until 193?	
Jardin Municipal des Petits Champs = Tepebaşı wāqī ^c belediye bağçesi In the garden a building	Guatelli Pasha's idea, then Municipality; usually rented to private impresarios, like L.	[1855]-1871-1881	Rue Mézarlık = Rue des Petits Champs = Tepebaşı Caddesi	1892-190?-1910-1969 (several reconstructions,	The Garden was opened summer 1880

called Théâtre des Petits Champs; then another scene in the Garden, called Théâtre d'Été des Petits Champs= Kiosque; a new building was built in the 1890s	Billorian			totally newly built in 1910?, destroyed finally in 1969)	The theatre building is first mentioned in spring 1881; the summer scene was burned down in June 1890, rebuilt soon,
Nouveau Théâtre Français / Nouveau Théâtre de Péra / Théâtre de Péra = Fransiz Tiyatrosu III.	Armenien Church	1884		1892, fire	
Theatre of Mehmed Effendi	Mehmed Effendi	Data from June 1885	Old City?	?	
“Théâtre Osmanié”		1887	?	?	
Yıldız Palace Theatre	Abdülhamid II	1888	Yıldız Palace	until today	
Theatre of Ömer Effendi	Ömer Effendi	Data 1889?	?	perhaps the Gedikpaşa?	DH.MKT. 1794/88, BOA
Theatre D'Amérique	tenu par Sotiraki, then by Spiro Croucli	1892	212 Grand rue de Galata	1902	

Chapter 4.

Theatres in Pera and Azbakiyya: Private Capital and State Initiative

This chapter explores the construction of the theatre buildings in Pera and Azbakiyya with an outlook to the theatre in the Gedikpaşa district of Istanbul. I explain also how these new buildings became parts of Arabic or Ottoman Turkish discourses, and I argue that their establishments, private or state, embodied the infrastructure of cultural politics.

In Arabic, theatre buildings were called (*maḥall*) *al-tiyātrū*, *mal^ʿab*, *malhan*, *marsaḥ*, and later *masraḥ*, in Ottoman Turkish *tiyatrolu*, *tiyatrohāne*, *lu^ʿbet-hāne*, *oyun-ı mahall* (or *oyun mahallı*), *oyun yeri/berri*. Architects of diverse origins designed the buildings: Italian, English, Greek, German, Armenian, and they used the then contemporary models of theatre buildings.¹ Usually they constructed theatres with half-ring shaped auditoriums in order to give the possibility to the audience to regard the stage and each other at the same time.

Reconstructing theatre building processes will help us to explore the strategies of private entrepreneurs and the involvement of the authorities, ultimately, the infrastructure of cultural politics. The story of a building can also highlight financial questions, property rights, and administrative mechanisms. For a list of 19th century theatres in Istanbul, see Table 4.1, and until 1892 in Cairo, Table 4.2.

A circus or a theatre should match two criteria in Cairo and in Istanbul ideally:

1. it should be located close to the intended audiences (no public transport yet), and ideally
2. it should not disturb the peace and rest of the inhabitants. To these two

¹ Of these models, see the theatre typology of the LeBlancs. Louis LeBlanc et Georges LeBlanc, *Traité d'aménagement des salles de spectacles*, 2 vols. (Paris: Vincent, Fréal and Cie Éditeurs, 1950), 2:4-5.

requirements sometime joined the already surveyed three other (French/European) criteria: 3. easy access, 4. an environment that elevates its grandeur, and 5. isolation for security reasons. Only the Cairo Opera House and the Tepebaşı Theatre fulfilled all five requirements.

Pera: The First Theatre?

The question of which theatre was the first one in Istanbul is perhaps meaningless. For instance, Metin And narrates that supposedly a theatre was established in Galata in the 18th century by an Italian from Genève and it was still working in 1827. This information would establish continuity between pre-19th century theatres and new 19th century theatres, even if this theatre, again supposedly, burned down in the huge fire of 1831.² However, we have no data at all which confirms its existence,³ just gossip about perhaps another theatre in Istanbul (exact location unknown) in 1835.⁴

² And, "Türkiyede İtalyan Sahnesi," 127-142. Here: 128. However, And does not provide any source for this information. Still, Sevingil and And, based on Adolphe Thalasso, claim that the first 19th century theatre in Pera was a French Theatre built by Giustiniani, a Venetian. (Sevingil, *Opera san'ati*, 17-18. And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 200.) Thalasso, who was raised in Pera in the 1860s and loved theatre, tells (in 1899) that Giustiniani, after Europeans in Pera had hosted many private performances, built a six-storey magnificent building "in the centre of Pera," during the first years of the rule of Abdülmecid. According to him, it was called Théâtre Français and also Palais de Cristal. Adolphe Thalasso, "Le Théâtre Turc Contemporain," 1038-1039. However, we have no data to confirm this piece of information and it is likely that it is based on confusion. Serious doubts can be raised about these data since nowhere we find the name "Palais de Cristal" before 1862, when indeed an institution under this name was opened and Giustiniani was indeed the proprietor. Giustiniani owned buildings in Pera before this date where balls were organized, but I have no data about theatricals. See below. A good description of the 1831 fire is in *Revue Etrangère de la littérature, des sciences et des arts* (St. Petersburg, 1832), vol. 1: 266-275.

³ Certainly, the Frenchman Brayer who visited first Istanbul in 1815 and then spent there 9 years, does not mention any theatre in Pera in his otherwise detailed analysis. He says there is "aucun libraire, ni cabinet de lecture, ni bibliothèque, ni club, ni théâtre, ni musée." Brayer, *Neuf années*, 1:15. Also, John Auldjo, *Journal of a Visit to Constantinople* (London: Longman, 1835), 56 wrote that in 1833 "the evenings at Pera are not agreeable, there being no public amusements into which one can enter." This indicated that these Europeans did not find a European theatre in Pera, although certainly in greater Istanbul many Ottoman Turkish theatrical amusements were performed.

⁴ "Du Théâtre Grec Modern," *Le Monde Dramatique*, 1835, 398-400. Here: 400. See also Jules Amic, "Spéctacles chez les Turcs," *Le Monde Dramatique*, 1835, 412-415.

In the summer of 1837 a circus company arrived to Istanbul.⁵ In spring 1838, Italian entertainers arrived from Greece, and started to perform in the outskirts of Pera. Seeing their success, the Austrian/French equestrian company of the Sultan (perhaps identical with the one that arrived one year earlier) demanded also permission to perform in public. Both companies set up amphitheatres in the Taksim field during the summer of 1838.⁶ The equestrian company can be identified as Louis Soullier's (1813-1888, leader of the Viennese troupe of Madame de Bach) while the Italian artists were a group of actors under the leadership of Gaetano Mele, a clown. Soullier and Mele naturally became rivals.

Soullier's circus was installed in Taksim, next to (*muttasıl ve mulassık*) Gaetano Mele's amphitheatre. His and Mele's men seemingly were not on the best terms. Mele's troupe used fire a lot, so Soullier was frightened to have his animals and people burned. This is why he wrote a complaining letter directly to the Sultan (Mahmud II), in February 1839, in which he asked if Mele could be moved to another

⁵ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 34, with reference to the *Tekvim-i Vekayi* 25 Rabî' al-Awwal 1253 (page 1, the circus artists came from Belgium!) and 23 Rabî' al-Akhir, 1253 (page 1, Austrian circus artists!). And takes it for granted that it was Soullier's circus but in these articles only stands the fact that it was an Austrian circus. We cannot be sure if it is De Bach's Austrian Circus Gymnasticus under the leadership of the Soullier. During the 1836 wedding festivities of Mihrimah (Mihirmah?) Sultan and the son of Mehmed Sa'îd Pasha (29 April – 7 May 1836) and the circumcision ceremony of the heir prince Abdülmecid (10 May – 17 May 1836), Austrian acrobats were already present in Istanbul. Özdemir Nutku, "Major festivities organized during the reign of Mahmud II," in *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, 4 vols., ed. Kemal Çiçek (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2000), 829-840. Here: 835. Cf. for the marriage also *Journal de Smyrne (Commercial, Politique et Littéraire)*, 14 Mai 1836, 3. For the circumnsions, 21 Mai 1836, 3. In fact, Mihrimah became the wife of Sa'îd Pasha, serasker and died in 1838. *Journal de Smyrne (Commercial, Politique et Littéraire)*, 7 July 1836, 3. For this marriage also a French orchestra was ordered from Paris. *Le Ménestrel*, 1 May 1836, 4.

⁶ John Reid, *Turkey and the Turks, being the present state of Ottoman Empire* (London: Robert Tyes, 1840), 217-225. Cf. Emre Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu – 19. Yüzyıl İstanbulu'nun İtalyan Operası* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2010), 50-51. The Italians may come for the festivities of the Kurban Bayram. *Journal de Smyrne*, 17 March 1838, 2 or for the Birthday of the Prophet, accompanied by two days of public festivals, *Journal de Smyrne*, 9 June 1838, 2.

place. The Sultan ordered the governor of Tophane to investigate the issue, and finally moved Soullier.⁷

In addition to the two circuses, during the autumn of 1838, a theatre of a certain Monsieur Navoni is mentioned as offering plays somewhere in Istanbul,⁸ but this theatre seems to be a recent construction.⁹ There must have been quite a competition,¹⁰ but finally Gaetano Mele got the permission to build a theatre in Pera in December 1838. Because of the historical importance, here is the announcement:

Le Grand Seigneur a définitivement accordé au sieur Gaetano Mele l'autorisation de construire un théâtre à Péra. Le sieur Mele a eu l'honneur de faire représenter deux fois sa troupe d'acrobates devant le Sultan qui l'a magnifiquement récompensé; il a aussi présenté une petition pour obtenir de donner des representations, à Constantinople même, pendant les nuits de Ramazan mais cette demande a été réjetée à cause des inconvénients qui pouvaient résulter d'un spectacle nocturne pour la tranquillité et le bon ordre.¹¹

⁷ Three documents belong to the digital *gömlek* of HAT. 758/35796, BOA. None of them is properly dated. The first one – the Hatt - is the only one which bears a date at the back of the sheet (because only this one has its back scanned – one has to apply for the Directorate of the Ottoman Archive to see these documents hardcopy and I had no time for this detail) and this is 6 Dhu'l-Hijja 1254 (20 February 1839). However, in the catalogue, Soullier's letter (that is, the Ottoman Turkish translation of a French or Italian original) is dated of 29 Dhu'l-Hijja 1254 (15 March 1839). But if the Hatt itself is dated 6 Dhu'l-Hijja which is actually a reaction to Soullier's complain (*iştika*) then Soullier's cannot be later – perhaps, only its translation or copy.

⁸ *Journal de Smyrne* (Commercial, Politique et Littéraire), 22 December 1838, 2. “La troupe de funabules de M. Price danois, composée de douz sujets, dont le plus agé n'a que 12 ans, commencera ses representations dimanche prochain, au théâtre de M. Navoni. On fait le plus grand éloge de ces jeunes artistes qui, dit-on, font des prodiges.” No mention of any theatres in Frédéric Lacroix, *Guide du Voyageur à Constantinople et dans ses environs* (Paris: Bellizard, Dufour, et Cie., 1839), 66-69 (Pera's description). However, it is almost sure that some kind of amateur theatrical activity went on in Istanbul, like in 1835 the wives of the foreign ambassadors formed a theatre group (perhaps in a private salon that they called “theatre”). *Le Ménestrel*, 4 November 1835, 4.

⁹ *Journal de Smyrne* (Commercial, Politique et Littéraire), 29 December 1838, 2. “Le théâtre construit à Péra par M. Price est achevé et doit ouvrir définitivement dimanche prochain. La police ayant eru, par mesure de bon ordre, devoir ne pas permettre aux Turcs d'assister aux representations du soir, le directeur a annoncé qu'il en donnerait une pour eux dans le journée.”

¹⁰ In the autumn of 1838, the *Journal de Smyrne* wrote that a theatre building was proposed in Pera but the “propriétaires du noble faubourg ayant représenté à l'autorité locale le danger d'un âreil edifice au milieu de toutes ces maisons en bois, il parait decide qu'on ne donnera pas suite à ce projet, au moins pour le moment,” 20 Octobre 1838, 2. This report cannot concern the Naum Theater since it was in the outskirts. However, it seems that the opposition was solved and soon with “souscriptions particuliers” a project of a theatre was communicated. *Journal de Smyrne*, 10 November 1838, 3.

¹¹ *Journal de Smyrne*, 17 November 1838, 3. The section of the news from Constantinople is dated 13 November.

This theatre, which would be the first of the *Tanzîmât* theatres in Pera (but elsewhere in Istanbul perhaps there were earlier scenes) was planned to built by stone, in front of the “Palais de Sardaigne” in Pera, and they wanted to play “la comédie en français, en italien, en turc (!).”¹²

During next year, 1839, certainly two playhouses were in use in Istanbul.¹³ Although the news above clarify the issue about Mele’s permission in 1838, contemporaries provide various data,¹⁴ and even according to Mele’s own recollections, he was granted land in Taksim to build *an Opera House* at the marriage of Fethi Ahmed Pasha and Atiye Sultan (the daughter of the Sultan Mahmud II) in

¹² “sera construit en pierres, sur la vaste emplacement vis-à-vis le palais de Sardaigne.” *Journal de Smyrne*, 8 December 1838, 3.

¹³ The earliest report from January 1839 informs us about *two* theatres. *The Times*, 8 January 1839, 6, quoted in Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*, 52. Another report of April provides data again about two theatres: a *working* Italian Opera (“Opéra-Italien”) where operas of Italian composers were executed. The anonymous reporter emphasizes that the theatre have been enjoying continuous favour “since its opening” that suggests a recent opening. The second institution, a “Théâtre du Faubourg Pera” is mentioned as under preparation with a promised opening in September 1839. *La Revue musicale de Paris*, 2 May 1839, 147. Letter dated 4 April. A curious detail that the *Journal des Artistes*, 14 July 1839, 32 informs the readers that “Un grand théâtre, où l’on représentera des pièces en langue turc, va s’établir à Constantinople, sur la place de Taxine, le sultan en a accordé le privilège au comédien turc Ali-Aga.” *Le Monde Dramatique* reports again about two theatres: a “théâtre de Constantinople” where Italian operas were executed and a “théâtre de Péra” where the Figaro is prepared for the autumn opening, *Le Monde Dramatique*, 1839, 286. Emre Aracı quotes *The Musical World* of September 1839 about “a brilliant Opera House at Constantinople” which was often visited by the Sultan Mahmud II (he died in July 1839). Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*, 53. So far, no corresponding archival material was discovered for this Opera House thus our only sources are *only* these French and English reports from 1839. If we judge the reporter’s description as an exaggeration, then we may think of one of the amphitheatres, perhaps of the Italian artists of Mele. We have no other data about this building, its owner or exact location. It also is impossible to guess what could be the “Théâtre du Faubourg Pera” which was under construction in late spring 1839, but was perhaps already working until July and the prepared for the new season in autumn 1839. It is more than important that none of these news were registered in any Ottoman Turkish newspapers.

¹⁴ Clement Huart writes in the “Turquie” article of *La Grand Encyclopaedia* T. 31, 528 that Mele got the permission in 1838, quoted in Sevengil, *Opera san’ati*, 18. Another author states that Gaetano Mele got the permission to build a theatre from Sultan Mahmud II in 1839! B...de B..., *Constantinople et Le Bosphore* (Paris: A. Francois et Cie, 1845), 53. This book was written in 1845 by someone who visited, perhaps lived in Constantinople for while and wrote this little booklet as a supplement to Miguirditch Melconian’s four “tableaux en relief” which represented Constantinople and which were exhibited in Paris. This info is repeated in Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*, 52, quoting Metin And, “Türkiyede İtalyan Sahnesi,” 45 (perhaps another edition than the one I use). A third source also confirms that Mele got the permission perhaps from Mahmud II. J. M. Jouannin et Jules Van Gaver, *Turquie* (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1840), 435. Since this book was published sometime in 1840 (definitely after August 1839, because the authors know that Abdülmecid is the new Sultan), their data may be reliable.

August 1840.¹⁵ Thus Mele's would-be theatre (permission in 1838) was transformed to an Opera House (perhaps this is how he could get capital in 1840?). (Appendix 3.)

The groom, Fethi Ahmed Pasha (1801-1858, former ambassador to Vienna and Paris) wanted to finance the opening performances of Mele's Opera. It is reported that this institution was also supported by local subscription, "Muslims" or "Turks" being among the subscribers. A further complication is that according to Mele, his Opera House burned down *before the opening performances*. This can be dated to December 1841.¹⁶ If it had not burned down, this would have been the *first* imperial opera house in the region.

The Sultan's support and Fethi Ahmed Pasha's involvement in Mele's Opera House can be regarded as the earliest acceptance by an Ottoman sovereign and statesman of a particular cultural institution as worth of state patronage. At this

¹⁵ Gaetano Mele's letter written to Sultan Abdülmecid, for Ottoman citizenship and for his land in Taksim, narrating his life, dated 5 April 1857. HR.TO. 427/30, BOA. Mele writes that the Sultan (?) was satisfied with him so much at the wedding celebrations that he got a land in Taksim to build an Opera House. Fethi Ahmed ("Ahmed-Féthi") Pasha's wedding festivities with the Sultan's daughter, "Athié" (Atiye/°Atiya) took place in the first weeks of August 1840. *Ceride-i Havadis*, 11 and 21 Jumādhā al-Akhar 1256 (10 and 20 August 1840), both 1; *Tekvim-i Vekayi*, 24 Jumādhā al-Akhar 1256 (23 August 1840), 1; and A(bdolonyme) Ubcini, *La Turquie Actuelle* (Paris: Libraire de L. Hachette et Cie., 1855), 137. Fethi Ahmed was also called in the French press as Férik/Féric Ahmed pacha. Cf. *Journal de Smyrne*, 29 July 1837, 2. Mele narrates in his letter that Fethi Ahmad was disgraced and although he wanted to apply to the new Grand Vizier, "Begid" Pasha, he left to Paris. Cf. Appendix 3.

However, there are several unclear points in Mele's letter: 1. Ahmed Fethi was never a Grand Vizier, he was Ambassador to Paris and Vienna, and then Minister of Foreign Affairs. 2. Under the name of "Begid" (Bezid?) Pasha we do not find any Grand Vizier or ambassador. Furthermore, there seems to be a mistake in Ubcini's data, since Atiye Sultan was a daughter of Mahmud II and not Abdülmecid's as Ubcini says. (Ibid., 148). However, Atiye Sultan's wedding was indeed in 1840. I.DH. 5/229, BOA.

¹⁶ *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris*, 2 January 1842, 8. Letter dated 15 December (1841). The report says that "a theatre in construction" burned down, and quotes the rumour that the Ottoman Government set it to fire because they wanted to build a casern. Indeed, later a military barrack was built in Taksim, and if the report is correct, and I correctly identified this burnt theatre with Mele's, then we can actually localise Mele's Opera House, since we know where the barrack was. Metin And, and based on him, others, hypothesized that Mele's theatre worked still in the 1840s. Their source, Vicomte de Valon (1818-1851), who visited the Levant in 1842-43, refers to Mele's theatre as still existing but closed because of the lack of actors and mentions that Turks were among the subscribers. Alexis De Valon, *Une année dans le Levant*, 2 vols. (Paris: Labitte, 1846), 2:130-131. I believe that De Valon did not see the theatre of Mele, but another one (perhaps the theatre in the land of Naum? Bosco?). Mele's letter (HR.TO. 427/30, BOA), together with the news from the *Revue*, I believe, support my hypothesis that at the time of De Valon's visit, the theatre buildings was already gone. For the Ottoman Turkish subscription in the theatre, see also: Jouannin et Van Gaver, *Turquie*, 435; B...de B..., *Constantinople et Le Bosphore*, 53.

moment, Mele's never finished Opera House embodied an elite preference of European music theatre. The intended "Turkish" plays/translations would be also the embryo of a new imperial culture, which, at least in the Palace of the Sultan Abdülmecid, indeed was born, as numerous translations of opera plots testify.¹⁷ Yet, Mele's Opera House burned down.

Pera: The Naum Theatre/Italian Theatre

Around the same time, in August 1840, when Mele flirted with Ottoman statesmen at Atiye Sultan's wedding, a small theatre building already worked in Pera. It was permitted to be built in the land of the Naum family in May 1840,¹⁸ for the use of an Italian magician/juggler (*hokka-bāz*), Bartolomeo Bosco.¹⁹ Again at the same time, in August 1840, a certain *Fīlūl* (Phileul? Filleul?), who was the leader of French actors dwelling in Dersa'adet, asked for permission to play "comedies, dramas, vaudevilles, and operettas (*küçük operalar*)" in Pera, in a theatre called Odeon.²⁰ We have no clue if this Odeon is identical with Bosco's or it is another theatre. Perhaps Bosco, Mele, and the French actors all were invited for the imperial wedding in 1840.²¹

In this summer of 1840 begins the story of the Theatre of Michel Naum (also written as Naoum, Noum, Nohum, because the Arabic name Mikhā'il Na'ūm, ?-

¹⁷ Cf. Chapter 9.

¹⁸ Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*, 55.

¹⁹ Ibid. and Sevingil, *Opera San'ati*, 87-89 (Document 5 – without source). And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 83 published an advertisement of Bosco's theatre in four languages (French, Ottoman Turkish, Greek, Armenian) from 1840. Cf. also *Ceride-i Havadis*, 11 Jumādha'l-Akhar 1256 (10 August 1840), 4; 11 Rajab 1256 (8 September 1840), 4; etc.

²⁰ The letter was published by Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*, 53, footnote 32. I.HR. 6/292, BOA. This contains two documents: the Ottoman Turkish translation of the French original request and the letter concerning the permission. In C.BLD. 20/963, BOA two documents dated 13 Rajab 1256 (10 September 1840), also mention the Odeon theatre but without any further information about the ownership.

²¹ *Ceride-i Havadis*, 11 Jumādā al-Akhar 1256 (10 August 1840), 1 says that the festivities started with *cānbāzlar ve sâ'ir oyunciler* ("circus artists and many entertainers") to entertain the audience (*seyirciler*).

1868),²² that developed into an unofficial opera house of the citizens of Pera and the Sultans. The institution existed with breaks (because of the fires) from 1840²³ until 1870, with at least three, subsequent buildings. Thus the history of the Naum Theatre is a history of a *location* and not of one building.²⁴

Between 1840 and 1853 many impresarios used the buildings on the land of Naum.²⁵ The last building existed between 1853-1870 and this period is the real golden age of the Naum. The famous Fossati brothers designed plans (dated 1846),²⁶

²² Michel Naum Duhany (Mikhā'il Na'ūm Dukkhānī) is of Christian Arab origin whose father was an Aleppo nobleman in the service of the Ottoman Porte. Michel Naum also served as a dragoman, later travelled in the same function with Lady Stanhope and finally settled in Istanbul. *Levant Herald*, 19 June 1868, 2. He is called sometimes in Turkish/Ottoman Turkish Tütüncüoğlu (Son of Tobacco-maker as an Ottoman translation of the Arabic Dukkhānī). The first Turkish historian who published original documents about Naum was the today almost forgotten Sevensil in his *Opera San'atı*, 25-40. See the details in the monograph of Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*.

²³ *The Levant Herald* gives 1840 as the establishment of the Naum Theatre (“une salle d’opéra”) in its obituary for Naum, 19 June 1868, 2. However, the *Journal de Constantinople* provides another version: after the 1831 fire of Pera, Naum wanted to use his domain and thus rented his “hangar” (i.e. shed) to dancers of the rope. The place became gradually more and more popular (also used by other acrobats) and finally was transformed into a theatre where Italian opera was played and was visited by the Sultans (Abdülmeçid and Abdülaziz). *Journal de Constantinople*, 12 June 1861, 12. For me, this version is far more convincing than the Herald’s although 1831 seems to be too early. Millas, *Pera*, 236, referring to Vicomte de Valon’s description supposes that de Valon refers to Naum’s Theatre. Aracı also accepts this, Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*, 47.

²⁴ It was researched by Sevensil, And, and others, while recently Emre Aracı published an already referred monograph that contains all the necessary information. Thus here I just provide a summary (with some additional details in other chapters) otherwise I refer the reader to Aracı’s book.

²⁵ Like in 1841 an Austrian opera-company rented a piece of land for presenting plays, perhaps the land of Naum. This document was not accessible to me at the time of the research: I.H.R. 12/609, BOA dated in the catalogue 20 Rajab 1257 (7 September 1841). Of other impresarios, like Papa Nicola, see the book of Dr. Aracı.

²⁶ Gertraud Heinrich, *Die Fossati-Entwürfe zu Theaterbauten – Materialien zur Architekturgeschichte Istanbul im 19. Jahrhundert* (München: Tuduv verlag, 1989). Heinrich published in fact three theatre plans out of which only two is dated. 33-63 and Abb. 7, 8, 9. Cf. Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*, 104-113. and also And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 207. The Fossati brothers were originally Swiss-born (Morcote) Italian architects. Gaspare after being educated in Venice worked for the Russian Czar and was sent from St. Petersburg to Istanbul to build the Russian Embassy in Péra in 1837. Here, he recruited his younger brother, Guiseppe. (Goodfrey Goodwin, “Gaspare Fossati di Morcote and his Brother Giuseppe,” *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre* [1990], 122-127. Here 122-123). They remained in the city and were commissioned by Sultan Abdülmeçid in 1847 to restore the mosaics of Hagia Sophia (Natalia B. Teteriatnikov, *Mosaics of Hagia Sophia, Istanbul: The Fossati Restoration and the Work of the Byzantine Institute* [Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1998], 8).

but an English architect, William James Smith, draw the finally realized plan.²⁷ During the 1850s, close relations developed between the Naum Theatre and the Palace in terms of guest performances, shared musicians, training. The Naum Theatre as a private location could count on the support of both the Sultan Abdülmecid and the citizens of Pera, intermediating between audiences.

Strangely enough, very few descriptions and only one verifiable image survived of the interior of the final Naum Theatre. The only available image (showing a celebration of Garibaldi on its stage in 1862)²⁸ and a hitherto unknown plan of the theatre,²⁹ make clear that this scene belonged to the type of theatres with “scène classique avec salle classique,” according to the theatre typology of the LeBlancs.³⁰ This was, and until the mid-20th century remained, the ruling theatre type: the stage and the audience in a half-ring shape were separated by a space, and the orchestra formed rather a part of the audience. The idea behind this arrangement is the “social” understanding of the theatre, namely, that the spectators can watch the performance *and* each other thus the audience is just as much a spectacle as the play itself.³¹

The magnificent Naum Theatre in Pera remained in the foreground of social life during the 1850s-1860s, often visited by Sultan Abdülmecid, and later by Sultan Abdülaziz and his European royal guests (see Chapter 10).³² In the 1860s it was called sometimes the “Italian Theatre,” “Opera” or simply “notre théâtre” by the local French and English press and by the very end in 1869-70, the theatre used the title

²⁷ Mark Crinson, *Empire Building* (London: Routledge, 1996), 126-136. Smith was originally sent from England to design the new building of the British embassy in Pera in 1841 because it burned down.

²⁸ *L'illustration*, 19 April 1862; Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*, 302-303.

²⁹ *Altıncı Dâ'ire-i Belediyye'de vâki' Na'üm Mişel Tiyâtrohânesinin harîtasıdır*. In ŞD. 10/505, BOA.

³⁰ LeBlanc et LeBlanc, *Traité d'aménagement des salles de spectacles*, 2:4-5.

³¹ LeBlanc et LeBlanc, *Traité d'aménagement des salles de spectacles*, 4.

³² For instance, *Levant Herald*, 8 February 1869 and 1 November 1869, see also Namık Sinan Turan and Ayşegül Komsouğlu, “From Empire to the Republic: the Western Music Tradition and the Perception of Opera,” *International Journal of Turcologica* 2, no. 3 (2007): 7-31, here 17.

“Théâtre Impérial Naum.”³³ In the Ottoman Turkish press, it was usually the “Theatre in Beyoğlu” (*Beyoğlu’da kā’in tiyatrosu*) or “the Italian Theatre” or *Tiyatrosu Na’üm*.

The “nôtre théâtre” expression (as the French press of Constantinople called it), the public interest in and care for this institution indicates that the Pera community indeed regarded the place as one of its major public representations. Naum also possessed an imperial *firman* giving him presumably a monopoly to play theatrical pieces in Istanbul (this was his claim).³⁴ (Cf. more in Chapter 11.) After the death of Michel Naum in June 1868, his family, brother Joseph and son Paul continued to direct the house with less success. The final blow arrived in June 1870 when the building, along with the costumes, etc., completely burned down with a large part of Pera.³⁵

It is of foremost importance that from 1869 the Naum Theatre started to use the title “Impérial.”³⁶ It is likely that the (new) owner, Joseph Naum, was prompted to do this for numerous reasons. Firstly, Sultan Abdülaziz actually promised his support to the Theatre and even had a plan to build an Imperial Theatre with Joseph Naum as director, and this was communicated in the press in February 1869.³⁷ Second, because of the serious competition with other Pera or non-Pera theatres at this time, it might

³³ For example, *Journal de Constantinople*, 9 January 1861, and numerous other instances. Even when it was burnt down the *Levant Herald* remarks that the fire destroyed “the Naum Theatre (the opera house)”, 7 June 1870, 1.

³⁴ Although no one located this *firman*, it was referred to, for instance, in an 1865 contract between Naum, as a broker of theatre-rights, and the Ottoman Armenian impresario, Seraphin Manasse, that gave Manasse the right to stage plays in French for two years. The photocopy of this document first was generously given to me by Emre Aracı who in turn got it from Suha Umur. This is a contract in French, dated 1 April 1865, between Naum and Manasse, testified by the Municipality of Pera. At the back of the document is written Meclis-i Vâlâ 23871. In the Ottoman Archive, I could identify this letter finally as LMVL 532/23872, BOA.

³⁵ *Levant Herald*, 7 June 1870, 1 and 9 June, 3. See also *Ruzname-i Ceride-i Havadis*, 12 Mayıs 1288 (Rumi), 1.

³⁶ We might say that in Europe in 1869 it was regarded as such, since Garnier along with the other state theatres lists the “Théâtre Impérial Naum de Constantinople.” Garnier, *Le Théâtre*, 425-426.

³⁷ *Levant Herald*, 9 February 1869, 3.

have been imperative to express the official character of the institution for business reasons.

These two direct reasons, however, refer to the larger global context, since exactly around this time opera houses/theatres became of crucial importance in worldwide politics as Table 0. already has shown. In 1869, opera houses/national theatres were under construction in Paris, Vienna, Prague, etc. The (French) definition of imperial capital involved the creation of an imperial opera house. Sultan Abdülaziz and his men knew this very well, especially after their European trip in 1867, involving visits to opera houses both in Paris and Vienna. Furthermore, in 1869 in increasing numbers European sovereigns started to visit the Ottoman Empire, especially coming in the autumn to the Suez Canal Ceremonies and their entertainment had to be taken care. (Cf. Chapter 10.)

Thus, the “Ottoman state” again *almost* had an “official” opera house and one might conclude that at least in the years 1869 and early 1870 the Naum Theatre was regarded as such by Europeans and Ottoman Court as well.

Pera: Palais de Cristal/Théâtre Français

Another important, rival scene, in the already mentioned building of Palais de Cristal was opened in Pera in January 1862. A banker of Italian origin, Bartholomeo Giustiniani, owned the building.³⁸ The owner of the Casino, Edouard Salla (and perhaps young impresario Seraphin Manasse) financed the interior transformation of this building, perhaps its first floor, into a theatre.³⁹ The *Journal de Constantinople*

³⁸ *Levant Herald*, 18 March 1869, 3. “M. Giustiniani, propriétaire du Théâtre Français.”

³⁹ *Journal de Constantinople*, 16 November 1861, 3. From 1875 there is a piece of information that this construction was financed by Salla and Seraphin Manasse together. *Revue de Constantinople*, 23 May 1875, 371.

calls it a “salle de bal,” (because likely it was conceived to be built for public balls) in a description which was written even before the opening.⁴⁰ The Italian architect Barborini, another resident at Pera,⁴¹ planned the changes.⁴² Barborini will remain, as we will see, the main theatre-architect in Pera.

The Palais de Cristal was magnificently decorated; the central ballroom had 18 columns that held the balconies good for chatting and gossiping, and had gas lighting. There was a smaller dance room, a smoking salon, a salon for gaming, a buffet, and various smaller rooms for private dinners.⁴³ In 1865, a “salle” was “constructed” here also (perhaps, a renovation of the previous rooms), having four levels of loges.⁴⁴ At the end of the 1860s – as contrasted to the Naum Theatre, the Italian Opera House – the Palais de Cristal was often called the “French Theatre.”⁴⁵ The expression “théâtre français” was also used to indicate the language or the genre of the plays, or the origin of the theatre group.

During the 1860s, the Naum as “Italian” and the Palais de Cristal as “French” theatres contributed significantly to the public life of Pera/Beyoğlu. Other amusement institutions like cafés, salles de bals, pubs etc., were also important for (European) music and theatre. Especially three cafés were large enough to host theatre and musical/opera/opera companies, Café Oriental, Café Palais des Fleurs and Café

⁴⁰ *Journal de Constantinople*, 17 January 1862. For some reason, Metin And gives the opening date as 1861 but it is wrong, see And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 200.

⁴¹ This time Guisepppe Fossati already returned to Switzerland and Gaspare to Italy. Goodwin, “Gaspare Fossati,” 122. Although they are still registered in 1860 in the Conseil des Travaux Publiques. S. Rose and J. Aznavour, *Annuaire de Commerce ou Guide des adresses commerciales et administratives de la ville de Constantinople 1860/1276* (Constantinople: Imprimerie Italienne, 1860), 15; and still there is a Fossati architect among the advertised ones in *Journal de Constantinople*, 29 June 1861, 3.

⁴² *Revue de Constantinople*, 23 May 1875, 372. Cf. And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 200.

⁴³ *Journal de Constantinople*, 17 January 1862.

⁴⁴ *La Comédie*, 21 May 1865, 8. The French journal writes that Manasse “a obtenu l’autorisation de construire une nouvelle salle pour son théâtre. Cette salle est située au Palais de Cristal.” This information is not found in the *Journal de Constantinople*.

⁴⁵ For instance, *Levant Herald*, 2 January 1868, 3.

Roumelie. These three cafés were reportedly already in the process of transforming into semi-theatres in 1860.⁴⁶ Concerts and balls were organized for “the Pera public” and for the Ottoman Turkish elite also in the foreign embassies and at the salons of different civil societies,⁴⁷ sometimes even with the participation of the Sultan Abdülmecid himself, already in the 1850s.⁴⁸

Gedikpaşa: the Anti-Pera?

Not only in the capital but also in other major Ottoman cities, like Izmir (Smyrna), Edirne, Bursa, and Adana (music) theatres or even opera houses were erected from the beginning of the 19th century.⁴⁹ From the 1860s, theatres began popping up in other districts of Istanbul, in Hasköy, Kadıköy, etc. The most important for cultural politics is the Gedikpaşa district’s theatre (sometimes written in the contemporary French or English press as “Yedikpasha,” likely based on Greek or Jewish pronunciation)⁵⁰ because usually this site is associated with the birth of theatre in Ottoman Turkish and in contrast to the Pera Theatres, it is regarded as connected to Turkish experiments.⁵¹

The building of the Gedikpaşa Theatre has a complicated history that is extremely important for the genesis of national or imperial narratives of theatre history. In some of the narratives, especially Metin And’s, the association of this

⁴⁶ *Journal de Constantinople*, 12 January 1861, 3.

⁴⁷ One of the most important is the Teutonia Society, the German Song-Association. Cf. Seren Akyoldaş’s MA-Thesis: “The Teutonia: A Case Study of the German cultural presence in the Ottoman Empire” (master’s thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2009).

⁴⁸ Mrs Edmund Hornby, *In and Around Stamboul* (Philadelphia: James Challen and Son, [1858]), 216-218. Mrs Hornby’s visit to Istanbul started during the autumn of 1855 and her last letter dated of 5th February 1858.

⁴⁹ And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 221-224.

⁵⁰ I am indebted for this detail to Edhem Eldem.

⁵¹ “As a result of Agop Vartanyan’s efforts that create an authentic language in Turkish theater, Gedikpaşa Theater as the setting of this unique formation gains a special meaning.” (sic!) Yazıcı, “Theatre in Nineteenth Century Istanbul,” 112.

building with the theatre troupe of Güllü Agop, called Ottoman Theatre, that played mostly in Ottoman Turkish, suggests an institutionalized national/imperial project which can be used as a counter-example against the Pera-based theatres that played mostly in French, Italian, Greek, or Armenian.

This ambiguous, already challenged⁵² framework can be reconsidered in an inquiry about the origins of this building. The above mentioned French circus artist Louis Soullier (1813-1888) returned to Istanbul in 1858.⁵³ Around that time, there was an entertainment building in the Gedikpaşa district. Metin And speculates⁵⁴ that the building and the troupe had a mutual connection, i.e. if the building was established *by or for* Soullier.⁵⁵

Soullier used Istanbul as his headquarters from 1858 to approx. 1864 because he was circulating in the Ottoman Empire with the permission of the Sultan Abdülmecid.⁵⁶ In May 1858 he got money to finance the travel of his company to Istanbul.⁵⁷ He received 30000 *akçe* for the imperial festival (*Sur-i Hümayün*), coming for the parallel marriages of Cemile and Münire Sultans (daughters of Abdülmecid), held in June 1858.⁵⁸

⁵² Güllü, *Vartovyan Kumpanyası ve Yeni Osmanlılar*.

⁵³ Let me call the attention that Mele wrote his letter approximately this time to Sultan Abdülmecid asking for Ottoman citizenship and demanding his land at Taksim back, cf. Appendix 3. Furthermore, he, just as Soullier, also came back from Alexandria. The similarity of the dates and locations shows something more than a usual rivalry between artists. This needs more research. It is possible that the news of the future marriages took both companies back to Istanbul or Soullier was simply summoned and Mele followed.

⁵⁴ Based on the documents dated 1276 published by Rauf Tuncay that both took as of 1859. Rauf Tuncay, "Türk Tiyatro Tarihi Belgeleri," *Belgelerle Türk Tarihi Dergisi*, no. 8, (May 1968): 71-75.

⁵⁵ He is quite confident at one point: "Gedikpaşa Tiyatrosu, Soullier [sic!] canbazhanesi için kurulmu tu." And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 34.

⁵⁶ In May 1861 an imperial order to the governors of Izmir, Salonika, Edirne was composed with the content to help in everything the famous *canbaz* Soullier in his chosen place of play (*muma ileyhin orada-ı la^cb ve san^cat ayracağı mahallıda*). Dated 3 Dhu'l-Qa^cda 1277 (11 May 1261), A.MKT.UM. 471/96, BOA. A little later separately another, similar order to the Governor of Egypt was issued (Sa^cid Pasha this time). Dated 19 Muḥarram 1278 (27 July 1261), A.MKT.UM. 486/95, BOA.

⁵⁷ Irada dated 28 Ramaḍān 1274 (12 May 1858) I.DH. 402/26618, BOA.

⁵⁸ Irada dated 4 Shawwāl 1274 (18 May 1858) I.DH. 403/26650, BOA.

Soullier came with the intention to erect a circus (building?)⁵⁹ but the troupe was given a temporary building in Maslak, away from the city centre, for the marriage.⁶⁰ After the celebrations in 1858, he did erect a wooden building, called Imperial Circus, in Pera (indicated in the famous D'Ostoya map), but he was also circulating within the different parts of Istanbul, even within Pera, between summer 1858 and 1861.⁶¹ His circus being burned down in January 1860,⁶² the troupe left to tour Ottoman Mediterranean cities in 1861, arriving back to Istanbul in March 1862.⁶³ After approx. a year, he left again and arrived back in 1864.⁶⁴

In March 1860, a theatre building existed somewhere in the “Istanbul” part of the city, close to Tatlı kuyu (*Tatlı kuyu kurbunda*). Although Metin And related this new theatre, called in the archival documents *Istanbul Tiyatrosu*, “Theatre of Istanbul/Istanbul Theatre,” to Soullier’s presence, so far there has been no further proof that it was established *for* his troupe.

The *Meclis-i Vâlâ*, the Legislative Council issued a regulation for this “Istanbul Theatre” in 1860, only one year after that the Naum Theatre received one from the Municipality of the 6th District. This regulation (*Nizâm-nâme*) states that the “Istanbul Theatre” was put under the direct jurisdiction of the police and the authority of the Municipality (art. 4).⁶⁵ There is no direct proof that the “Istanbul Theatre,”

⁵⁹ *Journal de Constantinople*, 19 May 1858, 4 and 26 May 1858, 4.

⁶⁰ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 34, based on *Journal de Constantinople*, 26 May 1858, 4.

⁶¹ First, his circus was installed in Pera, Taxim, then he moved to Dersa^câdet, Vefa Meydanı (Letter dated 3 Muḥarram 1276 [2 August 1859] HR. MKT. 298/94, BOA).

⁶² *Journal de Constantinople*, 31 January 1860, 1; 1 February 1860, 3; 2 February 1860, 1-2. Cf. Letter dated 23 Rajab 1276 (15 February 1860) A.MKT.NZD. 305/67, BOA.

⁶³ *Journal de Constantinople*, 5 March 1862, 3.

⁶⁴ *Journal de Constantinople*, 8 January 1864, 3.

⁶⁵ And’s references are the three documents published by Tuncay. The first document, issued from the Meclis-i Vâlâ to an unidentified authority, containing the Regulation (*tanzim*) of the theatre (in the form of a *nizâm-nâme*), does not make any reference to Soullier, only that the building will be for the use of horse circus artists (*at canbazları*). Tuncay, “Türk Tiyatro,” 71 and based on him, And too, took this document as dated 1859. But this is from 29 Sha^bân 1276 which corresponds to 22 March 1860.

close to Tatlı Kuyu, and the later so-called Gedikpaşa Theatre were one and the same building. One can only assume that these are identical.⁶⁶

All the more, since the first mention of the Gedikpaşa Theatre is from March 1860, exactly the time when the *Nizāmnāme* was drafted. Yaver Bey, the director of the “Théâtre-Cirque de Constantinople, situé à Jedik Pacha (sic!),” engaged the troupe of Soullier for the Ramadan.⁶⁷ Perhaps, this made the regulation necessary.⁶⁸ Thus we could establish the missing link between the building and the regulation. It would also mean that this theatre was first called Istanbul Theatre, alluding to a definition based on the large urban context (the Old City), and only later was labeled after its closer neighborhood, Gedikpaşa.

Yaver Bey and Ömer (°Umar) Bey financed the building itself.⁶⁹ Yaver Bey was a conductor at the *Muzika-ı Hümayün*, the Imperial Music of Sultan Abdülmecid, in the rank of *mültazim*, lieutenant. He got permission to establish a theatre in Dersa°adet in January 1860, requested obviously earlier in 1859.⁷⁰ Ömer Bey was the personal *katip* of Abdülmecid and Metin And speculates, based on Haluk Yıldız Şehsuvaroğlu’s research, that Ömer Bey invested money in the building which later was bought by Abraham (Yeremyan) Pasha for 5000 liras.⁷¹ Perhaps, the building was

Today these three documents could be found in a digital *gömlek* I.MVL. 430/18931, BOA. However, Metin And supposes that there was in this place previously something. It is possible that there existed a non-official circus but was used by others and was only this time regulated by the authorities. But perhaps not because *of* or *for* Soullier. Today next to the Tiyatro Caddesi – were the later Gedikpaşa Theatre stood – there is the Tatlı Kuyu Caddesi which is possibly the neighbourhood referred to in this document. Cf. below Emine Hanım’s letter.

⁶⁶ And takes it as if this would be natural but it is not.

⁶⁷ *Journal de Constantinople*, 28 March 1860, 2.

⁶⁸ A note to the police affirms this assumption, in which the *Nizāmnāme* is requested for the “theatre in Istanbul” in which the circus artists play. Dated 13 Ramađān 1276 (6 March 1860), A.MKT.MVL. 115/89, BOA.

⁶⁹ Undated petition, signed by 17 people, I.MVL. 471/21360, BOA.

⁷⁰ Dated 9 Jumāda’l-Akhir 1276 (3 January 1860). I.MMS. 16/691, BOA. Cf. later that to this theatre there was an *imtiyāz* of Yaver Bey, 17 Rajab 1288 (2 October 1871), D 2861/38, BOA.

⁷¹ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 36. However, he does not provide any year for this transaction.

in the beginning in the possession of the Sultan.⁷² The theatre was surely in the possession of Ömer Bey in 1880⁷³ (thus And's speculation is not grounded), while the land was owned by a certain Emine Hanım.⁷⁴ However, in a complaint of Emine Hanım, it is clear that at least in 1862 the building belonged to the *Evkâf-ı Hümayûn*, the Ministry of Religious Foundations (cf. Appendix 4.).

Although the ownership needs more clarification, based on the above, the Gedikpaşa Theater seems to be an initiative of individuals from the close environment of Sultan Abdülmecid who from the beginning perhaps imagined this theatre as a location of popular entertainment (hence they hired circus artists for entertainment) but also awaited the Sultan to assist the performances. The construction of the building, sometime in the winter 1859-60, may retain some relations with articles in the French press of Istanbul in 1859 about the need of an Ottoman "National Theatre."⁷⁵

Thus starts the intricate history of the building of Gedikpaşa Theatre as an Ottoman semi-imperial project, destroyed in the 1880s by the order of Sultan Abdülhamid II (see more in Chapter 11). From 1867, it is mentioned regularly as a theatre in the Ottoman Turkish press, usually as *Gedikpaşa'da kâ'in tiyatrosu* ("the theatre in Gedikpaşa"),⁷⁶ while in the French or English press it is "le théâtre turc de

⁷² In a note of 1288, it is mentioned that the Gedikpaşa Theater belongs to the *Avqâf-ı Hümayûn*. Dated 17 Rajab 1288 (2 October 1871), Ş.D. 2861/38, BOA.

⁷³ Raphael D. Cervati, *L'Indicateur Ottoman* (Constantinople: Cervati Frères et D. Fatzea, 1881), 367.

⁷⁴ She wanted to sell her land to a certain Qārā Tüdür (Kara Theodor?). Dated 17 Muḥarram 1279 (15 July 1862), I.MVL. 471/21360, BOA.

⁷⁵ *Journal de Constantinople*, 8 and 22 April 1859, 1-2 and 2 respectively.

⁷⁶ The earliest date I found the mention of this theatre in an Ottoman Turkish newspaper (*Ruzname-i Ceride-i Havadis*) is 17 Rajab 1284 (14 November 1867). And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, gives 19 Dhu'l-Qa'da 1280, too in *Ruzname-i Ceride-i Havadis*, but I could not locate this number. Needs more research.

Yédik-Pacha.”⁷⁷ It was never called “imperial” (*hümāyūn*), not even in 1869 when there was a need of an imperial theatre and when likely the building of the troupe of Güllü Agop received some subsidy (cf. Chapter 12). We may conclude that the Naum offered a European type theatre for elite use, especially hosting the sovereigns as will be shown (Chapter 10), while the Gedikpaşa represented a less elite location of popular pieces since there musical dramas in Ottoman Turkish, operettas in French, but no Italian operas were performed. This is why it was often described as “Théâtre turc à Stamboul (Guédik Pascha)” where “Armenian artists present plays during the winter in the Turkish language.”⁷⁸

The very rare drawings about this theatre picture a more or less circular building, which very much resembles an actual circus, but also preserves the idea that the people could watch each other. It was built of wood, had three floors and thus was quite huge. In front of the wide stage, the main box of the Sultan (with curtains/wire) was located.⁷⁹ Above was a dome with perhaps the necessary ropes for acrobats. It perhaps had a salon to the left of the entrance.⁸⁰ It was renovated several times, when in 1867 Güllü Agop, the director of the Ottoman Theatre group took it over, he had to renovate the building.⁸¹ Its renewal was communicated in the Ottoman Turkish newspapers.

In January 1871, the *Levant Herald* mentions that the success of the plays in Turkish is so huge that the public demands a “grand théâtre national turc.” Among

⁷⁷ As I am not able to read Armenian, I cannot say how the theatre was named in Armenian but surely the Gedikpaşa Theatre forms a very important part of Armenian cultural history too.

⁷⁸ *Guide de Constantinople, avec une introduction historique de A. D. Mordtmann* (Constantinople: Lorentz et Keil, s. d.), 11. Although there is no publication year, since the plan inserted in the book was copied from one drawn in 1880, and the theatre was destroyed in 1884, the book most likely was published between 1880 and 1884.

⁷⁹ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 36-37. Cf. Yazıcı, “Theatre in Nineteenth Century Istanbul,” 114.

⁸⁰ Yazıcı, “Theatre in Nineteenth Century Istanbul,” 114.

⁸¹ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 45-46.

other improvements the suggestions included “loges grilles” for Turkish (i.e. Muslim) ladies “comme cela a lieu au Caire.”⁸² Thus in 1871 at least the French press of Istanbul found the Cairo theatres (see below) convenient to refer to it when talking about the Gedikpaşa Theatre.

To recapitulate, the establishment of new theatres in Pera was first of all private business. The “state” – the *Meclis-i Vālā*, the Sultan, the Municipality – was involved in the erection of theatres, at least, in giving permissions. The ruler or rich statesmen might donate money for the theatres from time to time but the maintenance was the care of private businessmen who usually hosted or hired seasonally new troupes or artists. Thus, the maintenance and the ownerships of the buildings was largely in private hands in the period, even in the case of the Gedikpaşa Theatre.

Cairo: Azbakiyya

Cairo represents a different situation in several respects. As explained, the transformation of Azbakiyya was ordered centrally, by the will of Khedive Ismā‘īl. Theatres were established within three years between 1868 and 1871, in the place of an old private theatre and the century-old public entertainments of the Cairo Muslim population. These were framed in a larger project of transformation, at the center of which there was the Azbakiyya public garden.

Azbakiyya: Comédie and Cirque (November 1868 – February 1869)

⁸² *Levant Herald*, 14 January 1871, 3. About what “the public” means here, refer to Chapter 12.

Although some works started already in 1868 to create the public garden, surprisingly the Garden itself was the latest work accomplished (1872) in the territory.⁸³ The first public building was a state (Khedive) owned *Comédie* (French Theatre) that substituted a private one(s) whose existence is noted from the 1840s up to 1868; but likely the new *Comédie* was in another location.

This earlier, private theatre in the Azbakiyya is troubled by the lack of information. Continuing earlier amateur experiments by Europeans in the 1830s,⁸⁴ a private theatre in the 1840s in the neighbourhood of Azbakiyya hosted visiting Italian musical troupes.⁸⁵ This theatre, *Teatro del Cairo*, was in the Rosetti Garden (the garden of the Italian Consul), on the eastern side of Azbakiyya.⁸⁶ Behrens-Abouseif believes that this building was the French army's *Comédie* and that it worked until 1868,⁸⁷ but this possibility can be excluded.⁸⁸

Certainly, at the end of the 1850s there was reportedly also a wooden theatre somewhere close to Azbakiyya where visiting troupes played Italian operas,⁸⁹ in 1862 a theatre in Cairo (of uncertain location) was advertised as financed by Sa'īd Pasha,⁹⁰ perhaps the same stood in 1864,⁹¹ but it burned down in 1868,⁹² along with many

⁸³ G. Delchevalerie, *Le parc public de l'Ezbékieh au Caire* (Ghent: C. Annoot-Braeckman, 1897), 2.

⁸⁴ In 1835 a certain Mm. Colrinde Rogé organised in her own house a huge musical evening. *Le Ménestrel*, 7 June 1835, 4.

⁸⁵ Gérard De Nerval, *Voyage En Orient*, 2 vols. (Paris: Charpentier, 1851), 1:112, 1:168-170.

⁸⁶ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 37-39.

⁸⁷ Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 88-89.

⁸⁸ The author of an article in *Le Ménestrel*, 7 June 1835, 4 remarks that at that time in Cairo "il ne manque qu'un théâtre pour jouer l'Opéra." If the *Comédie* of the French Army would have been there, and in use, such a sentence would be meaningless.

⁸⁹ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 42. This theatre was only open when troupes visited the city, mostly from Istanbul, Smyrna or Italy.

⁹⁰ *Le Ménestrel*, 7 December 1862, 7.

⁹¹ Olympe Audouard, *Les mystères de l'Égypte* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1865), 199; 297-298.

⁹² Max Karkegi, "Commentaires topographiques" (a sub-website of the website *L'Égypte d'antan*, <http://www.egyptedantan.com/egypt.htm>, accessed March 25, 2011), with reference to *Le Progrès (Égyptien)* 17 October 1868, 3.

other buildings.⁹³ Azbakiyya, with its music cafes and theatre, already embodied in the 1850s-1860s a model of the “pleasure principle,” although it must have been too vulgar for the taste of some refined European visitors.⁹⁴ The theatre close to the Azbakiyya (1840s-1868) was perhaps only seasonal.

In 1868 the Khedive bought further blocks of houses and land as his private possessions. There were rumours that he intentionally set fire to those houses whose owners were reluctant to sell to him.⁹⁵ Perhaps this is the great fire that burned so many buildings in Azbakiyya, including the old theatre. Certainly, various types of ownership (private and *waqf* [religious foundation]) legally posed great obstacles for the intention of the Khedive, because the Egyptian “state” was not defined yet, and thus “state/public possession” was a non-existing category. Since, as I explained, Egypt was still a part of the Ottoman Empire, there was no other way to erect public institutions – in the absence of local private capital – than to use khedivial money as a type of “royal” patronage.

Thus Egypt’s Ottoman legal status posed a difficulty in the creation of “state” institutions, especially symbolic ones, even though the Khedive acted quite independently from the Sultan. Some theatres were already in his possession: small stages in palaces, mostly for private, elite usage like in al-Qaṣr al-°Āli.⁹⁶ But no

⁹³ Some of the owners got compensation from the Khedive for their burned house, like Shaykh °Āli al-Qabbānī, see *daftar* 2002-000255, Muḥāfazat Miṣr, DWQ.

⁹⁴ An author, signed L.S.R., complains in 1868 that (European) “musique n’existe pas en Egypte.” *Le Ménestrel*, 24 May 1868, 204-205.

⁹⁵ Sadgrove mentions that in case the Khedive’s request was refused, he would secretly order to set on fire the houses. For this story I had found no evidence in the archives but it might be true. Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 52.

⁹⁶ Already Sa°id Pasha had a (summer?) theatre, a “teatro francese” in Alexandria. Receipts and contract from April-September 1860, the first dated Alexandria, 1 April 1860 as a receipt of the musicians playing in the theatre. Carton 616, Dīwān Khidīwī - Mutafarriqāt, CA, DWQ. Later, it is sure that there were spaces that could be used as theatres in Qaṣr al-°Aynī, al-Qaṣr al-°Āli, perhaps in the °Abdīn (in the 1890s surely). Concerning al-Qaṣr al-°Āli reliable information comes from the

public, “state” funded theatre existed in Egypt; the Alexandrian theatres were all in private possession. As the old theatre in Azbakiyya burned down, this situation would now be changed.

Around one month after the fire, Ismā‘īl ordered the construction of a *Théâtre de la Comédie* supposedly on 22 November 1868.⁹⁷ However, the theatre was most likely conceived earlier because at the end of September 1868 – when Ismā‘īl stayed in Istanbul – a letter was written mentioning the plan for a theatre in Cairo⁹⁸ and an Ottoman Armenian impresario, the Francophile Seraphin Manasse was approached to “migrate to Cairo” from Istanbul.⁹⁹ Also, the construction must have started earlier than the supposed date of the order.¹⁰⁰

Julius Franz (1831-1915), a German architect, who had been the chief architect of the Khedivial palaces since 1863, designed the Comédie.¹⁰¹ His title in the official correspondences was *Bāsh-muhandis ‘Imārāt-ı Saniyya* (Chief Architect of the Exalted [Khedivial] Buildings), indicating that he was related to the Khedive and not to any public service,¹⁰² he called himself in German “Oberbaudirektor des Khediven.”¹⁰³ The Arabic journal *Wādī al-Nīl* reported the construction of the garden and the plan that theatres would be built also and such news was republished in the

journals *Al-Waqā‘i‘ al-Miṣriyya*, 31 March 1869, 2-3 and *Wādī al-Nīl*, 23 April 1869, 11-12. Cf. Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 66-67.

⁹⁷ The date of the order is in Sayyid ‘Alī Ismā‘īl, *Ta’rīkh al-masrah al-miṣrī fī Miṣr*, 37 but without further reference. Al-Ayyūbī also provides this date, Al-Ayyūbī, *Ta’rīkh Miṣr fī ‘ahd al-Khidīw Ismā‘īl*, 1:292.

⁹⁸ Letter dated 22 September 1868 to Kiamil Bey, unknown sender, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

⁹⁹ *Levant Herald*, 16 October 1868, 2. About Seraphin Manasse in detail cf. Chapter 5.

¹⁰⁰ *Le Ménestrel*, 8 November 1868, 398 communicates that 700 workers are working on the construction already in the beginning of November.

¹⁰¹ Pflugrad-Abdel Aziz, “Islamisiert Architektur in Kairo,” 79-81. Volait, *Architectes et Architectures*, 67. Although Franz died in Graz, he was originally German.

¹⁰² Several dispatches during 1285 *hijrī* (1868-69) in daftar 2002-000255 and 2002-000256, Muḥāfazat Miṣr, DWQ. *Bāshmuhandis* is a title used for architects in Egypt still today.

¹⁰³ Pflugrad-Abdel Aziz, “Islamisiert Architektur in Kairo,” 83.

Istanbul-based, widely distributed Arabic periodical *Al-Jawā'ib*.¹⁰⁴ Thus the wider Arab/Egyptian public knew also about the constructions in all the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, and this later (from 1870) resulted in demands for Arab theatres.

The location was on the south of Azbakiyya and the wooden building was constructed within one and a half months.¹⁰⁵ On the pre-1869 maps of Azbakiyya a huge compound is indicated here. Whatever was the origin of this compound or palaces (a former residence of Muḥammad °Alī Pasha, the residence of Aḥmad Ṭāhir Pasha, palace of Ḥalīm Pasha, or half-demolished houses),¹⁰⁶ governmental buildings

¹⁰⁴ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 46, based on the journal *Al-Jawā'ib*, 10 November 1868.

¹⁰⁵ H. De Vaujany, *Le Caire et ses environs* (Paris: B. Plon et Cie, 1883), 245.

¹⁰⁶ Behrens-Abousef, *Azbakiyya*, 82 states that initially Muḥammad °Alī lived in the Azbakiyya (in a former palace of al-Bakrī family), then he left the palace to his *ḥarīm*. Cf. also an image, facing page 86, Pl. XV.A. Also cf. Bellefonds, *Mémoires*, 380. A tourist gives that there was a palace of the youngest daughter of Muḥammad °Alī at the Azbakiyya which was close to the road to Būlāq. Eugène Poitou, *Un hiver en Égypte* (Tours: A. Mame et Cie, 1860), 403. Perhaps this is identical with the one Bellefonds mentions. Bellefonds, *Mémoires*, 601.

But the palace of the *ḥarīm* might be the same palace that was reported by Lane later to be the palace of °Abbās Pasha, son of Ṭūsūn (later °Abbās I). However, Bellefonds states that °Abbās Pasha *built* a palace here for his mother. It is also possible that the two are the same. Still, we have no proof for the identification of these palaces with the compound.

Behrens-Abouseif indicates a part of the compound as the palace of Ḥalīm Pasha (the uncle of Ismā'īl). Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 91, fig. 14. We know that this palace was in the possession of the Khedive in the 1860s (cf. Sāmī, *Taqwīm*, 3:2:534). In connection with the works of transformation, the dispatches of *Muḥāfazat Miṣr* often mention a palace, *Sarāy al-Azbakiyya* (the Palace of Azbakiyya). This *Sarāy al-Azbakiyya* must have belonged to the personal possessions of the Khedive, since all letters are written to the *Umūr-ı Khāṣṣa* (The Personal Administration of the Khedive); like 2002-000254, *Muḥāfazat Miṣr*, DWQ, dispatch dated 29 Jumāda'l-Thānī 1285 (17 October 1868): [...] *Janāb M. Afrāns [Franz] al-muhandis madhkūrān °an ṣarf al-akhshāb allatī talzamu li'l-°imāra al-mustajidda bi'l-Azbakiyya min al-mawjūd bi-Sarāy al-Azbakiyya*. “Monsieur Franz the architect demands the sending of the wood that is needed for the new building at the Azbakiyya from that supply which is at the Azbakiyya Palace.”

This term “*Saray al-Azbakiyya*” is a dubious one. Sometimes it is used for the previous palace of Elfi Bey which later became the Shephard Hotel. (I am grateful to Hoda El-Kolali for sending me the *waqfiyya* of this palace.) But in 1868-69, the *Sarāy al-Azbakiyya* must have referred to another building, because when the Prince and Princess of Wales visited Egypt during February-early March 1869, they were installed in the “Palace of Esbekieh,” which seems to be a quite huge palace. Cf. the notes of the Honorable Mrs. W. Grey, *Journal of a Visit to Egypt, Constantinople, the Crimea, Greece, etc* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1870), 26-27. Since Mrs. Grey mentions that at 9 o'clock they went to the French Theatre, without involving much travel, my guess is that this Palace of Azbakiyya was very close to the Comédie. *Ibid.*, 28. In the later maps of 1872, and Grand Bey's famous map of 1874, a palace is indicated as “Palais” simply or as “Palais du Prince Héritier” (at this time, Tawfiq). This is the same building which is “Ministre des Affaires Etrangères” in another map from 1868 (*Le Caire en 1868, Plan des Quartiers habités par les européens*). This might have been the *Sarāy al-Azbakiyya* or “Palace of Esbekieh.” According to Al-Ayyūbī “small wretched houses” were in the site of both the Comédie and the Opera. However, it is almost sure that in the place of the Opera there were

were certainly around. The Comédie faced the Police (“Zaptiyye” [Zabṭiyya], “*sarāy al-Zabṭiyya al-muṭill ‘alā al-Tiyātrū*”) and perhaps the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. My hypothesis is that a part of the former compound was transformed into the Comédie, or some parts of the material were re-used in the new theatre. The compound being cut by a road, the Comédie was established in its “upper,” eastern part with a small garden.¹⁰⁷

The Comédie had a curious look because it resembled a palace/mosque with two small domes. It is an open question if Franz Pasha’s “orientalist” architecture is visible in this theatre¹⁰⁸ or it was simply due to the possible fact that formerly it was part of a palace. We know that this theatre had “116 stalls, 46 orchestra stalls, 18 pit boxes, 18 first class boxes and 18 second-class boxes” and there were also wired boxes for the harem.¹⁰⁹ Ilyās Al-Ayyūbī remarks that its interior was beautifully ornamented.¹¹⁰

no houses, so one may not trust Al-Ayyūbī for this info concerning the Comédie also. Al-Ayyūbī, *Taʾrīkh Miṣr fī ‘ahd al-Khidīw Ismā‘īl*, 1:291. Certainly, there was *something* in the site of the Comédie, and it was close to Ḥalīm Pasha’s palace.

¹⁰⁷ In the letters of the *Muḥāfazat Miṣr* a continuous question of the *nāẓir* (director, responsible person, guardian) of the *Sarāy al-Azbakiyya* is what to do with the wood and I believe that some was reused on the spot for the construction of new buildings. The compound was either demolished completely or was partly transformed, during a longer period. The whole complex was cut by a road (today’s al-Baydaq [El-Beedaq] street) and four buildings occupied its place with two gardens. A letter dated 4 Dhu’l-Qa’da 1285 (16 February 1869) mentions the diminution (*naqṣ*) of the palace. To Umūr-1 Khāṣṣa, 2002-000256, Muḥāfazat Miṣr, DWQ. To discover the exact process, one must read carefully the *daftars* of the *Muḥāfazat Miṣr*, which is alone a work of months, and I had no time for that. In the map of Bellefonds, *Mémoires*, Pl. 9, the Comédie is indicated as if it would have been built *in* the old building complex without showing the street which actually cut the complex.

¹⁰⁸ An interesting detail that Carl von Diebitsch (1819-1869), another German architect working in Cairo (for the Khedive and for private persons), had drawn a plan of a theatre for Cairo which is a little bit resembling to the final Comédie. Cf. this image in Architekturmuseum der Technischen Universität Berlin in der Universitätsbibliothek, inv. n. 41638. I am grateful to Ralph Bodenstein for calling my attention to this image. In Pflugradt-Abdel Aziz, “Islamisiert Architektur in Kairo,” this drawing is not mentioned.

¹⁰⁹ Sadgrove, *Egyptian theatre*, 46.

¹¹⁰ Al-Ayyūbī, *Taʾrīkh Miṣr fī ‘ahd al-Khidīw Ismā‘īl*, 1:292.

Its inauguration was 4 January 1869 thus it was the first visible and ready building of the new entertainment structures.¹¹¹ This institution was often called in the French press “Théâtre de Vaudeville,” “Théâtre Comique” and of course, “Comédie.” Its first known mention in Arabic is *maḥall al-malʿab al-musammā bi'l-tiyātrū*¹¹² (“the building of the playhouse which is called theatre”), later it is called *Maḥall al-Tiyātrū* or *al-Malʿab al-Urūbāwī*, even later *Al-Kūmīdiyya/Kūmidī*. During the summer of 1869, the building was extended and renovated,¹¹³ and was again renovated in 1881.¹¹⁴ After the summer of 1882, the British occupational forces used this building for their horses which thus was devastated by 1885. This is why its material was transferred to the future Opera House during the summer and autumn of 1887,¹¹⁵ and the Comédie was destroyed around that autumn. As we shall see, this building was perceived as a potential building for Arab theatre, from 1872 to 1885 at least five times.

Another entertainment building, a *Cirque*, was also designed by Julius Franz (in Arabic *al-Sirk, al-Sirk, Maḥall al-Janbāz, Malʿab al-Azbakiyya al-Kabīr, Janbāz al-Khuyūl*, etc). He made the drawings in collaboration with a French engineer, Régis de Curel, and these were immediately published in an architectural journal in France,

¹¹¹ Sadgrove, *Egyptian theatre*, 46 and Sayyid ʿAlī Ismāʿīl, *Taʾrīkh al-masraḥ al-miṣrī fī Miṣr*, 37.

¹¹² *Wādī al-Nīl*, 23 April 1869, 12.

¹¹³ Letter from A. Rigab to Riaz (Muṣṭafā Riyāḍ Pasha, at this time chief treasurer [*Khaznadār*] of Ismāʿīl) 11 August 1869, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ. For Riyāḍ, see Hunter, *Egypt Under the Khedives*, 158-165.

¹¹⁴ It was still in use in 1878-79 by the theatre administration. Printed advertisement for Saison Théâtrale 1879, Théâtre Français du Caire. Carton 80, CAI, DWQ. In 1881 by an Arab troupe (again renovated), *Al-Ahrām*, 14 November 1881, 3. Cf. Sadgrove, *Egyptian theatre*, 154.

¹¹⁵ Note dated 3 June 1887, signed by Pasquale Clemente: “Material existant au petit théâtre de la Comédie devant être transporté dans les magasins du théâtre Khédivial de l’Opéra.” Also letter dated 11 June 1887, from Tanzim to Valli, Chef plombiers au Caire. “Le petit théâtre de la Comédie française devant être démoli prochainement.” Both in 4003-036990, *Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-ʿUmūmiyya*, DWQ.

republished by Mercedes Volait today.¹¹⁶ According to Christian Dupavillon, an expert on circus architecture, this was the *only* (European) circus building on the other side of the Mediterranean because, for some reason, although the French constructed colonial theatres in North Africa, they did not export circuses.¹¹⁷ Certainly it was not the only one in the Ottoman Empire, because there was another one in Istanbul, and there even the Gedikpaşa Theatre could be considered as a circus.

The construction started in December 1868¹¹⁸ and the cost was 300,000 Fr. Its inauguration was on 11 February 1869,¹¹⁹ while its troupe (Rancy's Circus) had already arrived on 6 February 1869.¹²⁰ In its short life, the Circus became very popular among the Egyptian audience as well since they were targeted especially by the circus troupes with press advertisements in Arabic in the journal *Wādī al-Nīl*. Mattatias Nahman, a Greek-Jewish merchant, bought the building in May 1872 and

¹¹⁶ Volait, *Architectes et Architectures*, 106. Cf. also Pflugradt-Abdel Aziz, "Islamisiert Architektur in Kairo," 83-85. According to Sayyid °Ali Ismā°il, although Julius Franz is credited with the Comédie and the Cirque, and Barillet-Dechamps with the construction of the Azbakiyya Garden, they were working under/with an important Egyptian governmental officer, Muḥammad Bey al-°Antabla, at that time *ma°mūr al-abniyya* ("commissioner in charge with buildings"). Both Franz and al-°Antabla were decorated together by Khedive Ismā°il for their achievement of the theatres in April 1869. Sayyid °Ali Ismā°il, *Ta°rīkh al-masrah al-miṣrī fī Miṣr*, 31. Footnote 2, with reference to *Al-Waqā°i°c al-Miṣriyya*, 8 April 1869. I had no access to this number of the *Al-Waqā°i°c al-Miṣriyya* and therefore these data cannot be confirmed.

¹¹⁷ Christian Dupavillon, *Architectures du Cirque des Origines à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions du Moniteur, 1982), 175.

¹¹⁸ Its construction is already mentioned in a letter from the Cairo correspondent of the *Levant Herald* dated 30 December 1868, published in the newspaper 8 January 1869, 2.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. Sayyid °Ali Ismā°il provides the date of 25 October 1869 as the opening date based on the advertisement in *Wādī al-Nīl* (15 October 1869) but that is the re-opening of the circus (not to mention that in *Wādī al-Nīl* the reopening date is 11 Rajab which equals rather 16 October). Sayyid °Ali Ismā°il, *Ta°rīkh al-masrah al-miṣrī fī Miṣr*, 32. Dupavillon also mistakenly says that the inauguration was on 16 October 1869, Dupavillon, *Architectures du Cirque*, 183. The date 11 February 1869 was already established by Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 49 who refers to °Abd al-Ḥamid Ghunaym, *Ṣanū°c - Rā°id al-Maṣrah al-Miṣrī*, 89. Based also on the numerous press-accounts it is sure that the Circus was already used during the spring of 1869.

¹²⁰ *Levant Herald*, 18 February 1869, 4.

the “Mattatias building” was built in its place in 1873.¹²¹ Thus, the Circus existed for only around three years.

Based on the surviving plan, this circus was built in the tradition of the Paris circuses, which was, according to the circus historian Henry Thétard, also copied all over Europe,¹²² very much resembling to the Cirque de l’Impératrice in Paris, formerly the Cirque d’Été.¹²³ As was already mentioned, the only unusual element was that it contained special loges for the members of the harem with a thin wire in front. The box of the Khedive was quite huge compared to the general size of the circus and it was very close to the scene, almost at the same level as the actors or the horses.¹²⁴

Thus in the spring of 1869, only two new constructions were ready: the Comédie and the Cirque. These buildings were standing alone in a construction site. Both of them were designed by Julius Franz, belonged to the Khedive as personal possessions, and were financed by him. The exact responsibilities and the status of the buildings were unclear for the City Governorate (Muḥāfaẓat Miṣr) during the first months.¹²⁵ The urban authorities most likely tested and learned from these playhouses about the requirements and handlings of a new type of public building.

¹²¹ The authorisation was given 20 May 1872 by the Khedive. The new palace of Nahman was built by Ambroise Baudry, a French architect. Marie-Laure Crosnier Leconte and Mercedes Volait, *L’Égypte d’un architecte – Ambroise Baudry (1838-1906)* (Paris: Somogy Édition, 1998), 63 and footnote 53. Based on this information and my own research, Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il’s narrative about the long existence of this Cirque (he writes that it stood even in the 1890s!) is false. Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il, *Ta°riḫ al-masraḥ al-miṣrī fi Miṣr*, 34-35.

¹²² Henry Thétard, *La merveilleuse histoire du cirque* (Marigny-Le-Chatel: Julliard, 1978), 218.

¹²³ Apart from the Cirque des Champs Élysées (1835-1880), in the 1850s and 1860s the most important circuses in Paris were the Cirque Napoléon (Cirque d’Hiver) and the Cirque de l’Impératrice. Thétard, *La merveilleuse*, 74-84.

¹²⁴ See image in Jacques Garnier, *Théodore Rancy et son temps, 1818-1892* (Orléans: Jacques Garnier, 1975), image in front of page 97.

¹²⁵ For instance, the *Muḥāfaẓat Miṣr* repeats that *muṣarrifāt al-Tiyātrū wa’l-Janbāz al-Khuyūl laysat min al-tabā°iyya li-Muḥāfaẓat* (“the expenses of the Theatre and the Circus do not belong to the Governorate”). Letter dated 12 Dhu’l-Ḥijja 1285 (26 March 1869), daftar 2002-000256 (page 95, to *Umūr-ı Khāṣṣa*), Muḥāfaẓat Miṣr, DWQ. Later, it had to be clarified that not even the gardens of the

Azbakiyya: The Khedivial Opera House and the Hippodrome (1869-1870)

Three other playhouses were built after February 1869 in the area: an Opera House, a Hippodrome, and the Azbakiyya Garden Theatre. Once again, Julius Franz designed the Hippodrome. The construction started from around late summer 1869 in the neighbourhood of the garden (it was a little bit further to the west, near to the today's Muṣṭafā Kamāl Square).¹²⁶ Hippodromes had been in Cairo since the tenth century, providing entertainment for the elite and for the people as well.¹²⁷ The Khedive wanted the new Hippodrome to be inaugurated on 18 January 1870 (the memorial day of his ascension, a “national celebration”) but Franz indicated that there would be a delay.¹²⁸ It was still standing in 1874,¹²⁹ and during the 1870s it was occasionally used by circus companies,¹³⁰ but was demolished in 1881.¹³¹ After the Cirque, the Hippodrome proved to be the most ephemeral public playhouse of Khedive Ismāʿīl.

The most important construction with far-reaching consequences in this entertainment area was the Opera House. Why did Ismāʿīl order the construction of an Opera House once he had a Comédie? Although he was a great fan of Offenbach, he could enjoy his Offenbach in the Comédie; *La Belle Hélène* had actually been the opening piece on 4 January 1869.¹³² The usual explanation given is that the Opera was an institution built *only* for the European visitors of the Suez Canal Opening

theatres are in the care of the Muḥāfazat. 20 Shaʿbān 1286 (25 November 1869), daftar in 2002-000262 (page 25), Muḥāfazat Miṣr, DWQ.

¹²⁶ Volait, *Architectes et Architectures*, 106.

¹²⁷ The first known hippodrome in Cairo was established by Kāfūr al-Ikhshīdī (935-939), later one existed in the thirteenth century, then also in the fifteenth century. One Mamluk hippodrome in the Rumayla square below the Citadel survived to the Ottoman times as well. Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 2, 6, 15, 29, 78. In Alexandria, in the openings of the former Gabbari palace, already in 1865 a Hippodrome was set up. *Journal de Constantinople*, 20 May 1865, 3.

¹²⁸ Letter dated 25 December 1869, from Draneht to Riaz, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

¹²⁹ Letter dated 19 January 1874, to Barrot Bey from Roufech (?), Carton 80, CAI, DWQ. The Hippodrome is still indicated in the famous map of Cairo by Grand Bey (1874).

¹³⁰ *Murray's Handbook – A Handbook for Travellers in Egypt* (London: John Murray, 1875), 152.

¹³¹ Information gratefully received from Mercedes Volait.

¹³² Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 61.

Ceremony.¹³³ I would suggest the following elements in order to find a balanced explanation.

First, I propose the rivalry with Istanbul, the imperial capital.¹³⁴ The earliest confirmed data that the Khedive ordered the recruitment of an opera company in Paris is from the end of February 1869.¹³⁵ This time Sultan Abdülaziz intended to subsidize the Naum Theatre annually, he wanted to build an Imperial Theatre in Istanbul,¹³⁶ and the Naum started to use the title “Imperial.” We do not know the effect of this news on Khedive Ismā‘īl, if there was any. At the same time, February-March 1869, the Prince and Princess of Wales were travelling in Egypt and later departed to Istanbul where they were invited to the Imperial Naum Theatre.¹³⁷ In February 1869 the troupe of the Naum (an opera troupe) from Istanbul was also invited by a private *impresa* to – Alexandria.¹³⁸ Manasse, the director of the Comédie’s troupe, was used to the rivalry with the “Italian Opera,” the Naum Theatre in Istanbul, and perhaps thought it convenient to suggest the same system in Cairo. The example of Istanbul was very much present in Cairo in January-April 1869 (see more in Part III).

The second reason for the new Opera House is the Paris- and Europe-mania of Ismā‘īl. The new Paris – as intended: “imperial” – Opera House by Garnier was certainly one of the main models, although it was not yet ready¹³⁹ when Ismā‘īl

¹³³ Cf. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 121, 129; Abu-Lughod, *Cairo – 1001 Years*, 107.

¹³⁴ To my best knowledge it is only Philip Sadgrove who in a half-sentence alludes to this possibility. Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 55.

¹³⁵ *Levant Herald*, 24 April 1870, 10.

¹³⁶ *Levant Herald*, 9 February 1869, 3.

¹³⁷ The royal couple arrived to Alexandria on 4th February 1869 and left for Constantinople on 28 March 1869. *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 13 February 1869, 102 and 3 April 1869, 215. Cf. also *The Times*, 11 March 1869. They visited the Naum in 2 April 1869. *Levant Herald*, 2 April 1869, 2-3.

¹³⁸ *Levant Herald*, 20 February 1869, 3-4. and *Levant Herald*, 15 March 1869, 3. The troupe (130 persons!), after entertaining the Prince of Wales in Constantinople, finally headed to Alexandria on 10 April 1869. *Levant Herald*, 10 April 1869, 2.

¹³⁹ Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera – Music Theatre in Paris in the Nineteenth Century* (1992 in German; trans., Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 17-18.

commissioned his own (yet he in 1867 surely visited the old Opera). Just like in Istanbul, the global context of constructing Opera Houses (Table 0) must be taken into consideration. In such a competition, a modern ruler would want his own Opera House.

All these elements (Istanbul and Paris) should be considered to interpret the construction of the Cairo Opera House, which illustrates the way the Egyptian state/ruler established other institutions. As an additional reason one should add that the Comédie looked rather “oriental” and perhaps was not European enough for Ismā‘īl (which could be the reason why Franz Pasha was not, or only partially, involved in the construction.)

Presumably the order for the construction of an Opera House was given in the middle of April 1869, when Paul Draneht “Paolino” Bey (see Chapter 5) was named as *surintendant* of Khedivial Theatres.¹⁴⁰ Still, the order has not been located, and the reasons of Draneht’s appointment remain among the mysteries of the busy spring of 1869, just like the *architect* of the Opera House.¹⁴¹

Different sources provide different names as architects: Pietro Avoscani,¹⁴² “Fasciotti and Rossi,”¹⁴³ even that “[the old Opera House was constructed by] architects Avoscani and Rossi and by foreign specialists with vast experience in theatre building.”¹⁴⁴ ‘Alī Pasha Mubārak, who at that time was the Minister of Transportation, narrates that it was Julius Franz who designed the Opera:

¹⁴⁰ *Wādī al-Nīl*, 30 April 1869, 47. Their information comes from the *Le Nil*.

¹⁴¹ The basic problem is that no one located so far the order of Ismā‘īl for the construction of the Opera House. It is not in G. Guindi Bey and Jacques Tagher, *Ismā‘īl d’après les documents officiels* (Cairo: s.n., 1946), nor in the publications of ‘Abdūn, Sadgrove, Volait, Sayyid ‘Alī Ismā‘īl, etc. I could not find it equally.

¹⁴² His role is given as such for instance, in ‘Abdūn, ‘*Āyida*, 47 (*mi‘mār*). Cf. footnote 124.

¹⁴³ Mostyn, *Egypt’s Belle Epoque*, 72 without any further reference.

¹⁴⁴ The website of the Cairo Opera House: <http://www.cairoopera.org/history.aspx> (accessed November 2, 2009).

[t]he engineer Franz (who later was promoted to the rank of Pasha) was ordered to build two theatres which are now in the Azbakiyya. He prepared their plans and carried out the construction of both – they worked day and night because there remained very short time for the preparation of the [Suez Canal] Ceremony. He constructed the big theatre – known as the Opera – from wood.¹⁴⁵

Nonetheless, it is usually accepted that Pietro Avoscani, an Italian decorator-architect designed the house based on La Scala of Milan.¹⁴⁶ No archival or contemporary documents back up this assumption; but until there is no contradictory proof, it must be accepted. Certainly, Pietro Avoscani was the entrepreneur (the construction company) because Draneht Bey accepted Avoscani's offer to be engaged to "direct the construction and the decoration of the Theatre" ("engagé à diriger la construction et la décoration du Théâtre").¹⁴⁷ We still cannot exclude the possibility that Franz had a role in drawing the plans.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Mubārak, *Al-Khiṭaṭ al-Tawfiqiyya*, 18:241.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Niccola Ulacacci, *Pietro Avoscani – cenni biografici* (Leghorn: s.n., 1871); L. A. Balboni, *Gl'Italiani nella Civiltà Egiziana del Secolo XIX*, 2 vols. (Alexandria: Penasson, 1906), 1:294-408; Jacques Tagher, "Pietro Avoscani, artiste-décorateur et home d'affaires," *Cahiers d'histoire égyptienne* no. 4 (1949): 306-314; Georges Douin, *Histoire du Règne du Khédive Ismail* (Rome: Nell'Istituto poligrafico dello Stato per reale società di geografia d'Egitto, 1934), 470-471. Arnaud, *Le Caire*, 59-61. Cristina Pallini, "Italian Architects and Modern Egypt," in *Studies in Architecture, History and Culture - Papers by the 2003-2004 AKPIA@MIT visiting fellows* (The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology), 39-50. Volait, *Architectes et Architectures*, 51, 106. Although Ulacacci quotes a number of contemporary Italian journals that celebrate Avoscani, in fact, not a single one mentions him as the one who *designed* the Opera. However, the contemporary Italian journals celebrate Avoscani as the one who brought the theatre "forms" to Egypt and thus they certainly presume that he is the architect (and that he would be the first one who built European theatres in Egypt). Ulacacci, *Pietro Avoscani*, 34-41.

¹⁴⁷ These letters are lost or at least I could not find them. However, they are quoted in a letter dated 18 September 1869 to Avoscani from "Nazir de la Daira Hassa," Carton 80, CAI, DWQ, with the date of 21 April 1869. Draneht and Avoscani's exchange would mean that perhaps there had been an already agreed oral contract *previously*. Avoscani was to receive 80.000 Francs for this work with an additional 8000 as a reward if he is ready by 1 October. If not, for every 15 days delay he pays 20.000 Francs. It means that the work could not start before this date and it is likely that the construction started on 25 April 1869. Cf. *Levant Herald*, 4 May 1869, 3. The letter of the Cairo correspondent is dated 26 April in which he says "on a commencé les travaux de nouvel Opéra italien." It thus also likely that the architectural plan was already ready at this time. However, in a letter dated 3 Muḥarram 1286 (15 April 1869) the *nāzīr* of the *Sarāy al-Azbakiyya* is inquiring (referring to an even earlier letter of 20 Dhu'l-Ḥijja 1285, [3 April 1869]) about the "ongoing works of the theatre" (*ashghāl al-Tiyātrū al-jārī binā-hu*) in the *fakhranjiyya* (workshop of pottery) and *qayyāna* (blacksmith's workshop) of Shaykh

The speed of construction of the Opera House (five months) has a long echo in the research literature.¹⁴⁹ According to some, its site was the former palace of a Mamlūk nobleman, then, in 1869, a neglected storehouse (*matjar*), close to the Comédie.¹⁵⁰ However, the Opera and the Circus were established on the most beautiful, southern territory of the previous huge Azbakiyya public garden (ordered by Muḥammad °Alī back in the 1840s).¹⁵¹ Since this first Azbakiyya garden was much larger (around 50 feddans – 20 hectares) than Ismā°il’s second one (20 feddans – 8 hectares),¹⁵² it is unlikely that there was – at the beginning of the construction – *anything* on the spot, apart from construction materials. Thus the description of the location of the Opera House as a previous palace rather fits the Comédie’s former site.

Avoscani had five months to finish the theatre (eventually more than what was the allocated time for the Comédie). From the side of the Khedive, °Alī Rizā Bey was the responsible officer (his role is unclear).¹⁵³ Draneht, who left to Europe to collect the troupes for the Comédie and the new Opera, did not get any response from

Muḥammad Qabbānī. If here “*al-Tiyātrū*” would mean already the Opera House, then we may think that preparations started earlier. Daftar 2002-000257 (page 55), Muḥāfazat Miṣr, DWQ.

¹⁴⁸ °Alī Mubārak’s data can be a possible misunderstanding since all the other theatres were (partly) designed by Franz Bey (and the Comédie was also built of wood). Furthermore, we know that the *Khiṭaṭ* was compiled by scribes who might not be the most *pünktlich* scholars. Gabriel Baer, “°Alī Mubārak’s *Khiṭaṭ* as a Source for the History of Modern Egypt,” in *Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt*, Appendix: 230-246. Here: 240-241. Certainly, Franz paid Avoscani because he reduced his salary. “M. Frantz-Bey, architecte du khédive, a réduit de 150.000 Francs le mémoire de l’entrepreneur Avoscani, constructeur du Théâtre-Italien du Caire, rien que pour la peinture décorative.” *Le Ménestrel*, 15 May 1870, 191. On the other hand, Pflugradt-Abdel Aziz, “Islamisiert Architektur in Kairo,” does not mention if Franz would have been involved in the construction or the plan. The exact relation between the four men – Khedive Ismā°il, Draneht, Franz, Avoscani – concerning the planning of the Opera remains unclear.

¹⁴⁹ This speed is usually understood as unusual and sometimes as a proof of the colonial nature of the Opera House. However, as we have seen, the Comédie and the Circus also were built during such a short time. Furthermore, buildings of wood were a custom in the Ottoman Empire and for theatres, partly in Europe also. Yet, it is exactly this time that because of the fires, more and more theatre is built by stone.

¹⁵⁰ °Abdūn, °Āyida, 45 mentions that it was Azbak’s palace but it seems to be unlikely, cf. Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 91.

¹⁵¹ Bellefonds, *Mémoires*, 600.

¹⁵² Delchevalerie, *Le parc public de l’Ezbékieh*, 1.

¹⁵³ Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il, *Ta°rīkh al-masrah al-miṣrī fi Miṣr*, 53.

Avoscani during May 1869 and became quite concerned¹⁵⁴ because the architectural plan (drawn by the unknown architect) lacked the offices and the storage rooms for the costumes and scenery.¹⁵⁵ An office was finally built in, but the old *Glacière* (storage room for the ice) had to be used as a store-room temporarily.¹⁵⁶

The workers worked in extreme heat, although singing (*cantando*), as Avoscani wrote to Draneht in June, thus they proceeded well but ten workers died.¹⁵⁷ Italian painters and interior decorators worked on the design, the best Parisian decorators made the sceneries,¹⁵⁸ the furniture came from Krieger (Paris), instruments were bought from the factory *Erard et Alexandre* (Paris), the decorated curtain was a creation of Annibale Gatti.¹⁵⁹ On 11 August it was happily reported to the Treasurer of the Khedive that “the huge works of the Grand Opera and the modifications of the Théâtre de Vaudeville are completed.”¹⁶⁰

The Arab press – which in 1869 cannot be called impartial since the Khedive financed both *Al-Jawāʾib* and *Wādī al-Nīl*¹⁶¹ – was not attentive to the construction.

¹⁵⁴ Finally, Draneht from Paris wrote to someone who in turn telegraphed “Cherif Pacha” / “Kassim Pacha” that someone should talk to Avoscani because the painter needs exact data. Telegram dated 18 June 1869, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

¹⁵⁵ Draneht wrote that he needs an office inbuilt in the house. Letter dated 27 June 1869, from Draneht to Riaz, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

¹⁵⁶ Letter from A. Rigab to Riaz (Riyāḍ), dated 11 August 1869, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

¹⁵⁷ This letter is quoted in an essay of Abdoun (°Abdūn) which is annexed to Abdoun, *Genesi dell’Aida*, 147-151, under the title “Il Teatro d’Opera del Cairo” nota di Saleh Abdoun, here: 148.

Avoscani wrote this letter to Draneht in June 1869 (according to Abdoun). The cited Italian text is the following: “we have a fresh breeze since three days and the temperature has decreased to 34 [degrees] but in the cellars of the theatre, where I will have to work, there’s a lovely fresh temperature. We work singing from 5 am to 8 pm and everything is going very well, although we have many sick because of sunstrokes and ten of them have passed away. Furthermore, after the Viceroy has left, road conditions are worsening because of the various constructions and transports, so we permanently work in the dust.” I am indebted to Sara Rosselli for helping in the Italian translation.

¹⁵⁸ Cambon, Chevet, Despléchin, Daran et Poisson, Robecchi, Sachetti. *Le Ménestrel*, 4 July 1869, 247.

¹⁵⁹ Abdoun, *Genesi dell’Aida*, 147-151, a text under the title “Il Teatro d’Opera del Cairo nota di Saleh Abdoun,” here: 148. Repeated in: unknown author (likely °Abdūn), “Histoire de l’Opera du Caire,” *Bulletin Annuel de L’Atelier d’Alexandrie*, 1 (1972): 53-57. Here: 54.

¹⁶⁰ “Le gros travail du Grand Opéra et les modifications du Théâtre de Vaudeville sont en total achevés.” Letter from A. Rigab to Riaz (Riyāḍ), dated 11 August 1869, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

¹⁶¹ The *Nuzhat al-Afkār*, the journal of Ibrāhīm al-Muwaylihī and °Uthmān Jalāl, which was presumably published also in 1869 in Cairo, and the Beirut-based *Ḥadīqat al-Akhbār* (from 1858) were

Al-Jawāʿib mentions it only as a part of the Suez Canal Opening Ceremonies,¹⁶² *Wādī al-Nīl* also only later provides any information. The official newspaper *Al-Waqāʿiʿ al-Miṣriyya* in June 1869 briefly noted that *Tiyātruʾl-Ūbirāʾ*'s construction had started and an Italian company from Alexandria is the contractor (Avoscani).¹⁶³ Later, however, the Arab press would be full with news about the Opera House performances.

On 1 September the Opera was ready externally.¹⁶⁴ Still, the construction must have had some problems because on 18 September the “Nazir de la Daira Hassa” (Nāẓir al-Dāʿira al-Khāṣṣa, Director of the Private Administration of the Khedive) wrote an unfriendly letter to Avoscani, calling his attention to the terms of contract and demanding the delivery of the House,¹⁶⁵ at the same time the *Levant Herald* of Istanbul wrote that “the Opera is all but finished.”¹⁶⁶ During September 1869 two boats arrived to Alexandria from France, bringing the necessary theatrical equipments, ornamentation, and furniture,¹⁶⁷ which indicates that the interior was not completed. As late as 19 October, a visitor noted that “Le Grand-Théâtre” was not yet ready.¹⁶⁸

unavailable to me in the period of research. *Al-Jawāʿib* was also under the more or less direct control of Sultans Abdūlaziz and Abdūlhamid II.

¹⁶² *Al-Jawāʿib*, 2 December 1869, 2.

¹⁶³ *Al-Waqāʿiʿ al-Miṣriyya*, 10 June 1869, 1.

¹⁶⁴ Sayyid ʿAlī Ismāʿīl, *Taʾrīkh al-masraḥ al-miṣrī fi Miṣr*, 54.

¹⁶⁵ Letter dated 18 Septembre 1869, to Avoscani from Nazir de la Daira Hassa, (Nāẓir al-Dāʿira al-Khāṣṣa), Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

¹⁶⁶ *Levant Herald*, 27 September 1869, 3.

¹⁶⁷ Sayyid ʿAlī Ismāʿīl, *Taʾrīkh al-masraḥ al-miṣrī fi Miṣr*, 54.

¹⁶⁸ Charles Taglioni, *Deux mois en Egypte – Journal d’un invite du Khédive* (Paris: Amyot, 1870), 58. However, it is possible that this time it was ready but not opened. One must note a Cairo urban legend that Ḥabīb Sakākīnī (1841-1923), a Syrian Christian businessman (later he was made a Pasha), was the one who finished the Opera House. It is said that he helped in the last moment Avoscani and organized a 24 hours working system, thus saving the head of the Italian decorator. So far, I have found no proof for these stories in the Egyptian National Archive, and even if it is true, I doubt if any proof can be found at all. For Sakākīnī cf. Yasmine El-Rashidi, “History of a home,” *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 25-31 December 2003. <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2003/670/feature.htm> (accessed November 2, 2009).

Be that as it may, the Opera House was the last one of the huge public entertainment institutions of Azbakiyya. Avoscani used stone as a basis and wood on its top as it was more or less usual according to the European custom of the (older) times. However, its European counterparts – the new opera houses in Paris and Vienna – were built of stone, so the Cairo Opera House may represent an older pattern in theatre construction than the then contemporary method.¹⁶⁹

Externally, the House was an Italian theatre. Based on the surviving imagery, it is clear that La Scala could have served as a model – just like for any new opera houses in the period – but the Cairo Opera House was certainly not a *copy*. Although the original architectural plan has not been located so far, some surveys from the 1880s survived in DWQ.

A later architectural plan¹⁷⁰ shows that the Khedivial Opera House belonged – just like the Naum Theatre in Istanbul – to the type “scène classique avec salle classique,” according to theatre typology of the French architects LeBlancs.¹⁷¹ The Khedive continuously improved the Opera House during 1870-1872 with additional ornamentation, and other minor works.¹⁷² There was an enlargement (for the costumes

¹⁶⁹ On up-to-date method I mean the construction theory of Charles Garnier (architect of the Opera House in Paris), *Le Théâtre*, 401-406. It is tricky to judge this building because although Garnier was already constructing the Opera in Paris for years, his book was not yet published at the time, and his theory became a rule only in the next decades. Thus one might say that although some elements (location, machinery) already represent a new understanding of theatres, in principal it belonged to a previous tradition. The reason for this is that this building was built exactly in the time of changing paradigms. In a historical approach of theatre constructions, the periodization for the nineteenth century is given as 1789-1848 – The neo-classical age, 1848-1860 – Intermezzo, 1860-1912 – The era of Garnier. In Pierre Pougnaud, *Théâtres 4 siècles d'architectures et d'histoire* (Paris: Moniteur, 1980), 5. Based on this, the Cairo Opera House should belong to the era of Garnier.

¹⁷⁰ I located a plan of a 1929 architectural survey, re-copied in 1949 with the help of Malak Wahba, director of the Archivist Unit at CULTNAT and the persistent encouragement of Ahmad El-Bindari. I am also indebted to the staff of the *Al-Maktab al-‘Arabi li’l-Taşmimāt wa’l-Istishārāt al-Handasiyya* (The Arab Office for Designs and Engineering Consultation).

¹⁷¹ LeBlanc and LeBlanc, *Traité d'aménagement des salles de spectacles*, 2:4-5.

¹⁷² Sayyid ‘Ali Ismā‘il, *Ta’rīkh al-masrah al-miṣrī fī Miṣr*, 55.

and scenery) in summer 1873 (done by Avoscani, again with problems)¹⁷³ and later also other repairs and additions. This enlargement might allude again to the assumption that Avoscani was the entrepreneur and not the architect since the plans of the enlargement were ready already in 1872 and Avoscani just executed them with minor modifications.¹⁷⁴

The interior of the Opera House was grandiose; numerous descriptions and photos survived. The *New York Times* gave the best description of the interior at the time of the inauguration. Its detailed observations are worth quoting in full:

[t]he auditorium is not very large, there being only about 250 seats on the lower floor. The boxes are nineteen in each tier, except the lowest, where the central box gives place to the parquet entrance and there is an amphitheatre above. The viceroial boxes occupy nearly the whole of the proscenium in heights, and are very broad and spacious, those for his ladies being screened by heavy lace instead of the usual gilded gratings. The public boxes are provided with seats for four only [...] The Viceroy's own box is hung with magnificent curtains of crimson silk velvet and real ermine, and the rest of the house is upholstered with plush of the same shade. [...] The lightning is by a glass chandelier, candelabra being prepared along the tiers for additional illumination on gala nights. The ceiling is flat, but admirably painted in relief, the panels into which it is divided containing each a medallion, bearing the portrait-bust of a composer upon the ground of dead gold. The busts are remarkably well-done [...] Mercadante, Donizetti, Bellini, Guido-Aretino, Auber, Cimarosa, Verdi, Mozart, Beethoven.¹⁷⁵

It is within this environment that the Opera House was inaugurated with a cantata of Prince Poniatowsky in honour of the Khedive and Verdi's *Rigoletto* on 1 November 1869. Contrary to popular (and scholarly) belief, neither *Aida* was ordered (or

¹⁷³ Letter dated 30 June 1873, from Mohamed Zeki, gouverneur du Caire to Abdelgelil Bey, Istanbul (containing the copy of Mohamed Zeki's letter to De Brunenghi – Consul d'Italie au Caire). Letter dated 7 July 1873 from unknown to Chérif Pacha, and letter dated 8 July 1873 - Dépêche chiffrée de S. Ex. Zeki Pacha (informing the recipient that the work is resumed). Carton 80, CAI, DWQ. This is why Sayyid °Ali Ismā'īl, *Ta'rikh al-masrah al-miṣrī fi Miṣr*, 56 is mistaken claiming that until 1881 the Opera House remained in the same state.

¹⁷⁴ Letter dated 1 June 1873, from Larose to Draneht, in Abdoun, *Genesi dell' 'Aida'*, 126. "C'est M. Avoscani, qui a pris les travaux, [...]. Le plan adopté est celui de l'année dernière avec quelques modifications au point de vue des forces de maçonneries."

¹⁷⁵ *New York Times*, 4 December 1869, 1.

performed) for this occasion, nor did the visiting celebrity monarchs for the Suez Canal Opening Ceremony (Emperor Franz Joseph or Empress Eugénie) participate in the first evening.¹⁷⁶

This major exemplar of the “pleasure principle” in Cairo can be best concluded by describing the curtains of the opening night. The description of the *New York Times* continues:

the main curtain has for its centre the great temple of Karnak, surrounded by the Pyramids, the Sphinx, an obelisk and a ruin or two. Upon the steps of the temple are grouped the Muses, at right are emblematic figures of the Nile and of productive powers of Egypt, while at the left a group of girls in modern costume are clustered about a telegraph machine. But the act-drop is still more curious. Upon a raised platform stand the Khedive and the Empress of the French, in the centre of a crowd of officers and courtiers – this forms the background; [...] in the foreground a troupe of ballet girls are dancing before the court, almost upon the bank of the river [...] At the left are the Europeans [...] in a boat upon the water sits the traditional Englishman [...] at the right stand or couch figures of the native men and women and far away loom up the pyramids. Let him who can, explain it sensibly.¹⁷⁷

Let us explain it sensibly, even if it is not clear whether the curtains realize the painter’s, Avoscani’s, Draneht’s, or the Khedive’s imagination. We may suppose that all approved them. The figures on the curtains confirm to two patterns. The first, main curtain is about the fusion of Egypt’s ancient past (pyramids), present (the Nile and “productive powers”), and modern future (telegraph machine, operated by girls [!]). The second curtain, the act drop, depicts the persons behind this history, and reform,

¹⁷⁶ When Eugénie dwelled in Cairo, the Opera was not yet inaugurated. On 1 November she was already cruising on the Nile, and after 17 November she left Egypt. Emperor Franz Joseph indeed visited the Opera – after the inauguration ceremony 17 November, on his way back. The most important source of Eugénie’s trip is the reports of Captain de Surville’s letters, also published online at the Fondation Napoleon website: http://www.napoleon.org/en/special_dossier/suez/html-content/inauguration/voyage/voyage-eugenie.html (accessed March 15, 2011). Cf. Félix Ribeyre, *Voyage de Sa Majesté Impératrice en Corse et en Orient* (Paris: Eugène Pick, 1870), 124-159.

¹⁷⁷ *New York Times*, 4 December 1869, 1.

but suggests also something more: the people (Khedive, the French Empress, court, Europeans, Englishman [!], natives) are all *audiences* of a ballet performance.

This second curtain entails a vision about the future of the Opera House *itself*: it is an elite entertainment venue, including the mighty, the Europeans, the Egyptian being placed a little bit away, and the Englishman excluded on his boat (note the cultural mirror of French-English competition in Cairo). It is here, in the Opera House, that Egypt is transformed by entertainment confirming to the European pleasure principle. It is here, at the new heart of Cairo, Azbakiyya, and in its heart, the Opera House, and at its centre, the stage, that we can understand that behind the reforms, Egypt is a theatre.

Azbakiyya: The Azbakiyya Garden Theatre (1870-71)

In addition to the already finished buildings by February 1869 (Comédie, Circus), the new Opera House (inaugurated on 1 November 1869), and the Hippodrome (early 1870), a new theatre was erected as a part of the construction of the Azbakiyya Garden. Although preparations from the autumn of 1868 had been ongoing, the actual construction of the Azbakiyya Garden (re)started later, in May 1870.¹⁷⁸

Ismāʿīl employed an army of gardeners placed under the direction of Jean-Pierre Barillet-Deschamps (former chief gardener of Paris, 1824-1873)¹⁷⁹ and its secretary, Levasseur.¹⁸⁰ Barillet-Deschamps modelled the new Azbakiyya Garden “in

¹⁷⁸ Letter dated 20 May 1870, from Barillet to unknown recipient, Carton 62, CAI, DWQ. Cf. Delchevalerie, *Le parc public de l'Ezbékieh*, 2 mentioning that in 1868 the territory was in a very bad state and they started immediately the work (Delchevalerie was a supervisor of the plantations and gardens in Cairo) in 1868, they had to stop and restart in 1870.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Luisa Limido, *L'art des jardins sous le Second Empire: Jean-Pierre Barillet-Deschamps (1824 - 1873)* (Seyssel: Champs Vallon, 2002).

¹⁸⁰ They were responsible for all the promenades in Cairo, all the gardens of the royal palaces (including the animals) and sometimes also giving expert opinion in the introduction of new plantations to the countryside. Barillet's office was called *La Direction générale des promenades et*

the style” of the Parisian Parc Monceau.¹⁸¹ Because Azbakiyya’s construction was delayed and the Khedive was nervous, they wanted to use *corvée* work but were informed that “la corvée n’existe pas en Egypte.”¹⁸² Finally, the Garden opened officially only in the last days of May 1871 (partly still unfinished, the work continued until 1872) and its cost was 278.000 Francs.¹⁸³ This new Garden, apart from being a European park, also preserved something of the former musical atmosphere of Azbakiyya, since music kiosques, a restaurant, an Arab musical café, and a Garden Theatre were erected.

This theatre, the Azbakiyya Garden Theatre (or as it was called by the Francophone inhabitants, “Théâtre-Concert du Jardin de l’Esbekieh”)¹⁸⁴ is the fifth and last state theatrical institution.¹⁸⁵ Julius Franz was presumably its designer, too, but the exact inauguration date is not yet known.¹⁸⁶ Never the less, the date of inauguration is of crucial importance for dating the beginnings of Egyptian Arab (music) theatre.

plantations and was officially approved on 8 May 1870 and commanded hundreds of *jardiniers*. In general, its documents are in Carton 62, CAI, DWQ and Carton 12, CAI, DWQ.

¹⁸¹ Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya*, 92. Limido, who did not use the documents in the DWQ, only says that the Azbakiyya was compared to the Parc Manceau and by V. Fournel it was called a “contrefaçon du parc Monceau.” Limido, *L’art des jardins*, 209 and 211.

¹⁸² Letter to Barillet 2 May 1871, Carton 62, CAI, DWQ. On the question of the abolishment of the *corvée* see Nathan J. Brown, “Who Abolished Corvee Labour in Egypt and Why?” *Past and Present*, 144 (1994): 116-137. It is Khedive Ismā‘īl who in theory abolished the *corvée* first in Egypt.

¹⁸³ Undated table signed by Barillet, “La Direction générale des promenades et plantations Budget 1870-1871 – Année copthe 1588” in Carton 62, CAI, DWQ. The final inauguration of the Garden was in 1872, Limido, *L’art des jardins*, 209.

¹⁸⁴ For instance, letter dated 31 May 1871, M. A. J. Rosenboom to Grant (Grand), Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

¹⁸⁵ Volait, *Architectes et Architectures*, 112.

¹⁸⁶ Sayyid ‘Alī Ismā‘īl, *Ta’rīkh al-masrah al-miṣrī fī Miṣr*, 31, footnote 2 states that it was designed by Franz ‘at the same time’ with the construction of the Circus and the Hippodrome. But these two buildings were not constructed at the same time thus this information (which is based on Carton 1, CMW, DWQ) needs to be checked. Furthermore, the author states that Franz was French what he was not. Volait, *Architectes et Architectures*, 431. Although it is true that we do not know much about this theatre, the available data is certainly more than nothing – contrary to what Sayyid ‘Alī Ismā‘īl says in his *Ta’rīkh al-masrah al-miṣrī fī Miṣr*, 40. However, he is right that sometimes there is a confusion, and in some cases we cannot be certain if the this little theatre or the Comédie is understood when one talks about “the Theatre in Azbakiyya.” Furthermore, it is possible that even the Opera is called sometimes by this name.

The first Egyptian theatre-maker, James Sanua, claims that the first play in Arabic in Egypt was performed publicly in this theatre in July 1870 in front of an enthusiastic audience of 3000 people.¹⁸⁷ Based on the archival documents this claim cannot be proved because at this time the construction work of the garden was still ongoing. However, it is possible that Sanua's theatre troupe performed open air, at the site of the later finished garden. Furthermore, Sadgrove calls attention to the fact that we have only news about Sanua's plays from summer 1871.¹⁸⁸ In my eyes, it is unlikely that Arabic journals would not have written about such successful theatre performances (given the previously cited interest of Muḥammad Unsī, the editor of *Wādī al-Nīl*, in theatre) and when much later, in August 1871, they do, *Wādī al-Nīl* announces that performance as the *first* one.¹⁸⁹

Furthermore, a secret agent's report about Egyptian theatre activities in 1870 does not mention this event at all. We may suppose that a 3000 person gathering might have caught the attention of Agent Z.¹⁹⁰ There is reliable information about the Azbakiyya Garden Theatre only from May 1871 (about the preparations of the

¹⁸⁷ These data is repeated cautiously by Sadgrove. In fact, Sadgrove believes more when he claims that even the inspiration for creating Arab theatre comes from Sanua's attendance at one of the plays of the Théâtre-Concert du Jardin de l'Esbekeh sometime summer 1870, *Egyptian Theatre*, 91 and that then in the same summer Sanua performed here also, *Egyptian Theatre*, 93.

¹⁸⁸ Sadgrove highlights that the Arabic papers did not report about this performance at all in 1870 and furthermore that it is in July 1871 that *Al-Jawā'ib* reports about the 'first evening' of Arab theatre there. Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 97. Irene Gendzier, *The Practical Visions of Ya'qub Sanu'* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 35 is mistaken that "records of others bear witness to the same event and confirm Sanu's account." Her references are Jerrold and Chelley. Jerrold does not mention the event, in fact. Chelley quotes in 1906, 36 or 35 years after the event, two journals: 1. An article from the journal *Ezbekié* (publisher: Jules Barbier) of 1873 (!), and the journal *Karagöz* (publisher: Jablin) of 6 May 1876. Jacques Chelley, "Le Molière Egyptien," *L'Abou Naddara* 1 August 1906, 2-3. Here: 2. However, *Karagöz* mentions only that Sanu' started his theatre in 1870, which might be true, while the *Ezbekié* quotation contains that his theatre played for *two* seasons. Both gives us clues to infer that 1870 might be the start of Sanu's experiments, but if his theatre was closed in autumn 1872, then the two seasons would correspond to the start of 1871 autumn or summer.

¹⁸⁹ *Al-Jawā'ib*, 16 August 1871, 2.

¹⁹⁰ Letter dated Le Caire le 27 janvier 1871, to Monsieur Nardi, Inspecteur de Police au Caire from Agent Z. 5013-003022, Usrat Muḥammad 'Alī, DWQ.

summer season) when the Garden was officially opened,¹⁹¹ and it is during this summer that news was published about Sanua's first performance. Based on these data, I do not believe that this little theatre worked before 1871,¹⁹² and this would establish a shorter experiment of public theatre in Arabic in Egypt than was hitherto supposed.

Open-air performances were organized also *after* the theatre building had been finished. It was a small theatre building, perhaps open-air in the beginning. A roof is a later addition because the Italian Enrico Santini, who rented this theatre for twenty years (1873-1893), once mentions the absence of the roof as a problem.¹⁹³ In 1885, Santini rebuilt (?) the building, adding galleries of loges, at the expense of the Government.¹⁹⁴ Having only exterior images, this theatre could be interpreted only as kind of temporary building, which remained in use later, because it was situated in a good location and its maintenance did not require much money.

Its location, in the south-east corner of the Garden, is well-known.¹⁹⁵ It became especially popular during late spring and summer, usually used by operetta troupes

¹⁹¹ Letter dated 3 April 1871, from Lavasseur to [Barillet ?], Carton 62, CAI, DWQ.

¹⁹² Summing up, all data supports the hypothesis that Sanua's memory is wrong, and he did not start his *public* performances before the summer of 1871. In fact, in Sanua's original auto-biography, "Ma vie," stands "un café-concert au milieu de notre beau parc de l'Ezbekeyya." Quoted in A. Tadie, "Naissance du Théâtre en Égypte," *Cahiers des Études Arabes* 4 (1990): 7-64. Here: 30. Blanchard Jerrold, a contemporary, says "a bit of grounds in the Eusbekieh [!]," Blanchard Jerrold, *Egypt under Ismail Pacha* (London: Samuel Tinsley, 1879), 216. John Ninet says "a little theatre in old town," quoted in Gendzier, *The Practical Visions*, 34. These suggest that the place of the performance was *not the building* of the Theatre of the Azbakiyya Garden (which, in fact, was in one of the corners of the garden and not in the middle) but in an open air performance or one of the kiosks (there was an Arab café in the Garden) or Sanua is mistaken. In my eyes it is not likely that Sanua played in the garden theatre before the summer of 1871. Still, it is an intriguing question what was called exactly a "café-concert" in 1870 or 1871.

¹⁹³ Undated letter, (supposedly 1888) signed signed by Tigrane, Keller, Ornstein, Parvis (Comité des Théâtres) Carton 2/1, *Nizārat al-Ashghāl*, CMW, DWQ.

¹⁹⁴ Letter dated 11 November 1885, from President of the Council of Ministers (Nubar) to "Moustapha Fehmy Pacha," Minister of Finances. 3003-074416, Dīwān al-Māliyya, DWQ.

¹⁹⁵ Sayyid °Alī Ismā'īl states that it was built in the place of the old theatre (Comédie?) erected by the French Army in 1799 (see Introduction) because an order of Ismā'īl to Franz contains the expression "in the place of the old theatre in Azbakiyya." Based on this, he also believes that Franz designed the theatre. Sayyid °Alī Ismā'īl, *Ta'riḫ al-masrah al-miṣrī fī Miṣr*, 41-42. Based on the daftar 39/1/1 of

for performing light plays. Its administration was taken out of the hand of Draneht, and although it remained a state possession, it was maintained and rented without the consultation of the authorities. The Azbakiyya Garden Theatre remained in continuous use during the British occupation and was destroyed during the First World War.¹⁹⁶ The Garden itself became a part of cultural warfare, the British army's musicians occupying the space – but that is a story to be told elsewhere.

After the Azbakiyya Garden Theatre, neither the financial means, nor the cultural urge of Khedive Ismā'īl allowed the construction of other playhouses. Out of the five Azbakiyya stages (Comédie, Circus, Opera, Hippodrome, Garden Theatre), three were specifically designed for music (Comédie, Opera, Garden Theatre), with the Garden itself where at least two different types of music (European and Egyptian) could be heard in a relatively small space.

Later Theatres In Cairo

In the 1870s and 1880s private theatres were also established in Cairo, Alexandria and in some of the larger countryside towns of Egypt, like Suez or Tanta. In Cairo, the “state establishments” did not foster the opening and prosperity of private theatres. A Théâtre Ismail (intended to be an Opera House – “un théâtre d’Opéra”) was opened in

the *Al-Ma'ayya al-Saniyya* in DWQ (today microfilm 7, daftar 30, al-Ma'ayya al-Saniyya, DWQ). However, Sayyid °Alī Ismā'īl express his concern that this note, written on 24 Muḥarram 1286 (6 May 1869), might refer to the Opera (!) since he believes that the two constructions were built at the same time. However, as I already indicated, in 1868 a theatre burned down in the Azbakiyya and for me, it is more convincing that the Khedive hinted to that theatre. Furthermore, the order in the *daftar* says only *al-muqāyasa al-firansāwī tata'allaq bi'l-ashghāl al-muqtaḍā ijrā-hā bi-maḥall al-tiyātrū al-qadīm bi'l-Azbakiyya bi-ma'rifat Firāns Bey* (“the French list of measurement which is related to the works that are needed to be made at the place of the old theatre at Azbakiyya by Franz Bey”) thus it does not indicate 1. what kind of work is this measurement for, 2. where is this old theatre exactly. In my eyes, thus Sayyid °Alī Ismā'īl's hypothesis is not firmly grounded.

¹⁹⁶ Karkegi, “Commentaires topographiques.”

the city in the autumn of 1877 (soon closed).¹⁹⁷ There was a Politeama in Cairo in the middle of the 1880s,¹⁹⁸ but it was perhaps demolished in January 1887.¹⁹⁹ There were perhaps temporary scenes also, like that of al-Ḥājj °Alī al-Ḥulw (al-Ḥājj °Alī, the Entertainer) in 1889, behind the mosques of Safīna and Sakīna.²⁰⁰

A new theatre in Cairo was opened in 1890,²⁰¹ this is perhaps identical with the theatre for Arab performances in °Abd al-°Azīz street²⁰² in 1891, which was the first permanent theatre for an Arab troupe (Salāma Ḥijāzī and Iskandar Farah), established with the support of °Alī Sharīf Pasha, president of the Advisory Council²⁰³ (cf. Chapter 7). This theatre, in turn, might be identical with a *Kāyirū* (Cairo) Theatre.²⁰⁴ At the same time, a theatre called *Al-Kawkab al-°Abbāsī* existed in 1891.²⁰⁵ The theatre building in °Abd al-°Azīz street was perhaps the first one dedicated exclusively for theatre in Arabic.

In Cairo, the numerous cafés-chantants/café-concerts like the Grand Orient, Eldorado, El-Cazar also hosted (music) theatrical events.²⁰⁶ One may underline that the Azbakiyya Garden Theatre and the Opera House were in almost continuous use by visiting troupes. These state theatres were supported by a number of private

¹⁹⁷ Letter (invitation) dated 2 October 1877, from Filippo Giannona and Clemente Buratti to the Khedive. Carton 80, CAI, DWQ. Based on this same document cf. also Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 70. Jerrold, *Egypt Under Ismail*, 135 says that at 17 March 1878 this theatre was used for a financial gathering with more than 400 people arrived.

¹⁹⁸ *Al-Ahrām*, 22 October 1884, 1. The Politeama is a typical 19th century “theatre” (Greek *polytheama* [π +] “many kinds of spectacles”), where not only theatrical pieces but also acrobats, balls etc., were shown.

¹⁹⁹ *Al-Qāhira al-Ḥurra*, 5 January 1887, 2. “Fī hādhā shahr yaṣīr hadm al-Pūlītiyāmā idh bi-°azm Nizārat al-Awqāf an tuqīm maḥalla-hā al-sūq al-jadīd.”

²⁰⁰ *Al-Qāhira al-Ḥurra*, 6 January 1889, 4. This was perhaps rather a circus-like theatre.

²⁰¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 21 July 1890, 3.

²⁰² *Al-Ahrām*, 22 October 1891, 3.

²⁰³ Belleface, “Turāth, classicisme et variétés,” 49 with reference to Fu°ād Rashīd, *Ta°rikh al-Masrah al-°Arabī* (1960, Cairo: Dār al-Taḥrīr), 22.

²⁰⁴ *Al-Ahrām*, 2 May 1891, 2.

²⁰⁵ Garfi, *Musique*, 225 based on *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, 18 February 1891.

²⁰⁶ For instance, the Eldorado in Cairo hosted theatrical plays in 1888, instead of the Opera House. *Al-Ahrām*, 1 December 1888, 2.

playhouses during this period in Egypt, especially those of Alexandria. Cf. for the Cairo theatres Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Theatres in Cairo (1869-1892)

Here the name “State” refers before the 1880s to the Khedive’s personal administration, *al-Dā’ira al-Khāṣṣa* or to *Muḥāfaẓat Miṣr*.

Name	Owner	Foundation	Location	Abolishment
Teatro del Cairo	Private	1850s?	Azbakiyya	1868?
Comédie	State	November 1868	Azbakiyya	1887
Circus	State	January 1869	Azbakiyya	1872
Cairo (Khedivial) Opera House	State	April 1869	Azbakiyya	1971
Hippodrome	State	1869 late summer	Close to Azbakiyya	1881
Azbakiyya Garden Theatre	State	1872?	Azbakiyya Garden	1915?
Théâtre Ismail	Filippo Giannona and Clemente Buratti	1877	?	1878?
Politeama (in Cairo)	Private?	1883?	?	1887?
<i>Kāyirū</i> Theatre	?	1890	?	
<i>Al-Tiyātrū al-Miṣrī</i> (perhaps identical with the Cairo Theatre?)	°Alī Sharīf Pasha’s land	1891	25 °Abd al-°Azīz street	?
<i>Al-Kawkab al-°Abbāsī?</i>	?	1891	Būlāq (information received from Prof. Sadgrove)	?

Istanbul: The Municipality's Theatre: Théâtre des Petits Champs/Tepebaşı Tiyatrosu

In contrast to Cairo, in Istanbul a new type of administrative ownership developed between state and private support: the municipality. Private enterprise remained the most influential: after 1870, numerous new theatre-buildings were erected in Pera and in other districts of the city (see Table 4.1; in a map of 1886 at least seven theatres are indicated).²⁰⁷ One theatre, the Théâtre des Petits Champs (in Turkish, the Tepebaşı Theatre), enjoys here a special importance because – after the Naum Theatre burnt down in 1870 – it was intended consciously as a continuation of the Naum Theatre, was also considered an opera house, and similarly had certain ties to the Ottoman authorities. The open field of Tepebaşı (originally Depe başı, “head of the hill”) was called Petits Champs (des Morts) by the French speaking inhabitants of Pera because originally it was a Muslim cemetery. Metin And’s data, that in 1855 here was already a theatre,²⁰⁸ refers only to a travelling company’s location that had no permanent building.²⁰⁹

The first Tepebaşı Theatre was the idea of the former music conductor at the Naum Theatre, the (new) director of the Imperial Music, the Italian Callisto Guatelli (1820-1900). He asked permission and support from Sultan Abdülaziz to establish a theatre close to Tepebaşı in 1871. (See Appendix 5.) In his letter, Guatelli made reference to the Great Fire and to Naum’s burned building and argued that a civilized

²⁰⁷ I am grateful for H el ene Morlier for the possibility that I could see this map. Collection des Guides – Joame, *De Paris   Constantinople* (Paris: Lib. Hachette et Cie., 1886), supplement.

²⁰⁸ And, *T urk Tiyatrosu*, 207, his source is *Journal de Constantinople*, 8 February 1855.

²⁰⁹ One document is dated 25 Jum adhi’l-Awwal 1271 (13 February 1855), A.MKT. MVL. 70/85, BOA. Another *g mlek* contains a whole series of documents: the earliest is dated 20 November 1854 and it is a French testimony by the caf e-owners at Petit Champ des Morts that they do not oppose the establishment of a “th  tre m ecanique” by a certain Louis Persoir there. The Ottoman Turkish permission is dated 21 Jum adhi’l-Awwal 1271 (9 February 1855) and from it is clear that it was a kind of wandering group and they planned to stay two months there. I.MVL. 324/13828, BOA.

state needs a public theatre that he wanted to call “Aziyiye Imperial Theatre.”²¹⁰ The Sultan granted land and a committee was formed to collect public funds in February 1872.²¹¹ The theatre construction started around this time, designed and supervised by the architect Barborini, but soon was abandoned.²¹² The outline plan is still extant.²¹³ It is said Barborini’s design was judged too expensive and that there was opposition because the site was a Muslim cemetery.²¹⁴ Perhaps this is why in 1874, in the Parisian *L’Art Musical* a satire was published about the imagined inauguration of this new Opera.²¹⁵

Later Guatelli again asked permission from Sultan Abdülhamid II, referring to the original permission by Sultan Abdülaziz (again mentioning the Naum Theatre), and this time he wanted to establish a special Opera Theatre (*Opera Tiyatrosu*). In his conception, this would have been a kind of state theatre (“just like in Europe where theatres are backed by the governments”) and he asked for money.²¹⁶

Although the original plan was drawn by the architect Barborini in the 1870s, finally the building was not built accordingly. The works resumed for a municipal garden in spring 1879.²¹⁷ It is said that Blacque Bey, the Head of the Municipality of the VI. Cercle, hired gypsies to force the rich people who lived around to donate

²¹⁰ Ottoman Turkish translation of a presumably French proposal, without date, but the headline says that it is the translation of a document dated 11 May 1871. HR. TO. 454/62, BOA. In this *gömlek* the other documents are only the sketches of the translator. Cf. And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 206 referring to the *firman* that was given in 1872.

²¹¹ *Levant Herald – Daily Bulletin*, 16 February, 1872, 3 [27].

²¹² *Revue de Constantinople*, 23 May 1875, 373.

²¹³ Undated plan of the area, with the seal of Barborini, in ŞD. 2394/47, BOA.

²¹⁴ And, *Türk tiyatrosu*, 205-206.

²¹⁵ A. L. Bey, “Inauguration du Nouvel Opéra à Constantinople,” *L’Art Musical*, 31 December 1874, 424. It was written by “un effendi fantaisiste.”

²¹⁶ Document without date. In the catalogue of the Ottoman Archive it is dated as 29 Dhu’l-Hijja 1300 (10 October 1883). Y.PRK.AZJ 7/89, BOA. Yet, I believe that this should have been written earlier.

²¹⁷ *La Turquie*, 21 May 1879, 1.

money.²¹⁸ In May 1880, the garden with a “kiosque” was almost ready, with three entrances, and with an inscription above the ports “Jardin du 6me Cercle.”²¹⁹ The garden seems to have opened in the summer of 1880, and quickly became a favourite promenade (the entry fee was 1 piaster), a member of the Giustiniani family being responsible.²²⁰ The Beni Zug Zug circus company used it during the autumn of 1880, although that time they held it inadequate because the garden was not located in more frequented streets.²²¹ By the summer 1882, the problem was eliminated when a restaurant was also installed in the garden.²²²

The kiosque, an “élégant petit pavilion,”²²³ was often called “salle du Jardin Municipal des Petits Champs”²²⁴ and from 1881, “Théâtre Municipal des Petits Champs,”²²⁵ in its Italian version, “Teatro Municipale del Piccolo Campetto.”²²⁶ From this year, the building and the garden itself became the most important location for entertainment in the district. Usually, the garden and the building together were rented by private impresarios, after public advertisement.²²⁷ Both the garden and the building were continuously changed, rebuilt during the 1880s and 1890s.

By the Greek community it was considered to be “the” theatre in the end of the 1880s,²²⁸ just like it was also often the place of the Italians’ entertainments. In the mid-1880s a “winter” theatre (it was called a “Pavilion” in the beginning of the

²¹⁸ And, *Türk tiyatrosu*, 206-7. Cf. Yazıcı, “Theatre in Nineteenth Century Istanbul,” 96, quoting Ahmed Fehim’s memoirs.

²¹⁹ *La Turquie*, 11 May 1880, 1.

²²⁰ *La Turquie*, 20 October 1880, 1.

²²¹ *La Turquie*, 13 November 1880, 3., 30 November, 1880, 1.

²²² *La Turquie*, 17 May 1882, 1.

²²³ *La Turquie*, 21 December 1881, 1.

²²⁴ *La Turquie*, 11 November 1880, 1.

²²⁵ First mention as such is *La Turquie*, 12 May 1881, 3. It was known as such in foreign papers as well. *L’Art Musical*, 1 November 1883, 340.

²²⁶ *La Turquie*, 6 Octobre 1883, 3.

²²⁷ The first public advertisement was in *La Turquie*, 25 and 26 September 1881, 3. *La Turquie*, 12 November 1881, 1.

²²⁸ J. D. Maksoudis, “Le théâtre à Constantinople,” *L’Orient (Franco-Hellenique)*, 23 December 1888, 339-343, here: 340.

1890s)²²⁹ was erected. The summer theatre (perhaps the kiosque) burned down in June 1890,²³⁰ but then was rebuilt. This theatre remained one of the main locations of Istanbulite theatre and music life,²³¹ embodying a new type of cooperation between private enterprise and municipal ownership.

Conclusion

In both cities, the core of the later theatre areas (Pera, Azbakiyya) were originally open fields or lands, both having entertainment histories back to the beginning of the 19th century if not before. The urban development of these areas accompanied new visions about the whole city. In Istanbul this development concerning the municipal structure was rather an experiment *within* the Ottoman administration that allowed Pera/Beyoğlu to become more independent of the central government and included it in the organic fabric of the city. In Cairo it is the *framework* which changes along with the formation of Azbakiyya in order to create a Paris on the Nile – which, of course, was supposed to shine brighter than Istanbul.

In Istanbul, at least six suggestions were submitted to create a “state” theatre but almost all failed - partly because private entrepreneurs available took the job on themselves (Naum, Ömer Bey, Güllü Agop, etc), partly because of the Sultans’ own

²²⁹ Demetrius Coufopoulos, *A Guide to Constantinople* (1895; repr., London: Adam and Charles Black, 1910), 36.

²³⁰ *La Turquie*, 11 June 1890, 2.

²³¹ A new building was designed by the Armenian architect, Hovsep Aznavour in the 1890s by the order of Rıdvan Pasha (1855-1906), that time Mayor of the city. The local *belediye* took care of it: in 1905 the building was partially renovated based on the plans of the architect Campanaki. And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 209. It continued to be named as Municipal Theatre (Théâtre Municipal – ehir Tiyatrosu) and was used in the 1910s by the new Conservatoire (from 1914, Darülbedayı Osmanlı) as well. Metin And, “Avant-Propos – Antoine et le theatre turc contemporaine” in André Antoine, *Chez les Turcs* (Ankara: Forum, 1965), 5-16. Here: 5. After 1921, the institution was renamed Tepebaşı Dram Tiyatrosu (Drama Theatre) in the 1930s and even later here was established the official Istanbul Opera Theatre in 1959-60 by tenor Aydın Gün. The last performance in the Tepebaşı Dram Tiyatrosu was in 1969, after which the building was destroyed. *Meydan Larousse*, s.v. “Tepebaşı tiyatrosu”, 12 vols. and a supplement (İstanbul: Meydan Yayınevi, 1973), 12:63.

small palace theatres, partly because of lack of money. This means that the *infrastructure* for an official state (theatre) culture was not in the hands of the imperial administration.

In contrast, in Cairo's Azbakiyya this infrastructure was created because it is the state, the Khedive, who ordered and financed five major playhouses; out of which only two survived for more than ten years (Opera, Azbakiyya Theatre). These buildings advertised his power and belonged to the official state body, providing locations for which later various cultural brokers will compete.

These processes were only partly influenced by Paris or London models. Both in Istanbul and in Cairo, the European and non-European elites watched each other with keen eyes and while the idea for a Comédie in Cairo was perhaps inspired by Istanbul's French Theatre and got its first troupe from there, for the renewal of the Gedikpaşa Theatre in 1870, the Cairo Opera House could serve as model for a state theatre, even if misunderstood. The hitherto unknown origin of this later institution, the Gedikpaşa Theatre, also shows how Ottoman courtiers were involved in imperial or semi-private business in the entertainments.

In the context of the Ottoman imperial networks and the emergence of new types of urban consumption habits, that we have seen in Part I, theatre buildings embody experimental built spaces where the elites in Cairo and Istanbul could compete with each other in new ways. These spaces also secured the possibility to join the worldwide fashions and public ceremonies. Furthermore, although the new buildings were designed exclusively for European performances, these could host any type of entertainment. Thus the buildings themselves provided a setting for theatre in Arabic or Ottoman Turkish. This built environment was a precondition to the state-related and non-state cultural visions in the late 19th century.

These buildings were all *host* institutions, offering the infrastructure to fill in with artists, performances, and audiences. In the next part, I will show the individuals who managed and brought troupes to these theatres.

Part III. Impresarios

In 1887, a note was composed in the Ministry of Public Works in Cairo about the requests of two individuals to use the Opera House. They were called “impresario arabe.”¹ After describing the urban infrastructure of theatres in Cairo and Istanbul – administrations and buildings – in this third part of my dissertation I focus on the individuals who brought troupes to the host theatres and the emergence of Arab and Ottoman impresarios.

Italian entertainment troupes had been circulating along the shores of the Mediterranean for centuries. The first half the 19th century witnessed considerable traffic, for instance Soullier’s and Mele’s circus and Italian theatre troupes in Alexandria, Smyrna, Istanbul, or Tunis.² These played open-air, in private homes or temporary theatres. From the 1860s, with the establishment of permanent theatre buildings in the Ottoman cities, troupes could find professional locations to perform. The individuals who connected buildings and troupes were usually called “impresarios” in the late 19th century.

The impresario is a problematic category, being a person who organizes theatre and music performances, investing money into art for profit but also having some part in the creative processes and some relations to the power brokers. The profession of an impresario has a well-established tradition in Western Europe,³ and

¹ “Soliman Cardahi, l’impresario arabe” and “Joseph Khayat, ancien impresario arabe.” Letter dated 1 June 1887, 4003-037874, Diwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

² Moncef Charfeddine, *Deux siècles de théâtre en Tunisie* (Tunis: Editions Ibn Charaf, Société Tunisienne des Arts Graphiques, [2001?]), 19-27.

³ The impresario can be traced back as early as the 17th century, cf. Beth L. Glixon and Jonathan E. Glixon, *Inventing the business of opera: the impresario and his world in Seventeenth-century Venice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). The French Toussaint Baubet is a 19th century local impresario, Octave Féré, *Aventures et un biographie d’un impresario, Toussaint Baubet* (Rouen: Haulard – Dentu, 1864), he was active in the 1840s, and the book ends with his marriage in 1859, 103.

according to John Rosselli, the late 19th century already devalues the (Italian) impresario.⁴ Being an impresario was a masculine profession.

Some individuals are also called impresarios who worked exclusively for a state or a sovereign, like the Italian Bartolomeo Merelli, an imperial businessman who arranged troupes between Milan and Vienna,⁵ serving the tastes of the elite. By the late 19th century, however, the impresarios became mostly private entrepreneurs but nonetheless counting on the support of sovereigns, as did Maurice Strakosch or Joseph Schürmann. A separate category would be those musicians who were good in self-management and did not earn money purely by managing others.⁶

An impresario often apprenticed as a secretary for another impresario, or was a musician or actor who decided to manage himself or other artists. Thus financially, materially, artistically a would-be impresario already possessed practical knowledge about the requirements of a performance or a tour at the time when he started his own career. They had special relations to their artists; as Strakosch explained, “the impresarios themselves create the stars.”⁷

By the late 19th century, the tour became a significant feature of artistic life. To quote again Strakosch: “during the tours the impresarios produce the stars whose fame is already established in Paris or London [...] and during these tours the value of

Another example is the Spanish Juan de Grimaldi. David Thatcher Gies, *Theatre and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Spain – Juan de Grimaldi as Impresario and Government Agent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

⁴ John Rosselli, *The opera industry in Italy from Cimarosa to Verdi: the role of the impresario* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 37.

⁵ Rosselli, *The opera industry*, 25-27.

⁶ William Weber, “From Self-Managing Musician to Independent Concert Agent,” in *The Musician as Entrepreneur, 1700-1914*, ed. William Weber (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), 105-129. Here: 111.

⁷ Maurice Strakosch, *Souvenirs d'un impresario* (Paris: Paul Ollendorf, 1887), 155. Chapter 20, “Étoiles et agents,” is his almost theoretical essay about the relations between the impresarios, the stars and the system they created.

the star is everything.” He also knew the importance of the press in the creation of the stars’ fame.⁸

Another late 19th century impresario (who actually started his career with a tour in the Ottoman Empire) Joseph Schürmann believed that six polyglot secretaries should surround him, one designated for the star. After engaging the star, the real work began: producing photographs, renting theatres, assembling a troupe, writing bios and advertisements, deciding the prices, etc. At one station of the tour, usually a capital city, the secretaries were to take care and control of all the details of the route while the impresario arrange meetings to invite the given rulers to the performances by the intermediation of their master of ceremonies.⁹

In contrast to these Europeans, the first Ottoman impresarios had no opportunity to observe or study from an older impresario the tricks of organizing a tour or guest play. In many cases they did not consider themselves impresarios but artists who took the burden of management as well, although after some years, some of them exclusively dealt with theatre as business. By the 1880s, this situation changed in some respects and new impresarios could build on the previous experiences of others.

We can classify the impresarios (see a chart of the most important personalities in Table 5.1.) in Cairo and Istanbul into four categories with some overlaps. The largest category contains those who possessed their own troupes, and performed in one of the vernaculars of the Empire. Mostly they were writers/actors/singers/musicians too, and usually called themselves “director” (*mudīr* in Arabic, *direktör/müdüür* in Ottoman Turkish, or *directeur* in French). Many times

⁸ Strakosch, *Souvenirs d'un impresario*, 258-259.

⁹ Impresario [Joseph] Schürmann, *Les Étoiles en voyage: La Patti – Sarah Bernhardt – Coquelin* (Paris: Tresse et Stock, 1893), 10-16.

they selected and trained their actors. These include Güllü Agop, James Sanua, Salīm Naqqāsh, Sulaymān Qardāḥī, Abū Khalīl al-Qabbānī, Eleazer Melekian, Dikran Tchouhadjian, Seropé Benglian. Most of these impresarios invested their own fortune in theatrical performances but also sought institutional affiliation as leaders of “national” or “imperial” troupes thus embodying proposals for state/official culture. They were all Ottoman citizens.

The second category comprises those persons who were *without* a troupe and *without* a building, and exclusively dealt with the transfer of troupes between Western European and Ottoman cities. These individuals usually rented a theatre or contracted with the theatre owner, then they went to Europe, collected a troupe of European actors/singers, returned to their contracted theatres, produced the season(s) of performances, and started again. An eminent example of this type of entrepreneurship is Seraphin Manasse but there are many others: Jacopo Billi, Parmeggiani, Edouard Salla, Nestor Noci, Meynadier, Castagne, Billorian, Claudius, Povelis, Santi Boni and Soschino. They rarely counted on state support but naturally used all the possibilities to get, for instance, free concession to the Opera House in Cairo.

The third category consists of the persons who *owned* a theatre or were *appointed* as administrators. In Istanbul, some of the owners remain unknown so far, or if they are known, they had nothing to do with theatrical daily business. However, some were forced to deal with theatrical issues, like Michel Naum, his brother Joseph Naum, and their great rival, Bartholomeo Giustiniani, the owner of the Palais de Cristal in Istanbul. In Cairo, during the period 1869-1892 many persons served as directors/superintendants of the khedivial playhouses. Three of them are notable: Paul Draneht, Léopold Larose, and Pasquale Clemente, who naturally counted on state support being part of the state body.

The fourth category consists of the directors/impresarios of European troupes who visited Istanbul and Cairo as part of a tour *only*. These were usually French, Italian, and Greek troupes. Other nationals, especially musicians and troupes from the Habsburg Astro-Hungarian Monarchy visited Istanbul too. The impresarios and the leaders of the troupes are well-known names, like Carayan who were specialized in their professions and often worked via professional theatre agencies.

Based on the activities of the individuals in these four categories, we can establish two types of the tours/guest seasons' motions: intra-Ottoman and transimperial. These were intertwined: when a foreign troupe arrived to the Ottoman Empire, they became parts of the internal circulation although in a privileged position. Many impresarios used both transimperial and intra-Ottoman routes to set up a successful tour, and some examples (for instance, Qardāhī or Tchouhadjian) prove that such ingenuity was *not* restricted to European impresarios or artists.

These individuals contributed significantly to the context of urban change in Cairo and Istanbul which was explored in Part I. Since the theatre buildings constituted an important part of city transformations as was shown in Part II, the impresarios bringing troupes to these locations acted as agents of fashion, not necessarily European, but in all cases, *new*. An impresario needed a good theatre building that usually also contained some important accessories like sceneries, offices, even costumes. It is via the building that an impresario could secure some funding from the state as we shall see in Cairo and even in Istanbul.

Through the lives of four exemplary personalities I will present the formation, working methods, and everyday problems with an overview of their troupes, repertoires, and the buildings they used. These four are not only important because their lives embody the entangled relations between Cairo and Istanbul (and other

cities) but also because they represent distinct visions for popular and state sponsored culture.

In Chapter 5, Seraphin Manasse' entangled life between Istanbul, Cairo, Paris, etc is described and contrasted with his most serious rival, Draneht Bey's who managed to become an official in the khedivial administration. I analyse in Chapter 6 those theatre impresarios who first made large scale tours performing in Arabic or Ottoman Turkish: the lives of Sulaymān Qardāhī, the leader of the major Egyptian music theatre group(s) in the 1880s and one of his rivals from Istanbul, Séropé Benglian's tours in the late Ottoman Empire.

Table 5.1

Selected Personalities of Theatres in Cairo and Istanbul, c. 1867-1892

Original name/versions/new name	Birth-Death	Citizenship	Ethnicity/Religion	Languages	Positions/professions/functions
Michel Naum/Naoum/Nohum, etc	?-1868, Istanbul	Ottoman	Syrian Arab Christian	French, Arabic, Ottoman Turkish?	Proprietor and director of the Naum Theatre, Pera
S�raphin Manasse/Minasyan	1837-1888, Istanbul	Ottoman	Armenian/Armenian Catholic	French, Armenian, Ottoman Turkish?	writer, composer, translator, musician, impresario
G�ll� Agop/(H)Agop Vartovyan	1840-1902, Istanbul	Ottoman	Armenian Christian later Muslim?	Ottoman Turkish, French? Armenian?	Actor, Director of the Ottoman Theatre, 1867-1882, then Director of the Yıldız Palace Theatre
Paul Draneht/Paulino Bey/Pavlos Xristofidis	1809?, Nicosia - 1892, Alexandria	Ottoman? Egyptian? Italian?	Cypriote Greek	Ottoman Turkish, Greek?, French, Italian, Arabic?	pharmacist, agent in Paris, superintendant of the Khedivial Theatres, businessman
Sulaym�n Qard�h�/Soliman Cardahi/Qurdahi/Qirdahi	?, Beirut?-1909, Tunis	Ottoman	Syrian Arab/Greek Orthodox?	Arabic, French	actor, director, impresario

°Abduh al-Ḥamūlī/al-Ḥāmūlī	1840?-1901	Ottoman/Egyptian	Egyptian Arab/Muslim	Arabic, Ottoman Turkish?	celebrated singer
Aḥmad Abū Khalīl al-Qabbānī	183?, Damascus – 1902/1903, Damascus	Ottoman	Syrian Arab/Muslim	Arabic, Ottoman Turkish?	actor, director, impresario
Léopold Larose	18? – 189?	French?	French?/Catholic?	French	Actor, painter, keeper of sceneries and costumes, impresario-director of the Cairo Opera House, 1881-1883
Callisto Guatelli	1819-1900, Istanbul	Italian?	Italian/Catholic?	Italian, French?, Ottoman Turkish?	conductor, musician, teacher, Head of Imperial Music
Séropé Benglian/Benkliyan/Bengliyan	1835, Istanbul – 1900, Alexandria	Ottoman	Armenian/ Catholic	Ottoman Turkish, Armenian, French?	actor, singer, impresario, director
Dikran Tchouhadjian	1837, Istanbul - 1898, Izmir	Ottoman	Armenian	Italian, Ottoman Turkish, French, Armenian	composer, piano teacher, editor, director
Salāma Ḥijāzī	1852?-1917	Ottoman/Egyptian	Egyptian Arab/Muslim	Arabic, French?	singer, actor, director
Pasquale Clemente	18?-191?	Italian?	Italian	Italian, French	musician, composer, pianist, Superintendent of the Cairo Opera House, 1886-1908

Chapter 5.

The Civilizing Mission in Theatre: Manasse and Draneht

This chapter reconstructs the lives of Seraphin Manasse and Paul Draneht as theatrical impresarios. They represent two distinct careers in the late Ottoman Empire and late Ottoman Egypt and, as we will see, they were in many ways connected although mostly lived in very different social environments. Yet, their knowledge of Paris and Milan in both cases was their greatest capital, offering in Istanbul and in Cairo “the” European entertainment as a cultural choice and as a civilisatory means. Manasse was an independent impresario while Draneht became an employee of the Khedive. As we will see, Draneht perhaps succeeded in getting his job at the cost of Manasse.

5.1. The Ottoman Impresario: Seraphin Manasse (1837-1888)¹

This almost forgotten² personality is the first Ottoman impresario. His life is a particular example of the entanglements between Paris, Istanbul, Cairo, Alexandria,

¹ His name is written in numerous ways, especially in later scholarship, in Turkish Mınasyan/Mınasyan/Manasyan, in Arabic Mınās/Manās/Mınās/Mansā/Mināsa/Manāsa, in French sometimes Manassé (!) with the often mistake of surname Seraphim/Serafim (!). In the Latin alphabet he wrote his name as Manasse, pronounce it in French as “Manas,” and this is what I followed. His name in connection with an “Armenien theatre” could be identified as Mınasyan (“son of Mınas”) in And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 210-211 who mentions both Mınasyan and Manasse but does not connect the two names. In *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 189 he mentions him as “Serafim Manasse.” He is mentioned as Seraphim Manasse in Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*, 305. In French, some should have pronounced also as “Manassé” (*Le Théâtre Illustré* 2, no. 77 [1869], 2. Also *Le Gaulois*, 31 July 1869, 3). Manasse (or rather Manassé) could be also a Jewish name (one of the twelve tribes), but all contemporary documents affirm that he was Armenian (*Wādī al-Nīl* once mentions that he is of Armenian origin [*al-Armānī al-aṣlī*], *Wādī al-Nīl*, 21 May 1869, 134; and a biographical article in *Hayal* [Khayāl], 15 Mayıs 1290, 1-2). Cf. Next footnote.

² He is mentioned in Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 46-47 as a “Frenchified American” but this is perhaps a printing mistake and it should be a “Frenchified Armenian.” Metin And mentions Manasse in his publications: And, “Eski İstanbul’da Fransız Sahnesi,” 79-80, 83; And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 210-211; And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 189 and 289. Cf. Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*, 305. He figures also in the theatre history of Sayyid °Alī Ismā‘īl under the name “Mansā”, *Ta’rīkh al-masrah fī Miṣr*, 37 and 40. He is

and Smyrna. As an anonymous writer wrote: “Manasse is the first person who brought French art to us in the Orient.”³ Yet, throughout his life, he almost always failed in his enterprises. His failures build up a narrative about the birth of a specific repertoire of music theatre, in which he not only participated with management but also with musical theatricals.

Manasse’ Early Years

Seraphin Manasse was born in 1837 to an Ottoman Armenian family. Manasse is a very well known family name, as many served in the Ottoman administration as translators or diplomats already in the first half of the 19th century.⁴ His exact birthplace is not known, likely Istanbul. He was educated in Paris, perhaps listening to European music and operettas, then he spent a certain time in Milan, around 1859-1860. There Manasse likely received some musical training,⁵ and published a book

mentioned in the *Türk Tiyatrosu Ansiklopedisi* (M. Nihat Özön and Baha Dürder, eds.) as the director of the Fransız Tiyatrosu in 1868 as “Manas or Minas” (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1967), 185, without a separate entry for his name. In the Armenian sources available to me, he is a very marginal figure in Garnik Step’anyan, *Urvagits arevmtahay t’adroni patmut’yan*, 3 vols. (Yerevan: HSSR GA hrtrkch’t’n, 1962-1975), 2:85, 188; translated for me by Gérald Papasian. In the recently translated (from Armenian to Turkish) Şarasan (Sarkis Tütüncüyan), *Türkiye ermenileri sahnesi ve çalı anları*, 48, 103 Manasse remains equally marginal.

³ “M. Manasse est le premiere qui nous ait porté l’art français en Orient.” *Moniteur Oriental/Oriental Advertiser*, 18 June 1886, 3.

⁴ Members of the Manasse/Manas/Manase family not only served as diplomats but some of them were artists also like the painter Joseph Manasse. In 1852, a “Sébouh [Sebut?] Manasse” was a dragoman at the Porte. *Journal des débats politiques et litteraires*, 19 November 1852, 1, (based on the *Journal de Constantinople*, 29 October 1852). There is a curious but perhaps unrelated data, namely that the Delegation of “Turkey” (the Ottoman Empire) in Bruxelles in 1858 was headed by Pierre Manasse who in this year recommended his cousin to Mme Petiteau in Paris. *Journal des débats politiques et litteraires*, 30 May 1858, 3. Metin And provides that there was an Edgar “Manas” composer, conductor etc, and another one was “Srapion Manas” (= Seraphin) who was a theatre-maker, actor and writer; And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 289. Precious information is in the website of Istanbul Armenians, <http://www.bolsohays.com/?part=yazar&gorev=oku&id=21> (the website states that the Manasse-family comes from Kayseri, a Central Anatolian town) (accessed November 11, 2010 – but at the time of terminating the writing, July 2011, this was unavailable). None the less, Seraphin Manasse could also conduct the orchestra (*Revue de Constantinople*, 14 March 1875, 465). Manasse is a very common family name, today there are more than 60.000 people with this family name in the world. (<http://peopleaz.org/firstname/Manasse/3>, accessed March 18, 2011).

⁵ *La Comédie*, 9 August 1863, 8: “musicien distingué.”

about this Milan experience, a romantic novel (“un roman de fantaisie”).⁶ He was a polyglot, surely knew Armenian, French, Italian, and likely Ottoman Turkish. His father wanted him to work in the imperial administration in Istanbul, just like other members of the family, but he felt himself imprisoned.⁷ He was an Ottoman subject.⁸

Young Seraphin Manasse returned to Istanbul perhaps during the autumn of 1860.⁹ He joined a group of theatre-makers, the so-called Hekimyan theatre group who were playing mostly in a café (Café Oriental) and were called “the Armenian theatre” by the press.¹⁰ His experimental musical, *The Miller’s Daughter*, was presented in the Naum Theatre in Armenian in March 1862.¹¹ This play is said to be a prose drama, but it was a musical piece,¹² today forgotten.¹³ Manasse perhaps decided to deal with theatre professionally, likely with the encouragement of a businessman, and went to Paris during the summer of 1863 to collect artists for a troupe for a new “French Theatre” in Istanbul.¹⁴

⁶ Seraphin Manasse, *La Vie à Milan* (Milan: Francesco Sanvito, 1861), 5. I am grateful for Réka Koltai for her precious help in getting images of this book.

⁷ *La Comédie*, 30 August 1863, 7. *Hayal*, 15 May 1290 (1875), 1.

⁸ In the Ottoman administrative correspondence once he is mentioned as “teba^c-i devlet-i ^caliyye.” Irade dated 10 Muḥarram 1282 (5 June 1865), I.MVL 532/23872, BOA.

⁹ The first advertisement of his book about Milan in Istanbul (!) is in 29 June 1861 number of the *Journal de Constantinople*, 4.

¹⁰ *Journal de Constantinople*, 2 January 1862, 1. Cf. And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 42. It is likely that “un jeune homme” who joined the Armenian theatre and wrote a *vaudeville* is Manasse. *Journal de Constantinople*, 1 February 1862, 3.

¹¹ *Journal de Constantinople*, 26 March 1862, 3. And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 42. arasan only mentions that the “Oriental Theatre” in 1862 played a “French opera” with Manasyan’s cooperation. arasan, *Türkiye ermenileri sahnesi*, 48. Cf. also And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 42 and 289.

¹² Already in the first report, the journalist ironically remarks that Manasse “a pris le chemin d’un opéra comique ‘sans le savoir’.” *Journal de Constantinople*, 26 March 1862, 3. Later, an anonymous letter of a reader to the Editors of the Journal mentions that Manasse’s play was “une pièce entremêlée de chants.” *Journal de Constantinople*, 28 March 1862, 3. Continuing the polemy, another article describes the piece as “drame mêlé de chant.” *Journal de Constantinople*, 14 April 1862, 3. For the sujet of the play itself we can only guess: The “Miller’s daughter” “La Fille du Meunier” is a theme among the tales of the Grimm-brothers, there is also a French tale about a miller’s daughter.

¹³ This counts as an early Armenian play in the 19th century, perhaps translated to Ottoman Turkish, still staged in the 1880s. And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 337, republished an advertisement in Ottoman Turkish from 1305 (1888) of this play, where the author’s name is missing.

¹⁴ *La Comédie*, 9 August 1863, 8.

This “French Theatre” (Le Théâtre Français) was a private enterprise in the building of the Palais de Cristal that was renovated by Eduard Salla (or Sala), owned by Bartholomeo Giustiniani, as was shown in Chapter 4.¹⁵ This location offered a convenient place for conducting theatrical business, and Manasse started to use his knowledge of French to bring French music theatre to Istanbul. This can be regarded as his conscious decision to offer the modern/fashionable entertainment of popular Parisian operettas instead of high Italian opera, to the citizens of Istanbul.

Manasse’ First French Theatre in Istanbul (1863-1868)

Manasse organized a troupe in Paris, in the summer of 1863.¹⁶ The summer stay in the French capital became his practice; he surely returned to Paris in 1864,¹⁷ 1865,¹⁸ 1866,¹⁹ and in 1868²⁰ engaging well-known actors and singers from important Parisian theatres like the Théâtre Lyrique, but also from the countryside. He used various French dramatic agencies, (Amédée Verger in 1863,²¹ Armand de Bongars in 1867²²). The French journals of Pera followed his travels, usually announcing in late summer/early autumn the expected programme of the troupes.²³ The stage in the Palais de Cristal was usually labelled as French Theatre but also in the first years was also called “Oriental Theatre” (Théâtre Oriental de Pera).²⁴

¹⁵ *Journal de Constantinople*, 16 November 1861, 3. From 1875 there is a piece of information that this construction was financed by Salla and Seraphin Manasse together. *Revue de Constantinople*, 23 May 1875, 371.

¹⁶ *La Comédie*, 30 August 1863, 7.

¹⁷ *La Comédie*, 23 June 1864, 7.

¹⁸ *La Comédie*, 13 August 1865, 5.

¹⁹ *La Comédie*, 13 May 1866, 8.

²⁰ *Levant Herald*, 13 August 1868, 3.

²¹ *La Comédie*, 9 August 1863, 8.

²² *La Comédie*, 24 March 1867, 8.

²³ Many times Manasse himself sent a letter to the journals, like the one in *Journal de Constantinople*, 26 July 1864, 3.

²⁴ Manasse himself sends once the “tableau de la troupe française et celui de l’administration du Théâtre Oriental.” *Journal de Constantinople*, 19 August 1864, 3.

By this time, Istanbul was a favourite destination of Italian musicians, but French troupes only occasionally played. With Manasse's enterprise, French music theatre (Manasse usually brought an operetta troupe) got a strong foothold in the city in the 1860s. As I mentioned in the Introduction, this was viewed in France as a major victory in the cultural competition between Italian and French, and as a political act.²⁵ Manasse himself looked upon his activity as a channel via which Parisian habits and fashions were transmitted to Istanbul. In 1868, he begged the mothers in Pera to let their daughters come to the French Theatre:

Where else can one acquire a better French? Where else can one be initiated into the fine manners? Where else can one pick up the original Parisian tricks? Where else can one go to *copy* the fashions and the outfits? (As some say): *the fool invented fashion, and the wise conforms to it.* [Original emphasis]²⁶

Manasse also complained about the often-changing taste of the audience because they always demanded new pieces and new actors while in France “the directors only have to renew some of their minor actors occasionally.”²⁷ The audience had perhaps the largest role, or at least this is how Manasse perceived it, in that the impresario had to return to Paris to bring the newest performances with new actors. The audience, in this way, “commissioned” the impresario to deliver distant fashions (cf. more in Chapter 12).

Edouard Salla was perhaps the one who financed the first season (1863/64),²⁸ although later his name is not associated with this enterprise. Manasse alone asked for permissions, signed the contracts – he was the “director of the French theatre” (“le

²⁵ *La Comédie*, 17 February 1867, 9.

²⁶ *Levant Herald*, 14 September 1868, 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ “Le théâtre Français, de Carybde en Sylla, a eu pour premiere bailleur de fonds, la première année, un petit capitaliste qui panse encore sa blessure.” *Journal de Constantinople*, 24 February 1865, 1.

directeur du théâtre français”).²⁹ His activity was a serious threat to the long established Naum Theatre. In January 1864 Manasse asked Fuad Pasha, the Grand Vizier, to grant him the privilege to present plays in French for three years. This was important because he wanted to build a new theatre involving the bankers Antoine Alléon and Baragnon, to provide them with security in the face of the competition with Naum.³⁰

At the same time, the impresario of the Naum Theatre, Nicolas Pezzer, also asked the financial help of Fuad Pasha.³¹ A year later, Manasse actually started to build a new theatre or to renovate the previous one in the Palais de Cristal.³² Finally, the “rude” competition³³ between Naum and Manasse was temporarily solved by a contract in April 1865. Seemingly Michel Naum won and forced Manasse to sign this agreement, based on Naum’s own imperial firman. Manasse could perform plays only in French in Pera with the *exclusion of opera*, which in any language remained exclusively in the hands of Naum.³⁴ The contract was valid for two years (until April 1867), and Manasse had to pay 400 “livres turques” for these two years. There is no evidence if such a contract was repeated in 1867 but much later in the spring 1869, Giustiniani, the proprietor of Palais de Cristal, protested against the privilege of (this time Joseph) Naum and also wanted a privilege.³⁵

²⁹ This is the way he signed a letter, printed in *Journal de Constantinople*, 12 February 1864, 3.

³⁰ French letter dated 12 January 1864, from Seraphin Manasse to Fuad Pasha, HR. TO. 445/33, BOA.

³¹ *Journal de Constantinople*, 11 January 1864, 3.

³² *La Comédie*, 21 May 1865, 8. *Le Ménestrel*, 28 May 1865, 206.

³³ “la rude concurrence.” *Journal de Constantinople*, 22 December 1864, 3.

³⁴ Originally, the photocopy of this document was given to me by Emre Aracı who in turn got it from Suha Umur. This is a contract in French, dated 1 April 1865, between Naum and Manasse, testified by the Municipality of Pera. At the back of the document is written Meclis-i Vale 23871. In the Ottoman Archive, I could identify this letter finally as part of LMVL 532/23871, BOA.

³⁵ *Levant Herald*, 18 March 1869, 3.

The financial background of this business is unclear. Once in 1862, a charity theatre evening of the Armenians produced 70000 piastres in the Naum,³⁶ which is a considerable amount (approx. 18186 francs). There is no data if Manasse ever got a state or sultanic patronage. Certainly, he could afford the travels to Paris to hire sometimes quite well-known actors/singers. Although in the season of 1863/64 perhaps Salla did not find his profit, it was still enough for Manasse to continue. The next year, 1864/65, Manasse had great pains with the season,³⁷ and in the press he was made ridiculous,³⁸ what he tried to retaliate with a court process but finally withdrew.³⁹ His theatrical seasons usually ended with scandals.

Season subscriptions were sold and every year the stage was also enlarged or renovated. In 1865, due to the extensive work on the theatre, three-year subscriptions were sold.⁴⁰ Manasse between 1863 and 1868 may not have become a rich man, due to the competition with Naum, a competition that was occasionally joined by other entertainers: Greek and Armenian theatres, circuses, and independent musicians, like the Hungarian violinist Edouard Reményi.⁴¹ However, by 1867 this “two theatre” (Italian and French) structure was established and appreciated by the French press. The Naum was considered to be “the imperial” theatre, being an Opera House, housing Italian troupes, in contrast to the “light” French theatre of Manasse. This system was partly a response to, and partly a condition of, the emergence of audience as a market that will be further explored in Part V.

³⁶ *Journal de Constantinople*, 7 April 1862, 3.

³⁷ *Journal de Constantinople*, 24 March 1865, 1.

³⁸ *Journal de Constantinople*, 3 March 1865, 3.

³⁹ *Journal de Constantinople*, 28 March 1865, 3.

⁴⁰ *Le Ménestrel*, 28 May 1865, 206.

⁴¹ For instance, *Levant Herald*, 17 May 1867, 1.

The Troupes in the 1860s

Manasse collected a new troupe every year, although some of the actors, like Léopold Larose, were long-standing. This totally forgotten⁴² French actor-painter-impresario⁴³ started his career in France and Germany, continued in Istanbul and finally finished in Cairo. As a comedian, he played first in the season 1864/65 in the French Theatre in Istanbul.⁴⁴ He spent the season 1865/1866 in Berlin in the troupe of de Silveryra.⁴⁵ In March 1866 he returned to the group of Manasse in Istanbul, with a universal acclaim, then the whole group went to Alexandria for guest-plays.⁴⁶ In 1868, Larose would follow Manasse to Egypt. Larose seems to have had a talent for comic roles and participated in numerous seasonal theatre troupes.

Manasse often had troubles with his artists, like in 1865 when “Mlle A” left the troupe with her lover, breaking her contract, so Manasse alarmed the police and the couple was arrested at the Dardanellas.⁴⁷ His troupes were judged usually favourably in the French press of Pera, especially the 1867/68 season.

⁴² Larose is *only* mentioned in the publications of ʿAbdūn, like ʿĀyida, 28 and in Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*.

⁴³ He is described as a painter usually. Abdoun, *Genesi dell’ “Aida”*, 142, footnote 68, repeating in his ʿAbdūn, ʿĀyida, 28, (*muṣawwir*), and Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 72 refers to him as a painter (Sadgrove based on Abdoun and *Le Moniteur Egyptien*, 1880).

⁴⁴ *Journal de Constantinople*, 16 January 1865, 4. His brother, Edmond Larose, was a singer (a bass) in France in the 1860s and 1870s.

⁴⁵ *La Comédie*, 30 July 1865, 5 and 26 November 1865, 4. It is possible that previously he played in Hamburg in 1863 since the journal frequently mentions that he was applauded in Constantinople and Hambourg. *La Comédie*, 11 February 1866, 6.

⁴⁶ *La Comédie*, 25 March 1866, 8.

⁴⁷ *Journal de Constantinople*, 26 January 1865, 3.

Adventures in Cairo and Paris (1868-1872) – the Manasse-Affair

When in September 1868 Manasse had begged the mothers of Pera to visit his French theatre, the governor of Egypt, Khedive Ismāʿīl, was staying in his Istanbul palace, Emirghan: he had come to Sultan Abdülaziz for the final permission for the Suez Canal ceremonies. Manasse now received an offer from the Khedive that he could not refuse. He was invited to become the director of the Comédie, the Egyptian “French Theatre” in Cairo. Thus, together with the 32-person troupe that he collected in Paris for the new season in the French Theatre in Istanbul (they arrived 5 October 1868)⁴⁸ he decided to leave for Cairo almost immediately. This engagement represents the first state supported music theatre in Egypt, the patronage of a French genre for Egyptian official culture.

It is likely that there is a connection between Manasse’ open letter and the Khedive’s invitation. There is less than two weeks between the publication of this letter (14 September 1868) and the departure of the Khedive (end of September 1868). At that time, probably, their agreement (perhaps mediated by one of Ismāʿīl’s secretaries) was ready⁴⁹ since Manasse also left for Paris looking for especially those actresses/singers who were, like Mlle Schneider, “old and tried friend of the Viceroy.”⁵⁰ This intimate information was published in Paris also, so Manasse publicly refuted it in the *Le Figaro*.⁵¹ He hired finally Céline Montaland (1843-1891) as the leading star, and brought along to Cairo the comedian Léopold Larose too.

⁴⁸ *Levant Herald*, 5 October 1868, 1.

⁴⁹ The exact date of the offer is not known. It must have been around end of September because in a letter addressed to Kiamil Bey someone is already talking “du théâtre de Constantinople” in connection with the proposed theatre in Cairo (“le théâtre que d’un propose de faire établi au Caire”). Letter dated 22 September 1868, from ? to Kiamil Bey, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ. The first public news that Manasse will move to Cairo is published in the *Levant Herald*, 16 October 1868, 2.

⁵⁰ *Levant Herald*, 16 October 1868, 2.

⁵¹ Republished in *La Turquie*, 16 November 1868. Manasse called Ismāʿīl “le roi d’Egypte.” I am grateful to Emre Aracı for this reference.

When the troupe arrived to Cairo, the theatre was not yet ready (perhaps the construction was not even started)⁵² so they performed in a palace in December.⁵³ The freshly built Comédie was inaugurated on 4 January 1869 with the favourite piece of the Khedive, Offenbach's *La Belle Hélène*,⁵⁴ which was reported back to Istanbul as a failure⁵⁵ but in Paris as a success.⁵⁶ None the less, in the next two months Manasse became a very influential man at the Khedive's court.⁵⁷ He had a contract for four seasons, and during his short stay in Cairo he was paid 4000 Ottoman liras.⁵⁸

The troupe of the Comédie under the direction of Manasse played also for the visiting Prince and Princess of Wales.⁵⁹ This time Nubar Pasha, then Foreign Minister, arriving in Cairo after his long negotiations abroad, was astonished how the court of the Khedive had changed to Europeans exclusively. Of course, the Khedive invited him immediately to the Comédie in mid-January 1869, which became the meeting place of the court, whose members had a "talon rouge."⁶⁰

Manasse' theatre soon was troubled because Montaland fell on stage, and the leading actor, Larose, had to be released because of a family tragedy; thus the Comédie was deprived of its two main stars and the theatre was empty. Furthermore, the newly arrived circus of Théodore Rancy took all the favours from the Khedive and the public.⁶¹ From the ironic sentences of the correspondents of the Ottoman

⁵² De Vaujany, *Le Caire et ses environs*, 245, says that the site was empty when the artists arrived.

⁵³ *Levant Herald*, 26 December 1868, 4 (letter from the anonymous Cairo correspondent, dated 15 December), "les débuts de la troupe de Manasse."

⁵⁴ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 46.

⁵⁵ Letter dated 13 January 1869, *Levant Herald*, 23 January 1869, 2.

⁵⁶ *Le Monde Illustré*, February 6 1869, 85-86.

⁵⁷ Already in a letter dated 13 January 1869 the anonymous Cairo correspondent of the *Levant Herald* mentions him as "our most prominent character." *Levant Herald*, 23 January 1869, 2.

⁵⁸ Amr Karīm Manṭūqa, dated 19 Muḥarram 1869 (1 May 1869), Daftar 30, Microfilm 27, al-Ma'ṣiyya al-Saniyya al-°Arabī, DWQ.

⁵⁹ Letter dated 6 February 1869 in *Levant Herald*, 18 February 1869, 4.

⁶⁰ *Mémoires de Nubar Pacha*, 349-350.

⁶¹ *Levant Herald*, 2 March 1869, 3.

French journals, it seems that Manasse was considered a very “able” person and he fought to regain the favours.

Manasse’s position was indeed very strong during his first months in Cairo. He was requested by the Khedive to arrange a ballet troupe with the only condition “that the ladies should be pretty.” Thus on 7th January 1869 Manasse in Paris commissioned Amédée Verger,⁶² the dramatic agent with whom he previously worked,⁶³ to arrange a ballet troupe. In the end of February he sent another letter to Verger to start immediately to recruit a fine opera company without minding the cost. This is the first indication that the Khedive Ismā‘il wanted an Opera House (or at least an opera troupe). In March, Manasse was in different negotiations and intrigues concerning the singers.⁶⁴ A credit of 15000 Ottoman liras was opened for him in Paris.⁶⁵ It is possible that he received an order to supervise the construction of a new Opera House.⁶⁶ This might allude to his being (almost?) named as superintendent of all khedivial theatres.⁶⁷ (See also this issue in Draneht’s life below.)

However, at this point, one of the strangest events in the history of the Ottoman theatres, the so-called “Manasse-affair” took place. On Friday, 2 April 1869, a bomb was discovered in the Khedive’s box in the Comédie before he arrived.⁶⁸ The

⁶² Amédée Verger later became in 1872 the director of the Théâtre Italien in Paris. Théophile Gautier, *Correspondance Generale*, dir. Pierre Laubriet, 12 vols. (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1996), 10:460.

⁶³ Already in 1863, *La Comédie*, 9 August 1863, 8.

⁶⁴ All of this information comes from a report of the *Levant Herald*, 24 April 1870, 10, in connection with the later trial of Verger against Manasse.

⁶⁵ *Qīmat Krīditū maftūh bi-Bārīs ilā M. Mānās: 15000*. “The value of credit opened in Paris for M. Manasse: 15000.” Undated table with number 66, at the bottom of the page number 81, in Daftar 30, Microfilm 27, al-Ma‘iyya al-Saniyya al-‘Arabī, DWQ.

⁶⁶ De Vaujany, *Le Caire et ses environs*, 246.

⁶⁷ Indeed, Manasse is named later as “ex-surintendant des théâtre vice-royaux d’Egypt.” *Le Gaulois*, 31 July 1869, 3. Cf. also *Hayal*, 15 Mayis 1290 (27 May 1874), 1-2. (Appendix 7.)

⁶⁸ Telegram dated 3 April from Alexandria, *Levant Herald*, 5 April 1869, 2. Cf. Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 47. It is said that the bomb was “under the seat of the Khedive” but other reports only confirm that it was in the loge.

news immediately received international media coverage;⁶⁹ the author of the plot was unknown. Yet, soon in Cairo rumour held that “its author was the same man who divulged the secret,” Manasse.⁷⁰

He was arrested and interrogated by the European Consuls. Manasse confessed that indeed he invented the plot, hoping for an additional reward. When asked what happened with the previous large sums he got, Manasse reported that he had to give “80.000 francs to a Bey whose mistress cost him an enormous amount.”⁷¹ Finally he and another man (a Greek, a certain Fransis [Francis] Iksantaki [?])⁷² were charged while two Italians, suspects as minor accomplices (a certain Carboni, and Atrikos Anasi [?]),⁷³ were held in custody in the Italian Embassy.⁷⁴ News spread that Manasse (and his Greek co-author) would be sent to the White Nile, almost to certain death.⁷⁵ We have only one indication that these charges were the results of a plot against Manasse in order to take away from him the position of the future superintendancy of khedivial theatres.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ *Levant Herald*, 5 April 1869, 2. In Ottoman Turkish: *Terakki*, 15 Nisan 1869, 1. The event was, of course, reported in Arabic in the *Wādī al-Nīl* (23 April 1869, 12 – this means actually that in Pera it was known before the Arabic speaking public would have known it in Cairo – but of course, hearsay was probably the fastest), *The New York Times* published a telegram from London in its 5 April 1869 number, the *Le Figaro* on 6 April 1869.

⁷⁰ The “machine” was a copper vase loaded with gunpowder and some bits of broken glass, which was thought to make small harm, and this was placed in the viceregal box. It is said that a European lady warned the mother of Ismā‘īl of the plot and the men around who want to befool him. Letter dated 7 April 1869, *Levant Herald*, 15 April 1869, 3. The vase was later exploded by the military and indeed it did not cause much harm. Letter dated 26 April 1869, *Levant Herald*, 4 May 1869, 2.

⁷¹ Letter dated 7 April 1869, *Levant Herald*, 15 April 1869, 3.

⁷² The name of this other person in Arabic script is Fransīs Iksāntākī/Aksāntākī (al-Yūnānī). *Wādī al-Nīl*, 21 May 1869, 134 (based on the news of the *Al-Waqā’i‘ al-Miṣriyya*).

⁷³ Atrikūz Anāsī (al-Īṭālyānī), *Wādī al-Nīl*, 21 May 1869, 134 (based on the news of the *Al-Waqā’i‘ al-Miṣriyya*). I have no info about who could have been this person, but his name sounds rather Greek.

⁷⁴ *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, 29 April 1869, 2, relates that Manasse and his “regisseur general” Carboni, another Armenien (?), were arrested, and two minor suspects were the machinists of the theatre, a certain François, a Greek, and Andréa, an Italian.

⁷⁵ Letter dated 26 April 1869, *Levant Herald*, 4 May 1869, 2.

⁷⁶ *Hayal*, 15 Mayıs 1290 (27 May 1874), 1-2. “Suez kanālının kushādī mas‘ūlesī mīdānī çıkararak bir itālyān tiyātrosu taşkiline dahī luzūm görününenin idāresi dahī Manasse Beyeffendiye verelmek üzere iken ‘aleyhinde bir tākim entrikler başlāyıp nihāyet iftirāya ograyarak taraf Khedividen habas ile bir meddet sonra tard olunur.” “For the Suez Canal Opening an Italian theatre was established and its

In the beginning of May 1869 the Consuls turned to “another court” which finally banished Manasse and Iksantaki from Egypt. The reason for this light sentence is not exactly clear; it is said that a heavier sentence would have “compromettre leur [the Consuls’] dignité.”⁷⁷ Thus Manasse escaped to Marseille and then to Paris with a financial compensation (!).⁷⁸

From France, he offered to publish a book about his story with piquant details that the French press said the public awaited with understandable excitement.⁷⁹ (Perhaps this book was never realised.)⁸⁰ In Paris he faced two further trials. One was a charge against him by the agent Verger who wanted 200000 francs as an indemnity (because he recruited the opera troupe in vain) that was finally decided in Manasse’ favour.⁸¹ The Egyptian “state” launched another trial for uncertain reasons, which lasted until 1873. In the process, Draneht Bey represented the Egyptian Government, the next director of khedivial theatres who in turn commissioned the lawyer Postel-Dubois. In May 1873 Manasse was sentenced (unclear to what) and he had to pay the costs of the two processes but he was no longer in Paris (so the lawyer demanded the money from Draneht).⁸²

directorship was trusted to Manasse Bey, too, when some finally false intrigues against him casued the Khedive to imprison him and then after a while, to exile him.” Cf. Appendix 7.

⁷⁷ Letter dated 19 May 1869, in *Levant Herald*, 27 May 1869, 3-4. Sadgrove mentions that the reason for the light sentence was that Manasse was a “*rayah* (a non-Muslim subject)” based on McCoan (1889), 89-90. (Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 47). He was indeed an Ottoman subject, surely. The Italian(s?) were sentenced to one-year jail. *Wādī al-Nīl*, 21 May 1869, 134 (based on the news of the *Al-Waqā’i‘ al-Miṣriyya*). See also Gellion-Danglar, *Lettres sur l’Egypte contemporain*, 241.

⁷⁸ This compensation is said to be for his “suffers.” But it is not exactly clear why he deserved this sum. Letter dated 19 May 1869, in *Levant Herald*, 27 May 1869, 3-4. And also in *Le Gaulois*, 2 August 1869, 3 suggesting that he got this money not to publish his book.

⁷⁹ *Levant Herald*, 2 August 1869, 4.

⁸⁰ Although a French journal writes that it is “sous presse”, I did not find any trace of publication. *Le Gaulois*, 31 July 1869, 3.

⁸¹ *Levant Herald*, 24 April 1870, 10.

⁸² Letter dated 20 May 1873, from Draneht to Barrot, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ. Draneht wrote again a letter in this matter in 5 January 1874, Draneht to Barrot, this time leaving the whole matter to Barrot. The lawyer wanted 6528 francs. Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

Being on trial, Manasse was surprisingly enterprising. Although perhaps first he wanted to go back to Istanbul,⁸³ finally he became the director of the Théâtre Dejaset (Théâtre des Folies Nouvelles)⁸⁴ in spring 1870,⁸⁵ as the press in Istanbul also reported,⁸⁶ and bought the theatre itself for monthly instalments.⁸⁷ After the last performance that spring (31 May 1870), he renamed the theatre as Folies-Nouvelles.⁸⁸ Under his direction, after a reconstruction,⁸⁹ this institution opened on 13 September 1871 (meanwhile likely the Prussian siege of Paris blocked his activity).

Although the Paris press judged him as successful in presenting “orientalising” pieces, like the *Nouvel Aladin*,⁹⁰ the audience did not come, so Manasse could not pay the settlements. Finally, the theatre was closed on 16 January 1872.⁹¹ Thus, after six shiny months in Cairo, Manasse spent approximately three years in Paris and then again had to flee.

⁸³ *Le Gaulois*, 4 December 1869, 3. “M. Manassé, de kédive-mémoire, va prendre à Constantinople la direction du Grand-Théâtre.” This might be the Naum Theatre?

⁸⁴ *Le Théâtre Illustré*, 2, no.77 (1869), 4 and many other journals. This theatre was constructed in the place of the Folies-Nouvelles which in turn replaced in 1854 a café-concert called Folies-Mayer. Nicole Wild, ed. *Les arts de spectacle en France II – Affiches Illustrées (1850-1950)* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1976), 83. The Théâtre Dejaset is still at 41 Boulevard du Temple. It was inaugurated in 1859 by Eugène Déjazet (the famous actress Virginie Déjazet, rented it in the name of her son. Alphonse Leveaux, *Nos Théâtres de 1800 à 1880* (Paris: Tresse et Stock, 1881-1886), 164-165 and cf. L.-Henry Lecomte, *Histoire des Théâtres de Paris*, 10 vols. (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1973) vol. VIII-X. 1-167 (vol. VIII reprinted containing the history of the first, second, and third Folies-Nouvelles until 1904], 142). It is not clear why Manasse wanted to buy this theatre.

⁸⁵ *La Comédie* announces in his 24 April 1870 issue the last performance of the previous director who gives his place to Manasse “ex-impresario turco-tyrolien” (!), page 8.

⁸⁶ *Levant Herald*, 22 March 1870, 2.

⁸⁷ *La Comédie*, 27 March 1870 announces that Manasse became the proprietor of the Théâtre Dejaset.

⁸⁸ Leveaux, *Nos theatres*, 183.

⁸⁹ Which was even reported back in Istanbul, *Levant Herald*, 23 July 1870, 3.

⁹⁰ *La Comédie*, 31 December 1871, 2. The critique of Alfred Taillez. The drama was written by the English writer Alfred Thompson.

⁹¹ Lecomte, *Histoire des Théâtres de Paris*, 163. From August 1872 the playhouse was reopened by Daiglement who renamed the theatre as Déjazet. *Les arts de spectacle en France II – Affiches Illustrées*, 83; Lecomte, *Histoire des Théâtres de Paris*, 163.

Manasse' Second French Theatre in Istanbul (1872-1878)

He migrated back to Istanbul. By 1872 many changes took place in the entertainment scene of Pera (and Istanbul in general), the two most important being the devastation of the Naum Theatre (June 1870) and the monopoly of Güllü Agop for theatre performances in Ottoman Turkish (May 1870).⁹² The *cafés-concerts* were the most popular: the garden of the *Concordia* (more or less the “Italian” place),⁹³ the *Croissant* in Taksim, or the *Téké*. The French Theatre in the *Palais de Cristal* worked under the direction of Madame Potel⁹⁴ (after Manasse left autumn 1868) and under impresario Nestor Noci with not much success.⁹⁵ Giustiniani, the clever businessman, established in the same building a music-hall also, *Le Concert International*.⁹⁶

Just like ten years before, Manasse perhaps first used his Armenian contacts and then established his own enterprise. Secondary sources state that during the summer of 1872 Manasse staged his operetta *Pamela or the Masked Ball* with the theatre group of Güllü Agop (*Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*). Güllü Agop asked the composer and musician Dikran Tchouhadjian to train the singers; however, Dikran Tchouhadjian wanted to compose operettas also.⁹⁷ Thus starts the “war” between Ottoman Armenians producing operettas (see in Chapter 8.)

So far I have no data that would confirm his presence in Istanbul during the summer of 1872, but surely in October 1872, a new musical-dramatic troupe arrived in

⁹² Dated 17 May 1870, I. ŞD. 18/777, BOA. Transliterated in And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 55-56.

⁹³ *L'Orient Illustré*, 12 October 1872, 135. A memoir confirms that around 1871 only the Palais de Cristal and the Concordia served the public as “videpoches céphaloniotes.” Bertrand Bareilles, *Constantinople – Ses Cités Franques et Levantines* (Paris: Editions Bossard, 1918), 66.

⁹⁴ Mlle Potel was a singer originally, already in Pera in 1868. *Levant Herald*, 13 August 1868, 1.

⁹⁵ *Levant Herald*, 24 December 1870, 3.

⁹⁶ *Levant Herald*, 26 December 1869, 3.

⁹⁷ Step'anyan, *Urvagits arevmtahay t'adroni patmut'yan*, 2: 85. And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 66, gives also the they collaborated, without source, perhaps based on Step'anyan.

Pera under the “suprême” direction of Manasse,⁹⁸ with the artistic direction of Carboni.⁹⁹ They took over the old Palais de Cristal, offering as a first music performance Donizetti’s *La Fille du Regiment* with a vaudeville.¹⁰⁰ This time there was an even tougher competition than before. During the winter they shared the building with a Greek theatre group.¹⁰¹ Other rivals were a troupe “de chanteuses et de chanteurs français” who played in the renewed *Alcazar* café.¹⁰² Still, Manasse’s Théâtre Français was considered to be “le théâtre unique” and was relatively successful in the first month.¹⁰³

One can only infer that severely critical articles written (in Italian) in January 1873 about the French Theatre, but never naming the actors, are about Manasse’s troupe.¹⁰⁴ It seems that this time his season was a total failure, and April 1873 his troupe left Istanbul.¹⁰⁵ Manasse vanished for more than one year from all the newspapers. (However, the French Theatre worked in Pera in the season 1873/74, with the direction of Carboni, perhaps Manasse was still behind it?).¹⁰⁶

He is back in Istanbul with a new troupe from Marseille for the season 1874/75.¹⁰⁷ On 7 November 1874 the French Theatre was opened to the utmost dissatisfaction of some.¹⁰⁸ Now, he engaged Henri Meynadier as a managing

⁹⁸ *The Levant Herald* already announces that soon will arrive Manasse’s new troupe of 36 persons. 14 October 1872, 142. Then they arrived around 25 October from Marseille. *L’Orient Illustré*, 26 October 1872, 166. *Levant Herald*, 28 October 1872, 182.

⁹⁹ *L’Orient Illustré*, 26 October 1872, 166. The names of all the singers and actors are printed here.

¹⁰⁰ *Levant Herald*, 28 October 1872, 182.

¹⁰¹ *Levant Herald*, 5 November 1872, 202.

¹⁰² *Levant Herald*, 7 November 1872, 207.

¹⁰³ *Levant Herald*, 2 December 1872, 219.

¹⁰⁴ *L’Orient Illustré*, 18 January 1873, 366. 25 January 1873, 382.

¹⁰⁵ *L’Orient Illustré*, 26 April 1873, 590.

¹⁰⁶ See the troupe’s personnel in *La Comédie*, 4-11 January 1874, 8.

¹⁰⁷ Ali Nihad Bey, “La saison théâtrale,” *L’Univers – Revue Oriental*, April, 1875, 300-303. *L’Art Musical*, 4 December 1874, 391. And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 211.

¹⁰⁸ Ali Nihad Bey, “La saison théâtrale,” *L’Univers – Revue Oriental*, April, 1875, 300-303.

director.¹⁰⁹ From the press, Manasse's activity can be reconstructed week by week in 1875, especially from the *Revue de Constantinople* that tried to defend him and his artists.¹¹⁰ This also indicates that music theatre in the beginning of the 1870s became a very important social issue.

This season of 1874/1875 is the peak of the Ottoman operetta war in Istanbul, which greatly excited and divided the Ottoman Armenian community empire-wide, too.¹¹¹ Already during the spring, some journalists wrote that “only the opéra-comique attracts everyone to the French Theatre.”¹¹² Not only did the Ottoman Theatre of Güllü Agop and Tchouhadjian's Ottoman Opera competed with each other¹¹³ (see details in Part IV) but a third, usually forgotten part was Manasse's French troupe.¹¹⁴ Perhaps this is why Manasse invited independent artists, for instance, Mlle Keller to sing under his direction. Furthermore, competing with the Tchouhadjian operettas in Ottoman Turkish and Agop's translations, Manasse produced his own “opéra-bouffe,” *The Mongols*¹¹⁵ - in French. Still, there was no audience and Manasse went bankrupt.¹¹⁶

But he did not give up bringing Paris to Istanbul. During the summer of 1875 he returned to Marseille to collect a new group, promising *only* opéra-comique for the autumn.¹¹⁷ This time he avoided Giustiniani's Palais de Cristal because of its huge

¹⁰⁹ *Revue de Constantinople*, May 23 1875, 367-379. His father, Eugène Meynadier, a Frenchman who “monopolised the vulgarisation of the French Theatre in Italy” was the director of the Comédie in 1871-72 in Cairo. Contract dated 9 March 1871 between Eugène Meynadier and Draneht Bey, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

¹¹⁰ For instance, *Revue de Constantinople*, January 1875 (no exact date indicated), 86-88.

¹¹¹ Nikoghos K. Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian* (Pasadena, CA: Drazark Press, 2001), 46.

¹¹² *La Comédie*, 8 March 1874, 5.

¹¹³ *Revue de Constantinople*, January 1875 (no exact date available), 153-154.

¹¹⁴ *Revue de Constantinople*, 23 May 1875, 370.

¹¹⁵ *Revue de Constantinople*, 14 March 1875, 463-500. *Levant Herald*, 14 April 1875, 120.

¹¹⁶ *Revue de Constantinople*, 21 March 1875, 568-570.

¹¹⁷ *Revue de Constantinople*, 4 July 1875, 41-42 quoting the *Levant Herald*.

rental costs and played in the newly built small but charming Alhambra Theatre,¹¹⁸ which was officially called Théâtre des Variétés.¹¹⁹ Manasse, again with Carboni's artistic direction, promised a remarkable repertoire of operas and operettas with good artists (including the baritone Pellusini).¹²⁰

The controversies continued in this season (1875/76) although the data, based on the *Revue de Constantinople* (pro-Manasse) and the *Levant Herald* (contra-Manasse), is blurred since the two journals fiercely fought with each other, joined by *La Turquie*. Still, the first month was successful for Manasse, especially because of his excellent singers (for instance, Mme Poitevin, the tenor Denis Robert), although not all the evenings were full houses.¹²¹

This season placed Manasse into a serious competition with an Italian troupe, Tchouhadjian's Ottoman Opera¹²² and Agop's Ottoman Theatre. The critic of *La Turquie* counselled Manasse to engage Comtesse Sadowska, a first class singer.¹²³ During January-February 1876, after a series of benefit evenings for the artists and the conductor (Solié), Manasse' situation became worse and worse – the Italians performed in the Concordia with much success, the balls' season was in its midst, and Tchouhadjian performed in the Palais de Cristal. Likely the political turbulence (the deposition of Sultan Abdülaziz in March) also added to the scarcity of audience. He

¹¹⁸ *Revue de Constantinople*, 19 September 1875, 754.

¹¹⁹ *Revue de Constantinople*, 7 November 1875, 288. This theatre was in the corner of the Café de Luxembourg.

¹²⁰ *Levant Herald*, 11 August 1875, 289.

¹²¹ *Levant Herald*, 17 November 1875, 401. *Revue de Constantinople*, 5 December 1875, 355-356. 12 December 1875, 400-404; 19 December 1875, 448-449; 26 December 1875, 487. Detailed description of the season, the income, and critiques of the pieces 16 January 1876, 145-152. 30 January 1876, 216-217 and 234-236. 6 February 1876, 299-303.

¹²² *Levant Herald*, 24 November 1875, 409.

¹²³ *La Turquie*, 5 January 1876, 1.

seemingly was in despair, first wanted to engage Mme Desclausas from Paris,¹²⁴ then to hire from Paris the fashionable scenery of *Bibelots du Diable*.¹²⁵

Finally, since Desclausas was ill and the scenery was expensive, he cooperated with the proprietors of the Café Luxemburg to give balls every Saturday night,¹²⁶ thus joining the easiest business during carnival time. A little hope came when Mlle Keller announced her entrée to Istanbul by the end of February 1876,¹²⁷ but never arrived. Although the balls went well, in the last days of February Manasse communicated that he has a “considerable loss.”¹²⁸ The final phase of his agony was that he staged a new opera, *Joseph en Egypte* by Mehut, on 10 March 1876, without success. He immediately announced that his artists could form a society to which he passes the right to stage performances in the Théâtre des Variétés.¹²⁹ Manasse was bankrupt.

Italians ruled the next season, 1876/77. Meanwhile the political situation escalated: after Sultan Abdülaziz, Sultan Murat was again deposed, and the Bulgarian uprising in April 1876 widened into Serbian-Ottoman, then, Russian-Ottoman war. We know that Manasse judged this situation “indécise” for a theatrical enterprise.¹³⁰ There is no information available what was his source of living these days but seemingly it was not enough since soon he ventured a theatrical adventure.

During the spring of 1877 Manasse restarted his activity as an impresario. He went to Paris to reorganize a troupe for the French Theatre for the next season.¹³¹ Seemingly he had no capital, since unusually in April 1877 Manasse organised an

¹²⁴ *La Turquie*, 22 January 1876, 1.

¹²⁵ Directly from the theatre of Port de Saint-Martin. *La Turquie*, 6 and 7 February 1876, 1.

¹²⁶ *La Turquie*, 10 February 1876, 1.

¹²⁷ *La Turquie*, 19 February 1876, 1.

¹²⁸ *La Turquie*, 29 February 1876, 1.

¹²⁹ *La Turquie*, 10 March 1876, 1.

¹³⁰ *La Turquie*, 10 April 1877, 1.

¹³¹ *La Turquie*, 2 March 1877, 1.

extraordinary evening for the benefit of the next season of the French Theatre in the Palais de Cristal – but the play in question was the Ottoman Turkish translation of the *La Fille de Madame Angot*.¹³² This is the last news about him for a long time.

Return to Egypt (1885)

The Ottoman-Russian war of 1877-78, the continuous Balkan crisis, the 1879 Egyptian crisis, the ‘Urābī revolution and the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 created hard times for the policy makers, money lenders, and entertainers of Istanbul and the Empire. Still, a surprising number of impresarios, many of them Italians, were active in Pera but Manasse vanished from the news and the archival documents. It is not impossible that he either went with smaller troupes to Smyrna or Alexandria, or returned to Paris where he had a wife and a son.¹³³

Sporadically he is mentioned in the press, like in 1880, as the “impresario de théâtre de Constantinople.”¹³⁴ Otherwise, there is a complete silence until the spring of 1885 when we find him in Cairo in the New Hotel. There is no available information what happened to Manasse between 1877 and 1885 and why he travelled to Egypt where he made a concession for the Zizinia in Alexandria and wanted even more. Seemingly, no one remembered his adventure sixteen years ago back in 1869 with Khedive Ismā‘īl.

In spring of 1885, Manasse submitted two plans to the Egyptian Ministry of Public Works for renting the Khedivial Opera House in Cairo. The first one arrived to

¹³² *La Turquie*, 2 and 3 April 1877, 3.

¹³³ His address in Paris was 4 rue de Berne – if it is the same street, than today this is found behind the Saint Lazare.

¹³⁴ But since it is a more or less invented (?) story about a poor girl (who was originally Egyptian, was brought to Paris as an actress, then from there was engaged by Manasse, supposedly brought to Constantinople, then on her “debut” evening was kidnapped and put to a harem from where she escaped), it is a dubious statement. *Le Gaulois*, 17 July 1880, 2.

the Ministry via Nubar Pasha, that time Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, to whom Manasse was recommended by the Ottoman ambassador in Paris (!). Nubar enclosed with his note the letter of Manasse concerning a 3-year concession of the Opera House (!).¹³⁵

At this time there was a huge competition: Italian impresarios, Santi Boni and Sochino; two Arab impresarios, Khayyāt and Qardāhī; Léopold Larose (likely Manasse' old actor from Istanbul) equally hoped for the concession. Manasse' second proposal was submitted perhaps in possession of more information because it was more modest in asking the House only for the next season and also adding that he would give “le théâtre une soirée par semaine à la disposition de la troupe Arménienne.” This “Armenian troupe” means the Ottoman Operetta Troupe of Benglian who performed in Cairo during the spring of 1885 with great success (see Chapter 7). He also added that because he had a contract with the Zizinia in Alexandria he could engage even better artists for the season because he is secured by the Alexandrian subscriptions already – and this is why he has to return to France to start selecting the troupe and meanwhile his representative would be Mougel Bey of the Ecole Normale in Cairo.¹³⁶

However, the Egyptian Government could not afford a subvention, only the payment of the gas and the costs of material, and they suggested an equal distribution of the season among the troupes.¹³⁷ However, Minister Rushdī transmitted this decision to the Comité des Théâtres with the preference of Santi Boni and Soschino

¹³⁵ Letter dated 22 March 1885, to Rouchdy from Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, and letter dated 22 March 1885, from Manasse to Nubar Pasha. 4003-037911, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

¹³⁶ Letter dated 12 April 1885, from Manasse to Rouchdy, 4003-037911, DAU, DWQ.

¹³⁷ “Les soirées de représentation devront être également réparties entre les diverses troupes arabes, européennes et turques qui en feraient la demande.” Undated letter (in its Arabic translation 26 April 1885) from Président du Conseil des Ministres, Nubar, to Ministre de Travaux Publics, 4003-037911, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

and Khayyāt.¹³⁸ So Manasse and the other applicants (including Khayyāt!) were informed about the refusal of their requests.¹³⁹ At this moment, Italian impresarios (nevertheless bringing French plays) won over Arabs and Ottomans.

This seemingly did not discourage Manasse to continue his preparations for the theatrical season in Alexandria, because in the autumn of 1885 we find him in Alexandria as the impresario of a French opera troupe.¹⁴⁰ The Arabic press this time often reported about this group under the director “Mināsa/Manāsa” that played operas (for example, *Traviata*),¹⁴¹ and who also lowered the tickets by public demand.¹⁴² He might have been there until early spring 1886.

Manasse' Third French Theatre in Istanbul (1885-1888)

Manasse seemingly regained his powers in Alexandria (perhaps in partnership with another impresario, called Micci-Labruna) because he ventured to visit Istanbul again. By this time, the differences were even more considerable than the time of his first absence (1868-1872, Cairo-Paris adventures). Now, perhaps after a nine year absence (1877-1886), he might have found a new Pera. The centre of entertainments was the Théâtre des Petits Champs (Tepebaşı Tiyatrosu), with numerous new playhouses, and new impresarios: Claudius, Billorian, Castagna, Clara Monti (herself a singer),¹⁴³ Lauri Byron (another singer), and Greek theatrical troupes (the troupe of Arniotakis,

¹³⁸ “Je ne veux point terminer ma lettre avant de vous informer que d’après la manière dont ils se sont acquittés de la tâche et les louables efforts qu’ils ont fait pour s’attirer la bienveillance générale M. M. Santi Boni et Soschino et J. Khayat méritent tout encouragement; M. Khayat surtout s’est montré digne d’encouragement vu le talent de quelques-uns des acteurs qui se compose sa troupe.” Letter dated 11 May 1885, from Rouchdy to Comité des Théâtres, 4003-037911, *Diwān al-Ashghāl al-‘Umūmiyya*, DWQ.

¹³⁹ Unsigned draft dated 21 May 1885. 4003-037911, *Diwān al-Ashghāl al-‘Umūmiyya*, DWQ.

¹⁴⁰ *Le Moniteur Oriental/The Oriental Advertiser*, 10 September 1885, 3.

¹⁴¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 16 November 1885, 3; 19 December 1885, 3; and 7 January 1886, 3.

¹⁴² *Al-Ahrām*, 12 November 1885, 3.

¹⁴³ She in fact leaves in 1886 because of her debts. *Le Ménestrel*, 7 February 1886, 77.

an actor). And Manasse found a new French Theatre, the Nouveau Théâtre Français (cf. Table 4.1), in the possession of the Armenian Church (but the building was owned by Lambiki and Tambouridés?)¹⁴⁴ whose controller during the spring 1886 was Edouard Salla,¹⁴⁵ who almost surely the same Salla who financed the first enterprise of Manasse 23 years before.

Manasse arrived in May 1886, and almost immediately left for Paris, after agreeing with E. Lassalle to run the next season in the New French Theatre. Anonymous letters supported them, calling the attention of the public that their rival, great impresario Claudius, would not venture coming back to Istanbul because he faces an almost sure fiasco since Manasse “always worked better than the directors we had in the last years” which is, after all, a shameless lie.¹⁴⁶ Still, the effect was marvellous because the subscriptions were sold immediately.¹⁴⁷

However, the competition with Claudius looked nasty. Both of them went to France to collect a French troupe, Claudius rented the Théâtre des Petits Champs from Billorian, Manasse the Nouveau Théâtre Français, both buildings being renovated during the summer. Both of them communicated their new artists and programme in August. Manasse was back in September and promised the opening to 5 November 1886, writing to his name that this is his 14th season (it means that he counted his first year when he migrated back from Paris in 1872). Claudius was no more behind; he already exhibited the photographs of his artists (!) in September, and scheduled the

¹⁴⁴ *Le Moniteur Oriental/Oriental Advertiser*, 23 June 1886, 3.

¹⁴⁵ *Le Moniteur Oriental/Oriental Advertiser*, 1 March 1886, 3.

¹⁴⁶ *Le Moniteur Oriental/Oriental Advertiser*, 4 June 1886, 3. Another supporting letter: 18 June 1886, 3.

¹⁴⁷ *Le Moniteur Oriental/Oriental Advertiser*, 23 June 1886, 3. Cf. also And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 210, based on the *Eastern Express*, 25 June 1886.

opening to 1 November. An interesting detail is that Edouard Salla now worked for Claudius.¹⁴⁸

Thus they prepared for the battle, both troupes arrived in October, both scenes renovated, so the public waited eagerly the results. *La Turquie* indicated their competition with a strange sign, the earliest smiley -(:-)- (Image X). Claudius worked out a trick: he announced in the last moment that they start on 29 October 1886,¹⁴⁹ and they were received favourably.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, Claudius performed the *Si j'étais Rois* – the operetta Manasse wanted to start with. Perhaps because of this, Manasse announced the delay of the season, and a new opening piece, *La Traviata*.¹⁵¹ His trick was that it would be performed in French, in his own translation (! the original was a Dumas-piece translated to Italian) that the public honoured with enthusiasm at the opening evening (7 November 1886).¹⁵²

During the season Claudius and Manasse did their best to attract the audience and destroy the other. One might say that never has been such hostility between two theatre troupes. Many times they played the same pieces, or changed in the last moment. Manasse continued to present plays in French, like *La Juive* (Halevy)¹⁵³ (it was judged as “démodée.”)¹⁵⁴ They played new pieces, like *As de Trèfle* of Decourcelle who personally gave his permission to the replay.¹⁵⁵ Manasse engaged Mlle Hasselmans who remained free after his impresarios' (Santi Boni and Sochino)

¹⁴⁸ *La Turquie*, 24 July 1886, 2. *La Turquie*, 7 August 1886, 2; 19 August 1886, 3. *La Turquie*, 9 September 1886, 3. *La Turquie*, 11 September 1886, 3. *La Turquie*, 18 September 1886, 3.

¹⁴⁹ *La Turquie*, 27 October 1886, 2. And they

¹⁵⁰ *La Turquie*, 30 September 1886, 2.

¹⁵¹ *La Turquie*, 5 November 1886, 2.

¹⁵² *La Turquie*, 8 November 1886, 2.

¹⁵³ *La Turquie*, 8 December 1886, 2.

¹⁵⁴ *La Turquie*, 10 December 1886, 2.

¹⁵⁵ *La Turquie*, 15 January 1887, 2.

failure in Cairo (see later).¹⁵⁶ In vain, seemingly by January 1887 the audience neglected the Nouveau Théâtre Français.¹⁵⁷

Although the troupe performed also in the “theatre of Stamboul” (?), and gave many charity performances,¹⁵⁸ the situation must have been terrible. Claudius left victoriously, with a charity evening for Salla – who was very much loved by the audience.¹⁵⁹ The artists of the Nouveau Théâtre Français revolted against Manasse, for unclear reasons, so he had to abdicate in early February 1887.¹⁶⁰ Thus a Society was formed by his artists, but later dissolved.¹⁶¹

Being beaten in Istanbul again, Manasse went to Smyrna, and started to negotiate.¹⁶² In August 1887, there is news that he was in Istanbul and wanted to have a revanche.¹⁶³ Most surprisingly (or not?) now Claudius rented the Nouveau Théâtre Français for the season 1887/88 and Manasse is included in his troupe as “directeur associé.”¹⁶⁴ This time they had to fight jointly against the Italians in the Théâtre des Petits Champs, and several other visiting guests, like Benklia’s Ottoman Operetta Troupe, Greek theatre, or the famous touring French actor, Coquelin aîné himself.

Of this season we do not have news about Manasse, seemingly he worked together smoothly with Claudius. On a Saturday, 14 April 1888, he had a stroke in a “maison étrangère” (perhaps a gambling house?) and immediately died.¹⁶⁵ After 25 years in theatre business, he had not much successful season and was immediately forgotten.

¹⁵⁶ *La Turquie*, 16 et 17 January 1887, 2.

¹⁵⁷ *La Turquie*, 20 January 1887, 2.

¹⁵⁸ *La Turquie*, 29 January 1887, 2; and 2 February 1887, 2.

¹⁵⁹ *La Turquie*, 27 January 1887, 2.

¹⁶⁰ *La Turquie*, 5 February 1887, 2.

¹⁶¹ *La Turquie*, 2 March 1887, 2.

¹⁶² *La Turquie*, 27 et 28 March 1887, 2.

¹⁶³ *La Turquie*, 20 August 1887, 2.

¹⁶⁴ *La Turquie*, 8 October 1887, 3.

¹⁶⁵ *La Turquie*, 17 April 1888, 2.

Manasse' Musical Plays

Seraphin Manasse was a unique impresario in that he composed musical plays in Istanbul, specifically for the audience of Pera. For his works, see Table 5.2. His talent, however, was judged often as very modest. His first experience with musical drama, *The Miller's Daughter* in Armenian in 1862 received mixed reviews. His second play, an “opérette bouffe” was staged in 1864, by his own French troupe.¹⁶⁶ The play carried the title *Les Cyclopes amoureux* (The Cyclopes in Love), and was performed in the Naum Theatre (perhaps because the circus of Soullier occupied the Palais de Cristal).¹⁶⁷ Curiously, no news survived about the reception of this play.

His next play was produced eight years later in 1872, entitled *Pamela or the Masked Ball*, a possible adaptation, to which Manasse referred as his own work since he changed many details in the libretto and also put rhymes. It is said that he composed its music (?) and Agop Vartovyan/Güllü Agop asked Dikran Tchouhadjian to train the singers.¹⁶⁸ This “opera komik” was later performed in 1874 by Güllü Agop's troupe during the operetta war in Istanbul, but his name as an author was not mentioned.¹⁶⁹

Manasse produced during the spring season of 1875 an “opéra-bouffe,” *The Mongols*, (his third operetta?) which premiered 9 March 1875 and was resumed in the *Revue de Constantinople*.¹⁷⁰ De Caston, the pro-Manasse editor of the journal, judged the music “original,” although he hinted that it might have been copied from

¹⁶⁶ *Journal de Constantinople*, 5 March 1864, 3.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. *Journal de Constantinople*, numbers 21 March, 30 March, 1 April, 1864 (page 3, in all numbers).

¹⁶⁸ Step'anyan, *Urvagits arevmtahay t'adroni patmut'yan*, 2: 85.

¹⁶⁹ *Hayal*, 2 Teşrîn-i Sâni 1290, 2.

¹⁷⁰ *Revue de Constantinople*, 14 March 1875, 463-500.

Offenbach.¹⁷¹ These were probably translations of librettos since, as we have seen, much later in 1886, Manasse also translated *La Traviata* to French.

Out of these, two plays remained in the repertoire of theatre troupes who performed in Ottoman Turkish, Armenian, and French: *The Miller's Daughter* and *Pamela* was both mostly staged in Ottoman Turkish but the plays' author was never indicated in the advertisements. These two early pieces (translations, adaptations?) are mysterious as is their music. Still, Manasse exercised a great influence even via his failures.

¹⁷¹ *Revue de Constantinople*, 21 March 1875, 568-570.

Table 5.2

Musical Plays of Seraphin Manasse

JC refers to Journal de Constantinople.

Title	Translation	Premiere	Language	Remarks
La Fille du Meunier (Original title in Armenian?)	no	25 march 1862	Armenian	“une pièce entremêlée de chants.” 26 March 1862, 3 JC
Les Cyclopes amoureux	?	1864	? Armenian?	JC, 21 March 1864
Pamela or the Carnaval nights	Yes	1872	Ottoman Turkish?	“opera komik” <i>Hayal</i> , 2, Teşrîn-i Sâni, 1290, 2. And, <i>Osmanlı</i> , 66.
Angelo	Yes, Victor Hugo		Ottoman Turkish?	Not clear. In <i>Osmanlı</i> , 289, And says it is Manasse who translated, at 181, he gives Ali Bey (perhaps both)
Les Mongols	?	9 March 1875, French Theatre, Pera	French	<i>Revue de Constantinople</i> , 14 March 1875, 463-500.

5.2. *The Impresario of the Khedive: Draneht Bey (1809 [?]-1894)*

Paul Draneht (Paulos Paulidis, Paulos Xristofidis) is an important figure in the 19th century history of Egypt because he was always around the Pashas' intimate circles and influenced a number of state decisions. He delivered Italian opera and French ballet to Cairo as the official elite culture of the Egyptian ruling class. So far, apart from numerous short allusions, I located six, sometimes contradictory, short biographies of Draneht.¹⁷² Here I supplement these with my findings.

Draneht's Early Years

Paul Draneht was born either as Pavlos Pavlidis (Busch's data) or as Pavlos Xristofidis (Koudounaris' data). Since “-idis” means in Greek “the son of someone” the only question is what was the name of his father. According to Koudounaris his father was Xristofakis Pavlidis.¹⁷³ His uncle, Logizis Kramvis, was an

¹⁷² One by his daughter, Despina Draneht/Zervudachi, entitled “Twilight memories” and was privately printed by her son, Mr. Peter Emmanuel Zervudachi who in the 1970s gave Hans Busch the possibility to take a look in it. Although the living members of the Zervudachi-family did not grant me permission to read this document, I am absolutely grateful to Ms. Manuela Zervudachi, great great grand daughter of Paul Draneht, for her help and communication and also to Carol L. Rodocanachi, another great great grand daughter of Draneht Pasha for her letters. I am also indebted to the website of Samir Rafaat about the history of the Ghezira-palace, <http://www.egy.com/zamalek/> (accessed July 12, 2011), where I came across the partial genealogy of the Draneht-Zervudachi family, and which is based on his article in *Cairo Times*, 14 October 1999. Based on this private memoir, Hans Busch published a bio in his *Verdi's Aida – The History of An Opera In Letters and Documents* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978), 631-632. the third is a Greek lexicon's entry which was translated for me by my dear friend and colleague, Marios Papakyriacou, As my Greek is absolutely superficial, I am quoting all Greek texts following Marios Papakyriacou's translation. Aristeidis Koudounaris, *Biografikon Leksikon Kyprion (1800-1920)* [Biographical Lexicon of Cypriots, 1800-1920] (Nicosia, 1989), 137. Šāliḥ °Abdūn's small bio perhaps based on his letters in the old Opera House, °Abdūn, °*Āyida*, 28. Abdoun also published his letters in his Abdoun, *Genesi dell' "Aida,"* a half-bio was compiled by Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il who could work from Draneht's pension-dossier in the Dār al-Maḥfūzāt in Cairo (the Archive of the Egyptian Ministry of Finance) and the sixth is a large footnote of Athanase Politis. Athanase G. Politis, *L'Hellénisme et l'Égypte moderne*, 2 vols. (Paris: F. Alcan, 1929), 1:200, footnote 1. Politis does not provide any specific source for his bio but given his archival and bibliographical work, it is likely that he has precise data.

¹⁷³ It is also backed by Politis, *L'Hellénisme*, 1: 201 who mentions a Ch. (Christophe?) Pavlidis among the “pouvant beaucoup” Cypriots in Egypt.

important notable in Cyprus, in Nicosia, where Draneht was born in 1809 (Koudounaris), in 1815 (Busch),¹⁷⁴ or in 1817 (°Abdūn).¹⁷⁵ The most convincing date is 1809 since, as we will see, from 1831 he was in the service of the Pasha of Egypt Muḥammad °Alī (and it is unlikely that he took into his service a 14 or 16 year old boy as a pharmacist).¹⁷⁶

The family (or only young Pavlos and his father)¹⁷⁷ either migrated to Egypt in 1827, or, most likely much earlier, after the Greek revolt, around 1821.¹⁷⁸ There a Greek merchant introduced the boy to Muḥammad °Alī asking the Pasha to send him to France to study.¹⁷⁹ The Pasha liked Pavlos and agreed to send him to study chemistry and medicine with the condition that after returning he would be his personal dentist and pharmacist.¹⁸⁰ In Paris, his favourite teacher was the famous chemist Louis-Jacques Thénard (1777-1857) – according to Busch, it is Thénard who was so proud of the Ottoman Egyptian-Greek student that “offered him his own name spelled backward.”¹⁸¹ Others say that Thénard became a “paternal ami”¹⁸² and it was

¹⁷⁴ Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 631.

¹⁷⁵ °Abdūn, °Āyida, 28.

¹⁷⁶ Although one must be reminded two points that contradicts to this hypothesis: that for instance, Nubar Pasha was not yet 20 when was appointed as a secretary of Muḥammad °Alī, and that Draneht's daughter was born in 1877, that is, if I am right, then Draneht was 68 years old when became a father.

¹⁷⁷ Politis, *L'Hellénisme*, 1: 200.

¹⁷⁸ 1821 is given in Koudounaris, *Biografikon Leksikon*, 137. Politis, *L'Hellénisme*, 1: 200, only mentions that they escaped after the massacre in Cyprus during the revolt. The date 1827 is given in Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 631 with the explication that the family fled to Egypt because of the “Turkish persecution” in Cyprus. In October 1827 there was the battle of Navarino where the Ottoman Turkish and the Egyptian flottas were destroyed – perhaps this battle has something to do with the persecution of the family? However, in 1821 there was indeed persecution of Greek Cypriotes since the Ottoman administration was alerted by rumours that they will join the Greek revolt.

¹⁷⁹ Politis, *L'Hellénisme*, 1: 200.

¹⁸⁰ Politis, *L'Hellénisme*, 1: 200. Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 631.

¹⁸¹ Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 632. Probably based on Despina Draneht's memoirs.

¹⁸² Politis, *L'Hellénisme*, 1: 200.

Pavlos who decided to wear his name. The exact time of his student period is not known, but must have been before 1831.¹⁸³

After returning to Egypt at an unknown date, from 1831 he served as a pharmacist in the Abū Za°bal hospital and from 1833 in the medical school (?).¹⁸⁴ Although Busch states that at this time his name was already Paul Draneht, in the 1840s he was known simply as Paulino Bey or “Monsieur Paulino.”¹⁸⁵ It happened later often also that he was called “Paulino Bey”¹⁸⁶ or “Paoli Bey,”¹⁸⁷ or even in the

¹⁸³ Politis, *L’Hellénisme*, 1: 200 states that he was sent with “la Mission égyptien.” He was surely not the member of the famous student mission of 1826. He is not indicated in the list of James Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, 159-163 and also not mentioned in Alain Silvera, “The first Egyptian student mission to France under Muhammad Ali,” in *Modern Egypt*, ed. Elie Kedourie and Sylvia G. Haim (London: Frank Class and Co., 1980), 1-22. There were three other missions in 1829, 1830, and 1832, cf. Anouar Louca, *Voyageurs et écrivains égyptiens en France au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Didier, 1970), 46; although his name is not figured either in Louca nor in Heyworth-Dunne’s second list about the approx. 100 students sent between 1826-1836, Heyworth-Dunne, *ibid.*, 170-175. Perhaps he was in the 1829 mission which contained 34 students (among them six black Nubians). Louca, *ibid.*, 255. There was a “medical mission” in 1832, but his name is not among the twelve Egyptians, Heyworth-Dunne, *ibid.*, 177-180 (who were anyway sent to escape the tiring intermediation of translators at Clot’s hospital-school and we have no data if Draneht knew Arabic). It is possible that he was not in any student missions but was sent individually. Surely he is not the one who is indicated in Heyworth-Dunne, *ibid.*, 176, footnote 1 as “one student had already been sent to France in order to study medicine” because Heyworth-Dunne refers to °Alī Hayba in the mission of 1826 (student n. 30). Thus, everything points to hypothesise that either he was sent in 1829 or individually, almost privately. If this is true, than it would be mean that Muḥammad °Alī trained at least him in a very private way in order to secure loyalty since Draneht was supposed to become his personal pharmacist.

Furthermore, his name is not mentioned in the *compte rendus* of Clot Bey written between 1828 and 1832 about the Medical School of Abū Za°bal, neither as a student, nor as a teacher. There was a school of pharmacy at this time in the Citadel. Perhaps this was Draneht’s first place of work. In 1828 a certain Alessandri was the pharmacist in the exam’s jury of the Abū Za°bal school, then in 1830 Alessandri was the director of the school of pharmacy, in 1832 in his place, we find a certain Celesia. See the three volumes of Clot, *Compte Rendu de L’Ecole de Médecine d’Abou-Zabel* (Egypte) 1828, 1829, 1830 (Marseille: Feissat Ainé, 1830) and Clot-Bey, *Compte Rendu des Travaux de L’Ecole de Médecine d’Abou-Zabel* (Egypte), 1831, 1832 (Marseille: Feissat Ainé, 1832).

¹⁸⁴ Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il, *Ta°riḫ al-masraḫ fi Miṣr*, 87 based on his pension-file in Muḥfaẓa 275, Malaff 7085 Dār al-Maḥfūẓāt. For the establishment of the Abū Za°bal hospital see Fahmy, *All the Pasha’s men*, 212. The problem is that Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il writes that from 1833 Draneht worked also in the Medical School (Madrasat al-Ṭibb) but the Abū Za°bal hospital functioned in itself as a medical school. In a letter written dated 1879, Draneht mentions that he served Muḥammad °Alī for 15 years – as Muḥammad °Alī was dethroned in 1848, it makes 1833. This letter is published in Arabic in Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il, *Ta°riḫ al-masraḫ al-miṣri*, 87-8. The confusion is caused by the fact that in the same letter Draneht mentions the year 1246 (why in *hijrī*?) as the year when he entered into the service of the government which corresponds to 1830-31. See also the previous footnote.

¹⁸⁵ Clot Bey, *Memoirs*, 373, 375. As Clot Bey wrote his memoirs in the 1860s, his wording “M. Paulino, aujourd’hui Draneht Bey,” talking about an event in 1847, indicates that Draneht was known in the end of 1840s as Paulino.

¹⁸⁶ Even in the Arabic official orders he is called sometimes Bāvulīnū Bey.

1880s “Paolino Pasha.”¹⁸⁸ The earliest autograph I saw is dated from April 1857 and he signed it as “Draneht.”¹⁸⁹ He was polyglot, perhaps sometimes mixing Italian words into French, “a true Levantine.”¹⁹⁰

Draneht was very much trusted by Muḥammad ʿAlī who recruited him in his entourage in the campaign of the Sudan in 1838.¹⁹¹ For his services, the Pasha endowed him with land in Kafr al-Dawar,¹⁹² and the third of the incomes of a soap-factory in 1847.¹⁹³ He was at the deathbed of the Pasha as well.¹⁹⁴ Busch notes that Draneht was in the service of all the later pashas and he established the Egyptian railway-system.¹⁹⁵ This last statement is certainly an exaggeration for the following reasons.

His life is only scarcely known in the period between the death of Muḥammad ʿAlī (1849) and the enthronement of Ismāʿīl Pasha (1863). Nothing is known about

¹⁸⁷ Letter dated 29 September 1869, from Antoine Banucci to the Khedive. Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

¹⁸⁸ John Ninet in his book *Au Pays des Khedives – Plaquettes Égyptiennes* (Genève: Imprimerie Schira, 1890 [on the title page: Paris]) published a satire-memoire entitled “Finances et Menus Plaisirs – Épisodes de la civilisation occidentale (sic!) en Egypte – 1871-73,” 277- 314, in which among the personages is “S. Ex. le baron Paolino Pacha, grand-maître des Menus Plaisirs khédiviaux,” 277.

¹⁸⁹ Letter dated 18 April 1857, from Draneht Bey to unknown, 3003-041343, Dīwān al-Māliyya, DWQ. It must be added that the only public printed material by him carries his name as Draneht Bey in 1862. Draneht Bey, Ad. Crémieux, and Jules Favre, *Observations pour Son Altesse Le Vice-Roi d’Égypte* (Paris: E. Thunot, 1862). In some contemporary French newspaper his name is written as “Drahnet,” (!) in Arabic his name is transcribed as “Drānit.” Cf. for instance, *Le Théâtre Illustré*, 2, no. 78. 1869, 3 or *La Comédie*, 17 March 1872, 8. *Wādī al-Nīl*, 17 February 1870 (on the title page 1869 is wrongly printed), 1285.

¹⁹⁰ John Ninet, *Au Pays des Khedives*, “Finances et Menus Plaisirs – Épisodes de la civilisation occidentale,” 279, footnote 1. Although Ninet’s satire cannot be used as a historical source because of its author’s obvious political intentions, I believe that Draneht was obviously polyglot: he must have known Greek, surely Italian and French, likely Ottoman Turkish. It is an open question if he later studied Arabic.

¹⁹¹ Politis, *L’Hellénisme*, 1: 200.

¹⁹² Politis, *L’Hellénisme*, 1: 200.

¹⁹³ *Mémoires de A-B. Clot Bey*, publié par Jacques Tagher (Le Caire: Impr. de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1949), 375. The savonnerie was divided between three doctors: Clot Bey, Gaëtani Bey (the Pasha’s personal doctor), and Draneht Bey.

¹⁹⁴ *Mémoires de A-B. Clot Bey*, 393.

¹⁹⁵ Busch, *Verdi’s Aida*, 632.

him during the rule of Ibrāhīm and ʿAbbās (1849-1854),¹⁹⁶ then Draneht became a kind of agent, a “factotum” to Saʿīd (1854-1863).¹⁹⁷ From 1853 to 1859 he is *mīrlī* (belonging to the court) in the service of Saʿīd Pasha.¹⁹⁸ He was close to Saʿīd Pasha, since in 1857 he personally chatted with him about the Egyptian students in Paris.¹⁹⁹ He is indicated in 1859 among the resident members of the L’Institut Égyptien as “pharmacien ordinaire de S.A. de Vice-Roi de l’Égypte,”²⁰⁰ which means that he kept his old function. Draneht was sent to Paris to buy “un objet special” in 1860. That time there was a negotiation between French businessmen (Comptoir d’Escompte-Charles Laffitte) and Saʿīd Pasha for a major loan, thus he became involved in the matter, and finally was authorized to negotiate on behalf of the Pasha. He signed the contract in July 1860 in the name of the governor of Egypt.²⁰¹ Perhaps he is the one who is characterized as “moitié employé, moitié homme d’affaires” by Nubar.²⁰²

After his return, Draneht was named as the Director of Railways (and General Transport, *Mudīr al-Sikka al-Ḥadīdiyya wa-ʿUmūm al-Murūr*) in January 1861, perhaps not unrelated to the fact that one of the bankers, Laffitte, had great expertise

¹⁹⁶ He stayed in Cairo but perhaps without exercising his functions as a pharmacist. Politis, *L’Hellénisme*, 1:200.

¹⁹⁷ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 48. Sadgrove and others copied this after John Ninet. He, in one of his letters, dated 2 August 1879, calls Draneht “factotum intermédiaire et secrétaire (sans plume) des commandements des Saïd-Pacha.” John Ninet, *Lettres d’Égypte - 1879-1882*, présentées par Anouar Luca (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la recherche scientifique, 1979), 71.

¹⁹⁸ Sayyid ʿAlī Ismāʿīl, *Taʾrīkh al-masraḥ al-miṣrī*, 87 based on his pension-file in Muḥfaẓa 275, Milaff 7085, Dār al-Maḥfūẓāt.

¹⁹⁹ Letter dated 18 April 1857, from Draneht Bey to unknown, 3003-041343, Dīwān al-Māliyya, DWQ.

²⁰⁰ *Bulletin de L’Institut Égyptien* 1, no. 2. (1859), printed in 1860, 11.

²⁰¹ Draneht Bey, et al, *Observations pour Son Altesse Le Vice-Roi d’Égypte* and also Landes, *Bankers and Pashas*, 107. In Nubar Pasha’s memoirs a letter is published dated 22 July 1861 (!) that is written about these negotiations, so although in the *Observations* repeatedly 17 July 1860 is the date of the contract perhaps there was in 1861 summer another agreement (or, the letter is wrongly dated).

Mémoires de Nubar Pacha, 191, footnote 1. While in Paris, between August and November 1860, Draneht must have bought many objects (for Saʿīd) since he got many payment receipts (his address was 1 rue Sorbonne, Paris), 3003-041344, Dīwān al-Māliyya, DWQ.

²⁰² *Mémoires de Nubar Pacha*, 190.

in railway-financing.²⁰³ Likely Draneht was the successor of Nubar. It seems that Draneht went to Paris in 1862 and bought four locomotives, by a loan of Comptoir d'Escompte,²⁰⁴ with different luxurious objects and furniture for Sa'īd, although his master, Sa'īd, died meanwhile. Draneht immediately congratulated to the new Pasha, Ismā'īl, with a remark that he needs money for the already bought objects.²⁰⁵

Draneht remained in Paris as an "agent" during the 1860s (perhaps between 1862-winter 1868 continuously) serving Ismā'īl.²⁰⁶ In February 1863 he must have bought many other objects for the new pasha, Ismā'īl, since he mentions that there were days when he posted 10 packages to Egypt.²⁰⁷ In 1866-67 he went on trial because Ismā'īl did not pay for the furniture what Draneht ordered for Sa'īd back in 1862.²⁰⁸ During the spring of 1868 he bought diverse agricultural machines and books for the princes, Ismā'īl's sons.²⁰⁹ In April, he was informed about the negotiations of

²⁰³ Amīn Sāmī, *Taqwīm*, 3:1:367, *irāda* dated 28 Jumāda'l-Akhira 1277 (11 January 1861). Cf. F. Robert Hunter, "Egypt's High Officials in Transition from a Turkish to a Modern Administrative Elite, 1849- 1879," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 19, no. 3 (1983): 277-300. Here: 286. Politis, *L'Hellénisme*, 1: 200. For Laffitte's past see Landes, *Bankers and Pasha*, 29, footnote 2. Draneht is still the pharmacist of Sa'īd pasha in the *Bulletin de L'Institut Égyptien*, 2., no. 4. (1860), printed in 1861, 12. In the satire of Ninet, the "Khedive" says that Draneht was "secrétaire des commandements de feu mon oncle et prédécesseur Saïd." Ninet, *Au Pays des khedives*, "Finances et Menus Plaisirs," 279.

²⁰⁴ Letter dated 10 April 1863, from Draneht to Minister of Finance. 3003-041345, Dīwān al-Māliyya, DWQ.

²⁰⁵ Letter dated 27 January 1863, from Draneht to Koenig Bey, Carton 80 CAI DWQ. Draneht is worrying for the health of the Pasha in a letter dated 17 January 1863, from Paris, Draneht Bey to Koenig Bey. His next letter dated 19 January 1863, from Paris, Draneht Bey to Koenig Bey, and asks Koenig to mention the new Pasha, Ismā'īl, that for 89333,35 Francs he bought 4 locomotives. Carton 1/1, CAI, DWQ.

²⁰⁶ In the *Bulletin de L'Institut Égyptien*, no. 9. (1863-64-65), printed in 1866, 11, he is indicated among the correspondent members simply as "Drahnet-Bey [sic!], à Paris."

²⁰⁷ Letter dated 10 January 1863, Draneht to Koenig Bey, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

²⁰⁸ "L'affaire Dussautoy:" Dussautoy was a carpenter in Paris and made furniture for the pashas of Egypt. This quarrel went on seemingly since 1864 when it was agreed that Draneht will pay but he did not. However, in September 1864 Draneht already paid 114.269,25 francs to the carpenter but he „did not find the receipt." Letter dated 26 Septembre 1864, from Draneht to Ahmed Rachid Pacha, 3003-041346, DM, DWQ. In 1868 finally the Khedive paid some part of the whole sum. Letters (drafts) 18 November 1866, 26 December 1866; 10 February 1867, all to "Séluin Bey" in Paris from Cairo by an unknown author. Carton 80 CAI DWQ.

²⁰⁹ For the objects, cf. letter dated 17 April 1868, from Paris, Draneht to Eram Bey. Carton 12, CAI, DWQ. For the princes' education: letter dated 19 April 1868, from Paris, Draneht to Khairy; letter dated 28 April 1868, from Cairo, Khairy to Draneht; letter dated 18 May 1868, from Paris, Draneht to

Ismāʿīl's new loan, perhaps, he was to do something.²¹⁰ During the summer 1868 he asked for money for an unknown job/business (40000 francs) from Ismāʿīl, that was sent to him when Ismāʿīl Pasha arrived to Istanbul.²¹¹

Although he was educated for some years in Paris at the end of the 1820s, it is likely that these years in the 1860s gave him the experience in French cultural matters and fashions. His Parisian life was entirely financed by the Khedive, monthly 3150 francs, and in addition, Draneht got large portions of land (1485 feddan).²¹² As we have seen, in 1868 preparations started in Cairo for the Suez Canal Opening Ceremony, the Khedive needed his men. Just like his old fellow around the Pashas, the Foreign Minister Nubar, recalled from his negotiations, Draneht also arrived to Cairo in January 1869²¹³ and was named as superintendant of the Egyptian theatres (*waẓīfat taftīsh al-tiyātrāt*) around 20 April 1869.²¹⁴

By this time, two playhouses, the Comedy and the Circus, were ready in Cairo. As we have seen, from November 1868 to 2 April 1869 it is Seraphin Manasse who rules the affairs of the Comédie. It is also Manasse who is ordered first to hire a ballet and an opera troupe from Paris. It might be also him who was first instructed to

Khairy. Carton 1/2, CAI, DWQ. The list of books is very interesting but should be the object of another study.

²¹⁰ Arboit, "L'arme financière dans les relations internationales: l'affaire Cernuschi sous le Second Empire," 553.

²¹¹ Letters dated 24 July 1868, 29 July 1868 from Draneht to Khairy (Khayrī) Bey; and the answer of Khairy Bey, 15 August 1868 from Istanbul. At this time Draneht lived under number 49, Boulevard Haussmann, Paris. Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

²¹² Draneht had to send monthly receipts, at least in 1868. Letter dated 2 December 1868, Draneht to unknown (likely to Ismāʿīl Siddiq Pasha, Minister of Finances), 3003-041347, Dīwān al-Māliyya, DWQ. Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives*, 108.

²¹³ In some sources it is stated that Draneht was the superintendant of the Cairo Theatres from 1867, but there is no proof for this at all, (furthermore, in 1867, there were only the palace theatres and the small theatre in the Azbakiyya). Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 48, based on Ninet, *Lettres d'Egypte*, 71 (there is no mention of this date), des Perrières: *Un Parisien au Caire* and Auriant. Draneht was already in Cairo on 2 January 1869, as his letter testifies to Ismāʿīl Siddiq Pasha, Minister of Finances, dated 2 January 1869 from Cairo, 3003-041347, Dīwān al-Māliyya, DWQ.

²¹⁴ *Wādī al-Nīl*, 30 April 1869, 47. The *Wādī al-Nīl* published this news based on the *Al-Nīl (Le Nile)*. The news was immediately announced in France as well. *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, 25 April 1869, 142: "le vice-roi a nommé Dravet-Paulino-Bey [sic!], intendant des théâtres de la Cour."

build an Opera House.²¹⁵ After Manasse's fake plot, however, for unknown reasons,²¹⁶ Draneht gets a central role in the affairs of the Egyptian state (khedival) theatres and keeps his post until 1879.²¹⁷ While Manasse was organizing an opera troupe, Draneht was only involved in the matters of the Cirque.²¹⁸

The Superintendent (1869-1879)

Without having any documented previous experience in theatre business, Draneht, most probably well into his 50s, became the first and last institutionalized superintendent with regular funding in the late Ottoman Empire, serving almost exclusively the needs of the Khedive's taste, publicly. His activity during his ten-year "reign" is spectacular. As the superintendent of all the khedivial theatres and the palace theatres as well, Draneht had to deal with *all* entertainments. From time to time, the singers and musicians of the Opera House gave private performances to the Khedive and his guests. Because of his involvement in the entertainment of the Khedive Ismā'īl, Draneht was ironically described as "le grand maître des Menus Plaisirs du Vice-Roi."²¹⁹ He was certainly not only an impresario but something much more: a director of an administration specialized in entertainments.

²¹⁵ De Vaujany, *Le Caire et ses environs*, 246. Vaujany states that Manasse supervised the works and he finished in remarkably short time which is, of course, not true. (Manasse had to leave Egypt in May 1869). But perhaps Manasse was first ordered to look for the possibilities for an Opera House since he wanted to engage opera and ballet troupes.

²¹⁶ Likely based on Despina Draneht's memoirs, Trevor Mostyn writes that Draneht got this position because of "his close contacts with the great opera houses of Europe." Mostyn, *Egypt's Belle Epoch*, 73. I have never found any indication before 1869 that Draneht had any connections with any opera houses or theatres.

²¹⁷ °Abdūn, °Āyida, 28. Although he kept his post administratively until 1879 perhaps, Draneht earlier must have stepped back, from around 1877, see later.

²¹⁸ Letter dated 21 April 1869, Alexandria, from Draneht to Eram Bey. Carton 80, CAI, DWQ. Actually, this is the earliest letter which is written by him in connection with the khedivial theatres and it is about the Cirque Rancy which was installed in Alexandria temporarily during the spring 1869.

²¹⁹ Ninet, *Lettres d'Égypte*, 73.

During these years, he usually spent the late spring-summer in Europe, negotiating and collecting the troupes. After 1876, when less and less money could be secured for the theatres, he mostly stayed in Italy throughout the year (or in Alexandria). Based on the surviving letters, Draneht's activity and the life of the Opera, Comédie, Cirque (especially in the period 1869-1873) can be minutely reconstructed, including the preparations for *Aida* during 1870-1871.²²⁰

His "empire" between 1869 and 1872 included the Opera House, the Comédie, the Cirque, the private theatre in the Qaṣr al-Nīl Palace,²²¹ and the Hippodrome. Draneht's position was challenged almost immediately: already in January 1870 a certain Valentino Spagnoli submitted a plan for the Opera to Riaz (Riyāḍ) Pasha, that time *khaznadar* (Chief Treasurer) of Ismā'īl, but he was not received for audience.²²² In the same year, Draneht was almost left out completely from the major decisions concerning *Aida*, and only later became involved, when Mariette was trapped in Paris.²²³ In 1871, A. J. Rosenboom (who was in the previous season the conductor at the Comédie)²²⁴ wanted to run the Comédie and thus separate it, a conspiracy that was

²²⁰ After the works of Ṣāliḥ 'Abdūn, Philip Sadgrove explored the documents concerning these years in the Egyptian National Archives, first. Hans Busch reconstructed the birth of *Aida* based on an admirable number of sources, among them two important collections: 1. the original letters of Verdi concerning the *Aida*'s production, kept at the old Cairo Opera House (he worked from the photocopies of the Verdi Institute in Parma) and destroyed in the fire of 28 October 1971 when the whole theatre burned. Actually, more of these letters were published in Abdoun, *Genesi dell' "Aida."* 2. The letters of Paul Draneht concerning the *Aida* in the possession of his grandson, Peter Emmanuel Zervudachi who generously let Busch to read these documents in 1973. Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, xiv-xv. I did not manage to get permission from the family to access this important private collection which perhaps contains more information than the creation of the *Aida*.

²²¹ 'Abdūn, 'Āyida, 28.

²²² Letters dated 22 January 1870, V. Spagnoli to Riaz, and 28 January 1870, V. Spagnoli to Riaz. In the first letter, Spagnoli offered 807.000 franc deficit, in the second, 650.000 francs. Carton 80, CAI, DWQ. For Mustafā Riyāḍ's (1834-1911) career see Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives*, 158-165.

²²³ Draneht was in fact only informed by Mariette about the whole plan in July 1870. Letter dated 19 July 1870, Mariette to Draneht, Abdoun, *Genesi dell' "Aida"*, 5-6. He did not know the details of the contract with Verdi because everything was arranged by Mariette and Du Locle, even until summer of 1871. Letter written to Verdi by Draneht, dated 22 December 1870, Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 117. This later caused problems, see Draneht's letter to Mariette dated 17 June 1871, in Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 175. It was only sent to Draneht in 7 July, 1871 see Mariette's letter, Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 181.

²²⁴ Letter dated 21 April 1870, from Draneht to Riaz, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

perhaps stopped by Draneht immediately.²²⁵ Instead, Rosenboom got the new Azbakiyya Garden Theatre when the Garden was finally opened in May 1871,²²⁶ then this theatre was rented by Santini, an Italian from 1873 until 1893.²²⁷ The Cirque being demolished, the Hippodrome suspended, the Bey disposed only over the Opera and the Comédie (and the private entertainments) from 1873.

Draneht's interest was otherwise to keep all the entertainment institutions under his direction, but *without* being involved in the daily affairs.²²⁸ He only kept the position of the director of the Opera for himself; other positions were distributed to different persons: the Cirque was given to Rancy, then to Guillaume's circus, for the Comédie in 1871 for instance, Camille du Locke himself was proposed.²²⁹ Then instead of Rosenboom, Léopold Larose got it. Camille du Locke in 1876 was actually asked to come to Cairo, this time perhaps as the possible successor of Draneht.²³⁰

As superintendant he exercised general supervision and control over the playhouses as public spaces (see further discussion in Part E) and was a guardian of the "dignity" of his lord. For instance, in December 1869, the Cirque Rancy put a pantomime on the programme, entitled *Uninvité* mocking the Khedive and his

²²⁵ Letters dated 19 and 20 January 1871, Roosenboom to Riaz, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ. Draneht's argument was that the Costumary is common to the two théâtres.

²²⁶ Letter dated 3 April 1871, from Lavasseur to [Barillet ?]. Carton 62, CAI, DWQ.

²²⁷ French Note to the Conseil des Ministres from the Ministre des Travaux Publiques, signed A. Rouchdy, dated 2 Fevrier 1884, Carton 2/1, Nizārat al-Ashghāl al-ʿUmūmiyya, CMW, DWQ. In this letter, the Minister provides the starting date of the concession of Santini which is 1 May 1873.

²²⁸ It is possible that in the beginning he did not want to deal with anything except being the superintendant, because when he arrived to Paris in late May 1869, there were rumors that he will appoint Nicole Lablache as "administrateur" of the Opera and the Comedie. *Le Ménestrel*, 23 May 1869, 199. Lablache was indeed in Cairo in September 1869, cf. letter dated 29 Septembre 1869, from Antoine Banucci to the Khedive. 5013-003022, Usrat Muḥammad ʿAlī, DWQ.

²²⁹ Letter dated 1871 mai 18, unsigned, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

²³⁰ Letter dated 26 January 1876, Camille du Locke to ?. Carton 80, CAI, DWQ. At this time Du Locke resigned actually from the direction of the Opéra-Comique in March 1876, Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 634, perhaps this is the reason why he was asked.

Parisian guests. This was immediately suppressed by Draneht naming it a “satire locale” and ensured that his objection was shown to the Khedive.²³¹

As a high functionary, he was a real “man” of the Khedive, not only serving his leisure time but conducting small affairs in his name. Draneht helped him to contact in France with journalists, and in fact, via Draneht, the Khedive financed some newspapers.²³² In return, he was also eligible for the attention of the authorities, for instance, when his servant robbed him in 1874 in Cairo, the police almost immediately caught the woman (and her lover).²³³

Draneht's Men - the Staff of the Khedivial Theatres

This already takes us to the question of his employees. In the beginning, when he was not in Egypt, Grand Bey, the chief urban engineer of Cairo, held the keys of the theatres, literarily,²³⁴ then, from 1872, Léopold Larose, who, at this time, was the keeper of costumes and designer (painter) of the scenery.²³⁵ Between 1869 and 1873 the Administration of Khedivial Theatres employed many Europeans and Egyptians temporarily and permanently. Europeans were mostly designated for specific positions, like tailors, machinists, while Egyptians were used as *farrāsh* (guards, nightwatchers, servants).

²³¹ Letter dated 26 December 1869, Draneht to ?, “Vous ferez bien de supprimer au plus tout votre pantomime, ou, pour mieux dire, votre satire locale.” See also Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 50.

²³² “Un important journal de la presse Parisienne,” yearly 25000 francs. Letter dated 21 Avril 1870, from Draneht to Riaz Pasha. 5013-002701, Usrat Muḥammad °Alī, DWQ.

²³³ Letter dated 29 March 1874, written to ? from Burichetti, Directeur de Police. 5013-003022, Usrat Muḥammad °Alī, DWQ.

²³⁴ Letter dated 8 September [likely 1870], from ? to Riaz. Carton 80, CAI, DWQ. “Give, please, the keys to Grand Bey who is charged with the administration of theatres in the absence of Draneht Bey.”

²³⁵ Letter dated 21 June 1872, from Larose to Draneht, in Abdoun, *Genesi dell' "Aida,"* 117. Letter dated 11 September 1872, from Draneht to Larose, in Abdoun, *Genesi dell' "Aida,"* 119-120.

Of Europeans, in autumn 1869, the Opera's staff included Madame Béroule, tire-woman,²³⁶ and a certain Pravis, decorator, the French Lablache and Hostein (two administrators),²³⁷ a number of Egyptian servants.²³⁸ In 1871 Larose entered service, while in 1872 Carlo d'Ormeville (1840-1924) is named as poet and "régisseur du théâtre du Caire."²³⁹ However, most of these persons were associated with the theatres temporarily.²⁴⁰ In 1878, the permanent personnel consisted of nine persons as the following table indicates:

²³⁶ French Note to the Conseil des Ministres from the Min. Trav. Pub., dated 19 February 1887, 2/1, Nizārat al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, CMW DWQ.

²³⁷ Some papers say that Hostein left in December 1869 (never found any trace in the documents). *Le Ménestrel*, 12 December 1869, 15. But *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* writes that he in fact prolonged his contract with one more year. 10 April 1870, 119.

²³⁸ Letter from Rancy to Police Municipale au Caire, dated 12 Novembre 1869. Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

²³⁹ *Le Ménestrel*, 2 Juin 1872, 223. D'Ormeville was an impresario himself also. Rosselli, *The Opera Industry*, 28.

²⁴⁰ Based on the payment daftars of the Muḥāfaẓat Miṣr, one can reconstruct the personel in a detailed way annually: 2002-003604, 2002-003605, Muḥāfaẓat Miṣr, DWQ.

Table 5.3

Personnel du Service de l'entretien du Matériel (Cairo Opera House, 1878)²⁴¹

<i>Nom</i>	<i>appointements mensuels</i>	<i>Fonctions</i>	<i>age</i>	<i>date de l'entrée du service</i>	<i>temps du service</i>	<i>antécédents de l'employé avant son entrée au service actuel</i>
Larose Léopold	833 fr = 3207 piaster	Conservateur du Matériel	38	1871	7	artiste dramatique et régisseur de théâtre
Passotti Joseph	150 fr = 577 piaster	Tailleur costumier	46	1870	8	Tailleur au Collège des Frères, Caire
Beroule Elise	150 fr = 577 piaster	Couturière	36	1869	9	Néant
Chäin Effendi	194 fr = 746 piaster	Chef des ferraches, Salle et loges V R	40	1870	8	Chef ferrache au palais de Ras-el-Tin
Mohamet Ismaïl	38.88 fr = 149 piaster	Ferrache Opera	32	1870	8	Ferrache de la Daïra Hassa
Ahmet el-Komi	38.88 fr = 149 piaster	Ferrache Comédie	28	1870	8	Ferrache de Kasr-el-Nil
Aly Ayoub	49.25 fr = 189 piaster	Portefaire	28	1870	8	Néant
Abdallah Awadeine	25.92 fr = 99 piaster	Gardien du nuit Comédie	30	1878		Gaffir au Palais de S A Mansour Pacha
Hussein Ibraïm	25.92 fr = 99 piaster	Gardien du nuit Opéra	25	1875	3	Gaffir au service du Gouvernement

²⁴¹ Copied from a letter dated 30 Decembre 1878, from Léopold Larose to unknown (perhaps Le Directeur de l'administration de la Voirie?) 4003-037847, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

In this table it is not the high salary of the Europeans compared to the Egyptian guards which is striking, but the payment of the Egyptian boss' of ferraches, which is even higher than the European tailors. This means that security and the maintenance of order was indeed a concern and it was especially important to secure the loyalty of the one who could control the men in charge.

Draneht and Money

The financial background of the khedivial theatres was never clear. What was clear is that Draneht is an employee, not an entrepreneur, even if he operated like a free-lance impresario. Draneht was an intermediary between the theatres and the troupes, like an impresario, but he never risked his own money. (Although by this time, he must become quite a rich man, due to his land possessions.) In 1871/72, he got a monthly salary of 5000 (piasters?).²⁴² Apart from this, there are references that he cut his own “percentage of all expenses.”²⁴³

As we have seen, all the buildings were in the possession of *al-Dā'ra al-Khāṣṣa*, taken care for the maintenance by the *Muḥāfaẓat Miṣr*. There was no regular and legal framework for the theatres. Only after the inauguration ceremony of the Suez Canal was over, Draneht suggested a financial “system” to the Khedive. He proposed that, in order to avoid delays in the payment of the artists and staff, the Khedive should open for him a credit in the Anglo-Egyptian Bank or any other

²⁴² Page 94 in daftar, *Juz' awwal Jarīda istiḥqāqāt al-ṭuruq wa'l-shawāri' wa'l-mutanazzahāt wa'l-tiyātrāt al-tābi'īn li-Muḥāfaẓat Miṣr tawtā 1588* (1871). 2002-003604, Muḥāfaẓat Miṣr, DWQ.

²⁴³ Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 26. Letter of Auguste Mariette to Edouard Mariette, dated 21 June 1870.

bank.²⁴⁴ Avoiding the delays, thus his argument, was important for the “dignity” of the Khedive.

This system was not put into effect properly, thus payments were made via two channels: either by personally paying the sums to Draneht by the Khedive’s Private Administration (*al-Dā’ira al-Khāṣṣa*) or, mostly, when he was in Europe, indeed credits were opened in different banks but only with previously *defined* amounts. It happened thus that he paid from his own purse and then asked for reimbursement.

Usually Draneht calculated an approximate cost for the next season and submitted it to the *al-Dā’ira al-Khāṣṣa* of the Khedive. Sometimes the calculation was exceeded already during the preparations.²⁴⁵ After every season he counted and submitted the real costs showing the deficits. Having a deficit was a natural outcome and was usually accepted by the Khedive or his personal administration.²⁴⁶ Sadgrove provides a table with some of the estimated receipts and expenses.²⁴⁷ It is sure that between 1869 and 1875 the Khedive spent for the theatres (sometimes much) more than one million francs in every year; for instance the production of *Aida* alone cost a minimum 320.000 francs in 1871.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ Letter dated 27 November 1869, from Draneht to Eram Bey, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ. “Il y aurait un moyen simple et en même temps économique à employer pour subvenir à l’avenir à ces dépenses. Ce serait que je fusse autorisé par Son Altesse à me faire avoir un nouveau crédit sur la Banque Anglo-Egyptienne ou sur toute autre maison à la convenance de S. A. Ce n’est pas sans fondement que je signale ce moyen comme présentant – un avantage réel d’économie. En effet, les dernier opérations de ce genre n’ont occasionné qu’un décompte d’intérêts n’excédant pas 3 % par an, ce qui fait a peine 25 centime par 100 per mois pour une durée moyenne de trois mois qu’est celle de nous opérations de crédit.”

²⁴⁵ Letter dated 11 June 1873 Draneht Bey to Barrot Bey, 5013-003511, Usrat Muḥammad °Alī, DWQ. “Je donc obligé de faire de grands sacrifices pour réunir les artistes nécessaires, je dépasserai sans doute encore cette année le budget ordinaire au Théâtre français mais aussi j’espère avoir réuni une Compagnie qui satisfera complètement S. Altesse.”

²⁴⁶ Not always, for instance, in 1875, stuck to the budget of the previous season. Letter dated 21 Avril 1875, Draneht to Barrot. „ Elle [la Khédive] s’en est tenue à celui de la saison 1874-75.”

²⁴⁷ Based on Carton 80, CAI, DWQ in Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 79.

²⁴⁸ Calculation dated 12 March 1872, unsigned [Draneht ?], Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

Perhaps in 1873 an effort was made to reorganise the whole entertainment system of the Khedive because it was obvious that it cost too much. An unsigned letter contains eight different variations, of which project n. 5 is recommended to the Khedive: keeping only the Opera House because the Comédie is not visited enough, eliminating the ballet.²⁴⁹ It was more or less realized after this year. This is also the year when Santini started his concession in the Azbakiyya Garden Theatre.

From the summer of 1870, Draneht began to use official papers with the heading “Administration des Théâtres du Khédivé d’Égypte.” His office never formed a part of the Egyptian/Khedival governmental body or at least I have never found the mention of this unit in any of the “state” Ministries. It can be defined as an independent branch of the Khedive’s personal administration, an institution financed by the ruler.

The Networks of Draneht

As Draneht remarked at one point, he wanted to elevate the Cairo Opera House to the level of the St. Petersburg “Scène Impérial” (the Opera House, inaugurated in 1860).²⁵⁰ Thus his conception was an *imperial* opera house. Indeed, from his appointment in April 1869 to the inauguration ceremony on 1 November 1869 he did everything to create a first class opera house according to contemporary standards. These standards meant simply that he hired troupes from Paris for the French Comédie, and troupes from Milan for the Italian Opera.

²⁴⁹ Perhaps 1873, unsigned letter to the Khedive, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ. My guess is that it is from 1873 since it contains a calculation for the season 1873-1874

²⁵⁰ Letter 24 May 1870 from Draneht to Riaz. Carton 80, CAI, DWQ. As one can see in Table 3.1 the theatre in Petersburg was renewed in 1860. In Ninet’s satire, Draneht is humbly serving all the intentions of the Khedive which is certainly an exaggeration, for instance 284-285. Ninet also suggests that everything in the Opera was due to the intentions of the Khedive, 296-297. Partly, it must have been true.

In Paris, Draneht (and as we have seen, Manasse also) used specialized French agencies to hire artists. The reason for this might be that he was not as familiar with Paris theatre life as such a grand project needed. We know that in 1874 he used Pandolfini,²⁵¹ in 1877 Laugier.²⁵²

In Italy, it was mostly himself who personally contracted with the most important singers. Already for the opening (1 November 1869), he contracted with the best Italian artists, arranged the sceneries, the costumes, paying and asking for payment, lodged the staff, and personally arranged the program of the opening (see more in Part V).²⁵³ He repeated this arrangement every year, for instance, during the spring of 1871 he personally negotiated with Verdi because Verdi wanted to choose the artists for *Aida* but Draneht wanted to use them for the whole season.²⁵⁴ Draneht was a manager.

He created, through the money of the Khedive, an important location in an already existing international network of opera houses. Draneht only conceived his task vis-à-vis Europe, and did nothing concerning the Ottoman Empire or even Alexandria. He did not receive wandering troupes in the first years, all the opera and operetta troupes were compiled specifically for the Cairo theatres, and even the circuses were invited. However, later travelling entertainers were let to perform also.

Draneht's networks certainly included the Italian opera singers themselves, since he personally negotiated with them and often lived in Milan, also because of his wife (Adele was the daughter of a musician from the La Scala). During his

²⁵¹ Letter dated 14 Fevrier 1875, from Draneht to Barrot, 5013-003511, Usrat Muḥammad °Ali, DWQ.

²⁵² Letter dated 19 October 1877, from Draneht to Khairy, 5013-003511, Usrat Muḥammad °Ali, DWQ.

²⁵³ Sadgrove's data that Avoscani was responsible for the programme of the first night cannot be accepted since it is Draneht who had a hymn written for the Khedive and wanted Verdi to compose its music (see more in Chapter 5). Letter dated 6 August 1869, Draneht to Riaz, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

²⁵⁴ Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 136-137, letter of Draneht to Verdi, dated 11 February 1871.

superintendancy, most of the famous Italian singers performed in the Opera House. Ferrucci, Valentine, De Gioza, Colonnese, Galletti, Zacchi, Colonnese Caryton, Augusti, la Pozzoni, Grossi all sang here, also having for the season 1871-1872 (for *Aida*) Giovanni Bottesini as conductor, and Muzi. He also organized ballet-troupes, for instance in 1870-1871 starring Monplaisir (*premiere maître de ballet*), with Mesdemoiselles Cucchi and Pertholdi.²⁵⁵

As the Khedive's man, he was in the unique position to use the official workforce of the country. For instance, with the authorization of the Khedive, from time to time could "borrow" soldiers and horses from the Ministry of War, for instance, for the performances of *Aida*.²⁵⁶ (Later, the Khedive Tawfiq will also let Arab impresarios to use soldiers for the Arab version of *Aida*.) Needless to say, his most valuable connection was the Khedive himself. It is Draneht's status as the representative of the Khedive that opened doors everywhere in Europe for him, and that in Cairo allowed him to come into contact with the visiting aristocrats and rulers. Finally, he was so associated with the Khedive and his regime that when Ismā'īl was exiled in 1879, it was Draneht who received the ex-Khedive in Italy and partly stayed with him.

Draneht and Theatre in Arabic

Draneht had a particular attitude to foster Arab theatre. For someone, who spent his entire life in the service of the Ottoman Turkish Pashas of Egypt, who became Francophone and also knew Italian, the support of theatre and opera in Arabic was not

²⁵⁵ Compiled from various letters in Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

²⁵⁶ Letter dated 22 October 1872, Draneht to Minister of War (Aḥmad Rāshid Pasha), *Genesi dell' "Aida,"* 120-121. Letter dated 7 November 1872, Draneht to Minister of War (Aḥmad Rāshid Pasha), *Genesi dell' "Aida,"* 122.

a natural disposition. The Khedive already ordered the librettos of some operas and operettas translated to Arabic in January 1869 for the Comédie.²⁵⁷ Perhaps this set the example, and in the summer of 1869 Draneht also took care of sending opera libretti to Cairo in order to translate them to Arabic to “instruct the audience.”²⁵⁸ After the inauguration, the prices of the boxes were communicated in Arabic in the journal *Wādī al-Nīl* together with a report about the first show.²⁵⁹ But the Opera House in the first season, unlike the Circus of Rancy, was not advertised in Arabic. Only in the second, spring season of 1870 was announced the opera *Semiramis* (Rossini) in *Wādī al-Nīl*, together with a definition of the opera.²⁶⁰

Draneht possibly knew very well the editors of *Wādī al-Nīl*, Abu’l-Su‘ūd Effendi and his son, Muḥammad Unsī, at least from this spring of 1870 when we have evidence from the journal that Unsī visited often the performances of the Opera. For instance, Unsī wrote about the operas *Semiramis* and *Faust*, the first detailed public opera plots in Arabic.²⁶¹

In December 1871, the (French?) libretto of *Aida* was requested by Muḥammad Unsī from Draneht, who in turn asked Delbos Demouret, the printer, to send him a copy.²⁶² Unsī’s father, Abu’l-Su‘ūd Effendi, translated it very quickly to Arabic. Then Draneht asked “Rassik Effendi,” the editor of the “Rusnamez” (the official gazette in Arabic – *Rūz-nāme*, still its Turkish name was used) to obtain an

²⁵⁷ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 47-48.

²⁵⁸ Letter dated 27 July 1869 Draneht to Khairy, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ. Cf. Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 48.

²⁵⁹ *Wādī al-Nīl*, 5 November 1869, 868-869: report about the ode for the Khedive and the prices. *Wādī al-Nīl*, 12 November 1869, 900-901: report about the *Rigoletto*.

²⁶⁰ *Wādī al-Nīl*, 17 February 1870 (1869 is wrongly printed on the title page), 1285.

²⁶¹ Muḥammad Unsī, “Mal‘ab al-Ūbira bi-Miṣr al-Qāhira,” *Wādī al-Nīl*, 28 February 1870 (1869 is wrongly printed on the title page), 1332-1334. *Wādī al-Nīl*, 4 March 1870 (1869 is wrongly printed on the title page), 1348-1352. In fact, the almost the whole issue is used for the description of *Faust*.

²⁶² Letter dated 28 November 1871, from Draneht to Demouret, in Abdoun, *Genesi dell’ “Aida”*, 134-35.

Arabic copy from Abū al-Suʿūd and, “conformément au désir que m’a exprimé Son Altesse,” translate it to Ottoman Turkish.²⁶³ The price of the Arab and Ottoman Turkish translations (including the print, the normal binding and the luxury binding of some of the examples) was 1270 francs. At the same time, the *Wādī al-Nīl* also issued a bill for the translation of *Les Huguenots* in Arabic of 1006 francs.²⁶⁴

However, Draneht had his own taste in Arabic theatre. He might not have liked the first Arabic theatre in Egypt by James Sanua,²⁶⁵ because in spring 1872 he rather supported the project of Muḥammad Unsī (and Louis Farrugia). Unsī’s project, might be a counterproject to Sanua’s, was recommended to the Khedive by Draneht personally and also through the intermediary of Khayrī Pasha, the Khedive’s personal secretary (Khayrī Pasha supported this project and Draneht knew his intentions since Khayrī already supported Sanua).²⁶⁶ Of course, this theatre of Unsī, which would have the name “Théâtre National” (they would have used the Azbakiyya Garden Theatre, “Kiosque” and sometimes the Comédie – in spring 1872 the Azbakiyya Garden Theatre was perhaps empty/not rented) and its school (!), were planned as a part of Draneht’s administration.²⁶⁷

After the closure of Sanua’s theatre in autumn 1872, the plan of Unsī was also forgotten. However, three years later, in the spring of 1875, Salīm Khalīl Naqqāsh,

²⁶³ Letter dated 20 December 1871 from Draneht to Rassik Effendi. Original French letter published in Abdoun, *Genesi dell’ “Aida”*, 101. In English: “Conforming to the wish that His Highness has expressed to me, I ask you to kindly do the translation of the *Aida* libretto from Arabic into Turkish.” Busch, *Verdi’s Aida*, 266.

²⁶⁴ Letter dated 31 January 1872, from Draneht to Kairi Pasha, *Genesi dell’ “Aida”*, 109-110.

²⁶⁵ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 105. Sanua later criticised severely the attitude of Draneht. Moosa, *The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction*, 45 and Matti Moosa, “Yaʿqūb Ṣanūʿ and the rise of Arab drama in Egypt,” *IJMES* 4 n. 4 (1974): 401-433. Here: 407-408. Sanua presents Draneht as one of his greatest enemies, but also adds that he managed not to provoke him to anger. Apart from his testimony we have no other sources that would testify Draneht’s attitude.

²⁶⁶ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 93; Moosa, *The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction*, 47.

²⁶⁷ Letter dated 20 April 1872, from Draneht to Khairi. To his letter he attaches the (French) project of the Arab théâtre, dated 15 March 1872, which was published by Sadgrove in *Egyptian Theatre*, Appendix 3., 186-196. Cf. 105-106 also.

the nephew of the great Mārūn Naqqāsh, visited Cairo to survey the possibilities for his Beirut theatre troupe. Naqqāsh likely watched some of the performances of the Opera House and surely an *Aida*-performance,²⁶⁸ which means that he visited the city before the end of the season (before April 1875). Draneht Bey met with Salīm Naqqāsh²⁶⁹ and he was “satisfied his [Naqqāsh’s] competence” (*aqna^c bi-ahliyyati-hi*).²⁷⁰ Sadgrove states that Naqqāsh persuaded the Khedive “through the offices of Draneht” that the ruler should support Arabic theatre.²⁷¹

Perhaps this is why in June 1875, although Egypt’s financial stability was already shaken, news appeared in the Arab and international press that the Khedive shall establish two Arab theatres, in Mansūra and in Cairo.²⁷² Moreover, some even suggest that when Salīm Naqqāsh translated, adapted, and published *Aida* in Arabic, in Beirut the same year (before July 1875, with a dedication to Khedive Ismā^cīl), this was due to the suggestion of Draneht or at least he was the one who transmitted the instructions of the Khedive.²⁷³

In my view, it is likely that Draneht helped Salīm with suggestions since he was *ab ovo* for the Arabic translations. However, it is a question if Draneht Bey suggested him the translation, or it was Naqqāsh’s own and natural choice, since he could also connect this translation with the praise of the Khedive Ismā^cīl. It seems

²⁶⁸ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 130.

²⁶⁹ Garfi, *Musique et Spectacle*, 221 writes that Salīm was received by Draneht Bey based on an article “Fawā³id al-riwāyāt,” *Al-Jinān*, 521 (1875). This is false, because in this article there is no mention of Draneht. Actually, Najm, who is supposedly copied by Garfi, in his *Al-masraḥiyya*, refers to two articles in the *Al-Jinān* and it is the second reference, an earlier number of 1875, which is referred to in Najm’s endnote 4. This article is entitled “Al-riwāyāt al-^carabiyya al-miṣriyya,” *Al-Jinān*, 1 Temmūz, 1875, 442-444.

²⁷⁰ “Al-riwāyāt al-^carabiyya al-miṣriyya,” *Al-Jinān*, 1 Temmūz, 1875, 442-444. Here: 443. Cf. Moosa, *The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction*, 34.

²⁷¹ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 126.

²⁷² *Revue de Constantinople*, 13 June 1875, 594. The *Revue* cites the *Phare d’Alexandrie* as a source. Sadgrove refers to *Al-Jawā³ib*, 16 June 1875. At this time presumably Sanua was out of Egypt in Europe. Moosa, *The Origins of Arabic Fiction*, 46.

²⁷³ Abul Naga, *Les sources françaises du théâtre égyptien*, 110. Cf. Garfi, *Musique et Spectacle*, 222. Abul Naga actually refers to Salīm Naqqāsh’s article in the *Al-Jinān*, 1875, p. 521.

unlikely that Draneht gave him the Arabic libretto of *Aida* (translated in 1871 by Abu'l-Su'ūd Effendi) because it is stated that Naqqāsh translated from the original Italian.²⁷⁴ Thus Draneht was intimately connected (opposing Sanua, backing Unsī and Naqqāsh) to the beginnings of Egyptian Arabic (music) theatre, too.

From Impresario to Retired Businessman

During the 1870s, his occupation with opera also led him to marriage. Adele Casati was the daughter of a cellist, playing in the orchestra of the Cairo Opera House, originally from Milan.²⁷⁵ It is said that they married a few month before the premiere of the *Aida*.²⁷⁶ After the marriage, in the beginning of the 1870s, they built together a villa in Oggebbio on the coast of Lago Maggiore, Italy, the so-called “Villa Draneht.”²⁷⁷ The couple had one daughter, Despina Draneht (1877-1948).²⁷⁸

From the summer of 1877 Paulino Draneht more and more retired, partly because of the Egyptian financial crisis, partly because he was aged, partly because this year his daughter was born. Elevated to the rank of Pasha, from this year he mostly sent letters from Italy concerning the matters of the Opera. He recommended Léopold Larose, the keeper of the costumes, as a good intermediary instead of him in

²⁷⁴ “Fawā'id al-riwāyāt al-ʿarabiyya al-miṣriyya,” *Al-Jinān*, 1 Temmūz, 1875, 442-444. In page 443 the author says “fuṣūl min riwāyat ʿĀ'ida allatī tarjama-hā ʿan al-iṭāliyyāniyya.” Unfortunately, Abu'l-Su'ūd's translation was not located so far thus we have no possibility to compare Naqqāsh's and Abu'l-Su'ūd's versions, however important would this be.

²⁷⁵ *Biografikon Leksikon Kyprion*, 137.

²⁷⁶ Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 632. However, neither in the vast sum of letters written in 1871, published by Busch and Abdoun (ʿAbdūn), nor in the letters in Carton 80, CAI, DWQ, there is no mention of his marriage at all, and nothing about his personal life. At least, we know that Draneht was mostly in Milan in the period May-September 1871.

²⁷⁷ Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 632. It was in the possession of the family until the 1970s and although it was sold, the villa is called “Villa Draneht” until today.

²⁷⁸ ʿAbdūn, ʿĀyida, 28, mentions a certain Planche (Blānsh) who would be his daughter as well but ʿAbdūn did not find any traces of this girl in the Alexandrian mauzoleum of the family. Despina was married to a member of the Zervudachi family, a wealthy Greek merchant dynasty.

1877.²⁷⁹ He officially retired in 1879 when Ismāʿīl was forced to resign. The Draneht family then lived mostly between Italy and Egypt, still in a close relation with ex-Khedive Ismāʿīl.

After 1879 Draneht was no more involved in the affairs of the Khedival Theatres, his name is never mentioned in the government documents concerning theatres. Many years later, in January 1887, when the actual impresario became bankrupt and the government had to pay the artists of the Opera to send them back to Europe, a sum of 27.000 francs was said in the press to come from a deposit that Draneht created a decade ago for the retired artists.²⁸⁰

In his last twenty years, Draneht devoted his time to business and family.²⁸¹ He took care of his huge lands in the countryside of Egypt. It is said that in his lands Draneht introduced for the first time in Egypt “le système du drainage et de l’assèchement des terres par ‘drains à ciel ouvert,’” perhaps already in 1872.²⁸² Draneht protested against an irrigation canal at his lands in Kafr al-Dahūr.²⁸³ He bought a part of the Gezira Palace in 1892. Draneht Pasha died near Alexandria in 1894 and is buried in the family crypt in Alexandria.²⁸⁴

²⁷⁹ Letter dated 3 August 1877, from Draneht to Barrot, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

²⁸⁰ *Bosphore Egyptien*, 1 January 1887, 1. Although in the archival documents this affair can be traced, there is no indication if this 27000 francs came from any deposit created by Draneht. French letter dated 28 December 1886, from the Président du Conseil des Ministres to Rouchdy Pacha, Min. Trav. Pub. Carton 2/1, Niẓārat al-Ashghāl al-ʿUmūmiyya, CMW, DWQ. However, in the *Wādī al-Nīl* in 1870 the opera Semiramis is said to be played for the “fund established to care with the needs of musicians and staff of the theatres” (*li’l-ṣundūq al-iʿānat al-munshāʾ ... li-dhawī al-ḥājāt min ustāwāt wa-khidmat al-tiyātrāt al-miṣriyya*) this is perhaps identical with this deposit. *Wādī al-Nīl*, 17 February 1870 (1869 is wrongly printed on the title page), 1285.

²⁸¹ This is why he is listed among the influential Greek merchants in Egypt in Politis, *L’Hellénisme*, 1: 200. Cf. also ʿAbdūn, *ʿĀyida*, 28.

²⁸² Politis, *L’Hellénisme*, 2: 99. Draneht’s lands were especially blessed and his mango became very famous, the so-called “draneetha”. Cf. ʿAbdūn, *ʿĀyida*, 28.

²⁸³ Letter dated 22 April 1880, From Ministre de la Justice to Aly Pacha Moubarek, Min. Trav. Pub., 4003-038673, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-ʿUmūmiyya, DWQ.

²⁸⁴ I am grateful for this information to the Zervudachi family.

Conclusion

Manasse and Draneht represent two unique careers but also similar convictions, namely, that European – Italian and French – music theatre should be performed in Istanbul and in Cairo, respectively. In the case of struggling Manasse, this was his own, sincere conviction as his letters testify. In the case of triumphant Draneht, it is rather the Khedive's taste that he served although from his hints it is clear that he believed also in the contemporary protocol, namely, that for a ruler (be that Oriental or Westerner), especially an *imperial* ruler, the genre of opera is the only fitting entertainment.

Presumably, they met only once, in the fateful spring of 1869, and again presumably Manasse's failure led to the rise of Draneht. Both of them used French as their everyday language, although neither was a native speaker. Somehow, this is where we may find a key to their activity: Draneht and Manasse wanted to transform *themselves* as well, they wanted to cultivate themselves (and gain money) via entertainment.

This imagined self-education also embodied a conception of European entertainment, especially music theatre, as means of education for others – in Manasse's plan, these were mostly the everyday inhabitants of Pera/Istanbul, while Draneht wanted to educate the (Turco-)Egyptian elite, too. Bringing European music theatre to Cairo and Istanbul not only meant the inclusion of these cities into the potential market of Italian and French troupes but in Egypt opera became the officially sponsored state culture that excluded or at least overshadowed Arab experiments. In Istanbul, Manasse's failures indicate that no official backing was given to this type of entertainment; furthermore, that the competition was cruel with other theatres playing in other languages. In the next chapter, in contrast to these two totally

Westernizing impresarios, we shall meet with two impresarios who preferred to perform in their native language, Arabic and Ottoman Turkish, however, ethnically they were neither Egyptian, nor Turk.

Chapter 6.

Public Education and Entertainment: Qardāhī and Benglian

In this chapter the lives of Sulaymān Qardāhī and Séropé Benglian will be reconstructed. In contrast to Manasse and Draneht, both were directors of theatre groups. Still, Qardāhī or Benglian used the methods of impresarios – they invested their own money for profit, and indeed they were called “impresario” in French. However, both of them cherished other goals than purely financial – advocating theatre as an educational means, presenting the audience with pleasure, and – in the case of Qardāhī – presumably a new passion, that one may call patriotic zeal. Their troupes performed in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish respectively, the two persons entertained a different vision about culture than Manasse’ or Draneht’s. While Qardāhī thought theatre a means of public education, there is no data if Benglian would ever consider theatre in such a way – his life and his troupes allows the assumption that theatre in his case was an entertainment enterprise rather than an educative project.

While Manasse and Draneht were influential in the 1860s and 1870s, Qardāhī and Benglian were mostly active in the 1880s and 1890s. Thus they exemplify the spread of music theatre in the late Ottoman Empire. Reconstructing their life also provides access into hitherto unknown details of the *Nahḍa* (the Arabic cultural renewal) and insight into the mechanisms of the late Ottoman cultural space that is defined by the common understanding of Ottoman Turkish. Although both of them

experienced magnificent successes, finally they failed to gain an everlasting name, and more or less vanished from the histories of theatre and culture.

6.1 Sulaymān Qardāhī¹ (?-1909)

Sulaymān Qardāhī was a Syrian Christian, likely from Beirut. After Sanua's experiments, Qardāhī could be credited with the application of music theatre in Arabic in Egypt. In the 1880s his troupe was almost institutionalized in Cairo but after a tragic failure, in the 1890s he had to develop into a "Mediterranean" director-impresario performing in Egypt, Syria, France, Algeria, Tunis.

Formation and Migration (?-1882)

Qardāhī is a popular Syrian-Lebanese family name. His birth date and early years are unknown so far, just like the date of his first migration to Egypt. If he was an actor in the troupe of Salīm Khalīl al-Naqqāsh (1850-1884), then he must have arrived in December 1876 together with that troupe.² As we have seen, the Syrians were invited in 1875, possibly via Draneht Bey (see Chapter 6) but arrived only one year later

¹ His name is transliterated as "al-Qurdāhī" in Mohamed Garfi, *Musique et Spectacle*, 223 and also by Beckman as "Kourdeghi effendi," Joseph Doïmo Beckman, "Le Théâtre arabe moderne," *Revue d'Art Dramatique* 24, (1890): 80-93. (I saw this article in a microfiche format, as an extract in the BnF). In Moosa, *The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction*, 35 his name is transliterated as "al-Qirdahi," just like in Fahmy, "Popularizing Egyptian Nationalism," 126. However, based on a letter, dated 21 Avril 1887 in Carton 2/1, Nizārat al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, CMW, DWQ, where his name is transliterated by the Egyptian Ministry of Public Works as "Cardahi," and another written by the Ministry to the Conseil des Ministres, dated 24 February 1887, Carton 2/1, Nizārat al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, CMW, DWQ, it is almost sure that mostly his name was pronounced as Qardāhī. His name is also transliterated as such ("al-Qardāhī") in Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 127; Hamadi Ben Halima, *Un demi-siècle de Théâtre Arabe en Tunisie* (1907-1957) (Tunis: Publications de l'Université de Tunis, 1974), 39. An advertisement in 1889 in Paris concerning his performances contains "Cardahi," BnF, Gallica: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9005652n> (accessed July 14, 2011) Because he and the contemporary Arab press did not use his name with an article (al-), I write his name as Qardāhī.

² Cf. Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 127.

when the Khedive's pocket was already empty.³ In this case Qardāhī might have been already part of the Beirut theatrical experiments.

Sulaymān Qardāhī migrated with his wife, Christine Qardāhī, who established a school for girls (*Madrasat al-Banāt al-Waṭaniyya*) in Alexandria, perhaps in 1877.⁴ The school advertised itself in 1879 with the signature of Sulaymān Qardāhī thus it is likely that he helped his wife in the administration.⁵ After al-Naqqāsh's directorship (December 1876-spring 1877),⁶ Yūsuf Khayyāt, another actor, took over the leadership of the Syrian theatre troupe (the summer of 1877). Although there is no evidence that Qardāhī was part of the troupe, seemingly he advocated theatre via his wife's school where he staged plays in Arabic in 1879 with the students and then in 1880 in the Zizinia Theatre, in the presence of the Khedive.⁷ Around January 1882 Khayyāt's troupe dissolved⁸ and thus Qardāhī formed a new one. By this time, he had considerable experience in theatrical issues.

The Arab Opera (1882)

After Sanua and Khayyāt, Qardāhī also involved women in his own troupe: his wife, Christin, and an actress/singer, called Ḥunayna, who first debuted in the role of

³ Garfi, *Musique et Spectacle*, 222.

⁴ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 143. Although Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il states that until his book no-one discovered the truth about the Qardāhī couple, Sadgrove in fact based on Ḥabīb and *Al-Aḥrām* established that Kristin (Khristīn) Qardāhī was the wife of Sulaymān Qardāhī. Nevertheless, the information about Qardāhī's involvement in the affairs of the school what Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il published (based on *Jarīdat al-Tijāra*, 23 July 1879) is new. Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il, *Ta°rikh al-masrah al-miṣrī*, 140.

⁵ An advertisement in the *Al-Ahrām*, 6 March 1879, 4, signed by Qardāhī. Cf. Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il, *Ta°rikh al-masrah al-miṣrī*, 140.

⁶ According to some, Salīm al-Naqqāsh and his troupe spent only one season in Egypt. Joseph Khoueiri, *Théâtre arabe – Liban, 1847-1960* (Ferme de Blocry, Louvain-la-Neuve: Cahiers de Théâtre Louvain, 1984), 85. It is sure that Salīm, and his main collaborator in the troupe, Adīb Iṣḥāq (1856-1884), gave up theatrical activities soon *but* remained in Egypt engaging in journalism until 1882. Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 136-138.

⁷ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 143.

⁸ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 155.

Calipso in *Tilīmāk* in April 1882.⁹ But his greatest addition was the already known singer, Shaykh Salāma Ḥijāzī, who remained one of the main stars of the Egyptian scene for the next thirty years (see Part IV). It is Qardāhī who used regularly local Egyptian singers in his plays thus – although the earlier experiments with Arab theatre in Greater Syria and Egypt also included music – he can be credited with the invention of Egyptian music theatre.¹⁰

His music theatre was nevertheless connected to politics, as never before, because this is also the time when the revolutionary ‘Urābī government (February-May 1882) encouraged all patriotic activities. In many ways, Qardāhī’s theatre in the spring of 1882 could be considered to be a counterreaction to Draneht’s and others’ Western European cultural proposals.

After he managed to bring together a troupe and had rehearsals in March 1882, they travelled to Cairo with public and governmental support. They got permission to use the House *gratis* in the end of March from the Minister of Public Works (this time Maḥmūd Fahmī) who even promised to pay for the lighting.¹¹ This was a month of guest-plays in April 1882¹² in the Opera House.¹³ During this time,

⁹ *Al-Ahrām*, 15 April 1882, 2. Sadgrove’s mention of the singer Laylā is true but only in 1888, Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 155. cf. *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 107.

¹⁰ Some maintain that Abū Khalīl Aḥmad al-Qabbānī invented (or brought) this art form in Egypt. Garfī, *Musique et Spectacle*, 191-192 and 198-199. However, as we will see, al-Qabbānī formed his troupe only later in Egypt. It is therefore regretful that Garfī included Qardāhī only in the “expansion” section of his book (Garfī, *Musique et Spectacle*, 223). It is, nonetheless, not a single mistake since Arab theatre histories do not provide due space for Qardāhī, like Miḍḥat al-Jayyār, *al-Masraḥ al-‘arabī* (Cairo: Dār al-Jumhūriyya li’l-Ṣaḥāfa, 2006). It must be added in Damascus, from 1878 surely al-Qabbānī had a music theatre group, thus in Syria he was certainly the first, but in Egypt he was only the second. However, if one accepts my arguments about Arab theatre in the 19th century as an essentially music theatre, started by Mārūn Naqqāsh, then the primacy is his.

¹¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 24 March 1882, 3. The journal actually expressed its gratitude to the Minister for letting the group use the Opera free (*dūna muqābil*) and paying for the lightning, 27 March 1882, 3.

¹² *Al-Mahrūsa*, 15 April 1882, 2; 24 April 1882, 2. *Al-Ahrām*, 24 March 1882, 3; 27 March 1882, 3; 28 March 1882, 2-3; 11 April 1882, 3; 15 April 1882, 3 and throughout April-May scattered news, see Chapter 5. Sadgrove provides a description of the plays: Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 156-159. See also Sayyid ‘Alī Ismā‘īl, *Ta’rīkh al-masraḥ al-miṣrī*, 140, although he, for some reason, is not really concerned with these performances in 1882 unlike Najm in his *al-Masraḥiyya*, 107-108.

the European troupe of the Opera House (now the impresario was Léopold Larose, the Keeper of the Opera House) was playing in Alexandria, in the Zizinia Theatre.¹⁴ The Arab Opera Troupe's repertoire consisted of four plays: *Fursān al-°Arab*, *Tilīmāk*, *Zifāf °Antar*, *Al-faraj ba°d al-dīq*, all of them featuring a hero – especially the Arab hero °Antar.

The recognition that he invented something new, Arab music theatre, is his own since Qardāhī himself called his new troupe “Arab Opera.” *Al-Ahrām* published this advertisement:

An Arab Opera [Group] will be presented in the capital's Opera in the middle of April [18]82, under the leadership of its director, Sulaymān Qardāhī. [This troupe] consists of 25 persons who are the most famous singers with pleasing voice and with perfect declamation [*ilqā°*] and theatrical abilities. [...]

I proceeded with this theatrical art whose joyful excellence and educative [*adabiyya*] advantage is not hidden from you. Thus I arranged an Arab troupe with a special consideration of the persons' theatrical ability, their pleasing voice, and their perfection of declamation. I also chose for this art good and gentle plays, sacrificing money, working day and night in order to perfect it.

But as my project cannot be carried out without the principal support of enthusiasm and zeal, I decided to present four plays with different subjects in six evenings in a well-chosen way. And since I know the love and zeal you nurse for this art, I present this request in the hope that you will honour me with your distinguished name subscribing at the number or scale as you wish and according to your grace.¹⁵

Qardāhī interestingly relied first on the Arabic-speaking audience. Secondly, he got considerable support from the government and the dignitaries, thus this new art form was connected to the political setting in two directions – embodying and counting on the “people” and offering a new, patriotic, Arabic cultural entertainment as an official state culture to the revolutionary government.

¹³ *Al-Ahrām*, 2 May 1882, 2.

¹⁴ *Al-Mahrūsa*, 18 April 1882, 2.

¹⁵ *Al-Ahrām*, 28 March 1882, 2-3. For some reason, this highly interesting article which is the proof of his being the first one to advocate reflectively Arab music theatre in Egypt, is not mentioned by any author I know.

The hero °Antar (represented by the body and the voice of Salāma Ḥijāzi) and colonel °Urābī as Arabs resisting foreign oppression offered an obvious symbolic pair. Thus Qardāḥī's music theatre could be considered as an expression of nationalist/patriotic ideas,¹⁶ especially because while they were performing, a trial against Turco-Circassian officers took place. (See more in Part IV and V.) By the encouragement of Minister Fahmī, Qardāḥī proposed the Government the institutionalization of his theatre group in the Comédie for the next theatrical year (1882-1883).

This hitherto unknown, remarkable letter is not only an offer for the state to promote national culture as a means of education but also a very personal expression of the devotion to theatre in Arabic (see the whole letter in Appendix 1):

Indeed, a strong zeal for this fine art has taken me to try to use it in Arabic until we will be able to [play theatre] in our language perfectly and we won't need [theatre] in foreign languages anymore. [...] I was sure that if I ask the Exalted Government, it will give a helpful hand when I notify the leaders about my zeal in refined education (*adab*) and my passion for the renewal of this useful project.

Qardāḥī's understanding of theatre as a "garden with mellow fruits," providing knowledge to which *everyone* has access, might emerge from two sources: the Naqqāsh family's and in general the Beirut understanding of theatre (perhaps originating in Christian missionaries), and his wife's school experiments. A third, additional source would be the Egyptian al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's description of Parisian theatres as schools but there is no evidence if Qardāḥī have read this *Riḥla*. However, in all such discourses achieving civilisation via theatre was an organic part, even central.

¹⁶ *Al-Ahrām*, 15 April 1882, 2.

Thus patriotic zeal and *mission civilisatrice* from below were united in Qardāhī's vision of theatres.

His project was quite grandiose compared to the earlier theatre projects in Arabic, but certainly very modest compared to the hired Italian opera troupes. He proposed to perform 15 different theatrical pieces in Arabic, with 30 actors and 15 actresses (!). He labelled the genre of the plays as “between opera and comedy” and also secured money for the translation of “historical and scientific books.”¹⁷

After submitting this letter, the Arab Opera troupe and Qardāhī triumphantly returned to Alexandria. However, all plans were interrupted by last phase of the °Urābī revolution and the British occupation of Egypt during the summer of 1882.¹⁸ Qardāhī and his family rushed back to Syria with other Syrians (like al-Naqqāsh), and the Arab Opera troupe was broken and dissolved.

The Return of Qardāhī (1885)

It is not known yet what Sulaymān Qardāhī did in Syria during his stay and also unknown is the exact date of his return. After three years, in the spring of 1885, he applied for concession of the Khedivial Opera House for the spring season of 1886, asking a four-month concession, then reduced to two months (February-March 1886).¹⁹ At this time (April 1885) he had been certainly already in Egypt for an unknown time.²⁰ Behind his decision one can detect that 1885 spring was the first real

¹⁷ Undated letter, (sealed as 3 May 1882, transferred to the Council of Ministers 7 May 1882), from Sulaymān Qardāhī to the Ministry of Public Works, 4003-037847, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

¹⁸ Of the details of this season see Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 156-160.

¹⁹ Letter dated 7 April 1885, from Soliman Cardahi to Rouchdy, 4003-037911, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ. Letter dated 7 May 1885 to Rouchdy from Soliman Cardahi, 4003-037911, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ. So far the theatre histories dated his return to the autumn. Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 162; *Najm, al-Masrahiyya*, 108 with reference to *Al-Ahrām*, 1885 September 21.

²⁰ In his second letter (dated 7 May 1885) he refers to a recent discussion with the Minister.

“peak season” of theatre in Egypt – two Arab impresario/directors, the Damascusi al-Qabbānī and Qardāḥī’s old fellow, Yūsuf Khayyāṭ ran two rival Arab theatre groups; Italian impresarios, Santi Boni and Sochino, rented the Opera House; Séropé Benglian’s Ottoman Armenian operetta troupe from Istanbul achieved an unusual success (see below); and on the top of that, old Seraphin Manasse also arrived to negotiate in Alexandria and Cairo. Furthermore, the British rule was consolidated in the country.

Thus Qardāḥī might have believed that it was time to return to the stage. He cooperated with the singer Murād Rūmānū.²¹ The exact composition of his troupe is not really known, just like the origin of the actors. He says in his first application in French spring 1885 (!) that he has “une excellente troupe théâtrale arabe” but in the second he admits that his first troupe was dissolved in 1882 “par suite des évènements insurrectionnels survenus en cette année.” In this second letter, he underlines that his new troupe would be based on those persons who achieved success (implicitly, Ḥijāzī), and would contain 15 actors, 5 actresses and 10 musicians.²²

The rival troupes performing in Arabic had their own singing stars: al-Qabbānī was associated with °Abduh al-Ḥamūlī, and Ḥijāzī was hired by Khayyāṭ, so Murād’s role as a well-known singer proved to be crucial. During the autumn of 1885, the troupe was usually mentioned as the “group of Qardāḥī effendi and Rūmānū effendi”²³ thus showing their equal leadership, between a prose actor-director-

²¹ For some reason Sadgrove mentions their association also regarding the first troupe (1882) but I have found no evidence for that, only from 1885.

²² Letter dated 7 May 1885 to Rouchdy from Soliman Cardahi, 4003-037911, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

²³ For instance, *Al-Ahrām*, 27 October 1885, 3 or 15 January 1886, 2. Cf. Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il, *Ta°rīkh al-masraḥ al-miṣrī*, 141.

impresario and a singer. These data reconfirm that early Arabic theatre was imagined and practiced as music theatre.

In October 1885 Rūmānū and Qardāhī started to play in Cairo with a very positive echo in the Arab press, especially celebrating the voice of Rūmānū, in a new theatre, the Politeama in Cairo.²⁴ His return and the establishment of the new troupe, first only called “Arab troupe” (*Al-Jawq al-‘Arabī*) had its due echo. A traveller mentions that against the Syrian “occupation” of the Egyptian scene, a “spéculateur habile,” Qardāhī (“Kourdeghi effendi”) established a patriotic troupe.²⁵ Soon, they were challenged by the troupe of al-Qabbānī,²⁶ so from Cairo they moved back to Alexandria.²⁷

Their repertoire partly consisted of the old plays (*Tilīmāk*, *‘Antar*-plays, *Al-faraj ba‘d al-ḍīq*, etc) and new ones (*Zanūbiyā*, etc). Their greatest success again was the *‘Antara al-‘Absī* in January, presumably again limelighting an Arab hero, fighting against oppressors. Around this time the troupe was first called in the press “Egyptian Arab Troupe” (*Al-Jawq al-‘Arabī al-Miṣrī*).²⁸

The new name (later they were also called *Al-Jawq al-‘Arabī al-Waṭanī*, “Arab Patriotic Group”)²⁹ meant more than just a stylistic change. *Waṭanī* is translated as “patriotic” because I believe that it was a conscious decision to advertise

²⁴ *Al-Ahrām*, 27 October 1885, 3; 9 November, 3; 26 November, 3; 4 December, 3; 8 December, 3; 14 December, 3; 16 December, 3;

²⁵ Beckman, “Le Théâtre arabe moderne,” 87. Beckman obviously did not know that Qardāhī was Syrian.

²⁶ *Al-Ahrām*, 13 November 1885, 2-3; 16 November 1885, 3; 18

²⁷ Najm mentions that they moved to Cairo in November (the number of the *Al-Ahrām* he refers to only mentions that Qardāhī will play in Cairo.) *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 109, which can be verified based on the *Al-Maḥrūsa* as well, *Al-Maḥrūsa*, 9 November 1885, 2. But they were already playing there in October and November, and it is only in December that they moved to Alexandria where the audience did not come first (*Al-Ahrām*, 4 December 1885, 3), but by January they were established. *Al-Ahrām*, 2 January 1886, 2; 4 January, 3; 15 January, 2; 18 January, 3; 22 January, 3; 25 January, 3. That is, on the contrary to Najm’s claim, Qardāhī and Rūmānū started in Cairo (October-November 1885) and then moved back to Alexandria (December 1885 – January 1886).

²⁸ *Al-Ahrām*, 25 January 1886, 3.

²⁹ *Al-Ahrām*, 17 March 1886, 2.

themselves as not only Arab but an Egyptian troupe to conform the general atmosphere. Murād Rūmānū left around 24 January 1886 when a beneficial evening was played whose income would go to the artists themselves fully.³⁰ This occasion is the first time that the new name is mentioned. It is not necessarily a conscious use of political ideology or a gesture of nation-building but it can be understood as a useful means to raise capital for further activity. A few days later there are news that Rūmānū would form a new troupe with Yūsuf Khayyāt³¹ or with his brother, Anṭūn Khayyāt,³² and actually on 15 February 1886 they performed their first musical play (the Arabic version of *Aida*) in Alexandria.³³ Thus it is very likely that with the “nationalisation” of the troupe Qardāhī and Rūmānū parted.³⁴

Back to the Opera: Qardāhī’s Patriotic Troupe (1886)

Although a note was written to refuse Qardāhī’s proposal in May 1885,³⁵ and Yūsuf Khayyāt was also (repeatedly) refused bluntly by Minister Rushdī,³⁶ Qardāhī finally got the possibility to perform in the Opera House after a series of coincidences.³⁷

During the summer of 1885 either Santi Boni and Soschino decided that they will use the Opera House only until 1 March and then “sublet” it, or – since we do not

³⁰ *Al-Ahrām*, 25 January 1886, 3.

³¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 1 February 1886, 3.

³² *Al-Maḥrūsa*, 5 February 1886, 2-3.

³³ *Al-Maḥrūsa*, 16 February 1886, 2. *Al-Ahrām*, 16 February 1886, 2. During the summer this troupe is mentioned under the name of Murād Rūmānū only, thus it is possible that Khayyāt parted. *Al-Maḥrūsa*, 7 July 1886, 2.

³⁴ It is a question if we can regard this troupe as a *new* troupe of Qardāhī. They played after the various scenes a humorous pantomime in which a certain Muḥyī al-Dīn Effendi’s skill is mentioned. *Al-Ahrām*, 1 February 1886, 3 and also *Al-Ahrām*, 1 April 1886, 2.

³⁵ Draft dated 21 May 1885, to Manasse (Mougel Bey), Khayat (Alexandrie), Kardahi (Alexandrie), from Ministry, informing them about the refusal. 4003-037911, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-‘Umūmiyya, DWQ.

³⁶ Letter dated 28 July 1885 To Minister des Trav Pub from Joseph Kaïat. At the end of the letter written: “Je ne pense pas plus aujourd’hui qu’avons accordés l’autorisation demandée. Rouchdy 29 July 1885.” 4003-037912, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-‘Umūmiyya, DWQ.

³⁷ Sayyid ‘Alī Ismā‘īl, *Ta’rikh al-masrah al-miṣrī*, 143 is thus mistakenly states that this is the first occasion.

have their contract for this year so far - their concession was only valid until 1 March,³⁸ but in any way, they wanted to gain more. Thus the two Italian impresarios submitted a proposal for the Ministry for the Opera House bringing an Arab and a Turkish theatre troupe for March-April 1886. The Ministry, perhaps the Minister, transferring their request to the Comité des Théâtres, noted that “je crois devoir, en terminant ma lettre, signaler à votre attention que la présence d’une troupe turque fera plaisir à la Cour ainsi qu’aux notables du pays, comme les spectacles arabes seront accueillis à la satisfaction générale de la population indigène.”³⁹

The Ottoman Turkish taste of the khedivial family and the Egyptian elite seemingly was obvious in the Ministries. This note shows that in such a late year (1885!), under British occupation, Ottoman Turkish entertainment was still imagined to be appropriate for the elite while – almost *in contrast* – Arab theatre was intended for the masses. This also indicated three types of cultural offers in Egypt: plays in Arabic for the Arabic speaking/indigenous population, plays in Ottoman Turkish for the Court of the Khedive, and of course, French operettas brought by the impresarios for the resident Europeans and all elite/middle class people. This tri-partite division does not mean necessarily class differences, or at least not a clearcut elite/mass/colonialists division, because tickets to the Opera House were not cheap even for the Arabic plays (for instance, a loge ticket for a charitable evening when

³⁸ This latter version is strengthened by the fact that there exists a copy of their 1885-1886 project entitled “Grand Théâtre Khédivial de l’Opéra – Projet pour la saison 1885-86, sous la direction Santi Boni et G. Soschino du 1 Novembre 1885 au 1er Mars 1886,” dated 18 May 1885. 4003-037912, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-‘Umūmiyya, DWQ.

³⁹ Letter dated 13 August 1885, to Comité des Théâtres from Ministry of Public Works, 4003-037912, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-‘Umūmiyya, DWQ.

Qardāhī's troupe performed was 60 francs, but only three francs for "general admission").⁴⁰

However, in the original application of Santi Boni and Soschino, not Qardāhī but Abū Khalīl al-Qabbānī's troupe is indicated.⁴¹ The "Turkish" troupe was probably Benglian's (see below). Based on the Comité's consent, the Ministry gave the authorisation in October 1885 to the two Italians for the additional period.⁴²

It is not exactly clear why Qardāhī instead of al-Qabbānī (who at this time was touring in Ṭanṭā in the countryside) could perform finally in the Opera House during March/April 1886, considering that Qardāhī was misinformed and during the autumn of 1885 only got the news that Arab troupes are granted to perform in the Opera. Then, only in the beginning of the season in January 1886, he came to realize that he must negotiate with and pay Santi Boni and Soschino. As a preparation, Qardāhī published an advertisement calling the Arab audience in Cairo into the Opera House in the journals *Al-Qāhira* and *Al-Zamān* in February 1886. "It is our honour to announce to the public that we are heading to the capital wishing to summon all the literate and gracious because we started again theatrical activities."⁴³ The troupe offered new plays to the audience and planned to play for 30 nights.

While in 1882 he could easily contract (in fact, exchange theatres and cities) with Léopold Larose, in 1886 Santi Boni and Soschino wanted (and got) 300 francs

⁴⁰ *Al-Ahrām*, 8 March 1886, 2.

⁴¹ Letter dated 10 August 1885, from Santi Boni to Rouchdy, 4003-037912, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ. "tableux et repertoires des deux troupes Turques et Arabes."

⁴² "Le ministre vous autorise à porter à 60 le nombre des représentations à donner au théâtre de l'Opéra par deux troupes turques et arabes, la durée de l'autorisation que vous a été donnée pour faire jouer ces deux troupes se trouvant bien entendu en toujours limitée aux mois de mars et avril 1886. Cette série de représentations sera partagée par moitié entre les deux troupes à engager." Letter dated 10 October 1885, to Santi Boni et Sochino from Barois, 4003-037912, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

⁴³ The text of this advertisement was first shared with the academic public by Sayyid °Alī Ismā'īl. Sayyid °Alī Ismā'īl, *Ta'rikh al-masrah al-miṣrī*, 142. Cited from *Al-Qāhira*, 16 February 1886.

for every night.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, his way was paved since in the previous year, in January 1885, al-Qabbānī's troupe⁴⁵ and in April 1885 Khayyāt's troupe⁴⁶ already performed in the Opera House and there was indeed an Arab public demand for theatre. Furthermore, the *Jama'iyya al-Tawfiq al-Khayrī* (Tawfiq Charitable Society) advertised one of the performances as for their benefit (scheduled to 15 March, *Hifz al-Widād*).⁴⁷ Perhaps because of this societal background, the Khedive Tawfiq and many Egyptian (even British) notables indeed assisted the performances (cf. Chapter 12). The Arab newspapers (especially *Al-Qāhira* and *Al-Ahrām*) were full of their success. Perhaps the most interesting praise arrived from the otherwise rather art-blind scientific monthly magazine, *Al-Muqataṭaf*, that published an article entitled “Arab acting” (*al-Tamthīl al-ʿarabī*) in April 1886.

The article explored the art of theatre “scientifically” presenting its history from the inherent “acting” nature of man via the ancient Greeks and Romans to briefly summing up the great French, English and German theatre-writers. The anonymous author⁴⁸ remarked that so far the Arabs were not active in theatre, and that the Khedival Opera House was “the first building which was built in Arabic countries for the dramatic art” (*awwal makān buniya li'l-tamthīl fi'l-bilād al-ʿarabiyya*) (which is not true, see Chapter 4), and connected its establishment to the Khedival family. Although the author mentions that that the “Orientals” instead of competing rather conform to the alien works, he still appreciates the usage of the noble (Arabic)

⁴⁴ A letter in Arabic, from Sulaymān Qardāhī to the Raʾīs Majlis al-Nazzār (President of the Council of Ministers), undated? Carton 2/1, Nizārat al-Ashghāl al-ʿUmūmiyya, CMW, DWQ. See the text of this letter in footnote X. Although in this letter Qardāhī mentions that he thought that he got for two months from the Government freely the Opera, we have no other data confirming this.

⁴⁵ *Al-Ahrām*: 10, 12, 20, 24, 31 January 1885.

⁴⁶ *Al-Ahrām*: 14, 17, 18, 20, 25 April 1885; 5, 7, 9 May 1885.

⁴⁷ *Al-Ahrām*, 5 March 1886, 2.

⁴⁸ Perhaps the editor, Fāris Nimr himself since he already presented himself in October 1884 at al-Qabbānī's theatre with a supporting speech. *Al-Ahrām*, 24 October 1884, 2-3.

language in the theatre and congratulated Qardāḥī hoping that the Khedive and the elite will help him.⁴⁹ This was a call for the association of the Khedivial family with Arab theatre.

This approach, the name of the “patriotic troupe,” the public echo, the governmental support affirm that Qardāḥī was able again to achieve a level of a public attention that neither al-Qabbānī, nor Khayyāṭ received previously. It seems, as Beckman reports and the Arab journals second, that his troupe was really considered to be “the” Egyptian troupe (although one must add that it was often called simply *jawq Qardāḥī Effendi*). But why was it considered more “patriotic,” more “Egyptian” than al-Qabbānī’s or Khayyāṭ’s?

The answer lies in the combination of the musical and the infrastructural embeddings of Qardāḥī. During this season, spring 1886, Qardāḥī – apart from Muḥyī al-Dīn Effendi’s pantomime – engaged a full Egyptian band (*takht*) of “the most famous masters in the art of music that one can find in the land of Egypt.” This fact was emphasized in the advertisement of the Tawfīq Charitable Society.⁵⁰ Later, the journal *Al-Ahrām* highlighted the Egyptianness of the actors (*jullu-hum min al-miṣriyyīn dhawī al-aṣwāt al-rakhīma* – “most of them are Egyptians with the most pleasant voices”).⁵¹ The scenes were intervened by the Egyptian *takht*, and the press celebrated especially the *‘ūd*-player, Aḥmad Effendi al-Laythī, and the (Egyptian) singers.⁵²

⁴⁹ *Al-Muqataṭaf*, 1 April 1886, 339-440.

⁵⁰ *Al-Mahrūsa*, 16 March 1886, 3. *Al-Ahrām*, 5 March 1886, 2.

⁵¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 10 March 1886, 2.

⁵² *Al-Ahrām*, 17 March, 1886, 2. We have no clues for the identities of these musicians and singers but it can be accepted that they were *regarded* as Egyptians by the public press.

Furthermore, as was mentioned, Qardāhī also performed for the benefit of the Tawfiq Charitable Society's school in Alexandria, too.⁵³ Several statesmen, like the Ottoman imperial representative in British occupied Cairo, Mukhtār Pasha al-Ghāzī, subscribed to the performances, and even demanded repetitions.⁵⁴ (Cf. Chapter 11) Thus Egyptian music, the involvement in public education and charity, and successful self-propaganda helped the Syrian Qardāhī's troupe to be accepted as Egyptian, even the gas was paid. Does it mean that artistically speaking he managed to find the taste of Egyptian noblemen, too?

In his 1885 spring proposal, Qardāhī listed 20 plays, five times more than what he possessed in 1882. This is a unique list because still not much information is available from these years about repertoires, although we have to keep in mind that it was written for the approval of the Ministry/Comité des Théâtres in French (here it is given keeping the original orthography!):

1. Télémaque, tragédie 2. Joseph vendu par ses frères, tragédie 3. Mariage d'Antar, comédi 4. Les Chevaliers Arabes, tragédie 5. Jephté, tragédie 6. Costhon, tragédie 7. Eustache, drame 8. Ce que sont les femmes, comédi 9. Auguste-César, trajedi 10. Mérope, trajedi 11. Pygmalion et Astarbé, trajedi 12. Zénobie, trajedi 13. Alexandre le Grand, drame 14. L'Amoureuse de Léla (Roman Arabe) 15. Phédre, trajedi 16. L'Avare, comedi 17. Geneviève, trajedi 18. Les deuse Dianes, comedi 19. Clémence des Mois, drame et plusieurs autres pièces sous composition dont entre eux: Cléopâtre, reine d'Egypte.⁵⁵

These 20 plays, mostly translations or adaptations of ancient classical topics, were not realized during the actual "season" in March-April 1886. Or at least, not with these titles.

⁵³ *Al-Ahrām*, 9 March 1886, 3.

⁵⁴ *Al-Ahrām*, 10 March 1886, 2.

⁵⁵ Letter dated 7 May 1885 to Rouchdy from Soliman Cardahi, 4003-037911, *Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-ʿUmūmiyya*, DWQ.

The Arab journals printed the following 10 titles to be performed: *Zanūbiyā* (Zénobie), *Yūsuf* (Joseph vendu par ses frères?), *Harūn al-Rashīd wa'l-Şayyād* (Harūn al-Rashīd and the Hunter), *Ḥifẓ al-Widād aw Asmā wa-Salīm* (Faithfulness, or, Asmā and Salīm),⁵⁶ *Işṭāk* (?), *Maḥāsin al-Şudaf* (Charms of Chances?), *ʿIffat al-Nafs* (The Virtue of the Soul), *Ghāʿilat al-Makr wa'l-ʿĀqibat al-Ghadr* (Disaster of Deception and the Result of Treason), *Al-Jāhil al-Muṭabbib/Al-Jāhil al-Muṭabbab* (The Ignorant Charlatan/The Mistreated Ignorant), *Dhāt al-Khadir* (The Numb Lady?),⁵⁷ *Gharām al-Mulūk aw Harūn al-Rashīd* (Passion of Kings or Harūn al-Rashīd [perhaps the same as *H. al-R. wa'l-Sayyād*?]).⁵⁸ These make up 10 or 11 plays, performed in 20 + 3 evenings, many times followed by a comic pantomime of Muḥyī al-Dīn Effendi. Seemingly, these plays, or at least their titles, suggest scenes from the 1001 Nights, love-stories, and Egyptian customs, thus already known topics were mixed with translations in a music theatre.⁵⁹ This is why perhaps Qardāḥī's success was enormous.

Based on this success, and perhaps *Al-Muqataṭaf*'s suggestions, the Khedive Tawfīq personally encouraged Qardāḥī to submit a request for the next year, 1887. On 24 March the Khedive was in the Opera and Qardāḥī's letter is dated (by Sayyid ʿAlī Ismāʿīl) to 25 March 1886 thus a strong connection might be supposed between the

⁵⁶ Cf. Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 151.

⁵⁷ This was surely an original piece, "it is a play consisting of selected Egyptian customs written by Saʿīd Effendi al-Bustānī." *Al-Ahrām*, 22 April 1886, 2.

⁵⁸ Based on the numbers of *Al-Ahrām* during March-April 1886.

⁵⁹ In the beginning of Qardāḥī's two month, a list was published in *Al-Ahrām* that was "approved by the Comission of the Opera": Tilimāk, Pygmalion et Astarbe, Mīrūbā (Merope) aw ʿAlāʿl-Bāghī tadūr al-Dawāʿir, Fīdr (Phedre) aw Nakth al-ʿUhūd, Esther, Hārūn al-Rashīd aw Gharām al-Mulūk, Zanūbiyā – Malika Tadmur, Al-Jāhil al-Muṭabbab/al-Muṭabbib, Muḥāsin al-Şudaf, Salīm wa-Asma aw Ḥifẓ al-Widād, Al-Muruʿa wa'l-Wafāʿ, Andrūmak (Andromaque), Dhāt al-Khadir, Işṭāk, ʿAntara al-ʿAbsī, Al-Bāriziyya Al-Ḥusnāʿ (La Belle Parisienne?). These 19 plays have some overlap with the finally advertised plays, although some titles remain enigmatic like *Ghāʿilat al-Makr wa'l-ʿĀqibat al-Ghadr*. *Al-Ahrām*, 10 March 1886, 2.

two events.⁶⁰ Indeed, a few weeks later the Arab newspapers announced victoriously that the Khedive ordered (!) that Qardāhī could get two months of concession for 1887.⁶¹

But at this moment, there were others who wanted the concession, too. Santi Boni and Soschino had already submitted their request for the season 1886-87 which was backed by Rushdī, the Minister of Public Works (even if this time the impresarios asked for a “petite subvention” but they also offered a group of ballet).⁶² Two other applicants were Frédéric Maucqet⁶³ and again Yūsuf Khayyāt (“Joseph Khayati”) – Maucqet was refused without explanation while Minister Rushdī noted that the Khedive “said at the end of the last season that if the opera will be given to Khayyāt he would never go there.”⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Sayyid °Alī Ismā°īl, *Ta°rikh al-masrah al-miṣrī*, 143-144. I have also seen the original letter, but in my notes there is no date, just like there is no date indicated in the photocopy what Sayyid °Alī Ismā°īl published. It is a letter in Arabic, from Sulaymān Qardāhī to the Ra°īs Majlis al-Nazzār (President of the Council of Ministers), Carton 2/1, Nizārat al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, CMW DWQ. The important part of the letter is the following: “When I was informed that the Council of Ministers decided to grant two months in the Opera House in favour of the Arab theatre, I strengthened my efforts to arrange a patriotic troupe composed of the cream of actors and actresses. I took care of it and did everything what one could possibly do [...] to I gain the satisfaction of the people with this group. But when I asked at the end of the European group’s activities for the already decided two months for the Arab group, I found for my bad luck that Mr. Boni preceded me taking the two months. But I persisted and contracted with him for 30 nights with the condition that I pay 300 francs directly to his hand for every night. Although I encountered in this matter with the hardest difficulties and troubles, I achieved to raise the troupe to a level where it was praised. Thus I arrived to knock on the noble door of your Domains and [trust in] the sublime nature of your Highness asking to grant me this beneficence [i.e. the exploitation] for two months the next year [season] for the Arab group in the Opera House that I could play during these two months thirty nights various plays and stories that are happy, sad, amusing, and humorous whose impact is good and whose benefit is universal. If we would be granted with this by our Most Respected Lord, let these two months be November and December this year or after the end of the European theatre, March and April of 1887.” It seems that although Qardāhī addressed this letter to the President, the real recipient is the Khedive Tawfiq.

⁶¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 24 April 1886, 2; *Al-Qāhira* and *Al-Zamān* in Sayyid °Alī Ismā°īl, *Ta°rikh al-masrah al-miṣrī*, 144, footnote 5.

⁶² French note to the Conseil des Ministres from the Ministre of Public Works, dated 24 February 1886, Carton 2/1, Nizārat al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, CMW, DWQ.

⁶³ French letter from Frédéric Maucqet to unknown recipient, dated 1886 March 11, Carton 2/1 Nizārat al-Ashghāl, CMW DWQ.

⁶⁴ Letter, undated (1886 winter?), from Rouchdy to President (of the Council of Ministers). Carton 2/1, Nizārat al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, CMW, DWQ.

On the top of these, the visiting Ottoman Armenians, Benglian's troupe also submitted a request later.⁶⁵ Out of these five applicants, two finally got the concession – the Italian impresarios, Santi Boni and Soschino, for the period between October 1886 and 1 or 7 March 1887 (with a contract from the Ministry),⁶⁶ and Qardāhī for March and April 1887 (likely without a written contract, or at least that was not located so far). The Khedivial Opera House was thus divided between European and Arab music theatres by the order of the Khedive, for the first time. This also means a conscious preference for entertainments in French and in Arabic, and the direct involvement of the Khedive to cultural affairs.

After the khedivial decision,⁶⁷ Qardāhī's troupe returned gloriously to Alexandria where they continued to perform in the Politeama during the autumn-winter of 1886.⁶⁸ This time they are called sometimes simply "The Patriotic Troupe" (*Al-Jawq al-Waṭani*) which points out to the fact that they were in some regards famous. Santi Boni and Soschino also started his autumn season in Cairo, while Khayyāt toured in the countryside.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Note from the General Secretary of the Conseil des Ministres to the Min. Trav. Pub., dated 17 June 1886, Carton 2/1, Nizārat al-Ashghāl al-ʿUmūmiyya, CMW, DWQ.

⁶⁶ Their contract was signed in 2 June 1886 by Rushdī and the Committee of Theatres. Carton 2/1, Nizārat al-Ashghāl al-ʿUmūmiyya, CMW, DWQ.

⁶⁷ *Al-Ahrām*, 24 April 1886, 2.

⁶⁸ *Al-Mahrūsa*, 29 October 1886, 4; and then scattered news. Cf. also *Al-Ahrām*, 23 October 1886, 2; 26 November 1886, 2; 9 December 1886, 2; 10 December 1886, 2; 23 December 1886, 2; 24 December 1886, 3.

⁶⁹ Yūsuf Khayyāt reformed a troupe jointly with his brother Anṭūn in August. *Al-Mahrūsa*, 1 September 1886, 2.

The Breakthrough of Qardāhī (1887)

The Italian impresarios went bankrupt in December 1886 (they disputed the gas) and the Egyptian Government had to ship their artists back to Europe.⁷⁰ The money thus spent was judged in the Arabic press as “regretful.” The newspapers demanded that the Government should help the Arab theatres just like the Europeans and “to help the first is better than to help the second,”⁷¹ but, of course, “it is not proper to the honour of Egypt to leave the actors in distress.”⁷²

The Government decided to close the Opera,⁷³ and at the same time, in late December 1886, a complete reorganization of the personnel took place. The Superintendancy was again established, naming Pasquale Clemente, an Italian musician as the superintendant while Larose retired.⁷⁴ Someone (perhaps Minister Rushdī) decided that Qardāhī’s promised two months should start sooner, in February 1887, what *Al-Ahrām* praised as wise decision,⁷⁵ although the troupe finally arrived to Cairo only at the end of February (as was scheduled previously).⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the Comité des Théâtres asked the Minister to maintain the temporary extra personal,

⁷⁰ Letter dated 28 December 1886 (from the Président du Conseil des Ministres to Rouchdy Pacha, Min. Trav. Pub.), Carton 2/1, Nizārat Al-Ashgāl al-‘Umūmiyya, CMW, DWQ. The events were reported in the *Al-Qāhira al-Hurra*, 14 December 1886, 2 (based on the *Bosphore Egyptien*). Previously at end of November Santi Boni asked if his name can be delated from the contract, *Al-Ahrām*, 26 November 1886, 2. Cf. also *Al-Ahrām*, 17 December 1886, 2. *Al-Ahrām*, 26 December 1886, 2.

⁷¹ *Al-Qāhira al-Hurra*, 26 December 1886, 3.

⁷² *Al-Qāhira al-Hurra*, 28 December 1886, 3.

⁷³ *Al-Qāhira al-Hurra*, 6 January 1887, 2.

⁷⁴ He is missing from all the lexcons and encyclopaedias I checked. Only figures in Andrea Sessa, *Il melodramma italiano: 1861-1900* (Firenze: Olschki, 2003), 121.

⁷⁵ *Al-Ahrām*, 18 January 1887, 2.

⁷⁶ *Al-Qāhira al-Hurra*, 27 February 1887, 2.

paid for Santi Boni and Soschino, to prepare the House for Qardāhī's concession,⁷⁷ so the gas was ready by 23 February 1887.⁷⁸

This company now featured the singer Shaykh Salāma Ḥijāzī who rejoined Qardāhī sometime the end of 1886.⁷⁹ With Ḥijāzī in the limelight, the troupe performed in the Politeama in Alexandria in January and February 1887, perhaps as preparations for their grand Cairo visit.⁸⁰ In this period they are variously called again "Qardāhī Effendi's troupe" or "The Patriotic Troupe." This year there is more information about the composition of the troupe than ever before: leading actors/singers included Salāma Ḥijāzī, Aḥmad Abu'l-°Adl, °Izzat [Abu'l-°Adl], Sulaymān Ḥaddād (he was also the "artistic director," *mudīr mushakhhisī*),⁸¹ actresses Katrin (perhaps Qardāhī's wife, Cathrine) and Hānūlā,⁸² while in April Iskandar Sayqilī joined them for two nights.

It seems that as their concession in Cairo came closer, the Egyptian authorities helped Qardāhī more and more. Already in Alexandria they were helped out; for instance, they performed °*Ayida* 9 February 1887 and got "important things" (*muhimmāt*) from Cairo (likely from the Opera House) and the Egyptian soldiers helped in the staging as well.⁸³ At this time, Qardāhī remained unchallenged, Khayyāt

⁷⁷ Letter dated 31 January 1887, from Comité des Théâtres (Ornstein) to Le Ministre des Travaux Publics. 4003-036990, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

⁷⁸ Letter dated, 23 February 1887, to Latruffe from Valli, 4003-036990, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

⁷⁹ *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 109; Sayyid °Ali Ismā°il, *Ta°rikh al-masraḥ al-miṣrī*, 146; Salāma Ḥijāzī previously played with Yūsuf Khayyāt's group.

⁸⁰ *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 109; Sayyid °Ali Ismā°il, *Ta°rikh al-masraḥ al-miṣrī*, 146; and the numbers of *Al-Ahrām* throughout January and February 1887.

⁸¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 19 April 1887, 2. Sulaymān Ḥaddād sold theatre tickets in the shop of Ḥabīb Gharzūzī previously in the summer of 1884 when °Abduh al-Ḥamūlī returned to the stage in the Zizinia Theatre. *Al-Ahrām*, 28 July 1884, 3. In a later letter of 1894, Ḥaddād remembers that he started theatre before 17 years, which makes likely that he was the part of the original troupe of al-Naqqāsh, coming from Beirut in 1876. Letter dated dated 12 December 1894, from Haddad to the Président (du Conseil des Ministres), Carton 2/1, Nizārat Al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, CMW, DWQ.

⁸² *Al-Ahrām*, 2 April 1887, 2.

⁸³ *Al-Ahrām*, 10 January 1887, 3.

toured in the countryside (Zaqāziq, Maṣṣūra, Ṭanṭā),⁸⁴ Santi Boni was already out of the country, al-Qabbāni vanished from Egypt.

From March to May 1887 they had a successful theatrical season in the Opera House in Cairo, again entertaining the Khedive Tawfīq and other Egyptian dignitaries in the audience.⁸⁵ The press continued naming them “The Patriotic Troupe” (*Al-Jawq al-Waṭanī*),⁸⁶ and they again performed charity-plays, for instance, for the benefit of the Maronite Charitable Society,⁸⁷ or for the Egyptian Brotherly Union (*Al-Ittiḥād al-Akhawī al-Miṣriyya*).⁸⁸ During this term other charity balls were organised in the Opera House also, once even with the rival singer °Abduh al-Ḥamūlī who sang for the benefit of Jewish Free Schools (*Ecoles Gratuites Israélites du Caire*).⁸⁹ But Qardāḥī, as usual, was well-placed in the network of Arab patriotic and educational societies (cf. Chapter 13).

The 1887 repertoire largely consisted of the same works as in 1886 (*Tilīmāk*, °*Antara*, *Ḥifẓ al-Widād*, *Zanūbiyā*, etc) with some notable exceptions. The most important is °*Āyida*, the Arabic translation of Verdi’s *Aida*, perhaps the text of Salīm Naqqāsh (1875). This is the first evidence that the *Aida* was played in Arabic in the Opera House, although on a much smaller scale, al-Qabbānī already performed it in Alexandria in 1884. As the fate of *Aida* and the khedivial family was bound, the

⁸⁴ *Al-Ahrām*, 28 February 1887, 3.

⁸⁵ *Al-Ahrām*, 3 March 1887, 2. Cf. *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 110 and Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il, *Ta’rīkh al-masrah al-miṣrī*, 146.

⁸⁶ The company is named as such also in *Al-Qāhira al-Ḥurra*, 12 March 1887, 3.

⁸⁷ *Al-Ahrām*, 9 March 1887, 2.

⁸⁸ *Al-Qāhira al-Ḥurra*, 13 April 1887, 2.

⁸⁹ Note dated 10 Mars 1887 from Min. Trav. Publ. to the Président, Carton 2/1, Nizārat Al-Ashgāl al-°Umūmiyya, CMW, DWQ. Cf. *Al-Ahrām*, 24 March 1887, 2. *Al-Qāhira al-Ḥurra*, 21 March 1887, 3. Cf. Also information about permissions to Shaykh Dasūqī Badr (director of the Alexandrian school of *Al-Najāḥ al-Tawfīqiyya*), and to Les Sociétés de Bienfaisance Copte et Grecque Catholique, La Société Maronite de Bienfaisance, Ecoles Gratuites Israelites du Caire. Letters dated 6, 14, 17 March 1887, to Tanzim from Chef du Service Administratif Labarough, 4003-036990, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

Khedive Tawfīq was present several times during the performances of this musical play.

Throughout March and April 1887, the Arab press was full of Qardāhī's and especially Ḥijāzī's praise (see more in Part IV). Even °Abduh al-Ḥamūlī introduced one of their last evenings in the Opera House for the request of one of the actors (who got the receipts as a benefit).⁹⁰ Their last performance in the capital was on 6 May.⁹¹ *Al-Ahrām* was bursting with praise, and thanked the Khedive, the audience, the troupe, and especially Qardāhī for their common project and the advance of Arab theatre.⁹²

Their achievement was so obvious that Rushdī Pasha, the Minister of Public Works, suggested the Council of Ministers to offer a financial award. Only 400 EP from the budget of the theatres remained (which was enough basically for the lighting), so he wanted to give at least this sum to Qardāhī.⁹³ Contrary to Sayyid °Alī Ismā'īl's statement that the Council refused Rushdī's plan,⁹⁴ it is clearly announced in *Al-Ahrām* that "it was decided that 400 EP will be given to him [Qardāhī] from the subsidy of the theatres."⁹⁵ It is mentioned several times that the Khedive Tawfīq personally supported the troupe. He even received Qardāhī at a

⁹⁰ *Al-Ahrām*, 25 April 1887, 2.

⁹¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 7 May 1887, 3. Thus Sayyid °Alī Ismā'īl, *Ta'rikh al-masrah al-miṣrī*, 148, mistakenly states that it was on the 27 April 1887. It is true that that evening was intended as such but there was a prolongation, for instance *Al-Qāhira al-Ḥurra*, 2 May 1887, 4.

⁹² *Al-Ahrām*, 7 May 1887, 3.

⁹³ Letter dated 21 April 1887 from Min. Trav. Publ. to the Président, Carton 2/1, Nizārat al-Ashgāl al-°Umūmiyya, CMW, DWQ. Its Arabic translation is published in Sayyid °Alī Ismā'īl, *Ta'rikh al-masrah al-miṣrī*, 147-148.

⁹⁴ Sayyid °Alī Ismā'īl, *Ta'rikh al-masrah al-miṣrī*, 148, he bases his argument on the fact that the last performances were for the benefit of some of the actors and implicitly believes that the reason for these self-beneficiary plays is that Qardāhī could not pay the troupe. It is not confirmed by any document or public news. In fact, beneficiary evenings were quite common that time.

⁹⁵ *Al-Ahrām*, 6 May 1887, 2. Repetead *Al-Ahrām*, 7 May 1887, 3.

private audience,⁹⁶ thus there should be no doubt that Qardāhī got the money. This donation means that Qardāhī was on the threshold to be institutionalized into the Egyptian state body with the support of the Khedive – that also indicates the ruling family’s increased Egyptianization as I introduced in Chapter 1.

The troupe went to Asyūṭ and then returned to Alexandria where they played again with the support of the khedival family using the army in staging °*Ayida* in the Zizinia in July 1887,⁹⁷ and in August in the Politeama.⁹⁸ I believe that it is exactly this time when the Khedivial family finally took the character of being an Egyptian dynasty and recognized that they must support Arabic cultural events in order to secure loyalty.

Tour in Syria (1887-1888)

Despite all his success, or exactly because of it, Qardāhī left Egypt during the autumn of 1887 and toured Syria.⁹⁹ It is unclear if this tour meant the dissolution of his glorious Egyptian group or if he brought some actors to Syria (perhaps only the Syrians?).¹⁰⁰ Certainly, it is Khayyāṭ’s troupe, playing in Manṣūra during the autumn of 1887, that is called now the “Arab Patriotic Troupe” (*Jawq °Arabī Waṭanī*).¹⁰¹ During the spring of 1888, Benglian’s Ottoman Armenian troupe played in Alexandria and in Cairo (see below). Also, Salāma Ḥijāzī performed in Alexandria during the spring of 1888 so at least he certainly did not follow Qardāhī to Syria.

⁹⁶ *Al-Ahrām*, 7 May 1887, 3.

⁹⁷ *Al-Ahrām*, 21 and 22 July 1887, 3.

⁹⁸ *Al-Ahrām*, 3 August 1887, 3.

⁹⁹ It is called by Najm a *riḥla tamthīliyya* (“a theatrical travel”), *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 110. Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il mistakenly believes that their absence is a proof of the final failure. Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il, *Ta°rikh al-masraḥ al-miṣrī*, 148.

¹⁰⁰ Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il declares that when they return in late 1888, it is the same troupe. Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il, *Ta°rikh al-masraḥ al-miṣrī*, 148.

¹⁰¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 25 November 1887, 3.

Qardāhī and his troupe was absent for around 9 months, then he (they?) returned to Alexandria sometime in April 1888 and established (?) again a new troupe.¹⁰²

The Third Patriotic Troupe: Hijāzī and Qardāhī Again Together (1888-1889)

The return of Qardāhī followed the now familiar pattern: after a period in Alexandria, he moved to Cairo. Qardāhī's troupe this time played in November 1888¹⁰³ in the Zizinia because the Politeama was too small for the audience.¹⁰⁴ Now the director involved another singer/actress, this time Laylā.¹⁰⁵ *Al-Ahrām* mentions them as “Egyptian Patriotic Troupe” (*Al-Jawq al-Waṭanī al-Miṣrī*) – perhaps in contrast to Khayyāṭ's “Arab Patriotic Troupe.” This time perhaps they had less success,¹⁰⁶ although *Al-Ahrām* praised them. The troupe prepared to leave for Ṭanṭā in mid-December 1888, perhaps because now Sarah Bernhardt arrived and performed in the Zizinia.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile Qardāhī also had a chance to perform a last °*Āyida* here,¹⁰⁸ because Bernhardt gave some guest plays in the Cairo Opera House.

In January 1889 Sarah Bernhardt again charmed the Alexandrians.¹⁰⁹ In February, parallel to °Abduh al-Ḥamūlī, Qardāhī submitted a request for the concession of the Cairo Opera House for 20 nights with his Patriotic Troupe and their

¹⁰² *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 110.

¹⁰³ *Al-Ahrām*, 8 November, 1888, 3; *Al-Qāhira al-Ḥurra*, 16 November 1888, 2.

¹⁰⁴ *Al-Ahrām*, 16 November, 1888, 3.

¹⁰⁵ *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 110.

¹⁰⁶ Sayyid °Alī Ismā'īl, *Ta'riḫ al-masraḥ al-miṣrī*, 148 quotes the *Al-Qāhira (al-Ḥurra)*, 19 November 1888. In my notes, the *Al-Qāhira al-Ḥurra* published this article on 16 November 1888, 2, and the journal itself republished this critique from *Al-Ittiḥād al-Miṣriyya*.

¹⁰⁷ For instance, *Al-Ahrām*, 22 December 1888, 2.

¹⁰⁸ *Al-Ahrām*, 26 December 1888, 3. Perhaps because on the 26th Sarah Bernhardt played in the Cairo Opera House, *Al-Ahrām*, 27 December 1888, 2-3.

¹⁰⁹ *Al-Ahrām*, 4-5 January 1889. She was on an Ottoman tour in “Turkey and Egypt”. Cf. Carol Ockman and Kenneth E. Silver, *Sarah Bernhardt – The Art of High Drama* (New York: The Jewish Museum, Yale University Press, 2005), 174. She returned to Paris 1 March 1889, cf. Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, *The Divine Sarah* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1991). She will come back to Cairo in 1891 and 1908.

request, as usual, was forwarded to the Comité des Théâtres (*Lajnat al-Tiyātrāt*).¹¹⁰ In 28 February with Salāma Ḥijāzī again, Qardāḥī's troupe played a charity performance for the Roman Catholic Society's benefit and then the troupe was granted its usual season in the Opera in March 1889,¹¹¹ with utmost success.

°Abduh al-Ḥamūlī also got his nights in the Opera House,¹¹² so the two Arab entertainment projects shared the Cairo Opera House. Qardāḥī with Salāma Ḥijāzī played before packed houses.¹¹³ The star singer Laylā, who sang *after* the actual play (just like °Abduh al-Ḥamūlī's practice was earlier with al-Qabbānī), contributed to their success. Every night they also praised the Khedive and the Sultan.¹¹⁴ In the spring of 1889 Qardāḥī's popularity rose to unprecedented heights as the journal *Al-Ahrām* noted: "the audience was much more numerous than in the preceding nights. People who stood on foot surrounded the already packed sitting places. Never had such a thing happened to any Arab or foreign troupe in Cairo!"¹¹⁵ The attendance – as the greetings for the Sultan and Khedive expressed – meant also the expression of political loyalty and cultural resistance against British occupation.

In the beginning of April 1889, Salāma Ḥijāzī left Qardāḥī to Ṭanṭā so the company was left without a leading male star.¹¹⁶ Sayyid °Alī Ismā'īl asserts that Qardāḥī's troupe played in August 1889 in the capital and then, "because of the disappointment" (*fashl*), they ceased their activity for 3 years "or at least they travelled to other countries."¹¹⁷ But Najm clearly states that during the autumn of

¹¹⁰ *Al-Ahrām*, 8 February 1889, 2.

¹¹¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 20 and 21 February 1889, 2.

¹¹² *Al-Ahrām*, 4 March 1889, 2-3.

¹¹³ *Al-Ahrām*, 7 March 1889, 3.

¹¹⁴ For instance, *Al-Ahrām*, 23 March 1889, 2-3.

¹¹⁵ *Al-Ahrām*, 18 March 1889, 2.

¹¹⁶ *Al-Ahrām*, 2 April 1889, 3.

¹¹⁷ Sayyid °Alī Ismā'īl, *Ta'rīkh al-masrah al-miṣrī*, 148.

1889 Qardāhī went to Paris to the World Exhibition and returned only in November 1891 to Egypt.¹¹⁸

Qardāhī in Paris (autumn 1889) – A Fatal Mistake

There is no basis not to accept that Qardāhī's troupe was unprecedentedly successful in the spring of 1889. This is exactly the reason Qardāhī was invited to Paris for the World Exhibition of 1889. Although the archives, the previous theatre histories, and the Arab journals are silent, and even a book about music at 1889 Paris World Exhibition omits him,¹¹⁹ still we can find some data about Qardāhī's activity in Paris.

An Englishman, Seymour Wade, who was the owner of Le Théâtre International, a kind of showcase theatre at the Exhibition, contacted him during the summer 1889 in Cairo. Qardāhī seemingly collected a special troupe for this Parisian tour and they arrived to Paris on 24 August and started their performances 31 August 1889. Qardāhī's name was written (similarly to his previous French letters) as Soliman Cardahi in the French advertisements.

Warde used his glorious past to advertise him as associated with the Khedive and the Cairo Opera House.¹²⁰ The troupe, however, was *not* his theatre troupe or only partly, because it was advertised as “Grand Troupe de Danseuses, Chanteuses, Lutteurs, et Escrimeurs dirigée par M. Soliman Cardahi, directeur du Grand Opéra Khédivial du Caire,” and the advertisements claimed the Khedive gave them permission to perform in Paris.

¹¹⁸ Najm, *al-Masrahiyya*, 110.

¹¹⁹ Annegret Fauser, *Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris World's Fair* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005).

¹²⁰ *Le Figaro*, 24 August 1889, *Le Ménestrel*, 1 September 1889, 8.

But the Khedive Tawfīq was informed. Santerres des Boves Bey, the editor of the Egyptian *Journal Officiel* published an open letter in *Le Figaro* denying that Qardāḥī would be the Director of the Opera House and that he performs with the blessing of the Khedive. Such commercial groups were not appropriate for the Khedive's dignity, wrote Boves Bey.¹²¹ This meant that after approximately 10 days of performing in Paris, Qardāḥī's Egyptian background, that he carefully established in the last 7 years, was broken.

His troupe, nonetheless, played indeed an Orientalized show. The most informed critic, Arthur Pougin, recognized a contrast with the Théâtre Annamite (the Vietnamese theatre) noting that while the Vietnamese theatre “was presented to us as a reflection on the habits, the civilization, the customs, and the intellectual tendencies” Qardāḥī's was “a spectacle of pure curiosity.” It remains a question if this Orientalized self-presentation was ordered by Warde or was staged by Qardāḥī consciously. His singers (Zeynab, Labība, Hanım Effendi!) and danseurs (Amīna, Laṭīfa, Farīda, etc) with the musicians (°Alī °Uthmān, Muḥammad, Salīm Maḥmūd) give the impression that this troupe has almost nothing in common with his Egyptian Patriotic Troupe. They did not offer any plays, only “pictures” and “scenes,” although surely in some “tableaux” Qardāḥī staged parts of the theatricals.¹²²

When Qardāḥī's troupe arrived in August, many other Egyptian spectacles had already been organized in the Rue du Caire or other orientalized exhibition spaces with belly-dancers, singers, or other persons since May. The Exhibition did not last long since it was closed 6 November 1889, although Qardāḥī and his troupe vanished

¹²¹ *Le Figaro*, 14 September 1889, 2.

¹²² Arthur Pougin, *Le théâtre à l'Exposition universelle de 1889: notes et descriptions, histoire et souvenirs* (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1890), 100-103. Like in “Tableau 1: Les Arabes se vengent du grand héros Antare; Tableau 2: La chanson d'amour par Zénabe et sa compagnie.” here: 101.

from the newspapers after September, possibly because the reaction of the Khedive to Warde's advertisement which positioned the troupe, but more Qardāḥī himself, in a very uncomfortable situation.

Qardāḥī lost the Khedive's benevolent intentions, his support, and with this also the possibility for the concession of the Opera House. He thus sued Warde for false advertisement and dishonouring him, for 150.000 francs indemnity, but the French court found that Warde advertised Qardāḥī's theatre based on the information that Qardāḥī had supplied. Thus, the case was lost and Qardāḥī even had to pay the expenses of the court process.¹²³ This might mean that Qardāḥī remained in Paris in 1890 still and perhaps had to work to repay the debts.

Nonetheless, it was a fatal event because Qardāḥī would never regain the favour of the Khedive Tawfīq, nor would he play ever again in the Cairo Opera House.

Touring the Arab Mediterranean (1892-1909)

Qardāḥī returned to Egypt, according to Najm, in November 1891. He started to organize a troupe again, but as he had lost the khedivial favours, al-Qabbānī got most of the better possibilities. Also, the superintendancy at the Opera House no longer left March and April free, the usual "seasons" of Arab music theatre in the Opera House. Perhaps because of this exclusion, Qardāḥī started to perform again during the spring of 1892 in the Egyptian countryside, in Maṣṣūra and Ṭaṭṭa.¹²⁴ During the summer of 1893 he performed in the Azbakiyya Garden, with success,¹²⁵ then toured between Alexandria and Cairo.

¹²³ *Journal des Débats Politiques et Littéraires*, 5 Décembre 1890, 4.

¹²⁴ Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il, *Ta°rīkh al-masrah al-miṣrī*, 149.

¹²⁵ Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il, *Ta°rīkh al-masrah al-miṣrī*, 149.

Although the period under investigation ends here, it is worth mentioning that he continued to tour mostly the Egyptian countryside (Ṭanṭā, Maṣṣūra, Al-Maḥalla al-Kubrā), and in 1894 he built his own theatre with municipal backing in Alexandria, the “Théâtre Cardahi” at the seaside.¹²⁶ He went back to Syria the same year,¹²⁷ and at the end of that year, after returning to Egypt, he was again allied with another famous singer, this time Ḥasan al-Miṣrī.¹²⁸ In 1895 Qardāḥī toured Egypt and was invited by the Khedive °Abbās Ḥilmī for the wedding party of one of his sisters.¹²⁹ After these celebrations, he toured around Egypt in the countryside for many years (in 1899 established with Sulaymān Ḥaddād a new troupe: *Al-Jawq al-Muntakhab*, “The Selected Troupe”), perhaps played again in Paris in 1900, and finally in 1908 his last enterprise was a tour in North-Africa.

It is said that his tour in North Africa was intended as a first stage of an international tour in Europe and Latin-America.¹³⁰ But he died in Tunis in the beginning of May 1909.¹³¹ The Tunisians regard him as the father of the Arab theatre in Tunis.¹³²

Qardāḥī’s activity in the 1880s in Cairo can be regarded as an almost successful attempt to institutionalize theatre in Arabic because his activity coincided

¹²⁶ *Annuaire des Artistes de l’Enseignement Dramatique et Musical et des Sociétés Orphéoniques de France et de l’Etranger* (Paris: Montorier, 1895), 782.

¹²⁷ Najm, *al-Masraḥiyya*, 111

¹²⁸ Najm, *al-Masraḥiyya*, 111.

¹²⁹ Najm, *al-Masraḥiyya*, 111.

¹³⁰ Hamadi Ben Halima, *Un demi-siècle de Theatre Arabe en Tunisie*, 39, footnote 4, without source.

¹³¹ Halima, *Un demi-siècle*, 41-44. Charfeddine published the necrologe in *Deux siècles de théâtre en Tunisie*. Qardāḥī arrived in Tunisia in November 1908, following another Egyptian theatre group, the group of °Abd al-Qādir al-Miṣrī, Halima, *Un demi-siècle*, 35. See Halima’s footnotes about the confusion of his name. Charfeddine, *Deux siècles de théâtre en Tunisie*, 242-244. Some Tunisian journals commented his arrival as if the troupe would have been recommended to Bey of Tunis by the Khedive, what other Egyptian journals refused. Halima, *Un demi-siècle*, 40, footnote 2. In January-February 1909 he played in the Theatre Rossini in Tunis but also toured in Bizerte and Kairouan. Qardāḥī was installed in Tunis finally, preparing for a tour in Algeria. He was decorated by the Bey of Tunis. Najm, *al-Masraḥiyya*, 112. This info is repeated by Halima but without reference. Halima, *Un demi-siècle*, 44.

¹³² Halima, *Un demi-siècle*, 44, Charfeddine, *Deux siècles de théâtre en Tunisie*, 239.

with the quest of the Khedive Tawfîq to regain his legitimacy in the eyes of his Egyptian subjects vis-à-vis the British and vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire. However, his fatal mistake was that by accepting a commercial offer, he did not – perhaps unintentionally – appear to respect the “dignity” of the Khedive, that was so well preserved by Draneht Bey back in the 1870s.

6.2 Séropé Benglian¹³³/Séropé Benlian¹³⁴/Serovpe Bengliyan¹³⁵ (1835-1900)

In contrast, the Istanbulite Séropé Benglian's theatre was depoliticized as much as theatre could be depoliticized in those years. This Ottoman Armenian actor/singer/impresario participated in almost all the important Ottoman Armenian theatre-groups in the 1860s and 70s.¹³⁶ As perhaps he is the most mobile person in my sample, I could not fully explore his life and activity between different locations (Istanbul, Edirne, Adana, Izmir, Alexandria, Cairo, Greek cities, etc), so I restrict this reconstruction on his activity in and between Cairo and Istanbul.

Benglian's Early Years

Benglian was born in 1835 in Pera/Beyoğlu in a poor family, as an Ottoman subject.¹³⁷ He perhaps participated in Armenian theatricals in Hasköy around 1858 when his name is mentioned in a theatre group around Sırap Hekimyan who studied acting in Italy and perhaps taught his young fellows as well.¹³⁸ In 1863 Benglian

¹³³ This is how his name is written in a contract for the concession of the Cairo Opera House, dated 3 March 1888, between “Entre le Gouvernement Egyptien, représenté par S. E. Abdel Rahman Rouchdy Pacha, Ministre des Travaux Publics, L'une part; Et M. M. Séropé Benglian et Eléazar Mélikian, sujets Ottomans, élisant domicile au besoin au Gouvernement du Caire.” But his signature on the contract, that was signed in his name by Melekian, is Benlian. 4003-036990, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-ʿUmūmiyya, DWQ. As his name in 1887 in the French press is also written as Benglian, I suspect that he accepted that his name is written as “Benglian” in the Latin alphabet (as also in *La Turquie*, 22 September 1887, 2). Thus I use “Séropé Benglian.”

¹³⁴ Letter dated 7 March 1888, from Ministry to Direction Gle du Tanzim, 4003-036990, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-ʿUmūmiyya, DWQ.

¹³⁵ This is how Metin And uses his name in *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 238-243.

¹³⁶ Metin And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 238-243.

¹³⁷ The name of Benglian was in Istanbul well-known because there was a Benglian (Benliyan) “Gasino” – a night club - in the 1860s in Pera, too. MVL. 486/66, BOA. The name “Benklian” figures in Istanbul as a painter, a broker, a tapestry-maker, but also as “Benglian” we find an agent of money exchange, all in AO, 1891. Furthermore, later, in the 1910s, another Benglian/Benliyan (taking his name?) lead another theatre troupe.

¹³⁸ And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 154. The *Journal de Constantinople* provides data about Armenian theatricals in Ortaköy, 13 February 1858; 4, 24 February 1858, 4. In the last article, however, an enthusiastic Ottoman Armenian is cited (anonymously) who spent time in Paris.

migrated to Izmir to join to the newly formed Vaspurgan Theatre Troupe.¹³⁹ After some years, he migrated back to Istanbul, where a new troupe started to play in different playhouses. This troupe later was called the “Ottoman Theatre” (*Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*) whose director Güllü Agop in 1870 got the monopoly of performing in Ottoman Turkish in Istanbul. It is this time when Benglian “developed a great passion for music.”¹⁴⁰

As I already alluded to, at the beginning of the 1870s in Istanbul the genre of operetta became the favourite entertainment form, performed in French and Ottoman Turkish, one of the most successful first evenings of the Ottoman Theatre being on 17 January 1872 in the French Theatre of the Palais de Cristal.¹⁴¹ This prompted Manasse (returning from Paris) and others to write/translate light musical pieces (also in French). As will be shown, an Ottoman Armenian musician/composer, Dikran Tchouhadjian, also composed operettas in Ottoman Turkish for Güllü Agop and likely he also participated in training the singers, possibly among them Benglian (cf. Chapter 8).

In 1872/73, when Tchouhadjian and Güllü Agop cooperated, Benglian was the member of the Ottoman Theatre, playing “bad” roles, *hagaragot*.¹⁴² Around 1873, Tchouhadjian established his own troupe, the Ottoman Opera (see Chapter X) taking many singers/actors from the Ottoman Theatre of Güllü Agop. The position of Benglian is not known in this rivalry, but we have information that he could not

¹³⁹ And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 157.

¹⁴⁰ The early life of Benglian is based also on Şarasan, *Türkiye ermenileri sahnesi ve çalı anları*, 58-67; And’s *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 238.

¹⁴¹ “The house was extremely well attended, the Ottoman element mustering in unusual numbers. The evening’s entertainment was wound up by a brisk little operetta [*Télémaque* – A.M.] and a spritied ballet.” *Levant Herald – Daily Bulletin*, 18 January 1872, 2 [942].

¹⁴² And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 128.

pronounce properly the Ottoman Turkish words (most probably, high *Osmanlı*),¹⁴³ and in 1875 he was very successful in the Ottoman Turkish version of the *Giroflé-Girofla*.¹⁴⁴ In this year, he is said to be responsible for the songs in the Ottoman Theatre.¹⁴⁵

The Ottoman Opera Troupe Under Benglian (1876-1880s?)

Benglian likely performed both with the Ottoman Theatre and the Ottoman Opera. When Tchouhadjian faced a financial disaster in 1876 (Melekian, his financier, left), Benglian took over the leadership of the Ottoman Opera troupe and Tchouhadjian remained only the music director.¹⁴⁶ Benglian added to the repertoire new musicals, like Offenbach's and Lecocq's translated operettas (perhaps taken from the repertoire of Güllü Agop).¹⁴⁷

With this troupe he traveled perhaps between Istanbul, Edirne, Adana in the period of 1877-1880. Perhaps this company with the singers, Mlle Karakash, Mlle Siranush, Mlle Astrik, Mlle Zahel, Fasuliyacan, Gurehian, and "Berlian" (?) presented *Giroflé-Girofla* to the "elite de la société de Pera" in the Croissant garden, in September 1877.¹⁴⁸ They also performed at a "soirée nationale" organized for the invalid Ottoman soldiers at the same garden, singing a "hymne nationale" from the old play of Midhat, *Vatan*, orchestrated by Tchouhadjian.¹⁴⁹ If we rightly identify this troupe, then there is further information that they played actually all summer in the

¹⁴³ And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 123-124, with reference to *Osmanlı*, 21 October 1293, 84.

¹⁴⁴ *Levant Herald*, 3 November 1875, 385.

¹⁴⁵ And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 172.

¹⁴⁶ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 50.

¹⁴⁷ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 50.

¹⁴⁸ *La Turquie*, 5 September 1877, 1.

¹⁴⁹ *La Turquie*, 18 September 1877, 1; 2 October 1877, 1 and 3; 4 October 1877, 1.

Croissant, and in the autumn 1877 they moved to the “ancien” French Theatre, that is, the Palais de Cristal.¹⁵⁰

The French press of Istanbul once called his company “Compagnie d’opéra turque.”¹⁵¹ Benglian remained for at least 12 years a director/impresario. In French, he fixed the troupe’s name in the beginning of the 1880s as “Compagnie des Operettes turques.”¹⁵² Tahmizian narrates that Tchouhadjian parted from the troupe in 1879, and after this date, Benglian between every tour brought the troupe back to Istanbul, so that the composer could hold rehearsals with the singers in this headquarter.¹⁵³ This “system” seems to be an exaggeration although there is no proof to exclude this possibility in this troupe which very much has the atmosphere of a conscious entertainment enterprise.

Metin And, based on the advertisements, names the singers-actors in this troupe:

Siranuş (I. singer), K. irinyan (II. voice), V. Karakaşyan (I. soubrette), Neomzar (? II. soubrette), Y. Karakaşyan (light?), Agavni Zabel (light?), Öjeni (Eugénie? II. soubrette), Yervant Benğliyan (I. tenor), Mardiros Mınakyan (I. bariton), Serovpe Benğliyan (I. bass), Onnik Güreryan (II. bariton), Mişel Benğliyan (II. bass), David Triyans (I. comic), Dikran Matosyan (II. comic), Mişel Berberyan (old lover), A. Yıldızçıyan (young lover) (plus 12 women, 12 men, 18 musicians).¹⁵⁴

This troupe numbered thus approximately 60 persons who needed great attention and financial care. They toured the Greek cities (Selanik, Limnos, Samos, etc) between

¹⁵⁰ *La Turquie*, 18 December 1877, 1.

¹⁵¹ *La Turquie*, 13 et 14 October 1880, 1.

¹⁵² Şarasan’s great Armenian theatre history (a basic reference for Metin And and others), apart from many smaller mistakes, calls this “Benglian Theatre” but under such name it was never mentioned. Şarasan’s book was available for me in its Turkish translation, *Türkiye ermenileri sahnesi ve çalışanları*, 25-26.

¹⁵³ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 52-53.

¹⁵⁴ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 240. Cf. And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 129. And, either transcribing the Ottoman Turkish or the Armenian, gives the names according to modern Turkish orthography. This I preserved because the originals are unavailable. However, all the names are presumably Armenian names. Şarasan also provides almost the same list, *Türkiye ermenileri sahnesi ve çalışanları*, 25.

1880 and 1882, and then the troupe used Izmir perhaps as their base because they continued to tour the islands between 1882-1884.¹⁵⁵ In 1884 they returned to Istanbul. The supposed number of the staff, musicians, and actors of this troupe is remarkable, compared to the 1882 Arab Opera troupe of Qardāhī, that was surely smaller. (Could Qardāhī get any inspiration in 1881/82 winter from the example of the Ottoman Operetta troupe?)

Their repertoire consisted of the operettas written by Tchouhadjian in the 1870s (*Arif*, *Köse Kahya*, *Leblebici*) and of translated (mostly from French) operettas (perhaps those translated for Güllü Agop, certainly *Giroflé-Girofla*, *Madame Angot*). It is likely that they could perform in French, too. Their main success was the operetta *Leblebici Horhor Ağa* and it is via their tours that this operetta became widely known within the lands of the late Ottoman Empire. However, during the winter of 1884, the drama *Cerkez Özdenleri* and the operetta of *Çengi* by Ahmed Midhat are banned in Istanbul (cf. Chapter 11) after the performances of the Ottoman Theatre troupe. In one of the performances a certain “Benlian Effendi” is celebrated (perhaps another Benglian or he himself also performed with other troupes).¹⁵⁶ However, soon the Gedikpaşa Theatre would be demolished.

Benglian in Egypt (1885)

This is the context when in 1885 they set off to tour Egypt. It is not unlikely that they previously visited Alexandria. One of the reasons of their visit was perhaps that in 1884 Nubar Pasha (of Armenian origins) became the Prime Minister and this might have given a strong impetus among Armenians to try their luck in Egypt although, in

¹⁵⁵ Cf. the Greek articles from 1883 in *Şarasan Türkiye ermenileri sahnesi ve çalışanları*, 65-67. And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 240-242.

¹⁵⁶ *Osmanlı*, 8 November 1884, 1.

fact, Armenians have resided in Egypt for centuries (and even Nubar was already one time the Prime Minister). However, since probably Enrico Santini, the renter of the Azbakiyya Garden Theatre and Restaurant, engaged Benglian's company, the exact financial and legal background of their stay remains unknown.

On 25 February 1885, the daily *Al-Ahrām* informed its public that a “troupe of Turkish plays” intends to present a play each Friday in the Khedivial Opera House.¹⁵⁷ Previously, another daily, *Al-Maḥrūsa* already advertised a theatre group that “presents plays in Turkish.”¹⁵⁸ At the same time, *Le Bosphore Egyptien* praised a “troupe arménienne d’opérettes.”¹⁵⁹ While Benglian and his company stayed in Egypt the Arabic press used different labels to describe them: Armenian, Turkish or Ottoman. In contrast, the Egyptian non-Arabic press, like the *Le Bosphore Egyptien* from the beginning understood them as an Armenian company. The period of their *séjour* was four months (January-May, 1885).

The *Bosphore* gave a precious description of the first evening of “la troupe d’opérette Arménienne” of “Monsieur Banklian” in the Ezbekiyya (Garden) Theatre, 2 February 1885. It was an absolutely full house and among the audience there were the ladies of the Cairo Armenian society, on their top Madame Nubar (the wife of Nubar Pasha, that time Prime Minister) with members of the khedival family. Benglian staged *Leblebici Horhor Ağa* as the opening performance in Ottoman Turkish what the critic regretfully did not understand but none the less correctly described the composer “Tchouadjian” who had composed the music of the play.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ *Al-Ahrām*, 25 February 1885, 3.

¹⁵⁸ *Al-Maḥrūsa*, 13 February 1885, 4.

¹⁵⁹ *Le Bosphore Egyptien*, 27 February 1885, 3.

¹⁶⁰ *Le Bosphore Egyptien*, 3 February 1885, 3.

The same day *Al-Ahrām* also informed its readers about “the Armenian group which arrived recently from Europe” (*al-jawq al-armanī alladhī ḥaḍara ḥadīthān min Urubā*, sic!).¹⁶¹ It is not clear why the troupe was declared as arriving from Europe – probably they came from Greece (others say they came directly from Istanbul).¹⁶² The weekly *Al-Maḥrūsa* in an article entitled “Oriental Theatres” (*Al-marāsiḥ al-sharqīya*) advertised the group that “performs in Turkish” and emphasized that “it was unthinkable previously that the Eastern people (*al-sharqīyūn*) would achieve success in theatrical arts” thus urging the inhabitants of Cairo to see the performances.¹⁶³ The troupe of Benglian have reinforced the importance of theatre for Arab journalists who saw it as a sign of “modern” advance, which both the Ottoman Turks/Armenians and Arabs shared.

The troupe continued to play in the Azbakiyya (Garden) Theatre with full houses. Their repertoire contained *La Belle Hélène*,¹⁶⁴ a very successful “vaudeville turc” with dances, *Les Zeybeks* (*Zeybekler*) and the *Horhor Ağa*.¹⁶⁵ The Arab periodicals did not cover their activities in February, instead, in this month they were full with news about Yūsuf Khayyāt and his Arab Theatre.

In fact, Khayyāt’s troupe also performed in Cairo in March, so *Al-Ahrām* could write that “there is no night in Egypt without a theatrical play, since in the Opera the French troupe, in the Politeama. the Arab troupe, and in the Garden [Theatre], the Armenian troupe play.”¹⁶⁶ It seems that the March of 1885 presented music theatricals in almost all languages of Cairo (except Greek and Italian).

¹⁶¹ *Al-Ahram*, 3 February 1885, 2.

¹⁶² Şarasan, *Türkiye ermenileri sahnesi ve çalı anları*, 62.

¹⁶³ *Al-Maḥrūsa*, 13 February 1885, 4.

¹⁶⁴ *Le Bosphore Egyptien*, 16 February 1885, 3.

¹⁶⁵ *Le Bosphore Egyptien*, 27 February 1885, 3.

¹⁶⁶ *Al-Ahrām*, 26 February 1885, 2.

The *Bosphore* announced that in the first Friday of March the Ottoman company would play in the Opera House while *Al-Ahrām* stated that they would play there every Friday, perhaps a misunderstanding.¹⁶⁷ However, for sure on 11 March they performed in the Azbakiyya for charity. The journal this time described the whole theatre as “Turkish” (“théâtre turc de l’Esbékiah”).¹⁶⁸ The Ottoman Armenians’ good relation with the impresarios of the Opera, Santi Boni and Soschino, might have remained, since on 15 March the Ottomans played in the Opera again. The Khedive Tawfiq personally watched the “Turkish” troupe (after he saw the French group the previous day).¹⁶⁹

Perhaps seeing the favours that the Cairo high society showered on the Ottoman troupe, Santi Boni and Soschino’s application included a Turkish group (“Troupe Turque d’Operettes” or “Troupe d’operettes turques”) for the concession of the Khedivial Opera House in 1885/86. From this letter we know that the troupe was composed of: “9 dames, 10 hommes, chœurs: 12 dames, 12hommes, 1 régisseur, 1 souffleur, costumier, chef d’accessoires,” approximately 50 persons, and their calculated cost was 20000 francs per month vis-à-vis the cost of the French troupe, 47000 francs (!).¹⁷⁰ This means that in 1885 Benglian’s company was almost as numerous as it was a few years ago.

In April 1885 the leader of the Arab theatre troupe, Yūsuf Khayyāt finally received permission to perform in the Opera House. So, the Ottoman Armenians,

¹⁶⁷ *Al-Ahrām*, 25 February 1885, 3.

¹⁶⁸ *Le Bosphore Egyptien*, 11 March 1885, 3.

¹⁶⁹ *Al-Ahrām*, March 16 1885, 2.

¹⁷⁰ Letter undated, (sealed 25 March 1885), From Santi Boni et Soschino to Rouchdy, with “Décompte Général des Dépenses et Recettes” dated 21 Mars 1885. Interestingly, the estimated income during 5 months from the “troupe d’operettes turques” was 82.315 and their cost was 100.000 during this period so one may think that theatre business was not really possible by one’s private capital. 4003-037911, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

Benglian and his company moved in turn to the Politeama in Alexandria where they played *Leblebici Horhor Ağa*, *Giroflé-Girofla*,¹⁷¹ *La Belle Hélène*, etc. This time *Al-Ahrām* again variously calls them throughout April “the Turkish group”, “the group of Turkish plays” or “the Turkish theatrical group” (*farīq al-tamthīl al-turkī*) but, in May, “the Armenian group.”¹⁷² They became integrated with the communities of Alexandria since the troupe also played for the benefit of the Greek hospital.¹⁷³ However, the company of the Opera arrived from Cairo and it seems that at this point, Benglian and his actors returned to Istanbul triumphant.¹⁷⁴

Their success, however, had an interesting echo. This echo is a letter written by the composer/musician Dikran Tchouhadjian, to Nubar Pasha in the summer of 1885, asking for help (see Appendix 9). Tchouhadjian, alluding paradoxically to the “disappointing” (*fâcheuse*) impression of Benglian’s troupe, offered to come to Egypt, as the composer of musical plays, with a big troupe, and to execute the plays with a subvention.¹⁷⁵ However, Nubar Pasha refused this request and suggested that he should apply at the Ministry of Public Works, as was the usual way.¹⁷⁶ (See more in Chapter 9).

The refusal was also due to the high competition for the concession of the Opera House in the spring/summer of 1885 as previously shown when in Qardāhī’s

¹⁷¹ *Giroflé-Girofla* is an opera bouffe in three acts, music by Charles Lecocq and text by Van Loo and Aterrier. It was first produced at the Théâtre des Fantaisies Parisiennes, Brussels, March 21, 1874.

¹⁷² *Al-Ahrām*, 24, 28, 29 April and 6, 8, 9 May 1885.

¹⁷³ *Al-Ahrām*, 9 and 12 May 1885.

¹⁷⁴ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 242.

¹⁷⁵ Letter dated Constantinople 30 June 1885, from Dikran Tchouhadjian to Nubar Pacha Président du Cabinet Egyptien. 4003-037911, Diwān al-Ashghāl al-‘Umūmiyya, DWQ.

¹⁷⁶ “ci-joint une pétition d’un Sieur Dikran Tchouhadjian par laquelle il demande au Gouvernement de lui accorder une subvention en vue d’organiser une troupe d’opérettes turques pour venir donner des représentations en Egypte. Je viens de lui repondre que le Gouvernremant ne peut pas accorder de subvention et qu’il a à s’adresser à Votre Département pour avoir l’autorisation de donner de représentations théâtrales.” Letter dated 19 July 1885, from Nubar to Rouchdy. 4003-037912, Diwān al-Ashghāl al-‘Umūmiyya, DWQ.

life and activity. But there is a further detail, since the Italian impresarios submitted an additional request for the concession of the Opera House for March and April 1886.

This second application/supplement, submitted during the summer of 1885, included a Turkish troupe (“Compagnie turque d’operettes et vaudevilles”) and an Arab troupe in addition to the already accepted French troupe. As it was mentioned, in this application, the Arab troupe was surely Abū Khalīl al-Qabbānī’s (but finally Qardāhī performed in the Opera), and the “Turkish” troupe was very likely Benglian’s. Both were scheduled to the spring months, March and April (after the French troupe would leave).

The repertoire of the “Compagnie turque d’operettes et vaudevilles” and thus potentially Benglian’s troupe was the following (with the original orthography!):

Keusse-Keya, Les Zeybeks, Leblebidji Hor-Hor Aga, Les Fourberies d’Arif, Le Grand Mogol, Girofflé-Giroffla, La Fille de Mme Angot, La Belle Hélène, Orphée aux envers; vaudevilles et drames.¹⁷⁷

In 1885 Benglian’s troupe likely played this old repertoire, basically Tchouhadjian’s operettas and translations of French operettas, the ones that Güllü Agop’s Ottoman Theatre used to compete with the Ottoman Opera back in 1874-75 (cf. chapter 9). This combined repertoire embodied a third cultural option between French operettas and Arab music theatre: operettas in Ottoman Turkish, partly translations, partly original works. This repertoire could be enjoyed only by those (Turco-Egyptian-

¹⁷⁷ Letter dated 10 August 1885, Santi Boni to Rouchdy, 4003-037912, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-‘Umūmiyya, DWQ.

Armenian-Greek) who knew Ottoman Turkish. Together with the Arab proposal, the “Turks” were accepted¹⁷⁸ but finally did not perform in the spring of 1886.

The Ottoman Operetta Troupe in Istanbul (1885-1887)

Seemingly, Benglian immediately wanted to return to Cairo the next spring (of 1886) but finally did not arrive. During the summer of 1886 nonetheless a Turkish group, presumably Benglian’s, applied for the concession of the Opera House for the autumn season,¹⁷⁹ but presumably was refused since Santi Boni’s contract for this period was already signed and no data show whether Santi Boni in 1886 would engage the Ottomans.

Likely the troupe stayed in Istanbul, or at least this city was their main headquarters. They performed in January 1886 there,¹⁸⁰ and also in October. Like in Cairo, this time they could perform in the main theatre of Pera (Tepebaşı/Théâtre des Petits Champs), but only until the “official” impresarios arrived.¹⁸¹ However, a great catastrophe happened with the troupe, this time named in the press as “la troupe arménienne d’opérettes turques”: the authorities prohibited the performance of *Leblebici Horhor Ağa* which, as the journal *Phare de Bosphore* wrote, “assured their

¹⁷⁸ To Santi Boni et Sochino From Barois, 10 Octobre 1885, 4003-037912, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-‘Umūmiyya, DWQ. “Le ministre vous autorise à porter à 60 le nombre des représentations à donner au théâtre de l’Opéra par deux troupes turques et arabes, la durée de l’autorisation que vous a été donnée pour faire jouer ces deux troupes se trouvant bien entendu en toujours limitée aux mois de mars et avril 1886. Cette série de représentations sera partagée par moitié entre les deux troupes à engager.”

¹⁷⁹ Note dated 17 June 1886 (from the Secretary General of the Conseil des Ministres to the Min. Trav. Pub.), Carton 2/1, Nizārat al-Ashgāl al-‘Umūmiyya, CMW, DWQ.

¹⁸⁰ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 241.

¹⁸¹ *La Turquie*, 13 October 1886, 2.

nice income.”¹⁸² Soon, the ban was seemingly lifted (although later this was still on a list of banned theatricals, cf. Chapter 11).

Next year, in the summer and autumn of 1887 the “Troupe d’Opérettes Turques” performed in Istanbul, traveling between the theatres of different districts.¹⁸³ However, Benglian continuously wanted to return to Cairo for the good possibilities as indicated by the fact that already during the autumn of 1887 a new troupe was formed with the intention to tour the Ottoman cities, Egypt, and Italy (!).¹⁸⁴

After summer 1885 (accepted) and summer 1886 (refused), in spring 1887 a “Turkish groupe” was again proposed for the Egyptian Government as part of the concession of the Opera House. The impresario who submitted the proposal in question was no other than Sulaymān Qardāḥī. It might be that meanwhile Benglian (or someone else) returned to perform in Egypt (perhaps in Alexandria), because Qardāḥī explained to the Minister that he could bring a “Turkish group” for the next season seeing the demand what the Egyptian Turkish and Armenian society expressed for such a troupe.¹⁸⁵ Since I have shown that Qardāḥī actually went to tour Syria in the coming months, he did not organize finally this guest performance of presumably Benglian’s thus, we cannot confirm if there was any relation between Qardāḥī and Benglian.

¹⁸² *L’Europe Artiste*, 1? October 1886, 2 (quoting *Phare de Bosphore* 4 September 1886). This ban is what might be contained in the document dated 13 Dhu’l-Qa’da 1303 (13 August 1886), DH.MKT. 1360/87 BOA, that I could not see personally.

¹⁸³ *La Turquie*, 22 and 24 September 1887, 2; 1 October 1887, 2.

¹⁸⁴ *Le Ménestrel*, 13 November 1887, 366.

¹⁸⁵ “maintenant, comme le public en général et la société turque et arménienne en particulier ont manifesté le désir de faire venir une troupe turque, j’ai l’honneur de prier V. E. de vouloir bien m’étendre cette concession pour deux autres mois, soit en tout pour les mois de novembre, décembre, janvier, février.” Letter dated 2 May 1887, Soliman Cardahi to Abderrahman Rouchdy Pacha, 4003-037874, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-‘Umūmiyya, DWQ.

Back to Egypt – the Melikian-enterprise (1888)

Yet, Benglian and his troupe indeed performed in Cairo in the spring season of 1888. Suddenly, in February 1888, an application arrived to the Ministry in Cairo from Séropé Benglian and Eléazer Melikian for the concession of the Opera House in March and April, the usual months of Qardāhī (who, at that time, was perhaps in Syria). This late application cannot be explained since they prepared to visit Cairo since 1887 – only that they counted on Qardāhī or someone else.

Minister Rushdī, asking the opinion of the Comité des Théâtres, remarked that the Khedive is favourable.¹⁸⁶ At that moment Melikian was in Cairo and demanded urgent reply. He was originally perhaps an Ottoman Armenian who invested money already in the troupe of Tchouhadjian in the 1870s, and thus supposedly possessed the rights to the scores/partitions.¹⁸⁷ He might be also a person who gave capital to Benglian a few months before to establish a new troupe. (Cf. Chapter 8.)

The Comité des Théâtres in Cairo quickly agreed to give the concession with three unusual conditions: 1. the impresarios should pay in advance 1100 Egyptian pounds, 2. only 30 performances could be given during the two months 3. the Ministry's interest (charity performances, balls) remain the most important during the concession.¹⁸⁸

The contract (see Appendix 11), signed 3 March 1888, embodied the strictest conditions that an impresario ever received in Cairo (likely because of the previous bad experiences with Santi Boni who left bankrupt). Although finally they had to pay

¹⁸⁶ In fact, the draft of the letter says: “S. A. Le Khédive s’est toutefois particulièrement intéressé à ce genre de représentation” but it is crossed and instead: “que S. A. Le Khédive a qui j’ai l’honneur de parler de cette demande dans le temps a daigné s’y montrer favorable.” Letter dated 16 February 1888, From A. Rouchdy to Membres du Comité des théâtres. 4003-037874, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

¹⁸⁷ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 42-43.

¹⁸⁸ Letter dated 20 February 1888, from Comité des Théâtres to Abdul Rahman Pacha Rouchdy: 4003-037874, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

50 Egyptian pounds only, and even the State paid the gas, otherwise everything was their responsibility, including the water. Even the days of performances were included in the contract.¹⁸⁹

News spread fast. Even before signing the contract, on 28 February 1888 the newspaper *Al-Qāhira Al-Ḥurra* already announced that a “Turkish theatre group” would perform in Turkish in the Opera House.¹⁹⁰ This time the paper mentions Benglian (“Banliyān Effendi”) who would arrive soon with a group of 35 artists, a much smaller number than before.¹⁹¹ This also means that the troupe was already *en route* or very quickly arrived from Smyrna (!)¹⁹² when Melikian negotiated with the Ministry. The newspapers announced their performances.¹⁹³

Al-Qāhira al-Ḥurra’s news is the first instance that an Arab paper refers to the name of the director and perhaps the reason is that its editor was Salīm Fāris, the son of Aḥmad Fāris Al-Shidyāq who might know Benglian, or at least the fame of the troupe, from Istanbul. *Al-Qāhira al-Ḥurra* uses either the name “the Turkish group” (*al-jawq al-turkī*) or the label “the Ottoman group” (*al-jawq al-‘uthmānī*),¹⁹⁴ never calls them Armenians. The group started to perform in mid-March but at the end of March, 1888 Ḥasan Pasha, the brother of Khedive Tawfīq, died.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁹ Contract dated 3 March 1888, between Rouchdy and Melikian/Benlian, 4003-036990, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-‘Umūmiyya, DWQ.

¹⁹⁰ *Al-Qāhira Al-Ḥurra*, 28 February 1888, p. 2.

¹⁹¹ *Al-Qāhira Al-Ḥurra*, 11 March 1888, p. 2.

¹⁹² “La troupe ne pouvant s’embarquer que le 8 ou le 9 de ce mois à Smyrne, les representations ne commenceront que le 14 ou le 16 courant au lieu du 8 Mars fiscé par article 7.” Letter dated 7 March 1888 To Direction Gle du Tanzim, 4003-036990, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-‘Umūmiyya, DWQ.

¹⁹³ *Al-Qāhira Al-Ḥurra*, 11 March 1888, p. 2. *Al-Ahrām*, 13 March 1888, p. 2.

¹⁹⁴ During their stay, *Al-Qāhira Al-Ḥurra* published at least 14 articles or critiques concerning the troupe’s activity.

¹⁹⁵ The troupe ceased performing 29 March 1888, *Al-Qāhira al-Ḥurra*, 29 March 1888, 2.

The Khedivial family announced a forty day mourning period.¹⁹⁶ None the less, “the Ottoman troupe” continued to play.¹⁹⁷ On 13 April *Al-Qāhira Al-Ḥurrā* explained that because of the recent “losses” (*khasāʾir*) and misfortune (*muṣība*) the company was in trouble and the Minister of Public Works asked the Committee of Theatres to help them.¹⁹⁸

This polite language announced that something very bad going on. Already on 2 April Benglian and Mélikian wrote a petition to the Khedive. Because not only the Khedivial family was mourning but other notables as well, basically everyone who frequented the Opera, so they asked for a “main genereuse.”¹⁹⁹ The Minister referred them to the Comité who in turn wrote that the Comité’s budget is enough only for the gas of 30 performances, so only if the troupe stops at the 15th evening the Comité could provide the rest of the money secured for the gas. The Minister nonetheless thought that this time the government (again) can be generous.²⁰⁰ This is the point when the *Al-Qāhira Al-Ḥurra* informed its readers and thus the troubles became public.

Furthermore, two bankers, Nessim Curiel and “Kokrit Caleyā” (?) submitted to the Ministry a request for the garnishment of all money due to Melikian.²⁰¹ This

¹⁹⁶ *Al-Qāhira Al-Ḥurra*, 7 April 1888, 2. Ḥasan Pasha was the second son of Khedive Ismāʿīl, brother of Khedive Tawfiq.

¹⁹⁷ *Al-Qāhira Al-Ḥurra*, 8 April 1888, 2.

¹⁹⁸ *Al-Qāhira Al-Ḥurra*, 13 April 1888, 2.

¹⁹⁹ Letter dated 19 April 1888 (from the Min. Trav Pub. to the Conseil des Ministres), Carton 2/1, Nizārat al-Ashgāl al-ʿUmūmiyya, CMW, DWQ.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ “J’ai l’honneur de vous informer, pour en prendre note, que les Sieurs Nessim Curiel et Kokrit Caleyā ont fait pratiquer une saisie-arrêt sur les sommes dues ou à devoir à M Eleazar Melikian, Directeur de la Troupe Turque. D’après l’avis du Contentieux, il y a lieu d’arrêter le paiement de toutes sommes dues ou à devoir au dit Sieur.” Letter dated 23 April 1888, (From the Ministry) To Tanzim. 4003-036990, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-ʿUmūmiyya, DWQ.

included the 50 Egyptian pounds that was deposited at the Ministry.²⁰² Seemingly, Melikian got a loan from these bankers in order to make the deposit, likely in the hope of a successful season, but because of the death of Ḥasan Pasha, their enterprise at the very beginning had been in serious trouble so the bankers asked for their money back.

But Curiel's confiscation order arrived too late since the Government had already accepted Rushdī's suggestion and together with the rest of the lighting (120 pounds) they offered 200 EP for the group. The order was that "this 200 pound must be secured for the 'repartriement' of the group."²⁰³ After this decision, the Government also decided that in the future they should not pay the gas. The company then was shipped back to Istanbul.

Around this failure a whole circle of legends developed. One version tells that the reason of the failure was that one night Benglian in a role would distribute money on stage singing that "bahşiş böyle bol verilir" ("so abundant tip is given"). The Khedive Tawfīq would have understood this gesture as an ironic allusion that he has spared money on the troupe.²⁰⁴ Another legend, dismissed by Metin And, was that Benglian remained without money in Egypt and it took 10 years for him to collect enough money to buy his ticket back.²⁰⁵

²⁰² "J'ai l'honneur de vous informer su'un acte de saisie arrêt vient d'être signifié au Ministère à la requête de Sieur Nessim Curiel. Partant saisie-arrêt sur la somme de L.E 50 déposée par les Sieurs Benlian et Mélikian pour garantie l'exploitation du Théâtre de l'Opéra. Les susdits Entrepreneurs ont fait cession de cette somme à M. Curiel. Pière de vouloir bien prendre note de cette saisie-arrêt et ne rien payer à personne sans l'avis préalable du Contentieux." Letter dated 22 May 1888, To Direction Générale du Tanzim from ? (Ministry), 4003-036990, Diwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

²⁰³ Letter dated 22 April 1888 (from the Président du Conseil des Ministres to the Min. Trav Pub.), Carton 2/1, Nizārat al-Ashgāl al-°Umūmiyya, CMW, DWQ. The note is signed as N. (likely Nubar, the Prime Minister).

²⁰⁴ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 243.

²⁰⁵ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 243.

Some stories certainly contain some truth like the one that claims that the scores (orchestral parts?) of the operettas remained in Egypt as deposit at one of the bankers.²⁰⁶ If this is true, then Tchouhadjian's lost scores should be searched either at Nassim Curiel's legacy or to trace the identity of "Kokrit Caleya." Anyway, this second adventure of Benglian in 1888 in a larger perspective shows the power of the Khedivial court and the Ottoman elite of Cairo, since without them such a grand troupe in such an expensive playhouse as the Cairo Opera House could not survive. This also reflects that Ottoman Turkish entertainment was not integrated and absorbed by those who visited the Opera House – or at least, this audience(s) could not disregard the call of the court for mourning.

Benglian's Later Life and Return to Egypt (1890s)

Be that as it may, Benglian's company dissolved after this failure in 1888, and he returned to Istanbul. But seemingly he or other persons copied or possessed the scores of the Ottoman operettas since soon again Tchouhadjian operettas were played in Istanbul and elsewhere.²⁰⁷ Benglian's last twelve years were not explored so far, but a few details show that despite the Egyptian failure, he regained his powers, a new troupe, and the tours continued.

In the next two years, he was likely permanently in Istanbul. In 1890, however, a Turkish group returned to Egypt, perhaps annually. It seems that Alexandria was indeed a target of this Ottoman troupe. The troupe, simply called "the

²⁰⁶ "les partitions des opérettes en gage chez un cambiste (ou banquier) arménien pour pouvoir se payer les billets de retour en Turquie. Selon la grande comédienne Heratchia, qui a jouée dans les opérettes et tournée en Egypte avec Benklian, les partitions sont à jamais restées au Caire. C'est aussi la conclusion du musicologue Haig Avakian en comparant toutes les données, les mémoires et les articles de Heratchia, Késsedjian et Alixanian." Gérald Papasian, DTRC, "Manuscrits."

²⁰⁷ Gérald Papasian suggests that these were copied in Smyrne; *ibid.*

Turkish troupe” (*al-jawq al-turkī*) arrived from Istanbul directly in March 1890. It contained 12 actors with four actresses,²⁰⁸ later two more ladies and four more actors joined them.²⁰⁹ They performed in Alexandria plays like *Janfiyāf* (Geneviève?),²¹⁰ *Līza wa Shārl* (Lisa et Charles?), *Al-‘Aṣā al-Saḥrīya* (The Magic Stick), *Al-Malik fī'l-Ṣayd* (The Hunting King?)²¹¹ singing songs in Turkish and Arabic (!).²¹²

The most distinguished singer of this troupe was a certain Mademoiselle Virginia who could play the *‘ūd* and the *qānūn* as well.²¹³ The members of the troupe could also sing in Italian and Greek.²¹⁴ Seemingly, after May they left Alexandria. The identity of this troupe is not yet deciphered but certainly it was a mixed, even more diverse group than the previous one of Benglian, and, foremost, they had a different repertoire.

There is no information whether Benglian had anything to do with this troupe. However, it is sure that by 1890 he already collected a new troupe in Istanbul.²¹⁵ With this new company, he performed in Izmir, Istanbul, Edirne in the following years. Although in February 1891 there is mention of again a Turkish-Armenian troupe playing in Alexandria,²¹⁶ it cannot be verified that it was his enterprise. It is said – and I could not engage with deeper research since my period is over here - that during 1892-93 he established a magnificent new troupe in Istanbul with the (financial?) help of Reşit Bey and Sadık Bey, consisting of around 60 people, involving many Jewish

²⁰⁸ *Al-Ahrām*, 28 March 1890, 3.

²⁰⁹ *Al-Ahrām*, 22 April 1890, 3.

²¹⁰ *Al-Ahrām*, 15 April 1890, 3.

²¹¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 2 May 1890, 3.

²¹² *Al-Ahrām*, 22 April 1890, 3.

²¹³ *Al-Ahrām*, 23 April 1890, 3.

²¹⁴ *Al-Ahrām*, 10 May 1890, 3.

²¹⁵ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 243.

²¹⁶ *Al-Ahrām*, 27 February 1891, 3.

actresses.²¹⁷ Others say that (perhaps with this troupe?) Benglian returned to Egypt and played again in the Opera House in 1894²¹⁸ and 1896.²¹⁹ All sources agree that after 1896 he mainly lived in Alexandria (!) and died there in very poor circumstances in 1900.

If the data about the return of Benglian to Egypt (both to Cairo and Alexandria) is accurate, than this return would imply that the connections and knowledge what Benglian acquired in the 1880s helped him to maintain his relations and to try his luck with the rich Ottoman Egyptian/Turco/Armenian audience much later too.

Conclusion

Via the reconstruction of the activities of Manasse, Draneht, Qardāḥī, and Benglian four very different conceptions and uses of “culture” opened up. They could have met (some of them surely heard about the others), but their activities took place in different social stratas mainly because their education, world-view, language, and belief about the purposes of music theatre.

Three of them (Manasse, Draneht, and Qardāḥī) surely had an educational understanding of theatre, including a sense of self-education. All three held that participation in theatre would bring the audiences closer to “civilization” but while Manasse and Draneht imported European entertainments Qardāḥī believed theatre in Arabic to be an autonomous and sufficiently modern means to achieve this goal. These three individuals also had other agendas connected to theatre: Manasse selling

²¹⁷ Step’anyan, *Urvagits arevmtahay t’adroni patmut’yan*, 2: 236, footnote 68. - translated for me by Gerald Papasian.

²¹⁸ ^cAbdūn, *Khamsūn c’Āmān*, 148.

²¹⁹ ^cAbdūn, *Khamsūn c’Āmān*, 149.

his own operettas, Draneht serving the Khedive Ismāʿīl, Qardāhī emphasising patriotism and Egyptianizing his Beirut roots. Séropé Benglian, in contrast, was active without detectable institutional or ideological affiliations and tried to use the late Ottoman cultural space purely for profit from entertainment.

These four individuals (and many others) transacted during approx. 25 years an enormous amount of traffic between different geographical locations within the late Ottoman Empire and between Western European cities, transporting literally hundreds of people from city to city, knowledges, tastes, languages, using new techniques to organize and manage their troupes with incredible financial and physical effort. They all looked constantly for patronage which most of them hoped from the central administrations or the rulers. Apart from Draneht, who was hired for the job, Manasse, Qardāhī, Benglian continued to struggle to convince the decision makers that music theatre is worth their patronage.

Manasse and Benglian were rivals in Istanbul but concerning all four personalities the paradox is that despite their very different background, conceptions, and intentions, they became, for some measure or another, at one point all rivals in Cairo. The reason for this paradox is that this was the only location where the state maintained a theatre – and the most prestigious one, an Opera House - and more or less public competition was held for the concession year by year (after Draneht's reign). Thus they were not only rivals parallel to each other, but the acceptance of one of them would mean the defeat of the others, in theory. What happened, however, that via very diverse situations of negotiation – always involving the European impresarios – a fragmented and uneven distribution of money and performance venues took place. This situation reflects an undecided position from the part of the Egyptian state because although the state (the Theatre Commission cf. chapter 11) indicated clear

preferences for European entertainment, other proposals from non-European cultural visions were not refused, thus the competitive framework was kept open. On the other hand, in the absence of state theatre and state patronage in Istanbul, such a competition was restricted to private capitalists.

Of the infrastructure of theatres in the two cities, described in Part II, and of the activities of leading individuals in management, discovered in this Part III, very diverse results derived with far reaching consequences in terms of artistic repertoires, social transformation, and state policies. In the next part, I will introduce the creators of repertoires and attempt to analyse the performances.

Part IV. On Stage

Administrations, theatre buildings and impresarios/managers were important conditions to create a performance but still a play was needed, actors to act, singers to sing. This part of my dissertation deals with these components of a performance choosing an Egyptian singer and an Ottoman composer to shed light on the formation and achievements of 19th century Arab and Ottoman musicians who were on stage and produced the performances.

Via reconstructing the lives of these two exemplary persons we access their life-world, the formation of a late 19th century Ottoman/Arab artist, we can follow the creation of plays and performances, and analyse the music they played. This means that in contrast of understanding 19th century Arab and Ottoman Turkish theatre as a text, as part of literature, via music I hope to reconstruct or at least imagine the performances as live staged experiences.

This part focuses on the role of musicians/singers as parts of the cultural competition. I do not aim, by no means, to provide a comprehensive description of 19th century Ottoman or Egyptian music education because, after all, my examples are somehow exceptional in their careers. Being a musician or a singer in the late 19th century Cairo or Istanbul could mean a variety of trainings, backgrounds, knowledge, audiences.

By this time, Western/European music education was relatively well known and practiced in elite and bourgeois families. Professional music schools were opened in Istanbul, the members of the Sultanic harem were trained by Donizetti Pasha, then

by Callisto Guatelli Pasha.¹ Many Ottoman soldiers were trained in the military music school to play European marches and operas or operettas.² In Egypt, already in the 1820s, European musicians trained Egyptian military bands. Later on, the members of the khedivial harem received the same training as their sultanic counterparts (cf. Chapter 2). Westernized musicians, like the Egyptian pianist Mansour, performed regularly in Paris in the 1860s,³ or a Turkish pianist returning from Paris played Beethoven for the Sultan.⁴

This appropriation of European music did not mean that Ottoman courtly music traditions were forgotten. An inevitable question is that what was the position of these various models, tastes, traditions of playing music to each other in the late Ottoman Empire? Can we talk about musical conflicts if these relations were conflictual? Or were these traditions existing separately? These questions need much specialized research to answer since here I deal only with the kind of music that was played in theatres. I focus especially on that aspect in which music helped individuals to be accepted as representations of a particular cultural vision – in Egypt, Salāma Ḥijāzī as a patriotic singer/actor, while in Istanbul (and empire-wide) Tchouhadjian as a respected composer.

In Chapter 7, Salāma Ḥijāzī exemplifies an artist who, coming from a religious and humble background, perhaps reluctantly but later professionally embodied roles of patriotic heroes and most likely he composed new songs as well.

¹ Cf. Raouf Yekta Bey, “La Musique Turque,” in A. Lavignac et L. de la Laurencie, *Encyclopédie de la musique et dictionnaire du conservatoire*, 10 vols. (Paris: Librairie Delagrave, 1922), 5/1: 2845-3064. Here: 2981.

² William Howard Russell, *A Diary in the East during the Tour of the Prince and Princess of Wales*, 2 vols. (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1869), 2:480.

³ A. Mansour was an Egyptian pianist, composer, piano-teacher who was trained and lived in Paris. Cf. *Le Ménestrel*, 5 September 1858, 4. His daughter Mlle Mansour became a soprano in the 1880s. *Le Ménestrel*, 4 November 1888, 360. As a young girl, it is said that in 1881 she got an offer from the Cairo Opera House as a premiere chanteuse, *Le Ménestrel*, 4 September 1881, 319.

⁴ Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam*, 105.

As a singer/actor, he was accepted by a wide Egyptian audience, although officially never received any subsidy in the period. As a contrast, the reconstruction of the activity of Dikran Tchouhadjian (Chapter 8) serves as an example of a musician who was never officially subsidized but his works became immensely popular. Continuing the argumentation that these persons embodied distinct visions for a state culture(s), and they many times, in different forms, tried to persuade the power brokers that it is worth to subsidy their activity, finally neither in Cairo, nor in Istanbul did the state authorities accept these persons as official representatives. However, their work established different repertoires (Chapter 9) that are remembered even today.

Chapter 7.

A Singer: Salāma Ḥijāzī (1852?-1917)

Salāma Ḥijāzī is perhaps the best remembered late 19th century singer/actor in Egypt. Great poets Aḥmad Shawqī and Khalīl Maṭrān wrote poems about him. His fame was due partly to his being a born Egyptian, partly to being unquestionably a star, partly to having a reputation of drinking no alcohol, and finally, because he lived long enough to be popularized by the new recording industry (the German Odeon Company).¹ Ḥijāzī is the first patriotic singer-actor and his name is associated with the birth of *al-masrah al-ghināʿī*, “song-theatre.”

Early Years

Ḥijāzī was presumably born in 1852 in the Rāʾs al-Tīn district of Alexandria into a poor family, and as a young boy was supported by a leader of a Sufi *ṭarīqa*, the *Raʿsiyya*. Ḥijāzī participated in the *dhikrs* and other religious occasions, like the *mawlid*s of Muslim saints, which were accompanied by singing, and he also knew the Qurʾān by heart at the age of eleven.² As a boy his voice became famous and he was taught by Aḥmad al-Yāsirjī, Khalīl Muḥarram, Kāmīl al-Ḥarīrī who were all masters

¹ He is mentioned almost all texts dealing with modern Egyptian music, although sometimes with very mixed and unreliable data. The basic work is Muḥammad Fāḍil al-Sharqāwī, *Al-Shaykh Salāma Ḥijāzī* (Damanhur, 1932). The latest publication is ʿĪzīs Faṭḥ Allāh, *Salāma Ḥijāzī* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2002) with a CD, but unfortunately without any references. A very important CD “Shaykh Salama Higazi” was released by Club du Disque Arabe, 1994, selected by Frédéric Lagrange. Lagrange also included Ḥijāzī in his doctoral dissertation “Musiciens et poètes en Egypte,” 84-87. For more literature see Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 167, n. 120.

² Faṭḥ Allāh, *Salāma Ḥijāzī*, 21.

of singing and taught other singers, too.³ After the death of his patron, he was elected as the leader (“Salāma”) of the Ra^ʿsiyya when he was 15 years old, that is, sometime at the end of the 1860s.⁴

As we have seen, this is exactly the time when Khedive Ismā^ʿil encouraged Europeans to visit Egypt for the Suez Canal Opening Ceremonies and ordered the construction of the khedivial theatres of Cairo. Although European troupes continuously visited Alexandria from the first half of the 19th century (often coming from Istanbul), the 1860s and 1870s show an unprecedented traffic of visiting entertainers. Salāma Ḥijāzī might have attended some of the European performances.⁵

It is said that at the age of 22, Ḥijāzī married a girl called ^ʿĀ^ʿīsha and soon their child was born, Muḥammad (around 1874?). Perhaps because of the need to finance his family he formed a *takht*, a group of musicians, with whom he performed in popular celebrations and marriages.⁶ By 1876, his voice became famous in Alexandria and thus when Syrian theatre-makers arrived in December that year, perhaps they wanted to convince him to play (sing) in their theatre, but he refused. Ḥijāzī might have thought that acting on stage is immoral, and some say that it was Qardāhī who persuaded him.⁷ However, in another story performing at the wedding of his sister, “Shafīqa,” Adīb Ishāq and Yūsuf Khayyāṭ heard his voice and finally Khayyāṭ managed to convince him by offering to perform between the acts of his theatre performances.⁸

³ Faṭḥ Allāh, *Salāma Ḥijāzī*, 22, Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 157.

⁴ Faṭḥ Allāh, *Salāma Ḥijāzī*, 21.

⁵ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 157 based on al-Ḥifnī and Barbour, “The Arabic Theatre in Egypt, I,” 177.

⁶ Faṭḥ Allāh, *Salāma Ḥijāzī*, 22.

⁷ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 157, based on al-Ḥifnī.

⁸ Faṭḥ Allāh, *Salāma Ḥijāzī*, 24-25.

This last version seems likely, since from later years there are many examples of Egyptian singers performing between acts of Syrian theatre-makers, like °Abduh al-Ḥamūlī. If we accept this, then Ḥijāzī’s participation could not have happened before autumn 1877 when Khayyāt took over Salīm Naqqāsh’ company, or, after having stopped theatrical activity between spring 1879 and autumn 1881, when Khayyāt revived his theatre for a few months between October 1881 and January 1882.⁹ The early years of Ḥijāzī thus were spent in an environment of religious music and Egyptian “art music,” urban techniques of singing, and he was exposed, perhaps only incidentally, to European and Syrian music theatre as well. In any case, the long held view that Ḥijāzī stepped on stage only in the mid-1880s was already dismissed by Sadgrove, based largely on the following data.

Ḥijāzī as °Antar – the Invention of a Patriotic Hero (1882)

In February 1882, after the appointment of the °Urābī-government, Sulaymān Qardāḥī, as was shown, established “al-Ubira al-°Arabī,” the Arab Opera troupe (see Part III and Part IV for further details). When the performances of this troupe in the Khedivial Opera House begin in April 1882, Salāma Ḥijāzī figures as the main star of the troupe. Although no further data available, it is likely that by this time Ḥijāzī had some theatrical experience in the troupe(s) of Khayyāt.

Qardāḥī’s repertoire included four musical plays, *Fursān al-°Arab*, *Tilīmāk*, *Zifāf °Antar*, *al-Faraj ba°d al-ḏīq*; three of these were surely works of Syrian authors/translators. Yūsuf Najm, Philip Sadgrove and others studied these plays, so we know that *Tilīmāk* was an adaptation of Fenelon’s *Thelemaque*, while *Al-Faraj*

⁹ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 154-155. Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il, *Ta°rīkh al-masrah al-miṣrī*, 133-135. Or much later, when Khayyāt restarts his activity in Egypt in late 1884, cf. *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 136.

ba^cd al-dīq (The Release from Suffering) was perhaps an adaptation of *Nathan the Wise* of Lessing.¹⁰

The two other theatricals, *Fursān al-^cArab* (The Heros of the Arabs) and *Zifāf ^cAntar* (The Marriage of ^cAntar) were both based on the adventures of a very popular hero of ancient Arab mythology. ^cAntar or ^cAntara bin Shaddād lived in the pre-Islamic times, perhaps in the 6th century, and around him a whole “cycle of tales and legends” developed.¹¹ In this genre of oral tradition, the so-called ^cAntariyyāt are storytellers who recite the episodes of the *sīrat ^cAntar*, the life of ^cAntar in form of ballads with musical accompaniment. These forms of entertainment were popular still in 19th century Egypt and Syria, very well known both by the poor and the mighty. But we can only guess that *Fursān al-^cArab* was a play about the heroic side of ^cAntar and his fight against the enemy to save his tribe. The *Zifāf ^cAntar* was perhaps rather about his love life with a happy ending.

The first performance of the Arab Opera troupe was delayed to 13 April 1882.¹² This delay coincided with the discovery of a presumed plot against ^cUrābī Pasha and other military officers on 11 April 1882. Mostly men of Circassian or Turkish origin were arrested. A military committee investigated the issue and, after a series of inquiries during April, all were exiled to the Nile.¹³ I would like to underline that while the patriotic performances of the Arab Opera were staged in the Opera

¹⁰ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 156-159.

¹¹ ^cAntar had a slave status in his tribe, the al-^cAbs, and he was black because his mother was an Ethiopian. But he was a mighty warrior and an admired poet who killed many enemies and then sang miraculous songs about the battles. During the Middle Ages tales and myths composed a whole legendary around his adventures, that grow bigger and bigger, especially around his quest for his love ^cAbla.

¹² Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 156.

¹³ Reid, “The ^cUrābī revolution,” 229.

House, the ongoing trial of the anti-°Urābists was the major talk of the town. (cf. for details Chapter 10.)

The first performance was *Tilīmāk* and although many notables were present, including the Khedive and his men, the reporter of the *Al-Ahrām* observed that “the number of those who do not know Arabic was *higher* than those who know it.” (My emphasis.) The singers, Salāma Ḥijāzī, Shaykh Maḥmūd, and the actress/singer Ḥunayna were praised for their voice and acting, of course, the main star being Shaykh Salāma, about whom a critic remarked quite prophetically:

Everybody was astonished by the [way] Tilīmāk (al-Shaykh Salāma) mastered his role. They cried when he cried; they were happy when he was pleased and happy. His gestures and movements in acting showed that he would have a most important role, the first place, in the Arab theatre, not to mention his excellent singing and the mellowness of his voice.¹⁴

The performance of *Zifāf* °*Antar* on the 23 April was especially successful: the audience was so enthusiastic that they demanded the repetition of the third act. Salāma Ḥijāzī acted °*Antar* and the wife of Qardāḥī, Christine, played °*Abla*. Was there any significance that presumably the only Egyptian member of the troupe, with the best voice, embodied the Arab hero, °*Antar*?

The journal *Al-Ahrām* highlighted the bravery of °*Antar* and the gentleness of the acting and voice of Ḥijāzī. Other actors, especially Christine Qardāḥī were also praised. The journal *Al-Maḥrūsa* did not miss the opportunity to emphasize that the Arab actors succeeded in this art – which was so far the privilege of Europeans – and the journal expressed hope for support (from the state).¹⁵ These remarks by the press

¹⁴ *Al-Ahrām*, 15 April 1882, 2; here in the translation of Sadgrove, 157. Cf. also *Al-Maḥrūsa*, 15 April, 1882, 2.

¹⁵ *Al-Maḥrūsa*, 24 April 1882, 2.

strengthen the importance of Arab acting and Ḥijāzī as a symbol of the patriotic sentiments and proposals for state-supported culture. An implied interpretation of Ḥijāzī's portrayal of ʿAntar as the embodiment of ʿUrābī on stage was further supported by the last play.

This last play, *Fursān al-ʿArab*, the Heroes of Arabs, was a statement on the part of ʿUrābī Pasha on 30 April 1882, who was popularly named as *fāris* (hero) in Arabic papers.¹⁶ The audience praised the actors and continuously clapped for repetitions. The journal *Al-Ahrām* noted that every time the actors reappeared on stage they were better than before. The reporter also remarked that the actors were very happy and wished “that these nights would last forever.”¹⁷ This was the day when the exile of the 48 military officers to the White Nile was communicated with the charge of conspiracy against the life of ʿUrābī.

After this triumphant April in Cairo, the Arab Opera and with them Ḥijāzī, returned to Alexandria where soon an anti-foreigner riot accelerated the revolutionary events which resulted in the occupation of Egypt by British troops during the summer of 1882. After his collaboration with Qardāḥī, Ḥijāzī fled from the disturbances in Alexandria and then perhaps from the British and Khedival forces, too. He went to hide in Rosetta (Rashīd) where his father was born and worked as the muezzin of the Zaghlūl Mosque but meanwhile both his wife and son died.¹⁸

¹⁶ Like ʿAbdallāh Nadīm's satirical, *Al-Tankīt wa'l-Tabkīt*, 23 October 1881, 306.

¹⁷ *Al-Ahrām*, 2 May 1882, 2.

¹⁸ Faṭḥ Allāh, *Salāma Ḥijāzī*, 22.

The Return of Ḥijāzī (1884-5)

It is not known when Ḥijāzī returned from Rosetta and if he had to hide because of his participation in the Arab Opera troupe. Some says he was thirty when arrived back to Alexandria,¹⁹ but if we accept that he was born in 1852, then it is impossible since it is 1882 exactly. The same source establishes that he was drawn to theatre only after this period, by Khayyāt in 1884.²⁰ Najm gives 1883 as the year of his return from hiding.²¹

By this time (1884) Ḥijāzī is said to have led another *takht* and especially emphasised *not* employing colloquial words in songs.²² This year Arabic theatre started its revival in Egypt after the shock of summer 1882. Between June 1882 and June 1884 there are no data concerning theatre in Arabic, although school plays and charity performances might include Arabic, such as in February 1884 when a “historical play” was staged at the Coptic Charitable Society’s evening.²³

Ḥijāzī might have seen a great revival of Arab performances. In June 1884, Abū Khalīl al-Qabbānī from Damascus started to stage plays in Arabic in Alexandria.²⁴ He asked °Abduh al-Ḥamūlī, the famous singer, to sing between the acts of his plays,²⁵ and later that year they also cooperated in Cairo.²⁶ Around that

¹⁹ Faṭḥ Allāh, *Salāma Ḥijāzī*, 22.

²⁰ Faṭḥ Allāh, *Salāma Ḥijāzī*, 25.

²¹ *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 135.

²² Faṭḥ Allāh, *Salāma Ḥijāzī*, 23.

²³ *Al-Ahrām*, 1 February 1884, 3. The evening was scheduled to 15 February.

²⁴ The July arrival date in Garfi, *Musique et Spectacle*, 186 is wrong, he also cites mistakenly *Al-Ahrām* as from “23 juillet 1884” since his citation is from the 23 June 1884 number. In fact, we do not know their arrival. Sayyid °Alī Ismā‘īl, *Ta’rīkh al-masrah al-miṣrī*, 159 cites the 23 June number of *Al-Ahrām* as announcing their arrival, meanwhile the 24 June number already says that two performances are already done, one “yesterday” (23 June) and the first was on “Monday” (21? June). *Al-Ahrām*, 24 June 1884, 3. Thus perhaps the *Al-Ahrām* announced their arrival on the 23rd but they must have arrived before.

²⁵ *Al-Ahrām*, 1 August 1884, 3.

²⁶ In mid-December he and al-Ḥamūlī got the use of the Opera House from 25 December 1884 to 31 January 1885. French Letter dated 24 December 1887 from Min. Trav. Publ. To the Conseil, Carton 2/1, Niẓārat al-Ashgāl al-°Umūmiyya, CMW, DWQ. Previously, Arabic request from °Abduh al-

time, Yūsuf Khayyāt returned from Beirut (18 November 1884)²⁷ and formed his own Syrio-Egyptian troupe and started to play in Alexandria, in the Zizinia Theatre, first night 10 December 1884.²⁸ *Al-Ahrām* and *Al-Maḥrūsa* were even more welcoming than in the case of al-Qabbānī, and advertised Khayyāt with huge titles as *Al-Tiyātrū al-‘Arabī*,²⁹ or *Al-Tashkhīṣ al-‘Arabī*,³⁰ his troupe immediately getting a huge appraisal. It meant that al-Qabbānī faced a serious competition back in Egypt, which was anyway a new soil for him. It is also possible that behind the scenes there was a Beirutian/Libanese and Damascusian/Syrian opposition.

Of Khayyāt troupe in late 1884 there is not much information, only that “young Syrian and Egyptian boys and girls are involved,”³¹ and that their voice was very pleasant (*rakhāma*).³² This theatre was certainly a musical one, as it is repeated that the actors voice is so “resonant” (*ranāna*) that “their voices enter the ear without permission” (*tadkhul al-udhun bidūn idhn* – an untranslatable play with words).³³

Salāma Ḥijāzī was perhaps involved already during these December performances although he is first mentioned in the press in February 1885 when he played the role of Na‘īm in the play *Shārlamān* (Charlemagne). Other members of the troupe consisted of Anṭūn Khayyāt, Ḥabīb Misk, Najīb Shukayt, Najīb Anastāsī (Anastasi?),³⁴ a certain Kānlūn, Faṭḥ Allāh al-Rabbāṭ, Hilāna (Helena) Bayṭār, al-

Ḥamūlī and al-Qabbānī dated 27 Šafar 1302 (16 December 1884) asking the Ministry for paying the lightning in the theatre. Carton 2/1, Niẓārat al-Ashgāl al-‘Umūmiyya, CMW, DWQ.

²⁷ *Al-Maḥrūsa*, 21 November 1884, 1.

²⁸ *Al-Ahrām*, 9 December 1884, 3.

²⁹ For instance, *Al-Ahrām*, 11 December 1884, 3; or a praising critique-letter 15 December 1884, 4; or an unusually long description, 30 December 1884, 4. Cf. also *Al-Maḥrūsa*, 8 January 1885, 3; 15 January 1885, 4; 29 January 1885, 1; 12 February 1885, 1.

³⁰ *Al-Maḥrūsa*, 14 November 1884, 4.

³¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 9 December, 1884, 3.

³² The critique of *Al-Ahrām* about the first performance, 11 December 1884, 3.

³³ *Al-Ahrām*, 26 December 1884, 3. Repeated in 30 December 1884, 4.

³⁴ *Al-Maḥrūsa*, 13 February 1885, 1.

Shaykh Muṣṭafā ʿArif who all had pleasant voices.³⁵ Interestingly, Ḥijāzī this time was not singled out as the main star, as he was ʿAntar in Qardāḥī’s troupe back in 1882. However, it is possible that Ḥijāzī was still used similarly to al-Ḥamūlī, and instead singing in the plays, or in addition to that, he also sang separately after the piece like in March 1885 when after a comic piece (“Don’t forget to close the door”), he gave a *faṣl inshād wa-ghinā*.³⁶

His involvement was perhaps a trick by Khayyāṭ to balance the al-Qabbānī-al-Ḥamūlī cooperation. At this point, both “foreigner” impresarios/troupe directors used Egyptian singers in order to sell themselves, their troupes, and theatre in general to the Egyptian Arabic-speaking public. Ḥijāzī proved to be a better lot than al-Ḥamūlī, since based on his previous experience, he not only sing between the acts but started a proper career as an actor/singer.

After al-Qabbānī and al-Ḥamūlī in December/January 1884/85; Khayyāṭ with Ḥijāzī got the concession of the Opera House in April 1885, too.³⁷ Ḥijāzī this time was singled out as the most important of those actors who are singers at the same time, since he was already “famous.”³⁸ His voice was praised regularly, with his acting abilities, which indicates that he not only sang between acts but also embodied roles.³⁹ This time perhaps the group consisted of other actors: Najīb Anaṣṭās, Cathrine, Najīb Ṭunūs,⁴⁰ and surely Khayyāṭ’s brother, Anṭūn Khayyāṭ. Salāma Ḥijāzī regained his later fame in Cairo, since in the last evening the audience of the

³⁵ *Al-Ahrām*, 9 February 1885, 3.

³⁶ *Al-Ahrām*, 17 March 1885, 3

³⁷ *Al-Maḥrūsa*, 12 February 1885, 1.

³⁸ *Al-Ahrām*, 4 April 1885, 2.

³⁹ “fa-inna-hu jamʿa ilā āḥkām al-tashkhīṣ fi’l-layl al-fāʿit husn al-ilqāʿ wa’l-īmāʿ bi’l-ḥarakāt al-rashīqa.” *Al-Ahrām*, 17 April 1885, 2.

⁴⁰ Sayyid ʿAlī Ismāʿīl, *Taʾrīkh al-masrah al-miṣrī*, 137, quoting *Al-Zamān*.

Khedivial Opera House demanded him to continue after the new operetta, *‘Āyida*, and to give a song-repetition.⁴¹

Based on the press reports, Khayyāt’s troupe was successful, but the Khedive Tawfiq did not like him.⁴² While al-Qabbānī and Khayyāt competed, silently Sulaymān Qardāhī returned and submitted a petition for the concession of the Opera House for the next season. In the autumn of 1885 he contracted with Murād Rūmānū until January 1886, but, then, presumably without an Egyptian star singer (yet employing an Egyptian *takht*) he hold his first season in March 1886 (cf. all details in Chapter 6) in the Cairo Opera House.

Although Ḥijāzī was quite successful with Khayyāt, at this time he vanishes from the news, and also from Khayyāt’s troupe since Murānū sings there from February 1886,⁴³ and he is not mentioned in the reorganized troupe of the Khayyāt brothers in September 1886.⁴⁴ I have not found any mention of Ḥijāzī until late 1886, although he might have been part of Qardāhī’s troupe in 1886 since these actors had also “pleasant and skillful voices” (and some of them were members of the previous Arab troupes).⁴⁵ Furthermore, there is only one mention, presumably from 1886 that Ḥijāzī already joined to Qardāhī (perhaps only for some performances) in the spring of 1886.⁴⁶ Certainly, after the success in the spring of 1882 and the spring of 1885, Ḥijāzī was to become an unquestionable star of the Arab stage – and both seasons took place in the Cairo Opera House.

⁴¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 9 May 1885, 2.

⁴² “The Khedive said at the end of the last season that if the Opera will be given to Khayat he would never go there.” Undated (but most likely spring 1886) letter from Rouchdy, Minister of Public Works to President of the Council, Carton 2/1, Nizārat al-Ashghāl al-‘Umūmiyya, DWQ.

⁴³ Cf. *Al-Ahrām*, 1 February 1886, 3. *Al-Mahrūsa*, 5 February 1886, 2-3. *Al-Mahrūsa*, 16 February 1886, 2. *Al-Ahrām*, 16 February 1886, 2. During the summer this troupe is mentioned under the name of Murād Rūmānū only, thus it is possible that Khayyāt parted. *Al-Mahrūsa*, 7 July 1886, 2.

⁴⁴ *Al-Mahrūsa*, 1 September 1886, 2; 20 September 1886, 2-3 (no mention of Ḥijāzī in the *‘Āyida*).

⁴⁵ *Al-Mahrūsa*, 5 February 1886, 3. *Al-Ahrām*, 10 March 1886, 3.

⁴⁶ “Al-tamthīl al-‘arabī fi’l-ūbira’l-khidīwiyya,” *Al-Laṭā’if*, 1886 (?), 175-176.

Ḥijāzī in Qardāḥī's Troupe (1886-7)

If the previous attempts to involve Ḥijāzī in theatre brought ambiguous results since he did not remain with the troupes, first because of the British conquest, second because of unknown reasons, the spring of 1887 was perhaps decisive in his career. At this year Ḥijāzī was presumably around 35 years old, living in Alexandria, with an established reputation, but presumably having lost his wife and son.

He might have joined to Qardāḥī's troupe in late 1886,⁴⁷ although a journal underlines that he joined them at the first performance in February 1887.⁴⁸ It is said that his return is due to a khedivial marriage where he, with °Abduh al-Ḥamūlī, entertained the guests and Qardāḥī's troupe also gave a special performance. Seeing this supposedly more professional company than Khayyāt's, Ḥijāzī after consulting with al-Ḥamūlī and Muḥammad °Uthmān, joined the Syrian impresario. There is also information that he got 20 Egyptian pounds, and that Ḥijāzī was in love with the daughter of Ṭal°at Pasha and this the real reason why he took the stage. He later actually married her.⁴⁹

Be that as it may, Ḥijāzī was a star of Qardāḥī's troupe in the spring of 1887 and from then onwards he remained in music theatre. In February 1887 he seems to “intervene” (*yatakhallalu*) between the acts, again.⁵⁰ Qardāḥī staged °*Antara b. Shaddād* just like five years before, when °Urābī was at his zenith, and this time the

⁴⁷ *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 109; Sayyid °Ali Ismā°il, *Ta°rikh al-masraḥ al-miṣrī*, 146.

⁴⁸ *Al-Qāhira al-Hurra*, 27 February 1887, 3. “Wa qad dakhala fī tilka al-jawq hādhihi'l-marra al-Shaykh Salāma Ḥijāzī al-muṭrib al-mashūr.”

⁴⁹ Faṭḥ Allāh, *Salāma Ḥijāzī*, 25-26. However, all these data cannot be verified and some elements seems unlikely, and the same source also puts this period with Qardāḥī between 1885-1889, which is not totally correct.

⁵⁰ *Al-Ahrām*, 28 February 1887, 2.

Khedive Tawfīq was again in the audience.⁵¹ Presumably, Ḥijāzī again embodied °Antara but there are no further data available.

He got the greatest praise in *Al-Ahrām* for his role in °*Āyida* where he played Ramphis (Ramfis), the bass role of the original Verdi opera, which was kept presumably in its Arabic translation as well.⁵² Ḥijāzī continued to play in the troupe and was established both as an independent singer who sings between the acts and as a member of the troupe who embodies roles on stage.

Ḥijāzī's First Attempt as an Independent Singer/Actor (1888)

After this successful season, as we have seen, Qardāḥī returned to Syria and only came back in spring 1888. Ḥijāzī likely did not accompany him, but there is no news about him until March 1888, although meanwhile both Sulaymān Ḥaddād (presumably with Qardāḥī's old troupe) and Yūsuf Khayyāṭ (with a new troupe) continue to perform in the second half of 1887.

But instead of joining them, Ḥijāzī's first independent troupe was assembled in March 1888 in Alexandria, perhaps by his own initiative (°*uniya bi-ta'ālifi-hi ḥaḍrat al-munshid al-shahīr al-Shaykh Salāma Ḥijāzī*, "Shaykh Salāma Ḥijāzī, the famous singer, took care of the composition [of the troupe]")⁵³ under the direction of a certain Yūsuf Mālilī and, after a public rehearsal, they offered °*Āyida* as the first attraction.⁵⁴ However, this troupe did not prove to be a long-standing one.

When Qardāḥī restarted performances in November 1888 in Alexandria, Salāma Ḥijāzī already figures among his actors/singers; in fact, he saves the

⁵¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 3 March 1887, 2.

⁵² *Al-Ahrām*, 9 March 1887, 3.

⁵³ *Al-Ahrām*, 5 March 1888, 3.

⁵⁴ *Al-Ahrām*, 9 March 1888, 3. Cf. *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 136.

performances from total failure.⁵⁵ Qardāḥi also got the usual season in the Khedivial Opera House where Ḥijāzī moves with the troupe, figuring as the main star with Laylā, a female singer who had also become very famous in the last few years.⁵⁶ This is the fourth season that he sings on the stage of the Opera House.

Qardāḥi and Salāma Ḥijāzī: Surpassing the Europeans (1889)

During this spring season of 1889, Salāma is singled out again, first in the title role of *Mūnghūmīrī* (Montgomery) with Ms. Lūna (?). During this performance, the singer Laylā is the one who connects the acts with her music.⁵⁷ If we consider that this March °Abduh al-Ḥamūlī also gave some musical evenings in the Opera House,⁵⁸ we can say safely that the three biggest Egyptian singer-stars performed on one stage, one after the other during this season, an unprecedented demonstration of Egyptian cultural choices under British occupation.

This time Ḥijāzī is praised as “the singer who is able to perform various styles of songs and acting, Shaykh Salāma Ḥijāzī. The skill of the acting surpassed the cream of the European actors and the diversity of songs was even more marvellous.”⁵⁹ The often repeated comparison in the Arabic press of measuring Arab actors to European ones this time shows a growing self-confidence in the professionalism of actors and singers from the part of the reporters – that actually might reflect that Arab artists indeed increasingly improved their acting skills.

⁵⁵ *Al-Qāhira al-Hurra*, 16 November 1888, 2.

⁵⁶ Laylā also sang for charity in Alexandria during the spring of 1888, under khedivial patronage, *Al-Ahrām*, 17 May 1888, 2.

⁵⁷ *Al-Ahrām*, 4 March 1889, 3.

⁵⁸ *Al-Ahrām*, 4 March 1889, 2.

⁵⁹ *Al-Ahrām*, 7 March 1889, 3.

Ḥijāzī figured in his usual roles of *‘Āyida*,⁶⁰ and once the income of an evening was secured for his benefit,⁶¹ although the *‘ālim* Laylā got equal place in the news. After their success, the troupe moved to Ṭanṭā to play in the countryside.⁶² Salāma Ḥijāzī continued to be established as a patriotic star, visible in the title roles and hero roles, and showing a great skill both in acting and singing. His association with Qardāḥī was successful and seemingly mostly confined to these huge performances in the Opera House. But, as we have seen, Qardāḥī’s adventure in Paris in August-September 1889 cost him the favour of the Khedive and lost the possibilities to get the concession of the Opera House anymore. Ḥijāzī had to seriously look for another impresario-director in order to perform.

Ḥijāzī Again Independent (1890)

During 1889 Egyptian theatre in Arabic was reconfigured. Qardāḥī fell out in August, al-Qabbānī returned, and new troupes were established, perhaps with the previous members of Qardāḥī’s. The Cairo Opera House was closed to al-Qabbānī,⁶³ and perhaps this is why he involved the famous Laylā,⁶⁴ the ex-star of Qardāḥī.

Ḥijāzī – as usual – again vanished from the stage (or at least, from the press) for a year, to return again during the spring season. However, he must have worked behind the scenes with great effort, because in April 1890 he reappears as a leader of a brand new troupe with new (translated) plays. He consciously chose to arrange this troupe when, as the press say, he saw the “need for patriotic taste” (*iḥtiyāj al-dhawq al-waṭanī*) and also “experimented” with two new plays translated by Najīb al-

⁶⁰ *Al-Ahrām*, 18 March 1889, 2.

⁶¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 23 March 1889, 3.

⁶² *Al-Ahrām*, 2 April 1889, 3.

⁶³ *Al-Ahrām*, 9 October 1889, 2.

⁶⁴ *Al-Ahrām*, 5 December 1889, 3.

Ḥaddād: *Shuhadāʾ al-Gharām* (translation of Romeo and Juliet) and *al-Rijāʾ baʿd al-Yaʾs* (translation of Iphigenia).⁶⁵ With a third play, *al-Amīr Ḥasan*, his troupe advertised three nights in the Zizinia.⁶⁶

There can be no doubt that this enterprise was Ḥijāzī's own initiative and likely his own work. We have no indication why he dismissed al-Qabbānī and other Arab impresarios and, according to the press, felt the need to establish a "patriotic troupe." In his advertisement, very likely written by him, entitled "Iʿlān al-Tashkhīṣ al-ʿArabī bi-idārat al-Shaykh Salāma Ḥijāzī" there is no mention of patriotic goals. This advertisement rather shows a religious vocabulary, very unusual in Arab theatre advertisements so far, since he starts with "we decided, with the help of God the Almighty, that we stage in the Zizinia Theatre in Alexandria three plays."⁶⁷ This also indicates that journalists for a certain extent coloured his involvement in theatre with their own agenda.

Since Ḥijāzī only mentions the titles of plays and the prices of the seats in this advertisement, it is hard to believe that he wanted to use ideological arguments (like before him Qardāḥī and Khayyāṭ) to bring the audience to the theatre, which was anyway, full.⁶⁸ It is rather likely that this was an entertainment project for the coming Ramaḍān period, although Najm states that this troupe existed for a long period.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ *Al-Ittiḥād al-Miṣrī*, 7 April 1890, 3.

⁶⁶ *Al-Ahrām*, 3 April 1890, 3.

⁶⁷ *Al-Ahrām*, 5 April 1890, 3.

⁶⁸ *Al-Ahrām*, 9 April 1890, 3; 15 April 1890, 3.

⁶⁹ *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 136.

Joining Iskandar Farah and Institutionalization (1891-1905?)

Some say that Ḥijāzī already joined to a new theatre troupe in 1889,⁷⁰ but there is no data confirming this. His enterprise in 1890 suggests that Ḥijāzī was independent at this time. It cannot be excluded, however, that he was also part of a troupe that performed during 1890, which was called “al-Jawq al-Waṭanī,” the Patriotic Troupe, just as Qardāhī named his company in the 1880s.

The early 1890s brought the institutionalization of Arab theatre, in the form of a special building exclusively for the purposes of theatre in Arabic in the °Abd al-°Azīz street,⁷¹ and later other theatres both in Cairo and Alexandria with some financial support from the municipality. Also, theatre became a real public issue in the press in Arabic, with an extensive translation activity and production of new Arabic texts.

Ḥijāzī figures in the news during the summer of 1891 when in Alexandria some young intellectuals assembled a new troupe for the summer with the leadership of Salāma.⁷² Najm believes that it is the same troupe that he established a year ago for giving the three plays, but nothing confirms this connection.

Certainly from autumn 1891 Ḥijāzī regularly played in the troupe of Iskandar Farah, who was educated by the Jesuits in Syria, and was an old associate of al-Qabbānī and perhaps came to Egypt with him.⁷³ Perhaps this troupe, again named as “al-Jawq al-Waṭanī/al-Jawq al-°Arabī al-Waṭanī,” is the one which played already in 1890 or the one that was formed in the summer of 1891, but in any case, the

⁷⁰ Faṭḥ Allāh, *Salāma Ḥijāzī*, 26. Again others state that this troupe, that of Iskandar Farah’s was already formed in Egypt in 1886, Barbour, “The Arabic Theatre in Egypt, I,” 176.

⁷¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 18 June 1891, 4. *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 127.

⁷² *Al-Ahrām*, 29 August 1891, 3.

⁷³ Regina Karachouli, “Abu Halil al-Qabbani (1833 - 1902) - Damaszener Theatergründer und Prinzipal,” *Die Welt des Islams*, New Ser., 32, no. 1. (1992): 83-98. Here: 86, footnote 12. Moosa, *The Origins of Modern Arabic Fiction*, 37. Also, Garfi, *Musique et Spectacle*, 184, based on Farḥān Bulbul.

appearance of this troupe with two stars, Sulaymān Ḥaddād and Salāma Ḥijāzī, under the direction of Iskandar Farah in October 1891 starts a long-term cooperation which marks the golden age of Arab music theatre.⁷⁴

Ḥijāzī had some kind of contract with this troupe, since he got a regular salary: perhaps his contract contained a salary of 30 Egyptian pounds monthly and the income of one evening per month.⁷⁵ Furthermore, this time the troupe could regularly use the new Arab theatre at °Abd al-°Azīz street (perhaps built by Farah with the support of °Alī Sharīf Pasha),⁷⁶ which means that for the first time, an Arab theatre troupe was attached to a permanent building or physical location. Furthermore, it also meant that he no more featured in the Opera House at least until 1893. Thus, with the crystallized institutions of the colonial state, parallel non-governmental institutions came about to cherish Egyptian patriotic culture. From now on, the centre of Arab theatre, that had been Alexandria, will be shared with Cairo.

This troupe, Farah's activity in the 1890s, and Ḥijāzī's later career is more or less well researched, so here I just analyse the first season (1891-1892) of this troupe which is actually the end of my chosen researched period (1867-1892). Farah's troupe was led by another person as well, with whom they agreed to give any surplus for the training of the troupe. Seemingly, apart from Farah, Sulaymān Ḥaddād, and Ḥijāzī, the troupe was joined by the writer/translator Najīb al-Ḥaddād (brother of Sulaymān) whose plays were performed, too.⁷⁷ They also played in Halwān,⁷⁸ in the presence of

⁷⁴ *Al-Ahrām*, 22 October 1891, 3.

⁷⁵ Faṭḥ Allāh, *Salāma Ḥijāzī*, 27. Farah indeed signed contracts with his artists, *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 127.

⁷⁶ Farah "shayyada masraḥan jadīdan fī awwal shāri° °Abd al-°Azīz fī'l-°aṣīma" 24 April 1891, as quoted in *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 127. However, *Al-Nīl*, 4 December 1892, 3, writes: [the theatre] "ta°assasa °alā ḥasab °ādāt al-bilād wa-muwāfaqat ma°lūfāti-hā wa-tashakkal min jamā°at waṭaniyyīn wa-sā°ada-hum ... °Alī Sharīf Pasha... bi-qīṭa°at arḍ min amlāki-hi al-khuṣūsiyya fī Shāri° °Abd al-°Azīz."

⁷⁷ *Al-Ahrām*, 5 Novembre 1891, 3.

the Khedive Tawfīq, who was praised by Najīb al-Ḥaddād before the performance, and based on the success, even a regular subsidy was demanded by the public from the government.⁷⁹ All performances were advertised with the name of Salāma Ḥijāzī.⁸⁰

Soon, however, this troupe met with the old professional, Sulaymān Qardāhī, who returned from Paris, and who took over in Alexandria the staging of dramas and prepared to visit Manṣūra,⁸¹ but there is no information if Salāma Ḥijāzī went with them. Certainly from July 1892 the troupe of Iskandar Faraḥ performed in their theatre in the °Abd al-°Azīz street in Cairo, with Salāma Ḥijāzī, who again embodied his great, old role as °Antara.⁸² Their success was honoured by the Government with 6000 francs from the special purse of the Municipality of Alexandria.⁸³

Ḥijāzī within this troupe was regarded by the press as the unquestionable patriotic artist, as *al-muṭrib al-waḥīd al-mumaththil al-waṭanī* (“the patriotic and unique singer and actor”).⁸⁴ Faraḥ’s troupe started to be mentioned in the press as “al-Tiyātrū al-°Arabī,” and consisted of Ḥijāzī, Ḥaddād (not for a long time), Labība, Mīryam, °Alī Wabhī, Shaykh Darwīsh, °Izzat Efendi [Abu'l-°Adl?], Husayn al-Inbābī.⁸⁵ Among them, Ḥijāzī is mentioned as the most demanded and applauded by the audience during summer-autumn 1892. However, the major part (25 years) of his career until his death in 1917 was still ahead.

⁷⁸ *Al-Ahrām*, 26 Novembre 1891, 3.

⁷⁹ *Al-Ahrām*, 30 Novembre 1891, 2-3.

⁸⁰ Like *Al-Ahrām*, 31 December 1891, 3.

⁸¹ *Al-Ittiḥād al-Miṣrī*, 20 March 1892, 1.

⁸² *Al-Nīl*, 9 July 1892, 1.

⁸³ *Al-Nīl*, 10 July 1892, 2. Najm, based on *Al-Ahrām*, is wrong that this was a special endowment to Ḥijāzī’s independent troupe.

⁸⁴ *Al-Nīl*, 10 July 1892, 2.

⁸⁵ *Al-Nīl*, 13 July 1892, 1; 17 July 1892, 1.

Conclusion: Hijāzī and Early Arab Music Theatre

Based on the above reconstruction, Salāma Hijāzī appears to be among the few Egyptians who stepped early on stage. Connected to the understanding of theatre as an educational means, his appearance was significant as a sign of patriotic progress. Although his acting, bodily movements, and gestures were often praised, it is foremost his voice that was admired by the journalists and the audiences.

Arab music theatre was not his invention but he conformed to a tendency already started in Beirut in 1849; to mix prose with musical insertions or vice versa. In Egypt throughout the 1880s (and later) the use of Egyptian musicians and singers by Syrian actors-impresarios in order to set up Arab theatre as something familiar points out, nonetheless, to a revised understanding of the relation between music and prose/acting. Hijāzī certainly represents a new phase because he was, first of all, not an actor but a singer.

Not much is known about the melodies in this formative period. For instance, what types of songs did he sing as *ʿAntar* in 1882 or in *ʿĀyida* in 1887? Although many emphasize that his proper career started only in 1905 when he finally established himself in a separate theatre building with an independent troupe,⁸⁶ and we have the most information about this is the period, including a recording of a series of theatrical songs, his creativity, fame and professionalism was realized already in the 1880s.

As an untrained actor, he managed to reconcile Arabic songs with theatrical topics and bodily narratives.⁸⁷ He not only changed the style of traditional Arab

⁸⁶ *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 137; Garfi, *Musique et spectacle*, 245; Faḥ Allāh, *Salāma Hijāzī*, 28.

⁸⁷ *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 139, quoting the memoirs of Muḥammad Taymūr.

singing (see details below and in Garfi,⁸⁸ Fath Allāh,⁸⁹ and Racy⁹⁰), but it is said that he composed a number of melodies for the newly translated texts, like *Shuhadā' al-Gharām*. He significantly contributed to the mixture between European polyphony and Arab song-culture, using techniques learned as religious singer, but also what he used as a cafehouse *takht*-member.

From the point of view of cultural politics, his artistic achievements served to help the reluctant acceptance of Arab music theatre – as a particular form of opera – via the troupes of Sulaymān Qardāhī. This refers to the role of Egyptian music – one may say, the Egyptian *voice* – not only in the popular acceptance of theatre as a new art form but also as a possible form of state or elite sponsored patriotic activity. Unlike °Abduh al-Ḥamūlī, Ḥijāzī was not a court-singer and did not participate in khedivial entertainments (or only rarely) and he, from the very beginning, represented an activity “from below” in association with Qardāhī. This popular stand was paired with a (traditionally trained) taste for classical Arabic texts to perform.⁹¹ His role in the struggle or formation of Egyptian culture(s) was thus that of a unique synthesizer between very different traditions, using others to transmit those European texts/styles he wanted to use, without actually knowing any foreign language.

⁸⁸ Garfi, *Musique et spectacle*, 249-257.

⁸⁹ For a list of Ḥijāzī's “song plays” cf. Fath Allāh, *Ḥijāzī*, 112-115

⁹⁰ Racy, *Making Music in the Arab World*, 86.

⁹¹ Fath Allāh, *Salāma Ḥijāzī*, 23.

Chapter 8.

A Composer: Dikran Tchouhadjian (1837-1898)

Compared to Hījāzī, who exemplifies a music theatre-maker without being trained in European music, the Ottoman Armenian Dikran Tchouhadjian¹ represents a very different career. Fluent in Italian and French, trained in Istanbul and Milan, and composing operas and operettas, he failed to become a state funded representative musician or even a popular star although his work became very popular among the Ottoman Turkish-speaking populations of the Mediterranean port cities due to the Ottoman Operetta troupes of Benglian. In spite of composing hymns, marches, etc. for the Sultans, Tchouhadjian never became an established musician in the Empire, which is also testified by the fact that his name is rarely mentioned in Ottoman Turkish journals or documents. Based on the various data I reconstructed the following but his life definitely needs more thorough research (also involving Greek, Armenian and more Ottoman Turkish sources).²

¹ The writing of his name is not standardized: in modern Turkish, it is “Dikran Çuhacıyan,” Metin And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 75. The *New Grove* (Second Edition) uses “Tigran Chukhajian,” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. “Armenia, III. Opera, ballet, orchestral and chamber music”, by Svetlana Sarkisyan, 2:26-28; and s. v. “Chukhajian, Tigran Gevorki,” by Svetlana Sarkisyan, 5:820-821. The French centre, established by Gérald Papasian, whom I thank for his help, uses in its name in English “Dikran Tchouhadjian Research Center.” The only book about him in English uses “Dikran Tchouhadjian”: Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*; the Italian *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo* uses “Tigran Čuchadžjan,” *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo*, 9 vols. (Roma: La Maschare, 1962), s.v. “Transcaucasia, II. Armenia, Teatro musicale e balletto,” 9:1084-1087 by Angelo Maria Ripellino. However, I respect his own transliteration which was “Dikran Tchouhadjian,” best exemplified by his autograph French letter dated Constantinople, 30 June 1885, from Dikran Tchouhadjian to Nubar Pacha, Président du Cabinet Egyptien, in 4003-037911, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-‘Umūmiyya, DWQ.

² About his life there exists an extensive Armenian literature, even debates which were not accessible to me because I do not know Armenian. Some of the texts were translated for me by Gérald Papasian, others are incorporated in the book of Tahmizian, some details are also given in Metin And, and finally the Grove entry by Sarkisyan is also based on Armenian sources. Anyway, I am obliged to Mr. Papasian and the Dikran Tchouhadjian Research Center for the unconditioned and generous help I got

Tchouhadjian's Education

All sources agree that he was born in Istanbul in 1837³ to an Ottoman Catholic Armenian family, and his father was the clockmaker of the Sultans.⁴ Tchouhadjian got a musical education in Istanbul, and was active in early Ottoman Armenian music circles and journals. It is said that he assumed the position of musical director in the new theatre of the Hasköy neighbourhood in 1859.⁵ It is exactly here that Benglian is also referred to be involved in theatre activity in the 1850s. (Cf. Chapter 6.)

Tchouhadjian from 1861 to 1864 studied in Milan at the Conservatory.⁶ He might have known Manasse who spent some time in Milan approximately the same years (1860-62?), studying music also. (Cf. Chapter 5.) However, it is also said that he was a founding member of the Knar Haikakan Musical Society in March 1862 in Istanbul,⁷ that might mean that he kept regular contact with the Armenian community in Istanbul.

Arriving back in Istanbul, Tchouhadjian became active in Ottoman Armenian music- and theatre-life, and likely composed occasional music to prose dramas and

from them. Some of the data comes here from a compilation of the Dikran Tchouhadjian Research Center in French, entitled "Parcours historique des operettes de Dikran Tchouhadjian," unpublished essay, which I got in an electronic format on 30 May 2010, and is based on the following sources in Armenian: articles of Haig Avakian in *Dzidzernag* (musical supplement in every three month of the Egyptian Armenian hebdomadaire journal *Tchahagir*) 6, n. 2-3 (2006); Nechane Bechigtachlian, *Theatrical personalities* (Beirut: Kevork Melidinets, 1968); Step'anyan, *Notes on the Theatrical History of the Armenian Diaspora/Theatre in France* (Yerevan: Armanian Academy of Sciences, 1982), Artsvi Bakhtchinian and Vartan Madteossian, *The Dancer Shamakh* (Yerevan: ?), and the already mentioned 3 volume work of Step'anyan. Apart from these Armenian sources, the essay also digested Tahmazian's book and the independent research of Mr. Papasian. This document will be cited as DTRC, "Parcours historique."

³ Except Adolphe Thalasso who gives 1840 in his "Le Théâtre Turc Contemporain" (1899), 1043.

⁴ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 14.

⁵ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 15-19. In fact, this theatre was sponsored by the Armenian *şarraf* Mkrdich Cezayirliyan. Mustafa Erdem Kabaydı, "Mkrdich Cezayirliyan or the sharp rise and sudden fall of an Ottoman entrepreneur," in *Merchants in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi and Gilles Veinstein (Paris: Peeters, 2008), 281-299 (with tables), here: 286.

⁶ Sarkisyan, s. v. "Chukhajian, Tigran Gevorki," 820. Tahmizian gives as 1865 for his returning date, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 27.

⁷ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 20.

comedies and already in 1866 some independent plays but so far, these remain mysterious. (See Table 8.1 for Tchouhadjian's plays).

Table 8.1

Works of Dikran Tchouhadjian

Tchouhadjian composed many occasional pieces: songs, hymns etc., which sometimes had also dramatic features. He composed music for dramas, some of them perhaps lost. Thus it is important to underline that this table is not complete and certainly remains only speculative about the correct genre of the pieces (opera, operetta, musical drama, musical, etc). Sources are: Tehmizian, And: *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, *Levant Herald*, etc.

Title/versions	Author of the libretto	Original language	Premiere	Notes
<i>Aleksinaz</i>		Armenian	1866?	
<i>Olympia?</i> (perhaps identical with <i>Arshak II.</i>)			1866?	in <i>The Turks</i> , vol. 4: Bülent Alaner, “Polyphonic music”
<i>Vartan Mamigonian</i>	Romanos Sedefjian Migirdic Basiktasliyan? (And, 45 and 49)	Armenian	18 April 1867, Naum Theatre 28 February 1867 ? Tahmizian, 32.	“Musical tragedy” (<i>Levant Herald</i> , 18 April, 1867, 3)
<i>Arshak II /Arsace / Olympia?</i>	Tovmas Terzian	Italian	8 March 1869 Armenian actors played a five act “tragédie” “ <i>Haïg Tutzazen</i> ” in the Naum Theatre, source: <i>Levant Herald</i> , 9 March 1869, 3.	2. and 3. part of <i>Arshak II</i> were played in the Naum Theatre on 10 March 1868. And, <i>Osmanlı</i> , 46 without ref. Tahmizian, 35.
<i>Vart yev Shousan / Gül ve Zambak ya da Masis'in Çobanları/</i>	Bedros Turyan	?	1869	drama with music, And, 50; Tahmizian, 35
<i>Medzn Drtad</i>		Armenian	1870s?	

<i>Arif'in Hilesi/Arif Ağa'nın Hilesi/Arif/ La Fourberie d'Arif</i>	Hovannes Ajemian, Hovannes Yazijian, Turkish writer / translation of <i>Le Nouveau Seigneur du Village</i> of Boieldieu? Royer, <i>Histoire Universelle du Théâtre</i> (1878), 6: 388.	Ottoman Turkish	9? 12? 17? December 1872, Gedikpaşa Tiyatrosu	Co-written with A. Sebastiano, then reworked with A. Alboreto (see the advertisement published in And, <i>Osmanlı</i> , 339, from 1879 [1296]), and <i>The Levant Herald</i> , 31 October, 1874. plot inspired by Gogol's <i>The Inspector</i> OR Boieldieu's <i>The new village chief?</i>
<i>Çin Çiçeği</i>	Translation of Lecoq's <i>Fleurs du Thé?</i>	Ottoman Turkish	1874?	And, <i>Osmanlı</i> , 75.
<i>Mektep ustası</i>	?	Ottoman Turkish	November 1874, Theatre in the Beyazid Square	drama with Tch's music, Tahmizian, 44, And, <i>Türk Tiyatrosu</i> , 422.
<i>Şair evlenmesi</i>	Şinasi	Ottoman Turkish	December 1874, Theatre in the Beyazid Square	drama with Tch's music Tahmizian, 44, And, <i>Türk Tiyatrosu</i> , 422.
<i>Mektep seyri</i>	?	Ottoman Turkish	December 1874, Theatre in the Beyazid Square	And believes this is the same as <i>Mektep ustası</i> , And, <i>Türk Tiyatrosu</i> , 422. Tahmizian, 44.
<i>Köse Kahya/Köse Abdul/Kuesse Kehya/ (Beardless Servant)</i>	Karakin Rishtuni	Ottoman Turkish	2? April 1875, Gedikpaşa Theatre	<i>Levant Herald</i> , 28 April 1875. Tahmizian, 48, is wrong giving 7 October 1875.
<i>Leblebici</i>	?	Ottoman	23 November	<i>Levant Herald</i> ,

<i>Horhor Ağa/Fleur d'Orient / Karine/Garine</i>		Turkish	1875, French Theatre (Palais de Cristal)	24 November 1875 Tahmizian, 49, gives 5 November 1875
<i>Indiana ?</i>	Joseph Yazijian	?	1870s? OR 1897?	In the existing manuscript, dated 1876, the composer is Al. Alboretto
<i>Ara Keghetsig</i>	Dikran Kalemjian	Armenian?	1879, Gedikpaşa Tiyatrosu	drama / musical, Tahmizian, 53.
<i>Zemire/ Eboudiat and Zemire</i>	written after a tale of Maillard, couplets are of Anméghian and Panossian Dikran Kalemjian	original in Ottoman Turkish, then translated to French, “opéra- comique”	April 1891, Nouveau Théâtre Français. December 1890, Concordia Theatre? Tahmizian, 60.	5 March 1891, <i>La Turquie</i> , p. 2. and 15 April 1891, <i>La Turquie</i> , p. 2.
<i>Varsenig</i>		Armenian	12 January 1897?, St. Hripsimants School, Smyrna,	
<i>Yemişçiler</i>		Ottoman Turkish?	unfinished?	

There is no information concerning Tchouhadjian's relation to Manasse who exactly these years (mid-1860s) started his first French Theatre in Pera and tried to produce also his own operettas in Armenian and French. Certainly after his return from Milan, Tchouhadjian was asked to compose music to dramas, like *Vartan Mamigonian* (presented in 1867).⁸ But it is only in this context that we can fully understand the choice of Tchouhadjian to compose an opera about the ancient Armenian king, *Arshak II*, of which parts were presented in 1868,⁹ and published in 1871.¹⁰

This particular piece is usually considered the first “national” Armenian opera although the original libretto was Italian, and its birth is due to the interest of the Ottoman Armenian and other publics in Istanbul in new musical pieces with, and the financial help Agop Bey Balian, the architect.¹¹ During these years, just as later, Tchouhadjian earned money by giving piano lessons.

His education was thus based on Western (Italian) musical traditions, playing mostly the piano, which was quite popular already in the 1860s. In 1869, for instance, in Pera four shops sold pianos.¹² Yet, at this time, Tchouhadjian was not advertised as a music teacher although very likely this was his regular livelihood, unlike in 1881 when he, as “Tchoradjian (Dicran)” is listed in AO as “professeur du musique (piano).”¹³ Apart from his musical activity, he might perform as an actor in some of

⁸ Although Tahmizian gives 28 February 1867 as the premiere, based on the Armenian journal *Massis*, on that day I have no news of this play. Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 32. But on 18 April 1867, the play was indeed presented in the Naum Theatre. *Levant Herald (Daily Bulletin)*, 18 April 1867, 3.

⁹ 2. and 3. part of *Arshak II* were played in the Naum Theatre on 10 March 1868. And, *Osmanlı*, 46 without ref. Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 35 provides various data, but he also basically accepts Metin And. I have not found any trace of this performance.

¹⁰ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 36, n. 26.

¹¹ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 33-35.

¹² R. Cervati and N. C. Sargologo, *L'Indicateur Constantinopolitain (1868-1869)*, (Constantinople: Pagolo, 1868), 220.

¹³ AO (1881), 253. In page 357, at the specialized list of music teachers, his name is written correctly as “Tchohadjian.”

the plays of Güllü Agop's (Agop Vartovyan) new Ottoman Theatre in 1870.¹⁴ It is likely that his female relatives (sisters?) were also active in this theatre.¹⁵

Working with Güllü Agop (1872-73?)

Tchouhadjian very likely worked for Güllü Agop in the 1860s. As we have seen, when in 1872 summer Manasse is back to Istanbul, running from his debts in Paris, and he started to work also with Güllü Agop, at the Ottoman Theatre, producing the operetta *Pamela or the night of masked ball*. They asked Dikran Tchouhadjian to train their singers, which he accepted, but he also wanted to compose operettas.¹⁶ In this short period these three Ottoman Armenians worked together but finally they chose different forms of entertainment. Manasse bet for French theatre, Agop for performances in Ottoman Turkish, and Tchouhadjian for Ottoman Turkish operettas.

The popularity and fashion of French operetta, and mostly Manasse' import of a new operetta troupe to Pera in October 1872,¹⁷ perhaps induced Güllü Agop, the director of Ottoman Theatre; to let Tchouhadjian present another operetta. And says that it was the idea of the businessman Eleazer Melekian.¹⁸ This was the *Arif Ağa'nin Hilesi* (The Trick of Arif), first performed in 8 December 1872 at the Gedikpaşa Theatre, an opera-comique (*opera kûmîk*).¹⁹ (See the details below). This operetta was a work composed by Tchouhadjian and an Italian, A. Sebastiano, who remains mysterious.

¹⁴ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 57. And signs only T. Çuhacıyan in the role of "soytarı," a clown. Perhaps this could be Teresa as well, see next footnote.

¹⁵ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 51, lists a "Teresa Çuhacıyan" as a soubrette among the early female members of the Ottoman Theatre. Also an "Annik Çuhacıyan," 61

¹⁶ DTRC, "Parcours historique." Stepanian, 2:85.

¹⁷ *Levant Herald*, 14 October 1872, 144.

¹⁸ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 66.

¹⁹ *İbret*, 4 Shawwāl 1289, 3. *Levant Herald*, 13 December 1872, 255. Tahmizian's data for the premiere as 17 December 1872, refers already to a repetition. Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 42.

Tchouhadjian's name was mentioned in the newspapers in French in connection with *Arif*, but not in Ottoman Turkish.²⁰ However, it is possible that by this time Tchouhadjian and Güllü Agop were already in very bad terms and it might be – although a sheer speculation – that Sebastiano finished Tchouhadjian's score. Be that as it may, around the premiere of *Arif Ağa'nin Hilesi*, a new entertainment location started to advertise itself in the Sultan Beyazid district of Istanbul, in the *qira'at-hane* of °Aziz Effendi as presenting plays, too.²¹ The nature of the problems between Tchouhadjian and Güllü Agop is not clear, could be financial²² or artistic.²³ However, this is the root of a later fierce debate and competition between Güllü Agop and Tchouhadjian that I earlier called the “operetta war.”

The Ottoman Opera/Opera Theatre and the “Operetta War” in Istanbul (1874-76)

However, the operetta fever had not only artistic or financial but political roots. The suppression of Namık Kemal's play, *Vatan yahut Silistre*, in spring 1873 and the temporary closure of the Ottoman Theatre might have contributed to the decision to produce less political or even depoliticized performances. (Cf. Chapter 11.)

The first news about an independent troupe of Tchouhadjian appeared in 1874. Likely he needed capital and finally established his own troupe with the financial support of the Ottoman Armenian businessman, Eleazer (Yeghiazar) Melekian who we know already from the adventures of Benglian. Melekian offered a monthly salary

²⁰ In the *Basiret* it is only said that a very nice opera was executed. *Basiret*, 10 Shawwāl 1289 (11 December 1872), 1. In *Ibret*, the advertisement does not contain the name of the composer 4 Shawwāl 1289 (5 December 1872), 3.

²¹ *Basiret*, 13 Shawwāl 1289, 4.

²² Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 42.

²³ DTRC, “Parcours historique.”

and “a lump-sum honorarium” to Tchouhadjian sometime in 1873.²⁴ Other sources state that he offered 1500 gold coins for the establishment of a new Ottoman operetta troupe.²⁵

Perhaps during the first half of 1874 there were some preparatory experiments and rehearsals, and a number of artists, with good voices, joined the new company from Güllü Agop’s Ottoman Theatre.²⁶ The main stars were Mlle Lousnak and the tenor Adjemian who later married.²⁷

By September 1874, Tchouhadjian’s troupe is reported to have a theatre in construction in the courtyards of the “Seraskierate,” the Headquarters of the Army that was located at the Sultan Beyazid Square in the Musafirhane which was actually very close to the Gedikpaşa Theatre of Güllü Agop.²⁸ The troupe’s name was Opera Theatre (*Opera Tiyatrosu*),²⁹ and they first started to perform around beginning of October 1874.³⁰

He explicitly challenged the Ottoman Theatre by staging *Arif Ağa* and a translated piece, Lecoq’s *Fleur de Thé*, during the month of Ramaḍān (*hijrī* year 1291, November 1874),³¹ which was traditionally the period of entertainment by the Ottoman Theatre. He involved in the recomposition of the *Arif* another music professor, A. Alboreto. Tchouhadjian staged in the theatre at Sultan Beyazid three

²⁴ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 43.

²⁵ DTRC, “Parcours historique.”

²⁶ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 43.

²⁷ *Levant Herald*, 3 March 1875, 69.

²⁸ *Hayal*, 4 Eylül 1290 (30 September 1874), 2-3; *The Levant Herald*, 25 September 1874, 749; 26 September 1874, 750. Thalasso, “Le Théâtre Turc Contemporain” (1899), 1044.

²⁹ I have not found in any form the name provided by Tahmizian: “Ottoman Operatic Drama Group.” Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 43. The first known mention of the troupe in Ottoman Turkish is in *Hayal*, 4 Eylül 1290 (16 September 1874), 2-3, and it gives Opera Tiyatrosu. Indeed, later Tchouhadjian himself calls it “Opera Tiyatrosu” in a letter/advertisement to the editor of *Hayal* (Teodor Kasap), 9 Teşrin-i Evvel 1290 (21 October 1874), 2.

³⁰ *Hayal*, 3 Teşrin-i Evvel 1290 (15 October 1874), 2 says that the Opera Theatre just started its first evening.

³¹ *Levant Herald*, 25 September 1874, 749. Data concerning their activity come from the corresponding numbers of Theodor Kasap’s journal *Hayal* that very much supported Tchouhadjian, and *Tiyatro*.

plays during the Ramađān, *The schoolmaster*, *The poet's marriage*, and *The school ceremony*.³² On 30 October 1874 *Arif Ağa* was presented in the Théâtre Français in Pera by his opera company.³³

To understand this shower of musical plays, one has to consider that operetta was the new fashion worldwide, emanating from the French center, Paris (and for some measure, Vienna). In Istanbul, operetta was the ultimate way to bring the audience into the theatres of Pera and it was not censored. For instance, exactly in this autumn of 1874 when Manasse engaged a French company who reportedly played *only* dramas and comedies, a journalist noted that “if so, they will certainly not prove so generally attractive.”³⁴

The operetta war, started thus in autumn 1874, had its height in 1875. It was not only about the competition of Güllü Agop and Tchouhadjian but Manasse also joined producing his *Les Mongols* in March 1875. (Cf. Chapter 6). While Tchouhadjian performed his second original composition “Keussé-Kiaya” *Köse Kahya* in April 1875, in the Gedikpaşa Theatre in the Old City, Güllü Agop translated *La fille de Mme Angot* and put it on in Palais de Cristal in Pera.³⁵ This also means that these two troupes not only confined their rivalry to the Old City (symbolically between Gedikpaşa and Sultan Beyazid districts) but they included Pera that – although usually regarded as a Francophone district – at least this spring of 1875 became a territory of the clash between Ottoman Turkish operettas.

³² And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 422.

³³ *Levant Herald*, 31 October 1874, 2.

³⁴ *Levant Herald*, 4 September 1874, 2.

³⁵ *Levant Herald*, 28 April 1875, 69.

Although immediately in May 1875 there is news about a fusion of the troupes,³⁶ seemingly the conflict between Tchouhadjian and Güllü Agop was too much to reconcile. During the autumn of 1875, both tried their best to give a blow to the other by producing something sensational. Güllü Agop, in fact, took over some of the Europeans of Manasse's troupe, like the stage director Henri Meynadier and conductor Solié.³⁷ His *Giroflé-Girofla* in Ottoman Turkish was thus a great success with the training and help of these Europeans, staged in the Gedikpaşa Theatre.³⁸

Tchouhadjian, having perhaps less financial means, was confined to his own talent and produced a new operetta, *Leblebici Horhor Ağa* in the French Theatre of Palais de Cristal. The premiere was delayed a few weeks, possible due to Güllü Agop's tricks because perhaps the leading female singer (Mlle Lousnak) performed with his Ottoman Theatre as well. However, finally it was a total success.³⁹ (Cf. below the details). It was repeated in February 1876 in the Palais de Cristal.⁴⁰

The Istanbulite press in Armenian was divided between Tchouhadjian and Güllü Agop (Vartovyan), especially concerning Tchouhadjian's new music. Tahmizian states that the journals *Massis* and *Mimos* defended the composer, while *Orakir* and *Tadron* attacked, and especially the latter was serious since the authoritative Hagop (Agop) Baronian was its main writer.⁴¹ The Istanbulite French journals were rather attentive to Manasse, while the journals published in Ottoman Turkish, like *Hayal*, were more critical towards Güllü Agop (Vartovyan).

³⁶ *Levant Herald*, 5 May 1875, 150.

³⁷ Meynadier was already contracted in May 1875, for three years (!), *Revue de Constantinople*, 23 May 1875, 368-379. *Levant Herald*, 3 November 1875, 385.

³⁸ *Levant Herald*, 3 November 1875, 385. *Revue de Constantinople*, 7 November 1875, 295.

³⁹ *Levant Herald*, 24 November 1875, 409.

⁴⁰ *La Turquie*, 4 February 1876, 1.

⁴¹ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 46.

This approximately two-year period of producing new music theatricals, mostly called operettas, either by translation or by new work, established a relatively large repertoire of plays in Ottoman Turkish either with the original music (in the case of translations) or a new musical vocabulary mixing “Ottoman” patterns with European styles. The two troupes exchanged their theatres very easily, both performing in the Old City of Istanbul and in the Francophone Pera, thus showing that in both locations they could find audiences and imagined interest. Thus the East-West divide can be seriously questioned since the Old City is geographically Europe, too, but in both “Europe” the means to attract an audience was the Ottoman Turkish language and musical style. This also reflects on the fact that none of these performances were understood as a patriotic project (especially after 1873 when Young Ottoman journalists were arrested) but as purely entertainment business.

Tchouhadjian Steps Back (1876-1879)

For unknown reasons, as we have seen, Tchouhadjian gave up the leadership of his company in 1876 and Benglian took it over. Tahmizian says that some actors/singers deserted the company,⁴² despite the success. Perhaps he remained with the troupe until 1879⁴³ but certainly had other possibilities as well.

However, as was shown, the period between 1876 and 1879 is a very troubled time of transition in the Ottoman Empire, since in March 1876 Abdülaziz is deposed, his heir Murad V is also deposed within a few months, and Midhat Pasha under the new Sultan Abdülhamid II promulgated a constitution. Soon, however, the Ottoman-Russian war darkened further the entertainment scene in the capital.

⁴² Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 50.

⁴³ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 52.

During this time, Tchouhadjian, and as we have seen in the case of Manasse, other impresarios, musicians, too, many times abstained from organizing joyful evenings while the Empire was at war. The composer's troupe, now under the leadership of Benglian, perhaps toured nearby cities as well, like Adana. Tahmizian says that Tchouhadjian remained in the capital and after every tour he "verified, adjusted and straightened the musical entire repertoire, in a performing sense."⁴⁴ It is not mentioned what happened with his agreement with Melekian and what was the further role of Melekian in the finances of Benglian's troupe until 1888 (when there is indeed proof that Melekian worked with Benglian).

Tchouhadjian certainly used the war atmosphere to produce some works that sells, like in May 1877 he composed "une marche nationale," that should be understood as an Ottoman military march, because he dedicated it to Sultan Abdülhamid II who accepted.⁴⁵ He must have been in contact with his old troupe because in October 1877 on a patriotic evening the troupe sang his "hymne nationale" that was a monologue of the drama *Vatan* set to music,⁴⁶ perhaps already in 1876.⁴⁷ This might have been a different song than the *marche* because the committee advertised it as an unpublished piece.

Tchouhadjian must have been in contact with other musicians and composers in Istanbul, mostly with the Italians. We have already enumerated his cooperation with Sebastiano and Alboreto, and in 1878 he seemingly worked (for? with?) the

⁴⁴ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 52.

⁴⁵ *La Turquie*, 8 May 1877, 1.

⁴⁶ *La Turquie*, 18 September 1877, 1; 2 October 1877, 1 and 3; 4 October 1877, 1.

⁴⁷ And quotes *Vakit*, 4 October [!] 1876, in his *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 174.

famous master, Pisani, because he published Pisani's new composition for piano and voices entitled in Italian *Pace* (Peace).⁴⁸

Since supposedly his deal with Melekian was long over, Tchouhadjian's income was based on teaching piano, and most likely as the example above shows, on musical publications. He also transformed many of his popular tunes into piano pieces and these were sold perhaps already during this time.⁴⁹ Tahmizian also states that in 1879 he composed music for a drama in Armenian, Dikran Kalemjian's "Ara Keghetsig."⁵⁰ He was more or less well connected with the Istanbulite musicians, be those Armenians, Italians, or Turks.

These connections proved very precious, when a disaster happened sometime in 1879 because his house in Ortaköy was destroyed by a fire. Thus a special charity evening was organized for him in the German musical society's club, the Teutonia, in October 1879 with the contribution of the "éminents artistes de Constantinople." These were Necib Pasha, Savfet Bey, Italians like Madame Musconi, Castagna, Labruna, etc., De Luigi who played a piano polka of Alboreto, and Strani.⁵¹ This catastrophe very likely impoverished him and his family for a long time, supposedly also many musical scores were destroyed in the fire.

⁴⁸ *La Turquie*, 22 February 1878, 1; 4 March 1878, 4.

⁴⁹ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 74 published a piano-score's title page advertising Arif as "opera-comique turque en 3 actes, musique de D. Tchouhadjian – Grand chœur de 1. Acte (safa geldinis). [sic!] Soyez le bien venu, arrangée pour piano par l'auteur."

⁵⁰ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 53.

⁵¹ *La Turquie*, 11 October 1879, 1 and 3.

On Hold (early 1880s)

During the 1880s he lived in Pera/Beyoğlu in rue Arabadji, as a professor of piano.⁵² Tchouhadjian gave performances at family homes with his son, who sang traditional (Armenian?) songs while the father accompanied him on the piano.⁵³ At this time, as we have seen, Benglian starts grand-scale touring and it is very likely that Tchouhadjian did not accompany them.

Meanwhile, performing in Ottoman Turkish in Istanbul became more and more difficult and the authorities stressed theatre control and prohibition more and more. (Cf. details in Chapter 11). Yet French, Italian, Greek, even Arab circus companies rushed to Istanbul in the hope of a good market. In this competition, in the autumn of 1880 perhaps Benglian's company performed at the Croissant the *Leblebici* and other plays⁵⁴ so Tchouhadjian may have had some income. The garden of the Croissant café seems to have become the usual playhouse of the Ottoman Armenian operetta company perhaps notwithstanding the fact that its owner, Léonard Billorian, was also of Armenian origin. However, the Croissant was demolished around April 1881,⁵⁵ although presumably its garden was kept as a summer theatre for this summer.⁵⁶

Tchouhadjian for years vanishes from the news, likely struggling for a living. In 1882, for a charity evening, he conducted an orchestra playing his own composition, the overture of *Arshak II*.⁵⁷ In June 1884, a hymn, dedicated to Sultan Abdülhamid by Tchouhadjian, was sung by the troupe which played the *Leblebici* in

⁵² AO (1881), 357; AO (1883), 440; AO (1885), 276.

⁵³ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 53.

⁵⁴ *La Turquie*, 13 et 14 October 1880, 1; 28 October 1880, 1, 30 October 1880, 1.

⁵⁵ *La Turquie*, 27 March 1881, 3.

⁵⁶ *La Turquie*, 28 May 1881, 3 and the numbers of *La Turquie* during summer 1881.

⁵⁷ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 54.

New French Theatre of Pera, owned by the Armenian church.⁵⁸ (Cf. Table 4.1). The same autumn of 1884, he composed a dirge in Armenian “ArDOSr i shirim” that was played for the funeral of the Armenian Patriarche.⁵⁹

We do not know how much, if anything, was his income from his operettas played by Benglian’s troupe, but for instance, *Arif* was played in May 1884 for the 277th time.⁶⁰ Tchouhadjian’s inactivity during these years was perhaps due to the increased censorship and possibly the anti-Armenian stand of the imperial authorities. However, his operettas became widely popular in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Struggling with Censorship and Attempts to Escape (late 1880s)

His works’ popularity was realized by Tchouhadjian around spring 1885 when the news about Benglian’s troupe in Cairo reached Istanbul.⁶¹ He immediately wrote a letter to Nubar Pasha (see Appendix 9), about the “fâcheuse impression” that troupe left in Cairo. This bad impression is not really what happened since all data points out that Benglian’s troupe was very successful in Egypt. Of course, Tchouhadjian needed a pretext because he offered to go to Cairo with a new troupe and personally conduct the operettas. This enterprise, as he imagined, must be secured by a subvention from the Egyptian government and he asked personally Nubar Pasha, then Prime Minister, to provide “une main secourable.”⁶² (Cf. Appendix 9.)

This letter is an indication that Tchouhadjian wanted to leave Istanbul and looked for better possibilities. His offer, addressed to an Egyptian politician of

⁵⁸ *Le Moniteur Oriental/The Oriental Advertiser*, 6 June 1884, 3.

⁵⁹ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 54.

⁶⁰ And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 424.

⁶¹ According to Gérald Papasian, based on the journal *Al-Zamān*, Tchouhadjian was in Cairo in March 1885 (with the troupe?) and he met with Khedive Tawfiq and dedicated *Leblebici* to him. DTRC, “Les opérettes.” But this is seemingly not valid.

⁶² Letter dated Constantinople 30 June 1885, from Dikran Tchouhadjian to Nubar Pacha Président du Cabinet Egyptien, 4003-037911, Diwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

Armenian origin, who cooperated with the British occupiers, also embodies a proposal for state supported “Ottoman” culture, since, as we have seen, the Egyptian elite indeed was very interested in and enjoyed Tchouhadjian’s operettas. However, his expectations were not returned since Nubar did not support this offer and wrote to Rushdī, the Minister of Public Works, who was also responsible for the state Opera House, that: “Je viens de lui répondre que le Gouverneman ne peut pas accorder de subvention et qu’il a à s’adresser à Votre Département pour avoir l’autorisation de donner de représentations théâtrales.”⁶³

However, from this letter we might induce that Tchouhadjian was not on good terms with Benglian and the operetta troupe, and that he looked down the way they executed their works. This also makes probable that at least in these years he did not “revise” the musical plays every year.

Tchouhadjian continued his activities as a piano teacher and composer of short salon piano pieces. Such a musical “morceau,” *Le mouvement perpétuel*, was advertised in August 1886 as being a bit similar to Weber’s but still original.⁶⁴ However, a happier occasion might have arrived since in February 1886 he was suggested to be decorated in the *Mābayn-ı Humāyūn* (the Imperial Court). Together with a French military musician, Tchouhadjian would get the fourth level of the Mejdī decoration.⁶⁵ However, I have no data to confirm that he did get this decoration, although according to Tahmizian he was decorated with “French and Italian medals.”⁶⁶

⁶³ Letter dated 19 July 1885, From Nubar to Rouchdy, 4003-037912, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-‘Umūmiyya, DWQ.

⁶⁴ *La Turquie*, 28 August 1886, 2.

⁶⁵ Note dated 4 Jumāda’l-Awwal 1303 (8 February 1886), I.DH. 97/77186, BOA.

⁶⁶ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 54.

However, as was quoted in describing Benglian's activity, in August 1886 suddenly all his three operettas, *Leblebici Hor Hor Ağa, Köse Kahya*, and *Arif'in Hilesi* were prohibited.⁶⁷ The reasons are unknown. For popular demands, this ban might have been lifted since already in October 1886 *Leblebici Hor Hor* was performed in the largest playhouse of Istanbul, the Théâtre des Petits Champs.⁶⁸ If the popular demand was really the cause of lifting the ban, and taking into consideration that the plays' author was just decorated, then this particular event presents us a complex image of Ottoman theatrical censorship, further explored in Part V.

His activities in the late 1880s are hard to decipher. Perhaps fearing from censorship he did not produce much, or only some unfinished pieces. In 1887, when Benglian and Melekian prepared for the second tour in Egypt, his name is mentioned in a French newspaper as the conductor, but that is likely a possible misunderstanding.⁶⁹ The failure of Benglian and Melekian in Egypt in spring, their debts, and the legends around this event (cf. Chapter 6), however, pose some questions concerning Tchouhadjian and his working method.

If it is true that Melikian was the owner of original scores, written in 1874-5, and that perhaps Tchouhadjian's own versions were destroyed in the fire of 1879, and Melikian had to leave the scores in Egypt as a guarantee in 1888, then, the question arises, how and who could play these operettas in 1889 in Izmir as Step'anyan claims?⁷⁰ Or, even later, again in many port-cities? One possible version is that Benglian sent money back to Egypt to get the scores and all his equipment,⁷¹ or, there

⁶⁷ *L'Europe Artiste*, 1? October 1886, 2 (quoting *Phare de Bosphore* 4 September 1886). Cf. the document dated 13 Dhu'l-Qa'da 1303 (13 August 1886), DH.MKT. 1360/87, BOA.

⁶⁸ *La Turquie*, 13 October 1886, 2.

⁶⁹ *Le Ménestrel*, 13 November 1887, 366.

⁷⁰ Step'anyan, *Urvagits arevmtahay t'adroni patmut'yan*, 2: 236, footnote 68.

⁷¹ DTRC, "Les manuscrits."

were other versions in the possession of other impresarios or Tchouhadjian himself. However, at least to my knowledge, Tchouhadjian was never associated with staging the pieces in these years.

Be that as it may, Tchouhadjian did not stop publishing piano pieces. In January 1889 such a composition, called “Grand Ballet Arabe” was published in Istanbul. In the description of the *livret*, we are informed that on the title page in his portrait he wears “une brillante decoration” which could mean that he indeed received an (Ottoman?) recognition.⁷² This was advertised in the same time in Armenian as a part of an opera called *Eboudiat and Zemire*.⁷³

In May 1889, a huge concert was organized in the Teutonia, with the contribution of the Armenian *Knar* musical association where the overture of *Arshak II* (under the title *Olympia*, likely fearing censorship), “Eboudiat et Zémiré, Ballet arabe,” “Rapelle-toi, romance,” and “Eboudiat et Zémiré, pot-pourri” were the Tchouhadjian-compositions among the other European composers’ short pieces.⁷⁴ The Armenian press enthusiastically described the concert, alluding that *Zemire* is a new opera of Tchouhadjian and that it was actually the first experiment of the *Knar* as a patriotic Armenian enterprise, that finally “the Teutonia Hall was transformed into a temple of Armenian art.”⁷⁵ Such success was last seen when he staged *Leblebici*, some fifteen years ago.

⁷² *La Turquie*, 5 January 1889, 2.

⁷³ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 55.

⁷⁴ *La Turquie*, 15 May 1889, 3; 18 May 1889, 2.

⁷⁵ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 56-58 quotes fully the article of *Arevelk*, 23 May 1889.

Zemire, Paris, Smyrna, Death (1890s)

However, it took almost two years to stage *Zemire* as a full opera. In the beginning of March 1891, the preparations and rehearsals started to stage this composition in the Nouveau Théâtre Français. The *sujet* was a translation of Maillard's fairy tale into Ottoman Turkish, that was, in turn, translated to French. The songs were written by Anmegian and Panossian.⁷⁶ However, it must be noted that *Zemire* was a very popular operetta and ballet topic in the 19th century, and actually, in 1879 a popular piano transcription of light pieces was published in Paris, among them *Zemire et Azor* of composer Grérty.⁷⁷

The troupe at this time in the Nouveau Théâtre Français was a French association of artists, but also the Greek actress, Lecatza, and the famous French star Mme Judic performed exactly this time, during the rehearsals here. The French artists even hired two Italians to make the decorations.⁷⁸ Because French artists would sing the opera, the libretto had to be translated, from Ottoman Turkish to French,⁷⁹ and the names of the singers were published in the press.⁸⁰ After some difficulties,⁸¹ the premiere was on 9 April 1891 and the genre of the work was announced as “opéra-comique” in four acts.⁸²

It was an immense success. The French artists also organized a matinee performance so that those who could not stay in the city until the evening could enjoy (and pay for) the new composition.⁸³ As a journalist wrote, its success was so great

⁷⁶ *La Turquie*, 5 March 1891, 2; 19 March 1891, 2;

⁷⁷ *Les Beautés Musicales*, transcript pour piano par R. P. Cramer (Paris: Bathlot, 1878).

⁷⁸ *La Turquie*, 4 April 1891, 1.

⁷⁹ *Le Ménestrel*, 12 April 1891, 119.

⁸⁰ *La Turquie*, 8 April 1891, 2. *Le Moniteur Oriental/The Oriental Advertiser*, 7 April 1891, 3.

⁸¹ *Le Moniteur Oriental/The Oriental Advertiser*, 8 April 1891, 3.

⁸² *Le Moniteur Oriental/The Oriental Advertiser*, 7 April 1891, 3.

⁸³ *La Turquie*, 18 April 1891, 1. Also later, 25 April 1891, 2.

that “tout Constantinople, ville et faubourgs, voudra entendre et applaudir *Zemireh*,”⁸⁴ especially celebrating Tchouhadjian and Madame Benneti who embodied the role of *Zemire*.⁸⁵

This success was unprecedented and also unprecedented was how the French press of Istanbul reported because, in fact, this is the first work of Tchouhadjian that the Francophone foreigners or French journalists could understand. This is the reason why Tchouhadjian departed to Paris for presenting his new composition in April (?) 1891.⁸⁶ However, just like Qardāhī two years before, he did not gain any support in the French capital.

His sponsor died a few months after his arrival and then Tchouhadjian tried to use the Armenian contacts in order to stage again *Zamire* in Tiflis or elsewhere but did not succeed.⁸⁷ He finally settled in Smyrna, where Tchouhadjian died impoverished in 1898 before he could move back to France, as he planned. As a French journal remarked at his death, he was named as “Verdi de l’Orient”⁸⁸

Conclusion

Tchouhadjian’s life, activities, and works took place in the context of the Istanbulite modern Ottoman urbanity. Since the Ottoman state had no state opera houses or theatres, he could not propose any of his works, or himself as good for imperial representation. Furthermore, he never wrote any of his works in Armenian, only composed music for Armenian dramas, and for his own works used rather Italian and

⁸⁴ *La Turquie*, 22 April 1891, 2.

⁸⁵ *La Turquie*, 23 April 1891, 2.

⁸⁶ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 60.

⁸⁷ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*,

⁸⁸ *Le Ménestrel*, 17 April 1898, 127.

Ottoman Turkish librettos. Still, we cannot exclude that he was more or less an Armenian patriot within an Ottoman context.

However, Tchouhadjian music theatre neither as a patriotic, nor as a state project was successful, thus he turned to music theatre as a business enterprise. After he presumably lost everything in the fire of his house in 1879, and pressed by the growing censorship of the first half of 1880s, he did not have the time, the urge, the courage, or the possibility to produce new works or sell himself as a composer for imperial representation because there were no state theatres in which the Ottoman state would offer any possibility, unlike in Cairo.

However, via the popularization of his operettas, his name became widely known in the Eastern Mediterranean. Not only a theatre repertoire but also a collection of popular melodies associated with his name was established via the piano transcripts. Although his life is about failed institutionalization, because he was not an imperial musician trained in and with access to the Court of the Sultan, and neither he could be regarded as a full patriot-national hero of Armenians because of his Italian and Ottoman Turkish librettos, his oeuvre was an attempt to synthesize diverse musical traditions, while conforming to European standards. Unlike Ḥijāzī, who conformed rather to Arab standards, while synthesizing diverse musical traditions, Tchouhadjian's works could become, and indeed became for a certain measure, parts of the Western canon of classical music. The nature and politics of the pieces in question will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 9.

Musical Theatricals – the Performances

After introducing via the lives of an Egyptian singer-composer and an Ottoman Armenian composer the context within which performances were created on stage, it is inevitable to deal with the ways original music theatricals appeared in Cairo and Istanbul in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish, the relation between music and language, the traditions that were fused together, and their content.

The performances were parts of the package that theatre-makers offered for all cultural brokers, be they the state, civil organizations, or individuals. The content, language, style and stage production of a particular work were among the features according to which a particular type of “culture” was understood by the audience and by the decision makers. Operas and operettas in French, Italian, Arabic, and Ottoman Turkish (in the context of Greek, Armenian, Bulgarian, etc plays) competed with each other and embodied distinct cultural visions.

Therefore it is crucial to describe the works themselves, to understand if they were obstacles in the institutionalization of music theatre in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish in these two cities. Furthermore, as we have seen, both Ḥijāzī and Tchouhadjian forged diverse traditions – in different frameworks, based on their education – and they dealt with a limited number of plays that later became models or a basis for later developments in various formats (selected parts, melodies, piano-pieces, etc.).

This chapter aims to show the two different repertoires and argue that the popular and semi-institutionalization of Egyptian theatre could start not only because there was a state Opera House but also because the content of the plays and the

musical styles rooted in earlier traditions of music, while in Istanbul, in addition to having no state theatre buildings, the musical style of the plays was only familiar to individuals with a certain educational background and therefore the reception was an issue of class.

Ottoman/Arab Acting and Music: Plural Traditions

Ottoman or Arab acting is not the invention of the late 19th century, nor the results of European influence. “Staging things” was always present in Arabo-Turco-Persian-Islamic entertainments, mutually influencing each other. These Ottoman Turkish types of entertainment are also traceable in the formal Ottoman Balkan provinces to a great extent.

Earlier forms of entertainments are usually considered, as an Arab historian said, “conditions” (*zurūf*) for 19th century later developments.¹ Concerning Arab acting, Landau distinguishes mimicry, shadow and passion plays (*ta^cziyya*).² Religious songs (*inshād, munshid*), storytelling (*taḥdīth, muḥaddith*), shadow theatre (*khayyāl al-ẓill*) or puppet theatre (*Karagöz*, in the Egyptian colloquial *Ara^ooz**), street entertainments, public dancers/singers (*‘awālim*), acrobats and farces (*muḥabbizūn*) were non-institutionalized forms of entertainment, and mostly improvisational (with some exceptions, like *Karagöz*).³ Ottoman theatre histories also consider *Karagöz* and *Orta-oyunu* as pre-histories to 19th century Ottoman Turkish theatre.⁴

¹ ^cAnūs, *Masrah Ya^cqūb Ṣanū^c*, 3.

² Landau, *Studies in Arab Theatre and Cinema*, 1-2.

³ Badawi, *Early Arabic Drama*; Landau, Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 11-26.

⁴ Saim Sakaoglu, “Turkish Shadow Theatre: Karagöz,” *The Turks*, 4:808-819.

Mimicry and farces indeed were very similar to European practices, containing inherently an element of politics, too, since in farces the poor mocked the powerful. In the 19th century these acting traditions were very much alive. The often-quoted William Lane describes a performance in which entertainers mocked a *shaykh al-balad* (chief of a village) in front of Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha for call his attention for the misuse of power.⁵ Plays by sailors also sneered at the authority.⁶ Not only such sarcastic pieces but also some semi-erotic (perhaps also homoerotic) performances should be considered like Theodore Valette’s experience. In 1840, he assisted a performance of the “kieustecs” in Istanbul where young boys in women’s clothes danced in a grotesque manner and a little bit seductive.⁷

To these mocking performances we have to add the great Arab traditions of reciting ballads in communities, like ʿ*Antariyyāt*, singers of the deeds of the mythical black hero ʿAntara that forms one of the greatest pool of sources in the late 19th century for Arab theatre-makers, as we have seen at Ḥijāzī’s case. These types of heroic ballads were also very much present in Ottoman Turkish folk culture, with the additions of tales, which became a separate branch of entertainments, the *meddah*, the storyteller.⁸ These performances between poetry and music embody a certain memory technique also.

Narrowly speaking about music, a number of different Arab musical traditions exist.⁹ The so-called *ṭarab*, an urban tradition of music making in Arab cities, that in a

⁵ Edward William Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (The Hague and London: East-West Publications, 1978), 384-5.

⁶ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 21.

⁷ Théodore Valette, *Souvenirs de Voyage en Turquie dans la Mer Noire et en Grèce* (Marseille: Barlatier-Feissat, 1875), 59.

⁸ EI2, s.v. “Meddah.”

⁹ *New Grove*, s.v. “Arab music,” 1:514-539.

specific sense denotes also “emotional evocation,”¹⁰ many times connected to a religious environment (like Sufi gatherings), is especially important, since from this practice originates most of the early Arab music theatre-makers, including Salāma Ḥijāzī. This music tradition is the closest to (or is the one) that early Arab theatre-makers used in their performances. Already in the 1850s in the Arab café-houses in Cairo this type of music was particularly cherished,¹¹ and later the greatest *ṭarab* singer, °Abduh al-Ḥamūlī, as was shown, indeed joined to theatre troupes. Thus *ṭarab* music with other entertainment elements provided a repository of means to employ in addition to bodily acting and prose-declamation.

Nineteenth-century Ottoman urban music in Istanbul denoted a variety of styles and practices.¹² First, a highly refined tradition usually related to the Palace (called “classical Turkish music,” or “Ottoman art music,”¹³ second, religious (Sufi - Mevlevi) music,¹⁴ third, old Ottoman military (janissary, *mehter*) music,¹⁵ and fourth, *cafeehouse/gazino/meyhane*-music,¹⁶ an urban secular practice which often included Italian or French music, too. The two basic traditions – Arab *ṭarab* and practices of Ottoman urban music – were mixed with each other over the centuries¹⁷ and continued to be throughout the 19th century, the eminent example being al-Ḥamūlī, translating Ottoman Turkish songs into Arabic.¹⁸

In Cairo and Istanbul, these plural practices of improvised acting and art music were not connected before the 19th century (although in storytelling some

¹⁰ Racy, *Making Music in the Arab World*, 6.

¹¹ Cf. my article, “Cairo as pleasure principle,” submitted to *Urban History*.

¹² In general, cf. *New Grove*, s. v. “Turkey,” 19:268-278.

¹³ Bates, *Music in Turkey*, 31-32, Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam*, 90. Ayangil, “Turkish music in the seventeenth century,” *The Turks*, 4:79-88.

¹⁴ Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam*, 91-93.

¹⁵ Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam*, 90-91.

¹⁶ Bates, *Music in Turkey*, 46-48.

¹⁷ *New Grove*, s.v. “Arab music,” 1:514-539.

¹⁸ Lagrange, “Musiciens et poètes en Egypte,” 70.

instruments were used, and for some measure, Koran-recitation could be considered also as a special melange of prose and melody). This connection between text, body, and music took place when Arab individuals invented their own versions of theatre, or when in Istanbul, for patriotic and commercial reasons, theatre had to be popularized for a wide audience.

In the pre-19th century forms of entertainment, stage and audience were not separated by a pre-built arrangement. The entertaining content was based on a shared knowledge of the entertainer and his audience: the mythical past, tales, or contemporary reality (one can only mock someone if the audience already knows him/her, or the type). The challenge that the Arab and Ottoman theatre-makers had to cope with was (European style) acting in a strictly divided space, in an *institution*. The Arab solution to this problem was music: I believe that it is not earlier traditions of acting or theatre (like *khayāl*) but *ṭarab* which is the root of Arab theatre, that was mixed with European acting. Ottoman theatre-makers, on the contrary, had more resources to European techniques of music and theatre; thus they rather represent a new branch of European music theatre in the 19th century.

Music or Prose?

This is the reason for the remarkable difference between Ottoman and Arab theatre: while performances in Ottoman Turkish likely started in prose, Arab theatre was *ab ovo* musical.

The first Arab theatre-maker, Mārūn Naqqāsh, made a distinction between two types of theatricals: *unsung* (comedy, tragedy, drama) and *sung* plays, operas. It is he who chose the second type (opera) as suitable for the first Arabic play, because it was “more tasteful, desirable, splendid and delightful” and because he thought that “it will

be more dear to the heart of my people and my kind.”¹⁹ He himself used the expression “*al-marsaḥ al-mūsiqī al-mujiddī*” (“reforming music theatre”).²⁰ The first *Egyptian* theatrical piece in Arabic was that of James Sanua who presented his first work in 1871 as an operetta.²¹ After Salīm Naqqāsh, Sulaymān Qardāhī’s *Arab Opera* in 1882, and the other theatre-makers’ activity in the 1880s testify to the musical character of theatre in Arabic in Egypt.

Describing a performance of al-Qabbānī in 1884, an expert says that he does not know a piece in Arabic that wouldn’t be accompanied with songs and music, and also dance. He describes an example of Arab theatre: four musicians are placed below the stage, where they sit “à la manière arabe,”²² the band’s instruments being composed of “kiçara”, oud, rebab, and tambourin. They follow the dance with music and singing and they also perform music during the breaks.²³

It is very likely that the first theatricals in Ottoman Turkish (translated from the Italian) in the 1850s were *performed* in prose by Ottoman Armenian actors.²⁴ The early dramatists writing in Ottoman Turkish created pure prose texts, like Şinasi or Hayrullah Effendi.²⁵ Yet, in the 1860s more and more comedies and dramas in Ottoman Turkish were set to music to sell better and to conform to the main (French) fashion of the day. As we have seen “an operetta war” took place in the 1870s in Istanbul, between the Ottoman Theatre troupe (*Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*), the Ottoman

¹⁹ Naqqāsh, *Arzat Lubnān*, 16. Also quoted in Najm, *Naqqāsh*, 11-12, and Moosa, *The Origins*, 28.

²⁰ Naqqāsh, *Arzat Lubnān*, 16. Najm, *Naqqāsh*, 12.

²¹ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 91, quotes “operetta” in Arabic “*ghinā’iyya*.” Matti Moosa, “Ya°qūb Sanū° and the Rise of Arab Drama in Egypt,” *IJMES* 5, no. 4 (1974), 401-433, here 404. Badawi, “Arabic Drama: Early Developments,” in *Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. M. M. Badawi, 329-357 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 339. Najm, however, does not think that Şanū° wanted to use songs. *Al-Masrahiyya*, 14. Gendzier calls this “a small vaudeville show,” Gendzier, *The Practical Visions*, 34.

²² Beckman, “Le Théâtre arabe moderne,” 89.

²³ Beckman, “Le Théâtre arabe moderne,” 90.

²⁴ *Journal de Constantinople*, 22 May 1858, 4. 12 June 1858, 2.

²⁵ And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 68-69.

Opera (*Osmanlı Operası*) and, in addition, Manasse' French Theatre. Many musical theatricals in Ottoman Turkish were produced later as well, the most famous being *Çengi* ("Tchengui" - *The Dancer*) of Ahmed Midhat Effendi (1884) whose music was composed by Haydar Bey.²⁶

The basic difference between early theatre in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic, already visible in the first creators, is that the first writer in Arabic theatre (Naqqāsh) is identical with the one who stages the plays while (and later too) creating dramatic texts in Ottoman Turkish and staging them were – if not separated but certainly – distinct activities. This explains why Arabic theatre-makers from the beginning were interested in the popular reception, and Naqqāsh conceived music theatre the appropriate form to achieve this interest while Şanūsi and other authors in Ottoman Turkish were not involved (or less than their Arab counterparts) in staging, and therefore did not reflect on the needs of the audience. However, during the 1860s, the staging (that is the "selling") of a play in Ottoman Turkish needed more charming features and then prose plays were considered too dangerous (because of censorship), thus music was gradually involved.

Music

The second basic difference arises at this point, namely, the kind of music that was involved. Music theatre in Arabic in Egypt (and Syria), with many European elements, was invented *within* the Arab *ṭarab* tradition or at least using many elements of that tradition with folk songs. The "song" is the basis of Arab music theatre. Music theatre in Ottoman Turkish, in turn, had nothing, or very incidental

²⁶ *Osmanlı*, 1 November 1884, 1. *La Turquie*, 2 et 3 November, 1884, 1.

relation to previous religious or art music and only had common features with the *gazino*-songs. It was, basically, a new branch of the Western European musical tradition, using melodies and some characteristics of Ottoman music but *outside* of that Ottoman tradition. This explains why a Tchouhadjian operetta could be easily conceived for staging in Paris, while a Qardāḥī/Ḥijāzī-performance was not taken to there (except as “images”).

This difference between the main characteristics of music theatre in Arabic in Cairo and theatre in Ottoman Turkish in Istanbul can be explained, I believe, by the training of the producers and singers. As we have seen, the Arab theatre-makers were mostly self-taught, their singers came from the *ṭarab* tradition,²⁷ and although Western music education became popular more and more, those individuals trained in that tradition did not step on the stage. In contrast, in Istanbul the Ottoman Armenians, like Tchouhadjian or Manasse, could study in Milan (the Mecca of contemporary Western music), and since many European music teachers served and lived in Istanbul, they could also find some, although not properly, trained singers in the Western European tradition locally.

This contrast in their backgrounds, knowledge, skill, and resources resulted that although in both cities performances were staged equally mixing European and non-European styles of music and acting, in Istanbul these were produced in within the Western European polyphonic tradition, with Ottoman Turkish texts, while in Cairo mostly still within an Arab traditional framework that was “renewed.” Very cautiously, one may say that music theatre in Arabic was based on bringing popular practices into an institutionalized (building – stage/audience) form while theatre in

²⁷ Racy, *Making Music in the Arab World*, 25-26.

Ottoman Turkish was based on using this institutionalized form in a new language with some characteristics of popular entertainment.

Operetta as a Genre in Cairo and Istanbul in the Late 19th Century

As I argued in the Introduction, opera was very much connected to the building of the modern state and to various ideologies. However, most of the new musical theatricals in Istanbul were called *operetta*, in Cairo commonly *riwāya*, Sanua called his work “operette” – songwork, *ghinā’iyya* - and Qardāhī his troupe an “opera” troupe. These titles show that in the late 19th century, Italian and French music theatre had an influence, in the vocabulary too, on Arabic and Ottoman Turkish.

All these works were called operettas because in the 1870s-80s (French) operetta was the popular fashion worldwide.²⁸ Originating in the 1850s, “opérette” was born in Paris since the public demanded melodies that could be easily sung.²⁹ This might be the major characteristic feature of the “opérette” (in English and German, “operetta”). The king of operettas was Jacques Offenbach,³⁰ while its best example could be the Lecocq’s *Fille de Madame Angot* (1872), one of the most popular pieces among the Francophone inhabitants in Cairo and Istanbul too, where, even in the 1880s, a journal could write: “Lecocq forever!”³¹

Yet, in French there existed a number of distinctions between musicals. The differences between “opéra-bouffe,” “opéra-comique,” “opérette” were not always clear even to the contemporaries. From our context a good example is when Khedive

²⁸ Richard Traubner, *Operetta: a theatrical history* (New York: Routledge, 2003), xii.

²⁹ Joël-Marie Fauquet, *Dictionnaire de la Musique en France au 19^e siècle* ([Paris], Fayard, 2003), J.-M. Fauquet, “opéra-comique”, 897-898, idem., “opéra-bouffe,” 898-899, and J.-C. Yon, “opérette,” 901-902.

³⁰ Of the numerous available biographies, I use Jean-Claude Yon, *Offenbach* ([Paris]: Gallimard, 2000), 9-18.

³¹ *La Turquie*, 12 et 13 February 1888, 2.

Ismā'īl of Egypt orders a troupe of “opéra-comique” in 1877, his superintendent, Draneht Bey corrects as: “le dépeche parle d’opéra comique, c’est sans doute l’opérette qu’on a voulu dire.”³²

Opera and operetta were defined in Arabic, again and again. Rifā'a Ṭaḥṭāwī defined opera in 1831 as the “biggest *sbaktakl* in the city of Paris is called ‘Opera’ [...] and there are many male singers and dancers. Here instrumental singing and dance of gestures [*al-raqs bi-ishārāt*] takes place which are like the gestures of the dumb, indicating marvellous things.”³³ The journal *Wādī al-Nīl* in 1869 at the opening night defined the Opera House as “the playhouse of distanced, imaginary performances [*al-takhlī'āt al-taṣawwuriyya*] mixed with musical melodies.”³⁴ The first Arabic translation of *Aida* in 1871 included a short definition (“representation of a famous historical event composed of marvellous scenes and strange dances mixed with musical melodies”).³⁵ Or for instance in 1880 the journal *Al-Waqt* provides an overview: “The French use various genres and names for the dramas (*riwāyāt*), like the opera which is fully sung (*inshādān*); the operetta which is partly sung, partly recited (*kalāmān*); and the comedy in which there is no singing and stands between comical and serious; while assassination happens in a tragedy.”³⁶

In Ottoman Turkish, such definitions must have been made much earlier since already al-Ṭaḥṭāwī remarks in 1831 that theatre “became famous among the Turks under the name of *kumdiya* [comedia].”³⁷ In a letter from 1841, the Habsburg subject

³² Letter dated 24 August 1877, from Draneht to Khairy Pasha. 5013-003511, Usrat Muḥammad °Alī, DWQ.

³³ Rifā'a Rāfi' al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *al-Dīwān al-naḥs fī iwān Bārīs aw takhlīs al-ibriz fī talkhīs bārīs* (Beirut: Al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya li'l-Dirāsāt wa'l-Nashr, 2002), 141.

³⁴ *Wādī al-Nīl*, 5 November 1869, 868.

³⁵ Only the title page of this libretto survived in a photo. It is published in William Weaver, *Verdi – A documentary study* ([London:] Thames and Hudson, 1977), 228.

³⁶ *Al-Waqt*, 4 December 1880, 3-4.

³⁷ Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *Al-Dīwān al-Naḥs*, 141.

Basilio Sansoni petitioned for playing opera in Pera/Beyoğlu that was defined in the translation as “opera means a certain kind of theatrical play” (*opera ta’bîr olunur bir nev’c tiyatrosu [ti’âtrû!] oyunu*).³⁸ This simple explanation indicates that already at this time, at least among the imperial administrators in Istanbul, European theatre was a well-known entertainment.

Perhaps this is also the reason why in Ottoman Turkish there are not many definitions of opera or operetta. According to the Ottoman Theatre’s advertisement in 1869, they played tragedies (*tragedyalar*), dramas (*dramlar*), comedies (*komediyalar*),³⁹ although at this time surely some of these were set to music. In 1874, however, their repertoire consisted of also operettas (*operetler*) and vaudevilles (*vodviller*).⁴⁰ The genres were not explained, at least not in the advertisements and articles, that alludes to the fact that the audiences might know their meanings very well.

Flexibility and Copyright in Cairo and Istanbul

One of the main features of the operettas, musical dramas, musical comedies in the 1870s and 1880s is that their music and their lyrics were not stable. It is true even in the case of Dikran Tchouhadjian who indeed composed music with fixed notation but again and again changed and revisited his pieces.⁴¹ On the other hand, like in the case of the Arab musicals, the lack of notation did not lead to a loss, rather, to a continuous

³⁸ Letter dated 20 Rajab 1257 (7 September 1841), I. HR. 12/609, BOA. Cf. Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*, 61.

³⁹ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 48 quotes the advertisement of Güllü Agop after *Mümeyyiz*, 19 November 1869, 91.

⁴⁰ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 72.

⁴¹ For instance, the music of Arif was reedited during 1873, Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 44.

re-application and live modification.⁴² The transmission of music, both in Istanbul and in Cairo, with Western notation from the end of the 1880s,⁴³ did not substitute for the traditional master-pupil relations that dominated and very much personalized *tarab* and Ottoman art music, too, until today.

Yet, changing notes or modifying melodies retroactively was not unique to 19th century Ottoman/Arab plays since, for example, Jacques Offenbach rewrote and changed many songs in his operettas,⁴⁴ or Verdi also revised his already finished operas. A music theatrical thus was rather considered an object under continuous “making” and “recomposing” than a final, entirely inflexible work of art. This fluidity and flexibility reflects the general performance practices of the late 19th century. The revision of music could be required by many changing conditions: specific singers, new audiences, finances, and finally, politics. Thus, the realized works were considerably different from each other.

In Istanbul in the 1860s, it was hard to find trained singers for Western European operettas, although many private persons offered music classes; for instance, 18 European music teachers worked in Pera in 1868.⁴⁵ In contrast, in Cairo in this period those persons who were trained in Western European music (like military bands, members of the khedivial family, or other elite individuals) were certainly not destined to step on stage – the members of the khedivial military orchestra were “borrowed” by Qardāhī in the 1880s as we have seen (Chapter 6). Thus, in Cairo religious or traditional singers with good voice became the new stars for the Egyptians who did not use the European singing techniques at all, therefore

⁴² Racy, *Making Music in the Arab World*, 26-31.

⁴³ Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam*, 93.

⁴⁴ See the list of his works, with the versions, in Yon, *Offenbach*, 759-777.

⁴⁵ Cervati et Sarvologo, *L'Indicateur Constantinopolitain*, 222.

they freely chose elements of European music, melodies that they found appropriate, but performed them in their own singing traditions with additional scales like *Ḥijāzī*.

Another reason for this flexibility is the ambiguity of *copyright* in the Ottoman Empire (*ḥaqq/ḥuqūq al-mu'allif* in Arabic, *ta'lif hakkı* in Ottoman Turkish). There was no legal framework for the protection of artistic works or to secure the rights of their authors, especially not theatrical texts or musical scores. Laws of copyright, protecting the rights of printers (the British model) and the authors (intellectual property, the French model), were in continuous development in various European empires since the 16th century. After several negotiations, the Berne Convention in 1886 finalized the base of the international legislation that remained an ongoing process until today.⁴⁶ While some countries, like Germany, France, Italy or Spain,⁴⁷ immediately signed the Convention, the US and the Ottoman Empire refused to do so.

Specifically, theatrical and music publications were protected from the 18th century in Europe. Especially from the 1830s German (1832), British (1833) and French (1810, 1844, 1866) acts established various measures for the protection of rights (and responsibilities) to the publications and of their authors. In the Ottoman Empire, the protection of musical rights was very alien to the traditions, based on master-pupil transmissions.

As a French journal noted in 1869, not only the Ottoman Empire as a whole, but semi-independent Ottoman Egypt was also out of international copyright agreements. Thus in case of European printed musical scores, “it is enough to acquire them, and have them executed,” but the music of the French ballets was still

⁴⁶ See the most important core documents: http://www.copyrighthistory.org/database/identityhtml/static_link_coredate.html (accessed, July 15, 2011).

⁴⁷ Jeanne Moisan, “Madrid et Barcelona, capitales culturelles en quête de nouveaux publics. Production et consommation comparées du spectacle, v. 1870-v.1910,” PhD diss., EUI, 2008, 375.

unpublished. Thus a certain Saint-Léon,⁴⁸ charged by Draneht Bey, preparing for the first season of the Opera House, paid for permissions to copy the music of the ballets.⁴⁹

Already in January 1871 a secret agent suggested the introduction of copyright for theatrical pieces in Egypt,⁵⁰ but most likely nothing was done in this regard. For instance, although Verdi included in his contract (1870) for *Aida* that the Khedive only got the rights in Egypt because Verdi “reserves for himself the rights to the libretto and to the score for the other parts of the world,”⁵¹ I doubt if in 1875 Salīm Naqqāsh asked for Verdi’s permission when in Beirut he translated and adopted it to Arabic.

As we have seen in Istanbul, there are examples when copyright was an issue, like the Tchouhadjian-Melikian agreement in 1873-1875 that might include Melikian’s rights to the scores as well (Tchouhadjian as composer likely transferred his copyright to Melikian).⁵² Or, for instance, in 1887 it was an issue that in “the theatres of the Orient,” the new opera of Verdi, *Othello*, was not permitted to be staged because of copyrights,⁵³ perhaps due to the recent international accord in Berne (1886). Still, other pieces, like works of Offenbach, were not only performed but were translated to Ottoman Turkish without any known permission. I have no knowledge if the Ottoman imperial law protected any of the original Ottoman Turkish operettas

⁴⁸ Arthur Saint-Léon perhaps (1821-1870), famous ballet master.

⁴⁹ *Le Ménestrel*, 11 July 1869, 255.

⁵⁰ Letter dated Le Caire le 27 janvier 1871, to Monsieur Nardi, Inspecteur de Police au Caire from Agent Z. 5013-003022, Usrat Muḥammad °Alī, DWQ.

⁵¹ See the contract in Busch, *Verdi’s Aida*, 473-474.

⁵² Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 43, and DTRC, “Parcours historique.” On the title page of one of *Arif’s* score books for piano, published by Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 74, the following is written “seule propriété pour tous les pays” – although it is not specified whose rights are indicated here, the composer’s, the publishers’s or an unknown owner of rights.

⁵³ *La Turquie*, 9 July 1887, 2. *Othello’s* premiere was on 5 February, 1887 in the Scala.

(like the *Arif* or the *Çengi*) or the Arab musicals (like Sanua's early plays or the *Zifāf* 'Antar performed by Qardāhī's troupe). Surely, in some Ottoman prose publications the following line was written "her hakkı mü'ellifin olmak üzere Ma'ārif Nizāretinin ruhsatile tab' olundu."⁵⁴

However, if music was not fixed or easily changeable, written texts were fixed, especially if printed. This feature, just like today, does not mean that the staged performances were identical with the texts. The texts, providing a plot, characters, and a moral/intellectual/entertaining content, certainly proved to be more permanent than the unwritten, unregistered music in the case of Arabic performances, or in the case of Ottoman Turkish theatre, the lost notes. This is also one reason why these early experimental theatrical productions are considered to be parts of literature and they are usually analyzed as parts of artistic speech.

Ottoman Turkish and Arabic in Theatre

Both in Istanbul and Cairo, the linguistic situation was extremely complex – the *diglossia* of Ottoman Turkish and Arabic (the co-existence of a master, "high" language and vernaculars) was accompanied by the plurality of European languages and those of the various local religious or ethnic communities. In Cairo, the Egyptian vernacular had a special role in popular entertainment, especially connected to humour,⁵⁵ while in Istanbul, although accents of the diverse communities was also an object of humour in traditional acting, in Güllü Agop's Ottoman Theatre the "high" Ottoman Turkish had to be corrected by Namık Kemal and others.⁵⁶ Theories of

⁵⁴ Like in 'Abd al-Hakk Hāmid, *Sahrā* (Istanbul: Mehrān matba'ası, 1296).

⁵⁵ Fahmy, "Popularizing Egyptian Nationalism," 31, 140.

⁵⁶ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 67.

linguistic nationalism or imperialism thus must be very cautiously applied in their case because of the ambiguity of the two levels and the multi-lingual situation.

In all languages of the Ottoman Empire, enormous quantities of entertaining texts were written in the 19th century, sometimes connected to linguistic nationalism (similarly, for instance, to Hungarian literature within the Habsburg Empire), but not necessarily so. The usual view that this revolutionary output was due *only* to the dissemination of European types of literatures is increasingly deconstructed and refuted, at least in the case of Arabic *Nahḍa*,⁵⁷ although indeed many works and genres were translated or adapted. This adaptation was balanced with original experiments always reflecting the earlier forms of expressions or leitmotifs, our period being what Badawi called the “age of Neo-Classicism.”⁵⁸

The significance of using Arabic or Ottoman Turkish on stage was underlined and welcomed both by native speakers and by external observers, mostly Western Europeans, too, as a sign of “progress.”⁵⁹ However, the usage of Ottoman Turkish by Ottoman Armenians on stage was due to economic and political reasons: outside Pera, especially in Istanbul, Ottoman Turkish was the *lingua franca* between the people and was understood everywhere in the Empire. Second, using Ottoman Turkish they could show their loyalty to the Sultan since it was the imperial language. Also, Arabic, especially *fushā* carried a special significance as a common language of educated Arabs.

Even though Ottoman Turkish which was simplified during the 19th century (Chapter 2), poor Armenian or Turkish actors did not know this elite language

⁵⁷ Al-Bagdadi, *Vorgestellte Öffentlichkeit*, 7-11.

⁵⁸ Badawi, “Introduction,” in *Modern Arabic Literature*, 16.

⁵⁹ For instance, the welcoming article of Benglian’s troupe in *Al-Mahrūsa*, 13 February 1885, 4. Cf. Chapter 6.

sufficiently so educated Ottoman Turkish intellectuals had to help them.⁶⁰ But Ottoman Turkish was not only used on stage but also in a number of other types of public discourse in connection with theatre.

From 1847, Ottoman Turkish had been the “official” language of the Naum Theatre; Naum put a text in Ottoman Turkish thanking the Sultan for his financial support on the entrance. In the 1850s Naum advertised his theatre in Ottoman Turkish, Armenian, Greek and Italian.⁶¹ This practice, to invite the very diverse audience in their respective languages, for obvious commercial reasons, was accompanied also by using Ottoman Turkish on stage in the form of hymns to the Sultan Abdülmecid (written by various composers, like Arditı, Guatelli, Necib Pasha, etc) or famous “oriental songs.”⁶² As I argued in Chapter 4, the Gedikpaşa Theatre was perhaps conceived for housing Ottoman Turkish performances directly while in 1872, *Arif* was welcomed as the first operetta in Ottoman Turkish. Even journals written in Ottoman Turkish specialized in theatre, like Agop Baronyan’s *Tiyatro* or Theodor Kasap’s *Hayal*.

Using Arabic in music theatre was natural. As a music theatrical language, it was first used in Mārūn Naqqāsh’ first play in 1847. Theatre-makers consciously played out the *diglossia* situation, usually the colloquial was mixed with *füşha* in Arab operettas. Others, like James Sanua, preferred the colloquial. In addition, Italian and French loan-words were also used to achieve comic effects.⁶³

Al-Qabbānī’s song theatre was described by an Arab traveller in 1882 as: “What I liked most was the purity of the speech and rhetoric: their excellence of

⁶⁰ Cf. the details in the previous parts.

⁶¹ See the poster from 1855 in Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*, 234.

⁶² Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*, 273.

⁶³ Najm, *Ya’qūb Şannū’*, (muqaddima) page dāl, Moosa, “Ya’qūb Şanū’,” 404-405. Fahmy, “Popularizing Egyptian Nationalism,” 96 for the journals of Sanua.

diction, their gracefulness of recent [? *muwallad*] Arab poetry, the degree of their eloquence be it the king or his vizier, and the sweetness of the servants' conversation in the entourage, mixed with melodies of pure Arab music and singing.”⁶⁴ Here, “purity” might refer to *fushḥa* (al-Sanūsī used *faṣāḥāt*) and “sweetness” to the colloquial, characterizing the social classes in the play.

Salāma Ḥijāzī was especially famous because instead of using the colloquial, he asked writers to compose poems or translate dramas into *fushḥā*.⁶⁵ Arab journals increasingly described theatre performances, and of course, advertised them although specialized cultural magazines were not created until the 1890s. There was a certain tension between those (usually from educated religious background, like Muḥammad °Abduh) who condemned the use of the colloquial in written texts and public speech, and those who for satirical, political or any other reasons (for instance, their *fushḥā* was not good) preferred everyday language (like Sanua). This tension, however, was not only about the use of colloquial but also about the content and style.⁶⁶

The similarity of the *diglossia* practices in theatre in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic can be balanced by a difference: although Arabs used translations/adaptations as well (mostly from French and Italian), they never performed (or at least I have no data) in any other language than Arabic. The Ottoman Theatre troupe or the Ottoman Operetta troupe could stage plays both in Ottoman Turkish and in Armenian (perhaps also in French). This is the reason why Arab impresarios played only in Ottoman Arab lands while the Ottoman Armenian impresarios circulated with their troupes

⁶⁴ Muḥammad al-Sanūsī, *al-Rihla al-Ḥijāziyya*, ed. °Alī al-Shanūfi, 2 vols. (Tunis: Al-Sharika al-Tūnisiyya li'l-Tawzī°, 1976), 1:140-141. Cf. also Garfi, *Musique et Spectacle*, 185.

⁶⁵ Faṭḥ Allāh, *Salāma Ḥijāzī*, 23.

⁶⁶ Fahmy, “Popularizing Egyptian Nationalism,” 169-172.

empire-wide, from Saloniki to Cairo. Language abilities predetermined the possible audience and Ottoman Turkish/French were the most profitable.

Italian-French Musical Competition in Cairo and Istanbul

The European competition between music theatricals in national languages (foremost between French and Italian) included Cairo and Istanbul as well. Language in theatre was connected to political power, class, money, self-imagination, fashion, and civilization.

In 1867, talking about Manasse' French Theatre in Pera, an anonymous critic under the pseudonym "Comte de Bragelone" remarks: "C'est surtout au moyen du théâtre que l'esprit français établit sa suprématie dans le monde."⁶⁷ ("It is by the means of theatre above all that the French spirit establishes its supremacy in the world.") The French Theatre in Pera thus was understood by him as a colonial enterprise, a vehicle in the service of the "French spirit." Seraphin Manasse himself, who, counting on the vanity of the ladies in Pera, called them and their daughters to the theatre to *study* French and *imitate* the latest Parisian habits in 1868.⁶⁸

From this informal imperial point of view, Italian is equally important. Although Italian lost its importance as a Mediterranean *lingua franca*, it still preserved its prestige as a musical language. In Istanbul the Naum Theatre was considered to be an Italian scene already in the 1840s and Italian operas were played for Sultan Abdülmecid.⁶⁹ Since Italians educated many Ottoman Turkish and Armenian musicians (if they were not sent directly to Italy), and Italians headed the Imperial Music during almost all the 19th century (Donizetti Pasha, then Guatelli Pasha), Italian possibly meant an elevated musical language in the centre of the Ottoman Empire until the 1870s.

⁶⁷ *La Comédie*, 17 February 1867, 9.

⁶⁸ *Levant Herald*, 14 September 1868, 1.

⁶⁹ Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*, 127-133.

It is therefore no coincidence that the first Ottoman opera, Tchouhadjian's *Arsak II* was most likely written for an Italian libretto with Italian annotations in 1868, and only later was translated to (Ottoman) Armenian. Tchouhadjian in the 1870s cooperated with Italian music professors, as we have seen. Visiting Italian opera troupes often advertised themselves in Italian, also translating the names of the theatres in the 1880s. This is how the Théâtre des Petits Champs became Teatro Municipale del Campetto or Teatro Municipale del Piccolo Campetto.⁷⁰

The Ottoman Empire was a convenient territory for the export of the cultural wars between Italian and French music theatre, although the fighters were *not* always Italians and Frenchmen. A clear evidence of this competition and its consequences is the contract between Michel Naum and Seraphin Manasse in 1865, about the Italian and French “territories” of their theatres.⁷¹ In 1868 when Michel Naum died, Bartholomeo Giustiniani, the proprietor of Manasse's French Theatre, as we have seen, asked the Sultan not to continue granting the monopoly for French to Joseph Naum.⁷²

The establishment of the (Italian) Opera House in Cairo in 1869 prompted a French critic to envision the world victory of Italian music. He feared that since out of 100 Egyptians already 30 speak Italian, soon we would hear in the Egyptian streets the songs of *Trovatore*, *Rigoletto*, *Barbier de Seville*, etc.⁷³ Although the critic forgets or never learned that the (French) Comédie in Cairo was the *first* khedivial playhouse,

⁷⁰ See for instance, the advertisement of Castagne's company in *La Turquie*, 6 October 1883, 3.

⁷¹ Originally, the photocopy of this document was given to me by Emre Aracı who in turn got it from Suha Umur. This is a contract in French, dated 1 April 1865, between Naum and Manasse, testified by the Municipality of Pera. At the back of the document is written Meclis-i Vale 23871. In the Ottoman Archive, I could identify this letter finally as part of LMVL. 532/23871, BOA.

⁷² *Levant Herald*, 18 March 1869, 3. Cf. Translation dated 26 C 1285 in A.MKT.MHM. 423/78, BOA.

⁷³ “L’Egypte et la musique italienne,” *L’Art Musical*, 15 July 1869, 1-2.

he is still right since not Offenbach, but Verdi will be asked to compose a national opera for Egypt.

Italian-French separation was only characteristic in Cairo during the directorship of Draneht Bey (1869-1878). In Istanbul, for instance, already in the 1850s increasingly French operas, like Meyerbeer's, were played in the Italian Theatre of Naum.⁷⁴ After 1879, the situation changed in Cairo too and the Cairo Opera House was given to visiting troupes playing in French.⁷⁵ The competitive (French-Italian) situation would be only reproduced in 1887 in Pera but no more in Cairo.⁷⁶ Italians and Greeks used the Tepebaşı Theatre (Théâtre des Petits Champs) mostly during the summer while the Nouveau Théâtre Français (1884) was designed for French theatricals. (cf. Table 4.1)

One must note that after the Azbakiyya theatres in Cairo in 1868-1871, no new theatres were built to “house” purposefully Italian or French performances, except the New French Theatre in Pera. Other European languages were also present, like German,⁷⁷ English, or German/Hungarian,⁷⁸ and of course, theatricals especially in Greek, Bulgarian, Armenian were played in Istanbul.

The economic and symbolic power of language in music theatres was not confined to European languages. The 1870 *imtiyāz* of Güllü Agop, which explicitly gave him the privilege to play in Ottoman Turkish, indicates also a kind of language

⁷⁴ Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*, 167.

⁷⁵ Perhaps not unrelated to the fact that now Léopold Larose was the impresario of the Opera House, cf. Chapter 11.

⁷⁶ Since only the Khedivial Opera House remained in Cairo as a place of grand entertainments, we may regard French and Italian “seasons” as an informal competition – but in general, Italian lose out in Cairo.

⁷⁷ In Istanbul, German was an old musical language because of the existence of the Teutonia Society.

⁷⁸ Hungarian musicians were quite common in Istanbul, like Reményi Ede, Onódy Kálmán, actresses like Csillag Róza.

barrier, or, at least, that language was used as a means for business.⁷⁹ Just like Naum's, Güllü Agop's monopoly was *not* valid empire-wide; he got 10 years privileges for "Dersa'adet [Istanbul] and the Three Cities [Pera/Galata, Eyüp, Üsküdar]."⁸⁰ I have no knowledge of such privileges given in Egypt.

Composing

Ta'lif in Arabic means "to compose," "to write" with the preliminary meaning "to unite," "to put things together," "to combine," "to compile." This word was used in Ottoman Turkish (*te'lif*) with the same meaning. In both languages, this word refers to the creation of a text.

In both languages *tawqī'c*, *şanna'afa*, etc meant to compose music. For instance, the Ottoman Turkish translation of *Aida* in 1871, says *Ghislanzoni tarafından inşā ve tanzīm ve Verdi nām-ı musika- inās ma'rifatile muzika-ı notasına vad'c ve tevkī'c olunarak*⁸¹ while in Arabic *ta'lif al-mu'allim Ghislanzoni wa-tawqī'c al-usta Verdi muşannifu-hu*.⁸² In Arabic, *talhīn* ("giving a melody") signifies a special sense of composition: *singing* a previously written text as opposed to a composition for instruments.⁸³

Creation of a musical play in the 19th century usually presupposes the joint work of a writer (text) and composer (music) and the whole mechanism that is needed to transform the interwoven text and music into a live performance. Concerning our period, although many early texts survived, in the absence of recordings and notation, it is very hard to reconstruct the musical parts of theatre in Arabic. It is, for some

⁷⁹ I.ŞD. 18/777, BOA, cf. also Chapter 4 and Chapter 11.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Published in 'Abdūn, *Khamsūn 'Āmān*, 144.

⁸² Published in 'Abdūn, *Khamsūn 'Āmān*, 141.

⁸³ Faṭḥ Allāh, *Salāma Hijāzī*, 51.

measure, easier in the case of Tchouhadjian's Ottoman Turkish operettas but still many Ottoman musical plays/scores are lost.

Being a composer in Cairo in the 1870s-1880s could mean a variety of practices. Some say that James Sanua composed his own music for his theatricals in the 1870s, but this seems to be refuted by Lagrange on the basis that "composition" did not have the same meaning that time as it has today.⁸⁴ Others similarly state that Salāma Ḥijāzī "composed" his own melodies for the new texts in Qardāhī's or his own theatre.⁸⁵ In Arabic, a composer was named *usta* ("master," for instance, Verdi in 1871), *mu'allim*, or *mūsīqār* but neither Sanua, nor Ḥijāzī was ever named as such in the contemporary press. In Ottoman Turkish, a composer, like Tchouhadjian, was *bestekār/besteci*, above Verdi was named as *mūsika-şinās*, and Offenbach was *musika hocası*,⁸⁶ once *mūsikār*.⁸⁷ Donizetti Pasha's stamp in 1831 figured *ustakār-ı muzika-ı hümayün*.⁸⁸

The creative process was very conscious in the case of the earliest staged Arabic operetta, *Al-Bakhīl* of Mārūn Naqqāsh (staged 1847), and also the earliest Egyptian operetta, the lost *Rāstūr wa-Shaykh al-Balad wa'l-Qawwās* of James Sanua (staged 1871). According to the present state of research, both plays are considered original works, created after the authors thoroughly studied some Italian theatricals.⁸⁹ It is very likely that Sanua knew Naqqāsh's work and was inspired by it.⁹⁰ Both

⁸⁴ Maḥmūd Kāmil, an Egyptian musicologist, states that Şanūc himself composed the music for his vaudevilles, quoted in Lagrange, "Musiciens et poètes" 83.

⁸⁵ Faṭḥ Allāh, *Salāma Ḥijāzī*, 51.

⁸⁶ *Hayal*, 26 Teşrin-i Evvel 1290, 1.

⁸⁷ Cf. an advertisement of *La Belle Hélène – Bāl Elen* in Ottoman Turkish of a later period by the Ottoman Theatre (under Fasulyacıyan), in And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 339.

⁸⁸ Aracı, *Donizetti Paşa*, interior title page illustration.

⁸⁹ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 91-92. Moosa, "Ya'qūb Şanūc," 416-417

⁹⁰ Cf. that *Arzat Lubnān* was available in Egypt in 1870 and this book was a source of inspiration for the first Arab theatre troupe that year, Letter dated Le Caire le 27 janvier 1871, to Monsieur Nardi,

authors invented a plot, perhaps modelled after Italian examples, wrote original dialogs and originated personalities, then fused the words with popular songs and finally themselves arranged staging.

Naqqāsh (or his publisher, another family member) in the printed edition, at the end of the text included the titles of existing Arab folk- or French songs referring to the corresponding line numbers of the prose.⁹¹ Thus composing here means an assemblage of previously existing elements with a new text and staging. This understanding perhaps became characteristic of Arab musical theatricals. *Taʿlīf*, “composing,” that is, “uniting,” and thus producing a new type of quality, might refer to a *Gesamtkunstwerk*-understanding before its German invention.

After Mārūn Naqqāsh, theatre-makers from Beirut, like Niqūlā and Salīm Naqqāsh, Khayyāt, or Qardāhī used a more or less common repertoire, and based on Mārūb Naqqāsh’ practice, they all involved music. But since none of them were musicians, they either used the same method, or in Egypt, they cooperated with local musicians, famous *takhts* or famous singers like Ḥijāzī. Abū Khalīl al-Qabbānī from Damascus brought new repertoire to Egypt, mostly perhaps his own musicals, but al-Qabbānī – himself a musician – likely used his own melodies.⁹²

While leaders of Arab theatre groups in Cairo were impresarios, writers, sometimes actors or musicians in one person, in Istanbul the creative process was more differentiated. We have two examples of an impresario/composer: Seraphin Manasse (composing musicals in Armenian and French only), and Dikran Tchouhadjian (composing musicals in Italian, Armenian, and Ottoman Turkish). Both

Inspecteur de Police au Caire from Agent Z. 5013-003022, Usrat Muḥammad ʿAlī, DWQ. Cf. the report in Appendix 6.

⁹¹ Reproduced in Najm, *Naqqāsh*, 57-68. Cf. Moosa, “Naqqāsh,” 110-111.

⁹² *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 62.

were trained in Milan, almost the same period (beginning of the 1860s) according to the Italian school of music, thus they both testify a familiar pattern of “composition” in the dominant Western European sense. Also a number of Ottoman Turkish composers trained in this tradition (mostly in the Imperial Music by the Italian professors) wrote music to theatricals: Mustafa Effendi, the famous Kadri Haydar Bey, etc.

We can already trace this differentiation in the creation of the first explicit musical in Ottoman Turkish, *Leyla ve Mecnun* (Leyla and the Madman), an “opera,” premiered in January 1869,⁹³ in the Gedikpaşa Theatre, by Güllü Agop’s Ottoman Theatre group. *Leyla ve Mecnun* was a popular⁹⁴ Ottoman/Muslim love tale of Arab origin about a young man, Qays, who went mad when his love, Laylā, was forbidden from him by her father. The Ottoman Theatre played Fuzūlī’s version (a 16th century Azeri poet, *Dāstān-ı Leyla ve Mecnun*) that a certain Mustafa Effendi “arranged and compiled” (*tertîp ve telîf [tartîb ve ta’lîf]*).⁹⁵ We do not know about what *ta’lîf* means here exactly: adaptation for stage, genuine writing, or the music that is unknown.

Arif Ağa’nın Hilesi (The Trick of Arif), a work co-authored by Tchouhadjian and an Italian musician, A. Sebastiano, shows a remarkable cooperation. The French journals of Istanbul/Constantinople/Pera were quite attentive to the event, although none of them participated directly.⁹⁶ There was a general success, it seems, and the music was judged as very original.⁹⁷ This piece was restaged during the autumn of

⁹³ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 47. The second advertisement in the journal *Terakki* says “Layla ve Macnun operası,” 9 Shawwāl 1285 (10 January 1869), 4. However, a later performance of the *Leyla ve Mecnun* in 1872 is called a drama “intercalé en outre, des chants avec accompagnement de musique (manéh).” *Levant Herald*, 3 February 1872, 991.

⁹⁴ Strauss provides a list from 1889 of the most popular books in which number 14 is an 1872 edition of *Leyla ile Mecnun*. Strauss, “Who Read What,” 58.

⁹⁵ *Terakki* quoted in And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 47.

⁹⁶ *Levant Herald*, 13 December 1872, 255.

⁹⁷ *Levant Herald*, 23 December 1872, 279.

1874, in the French Theatre in Pera (but in its original Ottoman Turkish) and this time it was advertised as co-authored by A. Alboretto,⁹⁸ a piano teacher.⁹⁹ Both in Gedikpaşa and in Pera the *Arif* attracted full houses. Later, in 1879, the *Arif* was still advertised as co-written by Tchouhadjian and Alboretto.¹⁰⁰ The involvement of Italian musicians in Istanbul in the creation of musical plays shows a cooperation which was unimaginable in Cairo.

The perhaps most ill-fated Ottoman Turkish operetta, *Çengi* (“*Tchengui*” - *The Dancer*) by Ahmed Midhat Effendi whose music was composed by Haydar Bey,¹⁰¹ (1846-1904, a trained musician in the *Müzika-ı Hümayūn*) was staged by the Ottoman Theatre group (now under the directorship of Minakyan) in 1884 (see more in Part V). It could be considered as a unique creation because Ahmed Midhat reworked his own earlier novel (1877) for the stage. The birth of this work reflects a clear differentiation that mostly exists until today: the author, the composer, the director, and the singers/actors are separate individuals. Haydar Bey later also composed the operetta *Penbe Kız* (*Pink Girl*, 1886), for the libretto by Osman Nuri and Muslihiddin Bey.¹⁰²

An exceptional case is Seraphin Manasse who produced Armenian and French operettas in Istanbul. His five musicals are problematic since out of the five perhaps only two can be considered as new works. The most famous one, *The Mongols* (1875) was proudly advertised as “paroles et musique par M. S. Manasse,”¹⁰³ although the critics found it an imitation of Offenbach.¹⁰⁴ However, still it could be considered as

⁹⁸ *Levant Herald*, October 31 1874, 2.

⁹⁹ AO (1881), 145.

¹⁰⁰ See a poster published in And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 339.

¹⁰¹ *La Turquie*, 2 et 3 November, 1884, 1.

¹⁰² And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 428-429. The libretto is published in Metin And, “Bir Tanzimat Operati: Penbe Kız,” *Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi*, no. 3 (1972): 167-184.

¹⁰³ *Revue de Constantinople*, 21 March 1875, 467.

¹⁰⁴ *Revue de Constantinople*, 21 March 1875, 568-570.

an original work, although poor. At the premiere, Manasse himself conducted the first act, and at this moment the impresario/composer/musician were integrated in one person.

The creative process of composing an Ottoman or Arab operetta was thus very much defined by the cooperation of various individuals who each gave their own knowledge, skill, or gift. In fact those who embodied the European ideal of the lonely genius-composer (like Tchouhadjian or Manasse) did not succeed in their personal achievements, even if the press and the audience favourably received their works. Arab music theatricals were, in contrast, the results of collaborative projects between various individuals.

Example of an Operetta 1 - Leblebici Horhor Ağa

If we would choose an ideal, original operetta, which was played both in Istanbul and Cairo, than we could not find a better example than Tchouhadjian's *Leblebici Horhor Ağa*. It was even considered worth staging for the honour of visiting Habsburg Prince Rudolph and his wife in 1884 in the Théâtre des Petits Champs (although perhaps they did not see it finally).¹⁰⁵ The career of *Leblebici Horhor Ağa* includes Turkish movies (1916, 1923, 1934) and the complete rewriting of its plot in French in 2010 by Gérald Papasian, under the title *Gariné*.¹⁰⁶

Dikran Tchouhadjian composed *Leblebici Horhor Ağa* (also known as *Fleur d'Orient/Karine/Garine*), approx. in English “Good Old Horhor, The Chickpea Vendor,” for the Ottoman Turkish text by one of his actors, Takvor Nalian.¹⁰⁷ The

¹⁰⁵ *Moniteur Oriental*, 15 April 1884, 3. And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 99 states that it was performed for them based on *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, 18 April 1884.

¹⁰⁶ Premiere: 11 May 2010. Théâtre de St. Maur, Paris.

¹⁰⁷ Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 49.

premiere was on 17 November 1875 in the French Theatre (*Palais de Cristal*) in Pera by the Ottoman Opera troupe.¹⁰⁸ Once upon a time, “in the times of the Janissary,” a *leblebici* lives in an Anatolian village and a young Bey, Khourshid from Istanbul falls in love with Fatime, his daughter, and takes her to the capital. The poor father rushes after his daughter and has many adventures because he is not used to the city. Finally, he manages to find his daughter but has to accept her marriage – the happy wedding is the last scene.¹⁰⁹

The context of this work is the “operetta war” in Istanbul as we have seen. This was the third operetta of Tchouhadjian, so the Istanbulite French press judged it as superior to the previous one (*Köse Kahya*) but not as original as the first (*Arif*). Although the critic Agop Baronian immediately dubbed the music a “mixture”, in a pejorative meaning, between Oriental and Occidental elements,¹¹⁰ exactly this mixture made it very popular all over the shores of the Ottoman Empire. In Cairo in 1885, when Benklian’s Ottoman Operetta troupe played the *Leblebici*, the music was described as composed of “airs turcs auxquelles l’auteur [...] a su donner, en leur appliquant certains procédés harmoniques de la musique européenne, une tournure fort agréable.”¹¹¹

This was an original musical with a simple but powerful plot, an experience perhaps known to many (love, countryside-city opposition, old-young, class differences) with choirs and a happy celebration at the end. Not only did the music and the plot contain impressive elements but the set was equally splendid because of

¹⁰⁸ Tahmizian provides 5 November 1875, without reference. Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 48.

¹⁰⁹ *Levant Herald*, 17 November 1875, 401 and 24 November 1875, 409.

¹¹⁰ Quoted by Tahmizian, *The Life and Work of Dikran Tchouhadjian*, 46, based on the journal *Tadron*, November 1875 (second week).

¹¹¹ *Le Bosphore Egyptien*, 3 February 1885, 3.

the rich costumes. Perhaps this was an orientalising Western operetta or a commercial musical, perhaps both.

This play was in the centre of the repertoire of the two subsequent Ottoman Operette troupes, touring Greece, Ottoman port cities, Istanbul and Egypt, between 1880 and 1910s. It was certainly performed in France in the 1930s in Turkish. It is said that it was translated to many languages (Armenian, Greek, Russian, French) but in the 19th century I have knowledge only of Ottoman Turkish performances, although presumably it was translated to French by Pierre Anmeghian in 1887 under the title *Fleur d'Orient*.¹¹²

Leblebici Horhor Ağa embodies the best example of a composition written in the vein of the polyphonic Western tradition in Istanbul using elements of Ottoman music, “fusing” orientalising melodies with classic declamation. Its popularity among upper class Ottoman Turkish speakers of late Ottoman urban centres proves that it embodied Ottoman urban culture in a successful Westernized form.

Translations of Librettos

After surveying the aspects of the creative process of music theatre, in the following I focus on the translation of European opera/operettas which – nonetheless – was an equally important creative process. Although in histories of Ottoman and Arab theatre/literature,¹¹³ European novels and classic dramas figure as the most important material translated, librettos of French and Italian operas/operettas were, in fact,

¹¹² DTRC, “Opérettes,” “Notes.” Under this title I only located scores for piano.

¹¹³ Translation in the late 19th century is a complex issue, cf. Badawi; Al-Bagdadi; Pierre Cachia, “Translations and Adaptations,” in Badawi, *Modern Arabic Literature*, 23-35. Moosa, *The Origins of Modern Arab Fiction*, 91-119.

earlier translated into Ottoman Turkish and Arabic and perhaps provided an experimental text for later other types of literary genres.

In Istanbul from the 1840s librettos/plots of operas, like *Nabucco*, were translated into Ottoman Turkish for the use of Sultan Abdülmecid and his harem.¹¹⁴ A description is extant about how such a libretto translation was used. In 1843, a visiting Italian troupe was hired to perform in the harem Donizetti's opera *Belisario* in an improvised theatre in one of the large rooms: "as the ladies occupied their seats, they brought a booklet in their hands [...] during the performance the ladies listened very seriously, reading the booklet with much attention."¹¹⁵

As Emre Aracı calls the attention, this particular report actually refers to the earliest translated opera libretto available *publicly*, that was indeed Donizetti's *Belisario*.¹¹⁶ This libretto in Ottoman Turkish was translated from the Italian, with a short explanation about the opera's *sujet*, and it was advertised for sale in April 1842 for six kuruş.¹¹⁷ It was a translation by a certain Hayrullah Effendi who was at that time a student at the *Tıbbiye mektebi* (Medical School, which was in front of the Naum Theatre, today the Galatasaray School).¹¹⁸ The ladies of the harem read his translation of *Belisario* likely, brought to them by the theatre troupe itself. Later, the Palace perhaps directly ordered translations, which is testified to by numerous, mostly handwritten translations now kept in the Ottoman Archive of the Turkish Prime Ministry (BOA).

¹¹⁴ Numerous opera libretto translations survived from the Court, either in the Dolmabahçe Palace Archives or in the BOA. The *Nabucco*'s translation is dated from 1849/1850 (1266), HH.d. 25249, BOA.

¹¹⁵ *Le Ménestrel*, 26 February 1843, 6.

¹¹⁶ Aracı, *Donizetti Paşa*, 117-120.

¹¹⁷ *Ceride-i Havadis*, 19 Rabî' al-Awwal 1258 (30 April 1842), 4.

¹¹⁸ Sevengil, *Opera San'ati ile ilk temaslarımız*, 66-67. Cf. Turan-Komsuoglu, "From Empire to the Republic: the Western Music Tradition and the Perception of Opera," 14.

Another exceptional music theatre translation, apart from the librettos of the Palace, is an opera that was played in 1855 in the Naum Theatre. The original was *L'Assedio di Silistria*, an Italian opera by Giacomo Panizza (1801-1860). The libretto was translated into Ottoman Turkish (*Silistre operası*), although naturally during the performance it was sung in Italian. Silistre was besieged during the Crimean War in 1854 thus this play was an expression of support for the Ottoman Empire against the Russians.¹¹⁹ (One may note that Namık Kemal also wrote a famous drama, *Vatan yahut Silistre*, [*Homeland, or, Silistre*] about this siege). It is possible that some opera plots were also translated into Ottoman Turkish for Muḥammad °Alī Pasha in Egypt in the 1840s.¹²⁰ These early elite translations, however, had no real contact with later musical developments.

The Arabic and Ottoman Turkish translations of French operettas in Cairo (like *La Belle Hélène* by Ṭaḥṭāwī) in 1869 or those of *Aida* and *Les Huguenottes* in 1871, ordered by Khedive Ismā°il and Draneht Bey,¹²¹ caused much more public resonance than the earlier ones in the Ottoman Palace in Istanbul because the performances themselves were public and the translators were government officers or journalists like Abu'l-Su°ūd Effendi who translated *Aida* as was shown. His and his son's experience with theatre was immediately made public in their *Wādī al-Nīl* newspaper. The Khedive might have ordered such translations because during the early 1850s, when librettos were translated for the use of Sultan Abdūlmecid and his

¹¹⁹ And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 417-418, also his "Türkiye'de İtalyan sahnesi," 127-142. Recently, with more clarifications Aracı, *Naum*, 227-232.

¹²⁰ See Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 39; and my article, "European music and Muḥammad °Alī Pasha, 1805-1849," in *The Ottoman Empire and European Theatre II* (Wien: DJA/Lit, 2011).

¹²¹ The translations of *La Belle Hélène* and *Aida* were in fact printed but were intended for the court of Khedive Ismā°il. Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 48.

harem in Istanbul, he actually was exiled to Istanbul and very likely heard about these practices.¹²²

The first translated librettos published for public dissemination in Cairo were Donizetti's *La Favorite* and Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* translated into Arabic by Muḥammad °Uthmān Jalāl, a government officer, printed at the expense of the philanthropic Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥī, a rich man of the Khedive, in 1870. Since the booklets contain the information of staging the originals in the Opera House (1 and 4 November 1870), the source of these publications might be very well again the needs of the court. Yet no doubt al-Muwayliḥī printed them on his own expense "to distribute them freely to everyone who does not know foreign languages."¹²³ The translation of *Aida* by Abu'l-Su°ūd Effendi in 1871 was not available for public sale, unlike °Āyida of Salīm Naqqāsh that was in 1877 on sale in Ḥabīb Gharzūzī's bookshop for two francs in Alexandria.¹²⁴

These early opera/operetta libretto translations, of what a few survived in Ottoman Turkish in the BOA, but none in Arabic in National Archives of Egypt (DWQ), were punctual and utilitarian, many times also providing short summaries of the plots. The printed or handwritten texts were usually distributed for harem ladies who did not know French or Italian.

¹²² Ismā°īl was in Istanbul during the last years of °Abbās Pasha (1852-54?), even started an Ottoman career, being appointed to the Legislative Council. Al-Ayyūbī, *Ta°rikh Miṣr*, 1:12.

¹²³ *Wādī al-Nīl*, I kept Sadgrove's translation, *Egyptian Theatre*, 58-59.

¹²⁴ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 130.

Full Translations of Musicals?

Translation of librettos gave way to a much more complex activity when French and Italian musicals started to be *performed* in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic. The exact meaning of translation in most cases cannot be clarified: there is not much data if these were performed preserving the original music and only translating/adapting the texts in Ottoman Turkish or Arabic or the music was also changed and if so, how.

Translation is *tarjama* in Arabic¹²⁵ and *tercüme* in Ottoman Turkish.¹²⁶ In 1871, the translations of theatrical plays by Muḥammad ʿUthmān was advertised as *bidʿa adabiyya wa-qitʿa taʿrībiyya aw idkhāl uslūb jadīd min al-taʿlīf al-luġha al-ʿarabiyya*, published on the expenses of Ibrāhīm al-Muwayliḥi.¹²⁷ In 1890, one of the most prolific translators of theatricals, Najīb al-Ḥaddād, reflected on the nature of translation by distinguishing *tarjama* and *taʿrīb* “Arabization.” He emphasized that since the distance between Arabic and European languages is wider than the difference between European languages (referring mainly to English, French, German), *taʿrīb* supposes much more than translation. A good *muʿarrib*, he says, must confirm to the “Arab taste” (*al-dhawq al-ʿarabī*) and thus it is not the exact translation but his “eloquence in his own composition” (*faṣāḥa tarkībi-hi*) that gains fame and success.¹²⁸ However, we have no reflection on musical “translation,” adaptation.

As we have seen, Güllü Agop fought the “operetta war,” perhaps on the initiative of a certain Ali Bey,¹²⁹ with a number of French operettas in Ottoman

¹²⁵ Theatrical translations into Arabic, *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 193-287.

¹²⁶ Theatrical translations into Ottoman Turkish, cf. And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 438-447.

¹²⁷ *Wādī al-Nīl*, 20 Shaʿbān 1287, 2-3.

¹²⁸ Najīb al-Ḥaddād, “Nazra fiʾl-taʿrīb,” *Al-Ahrām*, 29 November 1890, 1.

¹²⁹ There was a person, called Ali Nihad Bey, who wrote remarkable articles in French about the Ottoman Theatre and Tchouhadjian’s troupe, *L’Univers*, May 1875, 378-380.

Turkish translation: *La Fille de Mme Angot* (1874),¹³⁰ *La Belle Hélène* (1875),¹³¹ their greatest success, *Giroflé-Girofla* (1875),¹³² *Les Brigands* of Offenbach (1877),¹³³ an “unpublished” opera of Piciotto, *Télémaque* (1878).¹³⁴ Also, in 1874 Tchouhadjian already had the libretto of Lecocq’s *Fleurs de Thé* translated,¹³⁵ and perhaps this served as the basis one of his later compositions. We have no names attached to the translators of the librettos.

Sadgrove, without indicating his source, states that Salīm Naqqāsh in Egypt in 1876-77 may have performed in Arabic Meyerbeer’s opera *L’Africaine* as *Al-Ifrīqiyya*.¹³⁶ Later in the 1880s, *Al-Ifrīqiyya* was indeed performed, there is news about a version of *La Belle Parisienne*.¹³⁷ The performance history of Naqqāsh’s *‘Ā’ida/‘Āyida*, is dubious, Sadgrove without indicating his source states that Naqqāsh’s troupe performed it in 1876/77,¹³⁸ but I have data only that al-Qabbānī staged it in September 1884 in Egypt,¹³⁹ and as we have seen, in the late 1880s, it was repeatedly performed by Qardāhī’s troupe(s) and others. It is said that Naqqāsh did not change much the text of Ghislanzoni’s and Camille du Locle’s, only the music was significantly changed to “oriental melodies” (*alḥān sharkiyya*).¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, it

¹³⁰ *Revue de Constantinople*, 2 May 1875, 237.

¹³¹ *Revue de Constantinople*, (no date) January 1875, 88.

¹³² Ali Nihad Bey, “Les théâtres turcs,” *L’Univers – Revue Orientale*, May 1874, 378-380. Also *Revue de Constantinople*, 7 November 1875, 295.

¹³³ *La Turquie*, 28 December 1877, 1.

¹³⁴ *La Turquie*, 8 April, 1878, 1.

¹³⁵ *Levant Herald*, 25 September 1874, 749.

¹³⁶ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 132-133. Najm, *Al-Qabbānī*, 401, gives this as the work of Eugène Scribe who was the librettist of Meyerbeer.

¹³⁷ *Al-Ahrām*, 10 March 1886, 2.

¹³⁸ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 130.

¹³⁹ Cf. also Najm, *Al-Qabbānī*, 404.

¹⁴⁰ Najm, *Salīm Naqqāsh*, page b.

is possible when Ḥijāzī started his final phase of career in 1905, he composed new melodies to this “operetta.”¹⁴¹

It is likely that in the translated operettas into Ottoman Turkish the original music was preserved and only the texts – perhaps with some modifications – were translated into the new language. I suppose this is the case because a relatively huge number of Europeans/Francophone journalists participated in these performances who were familiar with the original and they did not complain about any change in the music. For instance, an 1875 performance of *La Fille de Madame Angot* in Ottoman Turkish was even praised by a French critic, compared to its performance in French.¹⁴²

One reason for the relative absence of translated and staged musicals in Arabic compared to the Ottoman Turkish production is that the real peak of Arabic Egyptian theatre starts in the 1880s, when these French pieces were no more novelties, and (Syrian) Arab impresarios already possessed their own repertoires. Second, as we have seen, in Egypt there was no trained musicians/singers in Western European music who could perform a full musical. This might be also responsible for the fact that it is very likely that translated operas and operettas did not, or only partially, preserved the music of the original. It is almost sure, for instance, that even borrowing the khedivial military music band, Qardāḥī’s performances of *‘Ā’ida* did not reproduce Verdi’s original music and melodies.

¹⁴¹ Najm, *Salīm Naqqāsh*, page t.

¹⁴² *The Levant Herald*, 28 April 1875, 139-140.

Double Translation: Adding Music to European dramas – Original Creation

Apart from creating original works, translating librettos to read, and staging European musicals in Ottoman Turkish or Arabic, there was another, much more popular practice of producing musical plays in these languages. Naqqāsh, Qardāhī, Khayyāt, and al-Qabbānī used plots of European dramas or fully translated dramas and mixed these with Arab songs/set to music. In Qardāhī's plan for an Arab Theatre in 1882 we can find separate calculations for buying "historical and entertaining books for translation" (*kutub ta'rikhiyya wa-adabiyya li'l-tarjama*).¹⁴³ This shows a very conscious attitude in creating new Arabic works of art.

Many famous dramas were translated into Arabic, like Greek classics (*Iphigenia*), famous dramas (like Corneille's *Horace*, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*), or contemporary dramas (like dramatized versions of Verne's works), and, of course, Molière.¹⁴⁴ A separate category would be religious (Christian) school plays that were based on biblical topics (like *Yūsuf– Joseph vendu par ses frères*, staged by Qardāhī cf. Chapter 6). Prose theatrical translations into Ottoman Turkish were even more numerous, mostly from the same pool of European texts.¹⁴⁵ Certainly more plays were translated than what have survived.

According to the principles of *ta'rib* most of these texts got a new title and sometimes the characters new names. The translation of *Romeo and Juliet*, for instance, by Najīb al-Haddād, got the title *Shuhadā' al-Gharām*. However, the textual translation in this case was only one stage of producing a new quality since Salāma

¹⁴³ *Bayān al-maṣārif*, undated attachment of a letter sealed as 3 May 1882, transferred to the Council of Ministers 7 May 1882, from Sulaymān Qardāhī to the Ministry of Public Works, 4003-037847, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-'Umūmiyya, DWQ.

¹⁴⁴ *Najm, al-Masraḥiyya*, 193-287.

¹⁴⁵ And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 438-447.

Hijāzī set to music certain monologues, as one of his surviving recordings testify.¹⁴⁶ Even if not with such professionalism, but mixing popular songs with monologues, or using known melodies with a new text were the usual practices. In such ways, hybrid genres were created that are usually named in English-language scholarship as “musical comedies,” “musical dramas,” etc.

This practice must have been extant among theatre-makers in Istanbul earlier. In the 1860s many European dramas were probably presented with songs or with instrumental music. This was indeed a practice not only with translated dramas but with new productions, like Seraphin Manasse’s first operetta (*The Miller’s Daughter*, in Armenian, 1862)¹⁴⁷ or *Vartan Mamigonyan* with the music of Dikran Tschouhadjian that Güllü Agop’s troupe played in the Naum Theatre in 28 February 1867, and its songs were sung by Vergine Karakaşyan.¹⁴⁸

This practice consisted of a double translation, since the creators did not only translate a text or a plot but they also arranged in a totally new setting by adding music, songs, and likely new stage decorations. Textual and musical translation in achieving the performance of a play thus meant much more than language practices – it included musical imagination, creative work of fusing texts and music, in order to express emotions.

¹⁴⁶ A song “Salamun ala husnin” (sic!) was published by Frédéric Lagrange, in a CD by Club Du Disque Arabe “Shaykh Salama Higazi,” 1994, recorded by the Odeon Company in 1906.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Part III.

¹⁴⁸ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 45.

Example of an Operetta 2 - Tilīmāk/Telemāk

Let us have an example of a translation/adaptation that was performed both in Istanbul and Cairo. Fénelon's *Les Aventures de Télémaque* was one of the most popular French books in the 19th century Ottoman Empire. It is a didactic and perhaps satiric novel published in 1699 about Odysseus' son Telemachus who is accompanied in his travels by Mentor, his teacher, who finally turns out to be the goddess Minerva.

This novel, which was widely used in schools because of its simple language, was translated into Ottoman Turkish (published in 1862) but was already printed in Greek in the 18th century, in classical Armenian (1826), and modern Armenian (1859, Paris).¹⁴⁹ It was equally popular among the Arab subjects of the Ottoman Empire, Ṭaḥṭāwī translated it during his exile in the Sudan (1849-1854?)¹⁵⁰ but his translation was only published in 1867 in Beirut. It is said that it was also translated by Sa^cd Allāh Bustānī and published in 1870 in the same city or later in Cairo.¹⁵¹

The story of *Télémaque* was put on stage both in Ottoman Turkish (*Telemak*) in Istanbul and in Arabic (*Tilīmāk*) in Cairo several times. Since all Ottoman subjects who ever studied French in this century probably have met with this text in school, it formed a convenient basis of "common knowledge" between educated persons. The story was especially adaptable to stage since it contains short sections involving relatively small number of persons, focusing on the central roles of Telemachos and Mentor. Furthermore, in many European languages the story was set to music by several authors, the most famous is Gluck's "drama per musica" *Telemaco, ossia L'isola di Circe* (1765) or Hughes John's opera, *Calypso and Telemachus* (1712).

¹⁴⁹ Strauss, "Who Read What," 49-50.

¹⁵⁰ Cachia, "Translations and adaptations," 27.

¹⁵¹ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 143. Strauss, based on the advertising list of the *Al-Jawā'ib*, provides that it was printed in Cairo, without years. Strauss, "Who Read What," footnote 105.

It was first put on stage in Arabic in Beirut in 1869¹⁵² and then in Egypt first in 1880, in Alexandria by Qardāhī in his wife's school. Qardāhī kept *Tilīmāk* on his programme in Egypt certainly in the performances of 1880, 1882, 1886-87-88, 1893. In 1882, a *Tilīmāk* performance by the Arab Opera group is described as the following:

As far as the acting is concerned, it was very good, and Tilīmāk (al-Shaykh Salāma) astonished everyone with the mastery in his role. They cried if he cried and they were delighted when he became glad. [...] his father, °Ülūs (al-Shaykh Maḥmūd) [...] the eyes cried on his sorrow when his only son slipped out [...] don't ask about Kālīpsū (al-Khānūn Ḥunayna) ... she moved so well, and showed such quality of acting that prompted the audience to clap their palms declaring her perfection.¹⁵³

Ṭaḥṭāwī's translation, Sa°d Allāh Bustānī's, or a new one was used. Ṭaḥṭāwī's had the title *Mawāqī°c al-Aflāk fī Akhbār Tilīmāk*¹⁵⁴ and Bustānī's was simply *Riwāyat Tilīmāk*.¹⁵⁵ It might be that since the Qardāhī was from Beirut he used Bustānī's translation, certainly, the report quoted above is entitled only as *Riwāyat Tilīmāk*. As we have seen, the Greek names, like Kalypso, were kept on stage together with the plot.

The Ottoman Turkish translation of *Télémaque*, *Tercüme-yi Telemak*, is the work of Yusuf Kamil Pasha. It became extremely popular between 1862 and 1880 it had eleven editions,¹⁵⁶ and based on an 1867 edition, we can say that Yusuf Kamil or

¹⁵² Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 143.

¹⁵³ *Al-Ahrām*, 15 April 1882, 2. Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 157.

¹⁵⁴ Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction To the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, 403.

¹⁵⁵ At least it was advertised with such a title in the catalogue of the *Al-Jawā°ib* in 1884, quoted by Strauss, "Who Read What," footnote 105.

¹⁵⁶ Orhan Okay, "Turkish Literature in the Restoration Period of the Ottoman State (1859-1922)," in *The Turks* 4:735-748. Here: 737.

the editors paid special attention to the readers since the transliterated Greek names had a separated section with the diacritical marks to help the pronunciation.¹⁵⁷

According to Metin And, *Telemak*, as a “müzikli oyunu”, it was first performed in 1869 by the Ottoman Theatre in the Gedikpaşa Theatre, and played until 1875.¹⁵⁸ We do not know if these performances were based on Yusuf Kamil Pasha’s translations. However, in 1878 the Ottoman Theatre group played a translated operetta with the title *Telemak* that is said to be an unpublished “opera” of a certain Piciotto, *Télémaque*.¹⁵⁹

It is remarkable that a translated European topos was staged in a musical form both in Istanbul and Cairo. *Télémaque/Tilīmāk/Telemak* is not only a case of translation, but represents a change from a prose fiction to a theatrical play with music. It is a genuine adaptation preserving the core of the plot but performing everywhere with music. Furthermore, this work introduced a familiar genre of writing, the adventure-tale, in the environment of other similar traditional narratives (like the *Antar*). Thus *Tilīmāk/Telemak* wandered between many cities and languages and also from stage to stage.

Conclusion

The above analysis shows the problems and main characteristic features of music theatre in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic in the context of the world fashion of operas and operettas. The basic difference between the two theatre experiments and cities was that Arabic music theatre was connected organically to earlier music traditions, to *ṭarab*, while experiments in Ottoman Turkish used European models of musical

¹⁵⁷ Yusuf Kamil, *Tercüme-yi Telemāk* (Matba[!]-yı °Amire, 1867), 11-13.

¹⁵⁸ And, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, 462.

¹⁵⁹ *La Turquie*, 8 April, 1878, 1.

composition. This could be explained by the theatre-makers' training, background, knowledge, and resources.

However, both music theatre types represent a synthesis between various entertainment traditions. While in Egypt this synthesis via music remained within the context of everyday, popular cultural activities, in Istanbul this synthesis could be only appreciated by those who belonged to an educated class. This feature is partly responsible for the fact that an alternative institutionalization of music theatre in Arabic started in the late 1880s, but in Istanbul such institutionalization finally failed, since operettas in Ottoman Turkish competed with French and Italian ones for the same public.

The style and content of the plays was also shaped by the expectations that the impresarios and musicians cherished. Manasse, Tchouhadjian were educated mostly during the era of Abdülmecid when Italian opera almost became a state culture, while Qardāhī understood theatre and European plays as a means of general education, that presumably embodied almost all Beirut-born theatre-makers' agenda and influenced their Egyptian actors/singers. Their later activities were largely due to these beliefs, acquired during their early lives.

The performances themselves, as enlived imaginations of a particular type of culture, entertainment, or ideology, included also an expectation about the public and were offers both to private and governmental organizations or rulers. The use of the rulers in Cairo and Istanbul of the public theatres, the reactions of state authorities to the new plays, and the popularity of troupes and performances among audiences expressed the acceptance or refusal of these proposals. These politics will be the subject of the next, last part of my dissertation.

Part V. The State and Music Theatres in Cairo and Istanbul

Ismail Kemal Bey, a distinguished Ottoman statesman and diplomat, was invited by Sultan Abdülhamid II to his palace theatre in Yıldız, sometime around 1892. He recalls that the Sultan was very loud and laughed so much that Kemal Bey was “wondering if it were he or the actors who were trying to attract the attention of the audience.” In contrast, everyone else, including the small boxes of the harem, remained in “dismal silence.”¹ Abdülhamid – who otherwise did not appear in public theatres – acted as if his tiny court theatre would represent an informal venue where he is exhibited. By this time, the representation of Sultanic or Khedivial power in theatres had a long history both in Istanbul and Cairo.

The previous chapters established the infrastructure of music theatre, elaborated on and intertwined the lives of the impresarios and performers, and discussed the dramatic and musical content of the plays. This closing part aims to reveal power and politics in connection with these real and imagined spaces and artistic practices. I argue that via these initiatives and processes the state became a cultural broker and became a participant in the competition that I call cultural politics.

Bringing the state back to discussions of cultural history does not aim to describe a simplistic bilateral situation in which, on the one side, individuals formulate some offers to the other side (governments) who refuse or accept these. As I have emphasized in the Introduction, cultural politics of the late 19th century is a much more elaborated negotiation between various interests about art, language, taste, and power, in which the state is but one. Furthermore, as I indicated, in an age of

¹ *The Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Bey*, 235-236.

constitutional monarchism that still carries absolutist traces it is very hard to define what a state is and separate it, for instance, from the person of the sovereign.

Nevertheless, the state/the ruler used theatres in both cities. In Istanbul from the 1840s to 1870 the Sultans exploited the Naum Theatre for their entertainment and representation, but from 1870s the sovereign became increasingly retires from theatrical presence and European ceremonies. In Cairo, on the contrary, from a relative absence of the Pashas in the European theatres of Alexandria and Cairo, by the 1880s the Khedivial Opera House became the demonstrative public space of the Khedive. This use of theatres also gives clues to the means by which late 19th century Ottoman and Egyptian rulers participated in the world wide ceremonial politics.

On the other hand, regardless of the state use or refusal of theatres, the ministries, the police, and the municipalities, by the order of the sovereign or the highest power broker, developed a number of initiatives towards theatres as public spaces and towards theatricals as texts. The analysis of these regulations reveals the ways authorities tried to supervise, regulate, and control the audiences and the way these audiences were imagined.

Within, and in connection with, music theatres many interested parties expressed in numerous ways their preferences: the theatre-makers, civil organizations – so-called societies – and various individuals (journalists, rich men, or intellectuals) played out their interests and visions against each other and the state interests. The clash of these interests ultimately leads to the foundation of distinct cultural policies of the modern Ottoman Turkish state and the modern colonial Egyptian state between 1867 and 1892.

In Chapter 10, I focus on the state representation/state use of theatres in Cairo and Istanbul. This mostly implies the presence of the Khedive/Sultan that had a

special significance for the audience and for the press. In Chapter 11, I investigate the various techniques of control and censorship towards music theatricals in the two urban contexts. Finally, I intend in Chapter 12 to highlight the various types of audiences in the theatres of Cairo and Istanbul with an inquiry into how theatre-makers imagined these audiences and how an audience was “made:” invited, organized, and attracted to the theatres.

Chapter 10.

State Representation in Music Theatre

In Ruth Bereson's theory the opera house "was a fitting arena for the monarch to demonstrate permanence and power," in Europe.¹ Rulers in Istanbul and in Cairo used this feature of opera, too. However, not only the opera but also any kind of music theatre immediately changed when a ruler attended. Participating in theatrical performances was a 19th century fashion of power brokers and here the practices of this type of modern symbolic politics and ceremonies by Ottoman and Egyptian sovereigns will be shown as a search for a new "cultural image" inside Istanbul and Egypt, in connection with the foreign representations of the Empire or Egypt that were first investigated by Zeynep Celik and Selim Deringil.²

Publicity and Power, the Opera House as a New Ceremonial Space

The Sultan traditionally was almost invisible to his subjects, and only appeared in public on very special occasions. Furthermore, his presence, as the caliph and the commander of all Muslims, had a certain saintly aura. From Mahmud II to Abdülhamid II the Ottoman Sultans increasingly became visible by portraits and photographs.³ They conformed to the fashions of European 19th century royalty: the rulers tried to secure loyalty via their images, personal presence, and bodies.

¹ Bereson, *The Operatic State*, 5.

² Celik, *Displaying the Orient*, 9-10.

³ Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 22.

Abdülhamid II gave up this practice but he did not avoid public Muslim religious ceremonies that were considered important imperial representations, too.⁴

His predecessors, Sultans Abdülmecid and Abdülaziz, were visible not only via their images but also by their bodily presence in hitherto unimaginable situations. Abdülmecid built a new palace, Dolmabahçe, that he also inspected daily, without much ceremony, which provided women (and only women) with a possibility to handle their petitions to him personally or to one of his officers.⁵ Abdülmecid regularly participated in receptions and invited many guests to his new palace and theatre.

One such occasion happened in 1856 when the British Ambassador, Lord Stratford, held a masked ball at the British Embassy in Pera/Beyoğlu. The Sultan arrived to the ball leaving his guards at the Galata Saray and was accompanied by the English soldiers. Upon entering the ball room, Abdülmecid was so charmed by the various masks, costumes, and diamonds, that he was reluctant to sit down on his velvet and gold chair that was a bit elevated to imitate a throne. The Pashas (like Ali Pasha, at that moment Grand Vizier) formed a double row in front of his throne where he finally took place and let only selected ladies to be introduced. After the waltz, the Sultan departed.⁶

In Egypt, Muḥammad °Alī Pasha remained invisible and perhaps never visited the foreign consuls' or the European society's reception in Alexandria.⁷ Cairo was

⁴ Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 23-26.

⁵ Mrs Edmund Hornby, *In and Around Stamboul*, 211-212.

⁶ Hornby, *In and Around Stamboul*, 216-221. This letter, which describes a visit of Abdülmecid at a masked ball at the British Embassy, is dated 8 February 1856.

⁷ E. de Cadalvene et J. de Breuvery, *L'Égypte et la Turquie de 1829 à 1836* (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1836), 11.

“dull” in terms of European social life in the 1830s.⁸ We do not know if ʿAbbās Pasha participated in public events, apart from the ceremonial occasions, like the procession of the *maḥmal* before the caravan went to Mecca.⁹ Saʿīd Pasha, however, being Francophone and perhaps imitating the Sultan Abdülmecid, loved to have an entourage of French gentlemen and this involved public receptions too.¹⁰ He was the first ruler of Egypt (after Ibrāhīm Pasha) who regularly visited European cities. Saʿīd was a welcomed guest at Napoleon III’s palace, for instance, in 1862 when actually he invited the emperor for an “oriental” dinner in Paris.¹¹

Theatres – especially opera houses – were among those public spaces where mid- and late 19th century rulers became ceremonially visible. In the Ottoman Empire, Abdülmecid regularly visited the Naum Theatre and also, from 1858, he had his own *Hoftheatre* at (near) the Dolmabahçe Palace (see below). Sultan Abdülaziz, who seemingly was less fond of public appearance, did not continue this practice from 1861.

When Saʿīd Pasha of Egypt died in January 1863, as was shown, his nephew Ismāʿīl Pasha was keen on getting the benevolence of Sultan Abdülaziz who visited Egypt. They appeared together in public, the Sultan prayed in the mosque of the Citadel, and presided over the parade of the caravan to Mecca, but he did not participate in any European style public event, apart from a Parisian firework.¹² Four years later, both of them went to Paris for the World Exhibition, carefully avoid any possibility of meeting.

⁸ C. Rochfort Scott, *Rambles in Egypt and Candia*, 2 vols. (London: Colburn, 1837), 1:216.

⁹ Toledano, *State and Society in Nineteenth Century Egypt*, 51-53.

¹⁰ Audouard, *Les mystères de l’Égypte*, 151.

¹¹ *L’Illustration*, 7 June 1862.

¹² Of course, the consuls in Alexandria were received by the Sultan and the Khedive together, Gardey, *Voyage de Sultan Abd-Ul-Aziz*, 41-42. For the firework, 60. For the public prayer of the Sultan in Cairo, 74, for the caravan, 89-90.

It is less known that both sovereigns' visit included an evening in the (*Le Peletier*) Opera House in Paris. Khedive Ismā'īl visited this house in 15 June 1867 with Draneht, Nubar, etc, and sat in the loge of the Emperor,¹³ while for his part Sultan Abdülaziz went to the Opera of Paris on 5 July 1867,¹⁴ and on his way back to Istanbul he visited the Opera House in Vienna as well.¹⁵ Ismā'īl often toured later Europe and almost always attended the theatres. This means that both of them and their entourage participated in the contemporary European elite's rituals and accepted this mode of international relations and state representation, perhaps vis-à-vis the Europeans but perhaps not vis-à-vis each other.

Abdülmeceid and the Naum (1850s)

As was mentioned earlier, Sultan Abdülmeceid in the 1850s regularly visited the Naum Theatre or ordered the troupe of the Naum to his palace. The Naum Theater maintained a particular relation to Sultan Abdülmeceid who from time to time donated money for the upkeep and used the theatre as his unofficial opera house, as Emre Aracı emphasized.¹⁶ The visiting companies of the Naum Theatre performed often in front of the Sultan and his family (harem), like in 1851, when the Italian opera troupe played in a temporal theatre “constructed in the internal garden of the harem.”¹⁷ The members of the harem received a musical education, both Ottoman and European, thus by 1856, a female company was formed in the Palace.¹⁸ Abdülmeceid, however,

¹³ *Le Moniteur Universel*, 16 June 1869, quoted in Chavalier de La Teillais, *La voyage de S. A. le Vice-Roi d’Egypte et la presse européenne* (Paris: Kugelmann, 1870), 29-30.

¹⁴ Telegram in the *Levant Herald*, 8 July 1867, 1.

¹⁵ Telegram in the *Levant Herald*, 30 July 1867, 1.

¹⁶ Cf. Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*; Turan and Komsouğlu, “From Empire to the Republic: the Western Music Tradition and the Perception of Opera,” 15.

¹⁷ *Le Ménestrel*, 14 December 1851, 2.

¹⁸ *Le Ménestrel*, 24 August 1856, 4.

wanted his proper theatre that was built indeed as an attachment to his new palace, Dolmabahçe, in 1858.

The short-lived Dolmabahçe Palace Theatre might be considered as a *Hoftheatre*. There were occasions when high personalities of the imperial administration were invited to watch performances like in April 1859 when the Sultan ordered the troupe of the Naum Theatre to Dolmabahçe Palace, and all the Ottoman ministers, including the Grand Vizier and the princes, assisted the performance.¹⁹ In 1859, the same year, a French article in the Francophone Istanbulite press called for a “national theatre,”²⁰ but we do not know its author, nor the Ottoman Turkish reactions, if there was any (see below).

The reason for publically using opera was not only the artistic taste of the Sultan – who surely loved this genre – but also that its importance for the participation in international politics and, as we have seen, the theatre buildings themselves represented modernity and progress. The 1850s is the context when Saʿīd and Ismāʿīl Pashas of Egypt both come of age, and in general, the second French Empire has a world-wide informal power and radiance. Based on this example of the Sultan in Istanbul, it is perhaps not a coincidence that later Ismāʿīl, as we have seen, wanted an Opera House too.

Sovereigns as Audience 1: 1869 – Joining the Seas in the Theatre

1869 remains an important year in the history of foreign relations and music theatres in the late Ottoman Empire. As the Sultan and the Khedive became curiosities in

¹⁹ *Journal de Constantinople*, 15 April 1859, 3.

²⁰ *Journal de Constantinople*, 8 and 22 April 1859, 1-2 and 2 respectively.

Paris, London, Vienna, or Berlin in 1867,²¹ the same way the royal/imperial visitors coming for the Suez Canal Openings became objects of curiosity in the autumn of 1869 from the side of the Istanbul or Cairo population. Usually only those travel descriptions are taken into consideration in which Europeans describe their experiences during the Suez Canal opening ceremonies,²² but these tourists, and especially their rulers, became equally object of interest for the inhabitants.

A prelude to the events of autumn 1869 was the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales both in Cairo and Istanbul. The excursion of the royal couple (who were very familiar with the Middle East and later returned many times to Egypt) included an evening in the new Comédie in the beginning of February 1869. With Khedive Ismā'īl at a performance of Manasse's French troupe, *Le Serment d'Horace* and *Contributions Indirects*. Opposite the Princes' box the harem of the Khedive was hidden behind a lattice-work.²³

The royal couple continued their tour to Istanbul where as an English journalist remarked: "it appears that the Sultan retains lively recollections of his own reception in England and desires to express his sense of it."²⁴ Here, apart from a reception at the Dolmabahçe, the Prince and Princess at least three times attended performances at the Naum Theatre, once in the company of Sultan Abdülaziz himself.²⁵ Knowing the interest of the people in the Sultan and British Prince, the press feared that the prices would be high. Perhaps this is why the Sultan paid Joseph

²¹ Celik, *Displaying the Orient*, 32-37.

²² The most remarkable is Roberto Morra di Lavriano, *Journal de Voyage en Egypte – Inauguration du Canal de Suez* (Paris: Librairie Gründ, 1997).

²³ *Levant Herald*, 18 February 1869, 4. Cf. the notes Mrs. W. Grey, *Journal of a Visit to Egypt, Constantinople, the Crimea, Greece, etc.*, 26-28. Mrs. Grey mentions that at 9 o'clock they went to the French Theatre. Cf. Russell, *A Diary in The East*, 1:114-116.

²⁴ Russell, *A Diary in The East*, 2:481.

²⁵ The Prince of Wales visited the Naum, 2, 4, 8 April 1869. In *Levant Herald*, 2, 5, and 8 April 1869, 2-3, 2, 2-3 respectively.

Naum 2000 liras in advance for the decoration.²⁶ However, at the first performance, *Prophète*, the audience was modest and did not spy on the royal couple too much.²⁷

When the royal couple together with the Sultan visited the Naum Theatre on 7 April 1869, the ladies and gentlemen of Pera put on their best clothes with their most beautiful jewellery, the house being “crowded from pit to gallery.” Only the second and fourth acts of *L’Africaine* were played by the troupe, then the sovereigns left. In the imperial loge, the Grand Vizier himself (at this time Mehmed Emin Ali Pasha) acted as a translator between the Sultan and the royal couple and also explained the scenes to the Sultan.²⁸

These evenings can be understood as both international diplomatic events and state representations in the European context and receiving foreign nobles according to *their*, at this time worldwide accepted, ceremonies. The Sultan Abdülaziz understood that his use of Naum for the entertainment of the royal guests needs a contribution of the costs. However, this royal tourism was only an exercise for the events of late autumn 1869. Two sovereigns, Empress Eugénie and Emperor Franz Joseph, travelled via Istanbul to Cairo, as an indication that they (their states) still considered the Sultan the real ruler of Egypt. For both of them, theatre performances were organized in Istanbul.

However, although everything was ready, Eugénie did not manage to show up in the Naum Theatre on schedule. She arrived to Istanbul 14 October and left on the morning 19 October 1869. During these four days she dined with the Sultan twice,

²⁶ *Levant Herald*, 2 April 1869, 2.

²⁷ Russell, *A Diary in The East*, 2:487.

²⁸ *Levant Herald*, 8 April 1869, 2-3.

went to the (Catholic?) Armenian Church in Pera to pray and although the Sultan's box was prepared for her in the Naum, finally she did not arrive.²⁹

A few days later Emperor Franz Joseph disembarked, and he indeed visited the Naum Theatre on 31 October 1869. He was welcomed by thousands of people who made a double line with torches to light his way from Taksim to the Naum Theatre (the Emperor came without the Sultan and from the Dolmabahçe Palace). The journals noted that “the crowd was even denser than on the recent occasion of the Empress Eugénie's visit.”³⁰ The Emperor stayed just one hour in the packed Naum Theatre and then left in a hurry. He might have been less resistant to be an object of general curiosity than was Sultan Abdülaziz in Paris or Vienna two years ago.

The Empress of the French and the Emperor of the Habsburg Empire followed different travel plans. Yet, again, ironically, only one of them visited the Cairo Opera House, and neither was present at the inauguration.³¹ At the time of the inauguration play, 1 November 1869, Eugénie was on her tour on the Nile, and Franz Joseph did not arrive yet from Jerusalem. Only a few “secondary” notabilities, like the prince of Prussia, were at the inauguration (this event took place still before the establishment of the German Empire in 1871!).³² After the ceremony (17 November) at the Suez Canal, Eugénie almost immediately left Egypt. Franz Joseph, however, visited the

²⁹ See the corresponding numbers of the *Levant Herald*. Also cf. Sevengil, *Opera San'atı ile İlk Temaslarımız*, 42. The most important source are Captain de Surville's letters in the dossier BB/4/1048 (Archives Nationales – Services Historique de la Défense, Département de Marine, Château de Vincennes, Paris). This contains the letters of the captain of *L'Aigle*, Captain Surville to “l'Amiral Ministre de la Marine et des Colonies.” Some also published online at the Fondation Napoleon website: http://www.napoleon.org/en/special_dossier/suez/html-content/inauguration/voyage/voyage-eugenie.html (Accessed July 15, 2011). Cf. Ribeyre, *Voyage de Sa Majesté Impératrice en Corse et en Orient*, 124-159.

³⁰ *Levant Herald*, 1 November 1869.

³¹ Compare with Sadgrove: “the Khedive, his guests, including the Empress Eugénie and the Crown Prince of Prussia, the Khedive's retinue, some of his officials and military officers” were present at the inauguration ceremony. Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 53.

³² *Wādī al-Nīl*, 5 November 1869, 868.

Opera House with Nubar Pasha who guided him in Cairo,³³ perhaps on 22 November when *Giselle* was performed.³⁴

Although neither the Empress nor the Emperor was present at the inauguration ceremony of the Opera House, this event was a particular representation of the Khedive's power as already the decoration and the curtains (cf. Chapter 4) showed. First, a cantata was played for the honor of the Khedive composed by prince Poniatowsky to an Italian poet's text. Eight singers stood around a bust of Ismā'īl and while executing the cantata they represented eight allegories: Justice, Mercy, Fame, Music (*Mélodie*), History, Agriculture, Industry, Commerce. The end of the cantata was accompanied with a hurra and the shouting of the name of the Khedive. Then Verdi's *Rigoletto* was performed by the finest Italian singers.³⁵ However, in all these representations, the Sultan's name was not mentioned and Ottoman official iconography was not implemented.

1869 was thus an unusual year that was defined by the rivalry of Khedive and Sultan through symbols and ceremonies of European international protocol. For the diplomatic society and in general for the European residents and protected Ottomans these visits meant also a possibility to express their loyalty towards their lords. However, 1869 was foremost a year when the Khedive manifested the independence of Egypt vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire, but instead of political or military means, by joining to European symbolic politics.

³³ *Mémoires de Nubar Pacha*, 366.

³⁴ di Lavriano, *Journal de Voyage en Egypte*, 138. *Giselle* seems to be a repeated performance, since Gautier, *Correspondance Générale*, 10: 428, says already in 8 November that this will be in the Opera. Cf. also *Le Ménestrel*, 12 December 1869.

³⁵ Douin, *Histoire du Règne du Khédivé Ismail*, 470-471. *Wādī al-Nīl*, 5 November 1869, 868; 12 November 1869, 900.

Using the Cairo Opera House for State Representation (1871-1882-1886)

Such grand occasions were rare and exceptional, and after 1870, when the Naum Theatre burned down, in Istanbul there was no appropriate theatre and no state intention to construct such buildings. Thus the Ottoman state and its head, the Sultan did not present himself publicly attending operas in a theatre. In contrast, in Egypt the establishment of the Cairo Opera House provided an appropriate and a highly symbolic, constant venue for state representation. In fact, it is at the Khedivial Opera House that certain conceptions about Egypt and its future are realized or communicated. Thus in Cairo throughout the 1870s and 1880s we find a number of occasions when – conforming to the European custom of the time – cultural symbols of power and loyalty were exhibited in the Opera House.

The Premiere of Aida (1871)

The history of *Aida* is well researched,³⁶ here I would like to describe the evening of the premiere 24 December 1871 and the meaning of this event as a second – but already belated – representation of the “independence” of Egypt. In my understanding this premiere and whole project of *Aida* was not only intended for the representation of Egypt’s (and its ruler’s) independence from the Ottoman Empire but aimed a distant goal: to depict the mini-imperial aspirations of the Khedive. With this, he might unintentionally or intentionally contributed to the formation of a patriotic discourse in Arabic.

³⁶ Busch, *Verdi’s Aida*; Said, *Culture and Imperialism*; Jean-Marcel Humbert, “Les Expositions universelles de 1867 et 1878 et la création d’*Aida*: l’image de l’Égypte transmise par Auguste Mariette,” in *La France & l’Égypte: à l’époque des vice-rois 1805-1882*, ed. Daniel Panzac et André Raymond (Le Caire: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 2002); Weaver, *Verdi – A documentary study*; Paul Robinson, “Is *Aida* an Orientalist Opera?” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5, no. 2 (1993): 133-140; Raph P. Locke, “Beyond the exotic: How ‘Eastern’ is *Aida*?” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 17, no. 2 (2005): 105–139.

Aida as an Italian opera about the ancient Egyptian Empire³⁷ corresponded to those plans of the Egyptian Pashas from Muḥammad °Alī to Khedive Ismā°il that aimed to make Egypt a regional superpower, conquering the Sudan and flattering with Greater Syria. After his predecessors, Khedive Ismā°il arranged a large scale expedition to the Sudan in 1869 with the intention to suppress slave trade under the command of the British explorer, Samuel Baker.³⁸ Thus the idea of *Aida*, born presumably in Ismā°il’s mind and written by the Egyptologist Mariette,³⁹ sometime in the spring of 1870, conveniently corresponded to Ismā°il’s imperial dream. Lucia Re underlines that “Khedive Ismail is likely to have seen in Verdi’s music a political symbol of the spirit of national independence rather than a means to enslave Egypt [...] to Europe.”⁴⁰

The Prussian siege of Paris during 1870 delayed the premiere because Mariette was trapped in the city. When in December 1871 *Aida* was staged, at least one imperial dream was already over – Napoleon III’s. Khedive Ismā°il again moved closer to the Porte, to which he handed over Egyptian troops in the Ottoman wars in the Balkans.⁴¹ Yet, the arrangement of the premiere of *Aida* was organized according to the contemporary Western European standards; and not only were famous noblemen invited but also the best critics and journalists of the day. Khedive Ismā°il had a particular skill in using the press, be that Arabic, Ottoman, or French.⁴²

³⁷ Robinson, “Is *Aida* an Orientalist Opera?” 134.

³⁸ Samuel W. Baker, *Ismailia – a narrative of the expedition to Central Africa for the suppression of the slave trade, organized by Ismail, khedive of Egypt*, 2 vols. (London: MacMillan, 1874), 1: 6-7. Dunn, *Ismail’s army*, 85-86.

³⁹ Cf. Du Locle: “the Egyptian libretto is the work of the Viceroy and of Mariette Bey, the famous archaeologist, nobody else has touched it.” Weaver, *Verdi – A documentary study*, 223.

⁴⁰ Lucia Re, “Alexandria Revisited – Colonialism and the Egyptian Works of Enrico Pea and Giuseppe Ungaretti,” in *A Place in the Sun – Africa in Italian Colonial Culture from Post-Unification to the Present*, ed. Patrizia Palumbo (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 163-196. Here: 164.

⁴¹ Dunn, *Ismail’s army*, 72.

⁴² Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East – A History*, 41.

The events of 24 December 1871 started perhaps in the morning, with the arrival of music critics who were received warmly by Draneht Bey and the Khedive himself. At least, the French critic Ernest Reyer, who was delayed and only arrived on the morning of the premiere, got a warm welcome.⁴³ The invited guests of the Khedive included Filippo Filippi, Ernest Reyer, likely the journalists of *Wādī al-Nīl*, the European consuls, and other residents.

Baron du Kusel, an English resident in Egypt, narrated this Christmas Eve in the following way:

[T]he Khedive with all the princes were there, and the Khadivah was present, and the Egyptian princesses were in the Royal Harem Boxes, the fronts of which were covered in with thin lattice work, through which one could see, hazily, the forms of the ladies, with their diamonds and precious stones sparkling as they moved to and fro in the large royal box. All the Consul-Generals and their wives were present, the ministers and the Khedival staff officers in their brilliant uniforms while in every box were many lovely women, resplendent with jewels.⁴⁴

As Draneht telegraphed to Verdi immediately after the premiere, it was a “complete success.”⁴⁵ Not only the music of Verdi, or its excellent execution but the set was celebrated in its richness and luxury, to such a point, that – as one of the correspondents noted – “when the curtain is raised, we forget Aida and Verdi, the drama and the music itself but we are absorbed by the magic of this view [*spectacle*].”⁴⁶ The set prepared by Mariette seemingly amazed the audience who anyway saw “the life of ancient Egypt in a modern theatre.”⁴⁷

⁴³ At least, Reyer was received such a way as he tells in his article; dated 31 December 1871, from Cairo. *Le Journal des Débats Politiques et Littéraires*, 16 January 1871, 5-6.

⁴⁴ Baron de Kusel, *An Englishman's recollections of Egypt, 1863-1887* (London: John Lane, [1915]); 89.

⁴⁵ Telegram from Draneht to Verdi. Cf. Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 266-267.

⁴⁶ *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, 7 January 1872, 5-6, quoting the *Indépendance Belge*.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

As for the piece, the critique of the *Journal des Débats*, Reyer, seems to know that Verdi got “un motif turc” from Donizetti Pasha from Constantinople (? Donizetti Pasha died in 1856? or from one of his pieces?) and a “native melody” and both were used in *Aida*. Apart from judging the music, he also pays a detailed attention to the set and decorations. Reyer sincerely congratulated the Khedive for the success. It seems that not only the music but also the staging– the set, the costumes, decorations, and the “effect” of royalty – all contributed directly to the success. Not only did time-travel take place with the staging of ancient Egypt, but, according to Reyer’s first review, Cairo came ahead of Paris in many aspects (although Reyer hastened to admit that French painters painted the sets).⁴⁸ It is not surprising that, as Filippo Filippi, the invited Italian critic remarked, not Verdi but the Khedive was applauded after the performance.⁴⁹

It is a pity that we have no news in Arabic about the premiere. The translation of the libretto, prepared by Abu ’l-Su‘ūd effendi, is lost, just like the corresponding issues of his journal *Wādī al-Nīl*. Although it is sheer speculation, it is not unlikely that *Wādī al-Nīl* reported on the event and perhaps also published the plot. However, so far I have not found any Arabic notes concerning these first representations, neither in *Al-Jawā’ib* nor in *Al-Jinān*, which suggests that either their journalists were not present or that they were uninterested in *Aida*.

Khedive Ismā‘īl presided over the premiere of *Aida* and he was certainly the person who won the respects of the critics, especially the French Reyer, who wrote that “you must admit that a prince like Ismail Pasha indeed earned a lot like a

⁴⁸ This was also translated to English in *New York Times*, 21 January 1872.

⁴⁹ Weaver, *Verdi – A documentary study*, 229.

sovereign who won the battles, and certainly more than the one who lose them.”⁵⁰ Staging an opera about Egypt was part of the symbolic warfare with the Ottoman Empire indeed that was won by Ismāʿīl at enormous costs (see details at Chapter 4). The premiere in Cairo embodied the fragile participation of Egypt in the world wide Western European dominant “civilization” that esteemed operas as the most refined symbols of power. This state representative culture financed by the Khedive’s personal purse, that is by foreign loans, however, soon was challenged by a proposal from below.

Sovereigns as Audience 2.: Royal Tourism

Royal tourism continued in the late Ottoman Empire throughout the 1870s and 1880s. In Egypt, not only the touristic places, like the Pyramids or the desert, but also the Khedivial Opera House received all foreign royal guests. *Aida*’s premiere in December 1871 was such an event with an explicit aim of showcasing the Khedive’s modern Egypt. This work of art, which was so connected with the name of the Khedive, was indeed handled as a precious possession of the sovereign who showed it only to selected royal guests.

In November 1872, it was the Russian Grand Duke Nicholas for whom the Khedive specifically ordered to stage a performance of *Aida* in the Opera House, and they went together.⁵¹ In 1875, when Prince Arthur of England visited Egypt, *Aida* was again presented “as an opera speciality of Cairo”⁵² in the Opera House. Such royal visits included an evening in the theatre, offering European entertainments at night for

⁵⁰ *Le Journal des Débats Politiques et Littéraires*, 16 January 1872, 5-6.

⁵¹ The performance took place on 22 November 1872, *L’Orient Illustré*, 16 December 1872, 279. Cf. also *Levant Herald*, 5 December 1872, 226-227. Perhaps because at this time the Grand Duke of Oldenburg was also in Cairo. *L’Orient Illustré*, 23 November 1870, 227.

⁵² *Levant Herald*, 3 February 1875, 37.

the sovereigns who became tired during the day in the “Orient.” Not only the Opera House, but also palace theatres were used, as in 1876 when the Prince of Wales was again in Egypt with Russian Grand Duke Alexis,⁵³ although this time the Prince of Wales again visited the Opera House, too.⁵⁴

It is worth mentioning that in Istanbul, unlike the etiquette with European rulers, the visiting sovereigns from the Orient, like the Shah of Persia in 1873,⁵⁵ or the Khedive Ismā‘īl himself, who quite often was a visitor in the imperial capital, were never invited to theatre. Ismā‘īl often dined with Sultan Abdūlaziz⁵⁶ but never went with him to theatre in Istanbul.⁵⁷ In contrast in Cairo some of the Eastern notables indeed visited the theatre with the Khedive, such as the uncle of the Shah of Persia, who went to the theatre and was surprised by the visible numbers of Europeans.⁵⁸

After the 1870 destruction of the Naum, no large, “royal” playhouse remained in Istanbul. Although plenty of venues were scattered around, none of them was an Opera House. Thus during the 1870s, theatres were avoided by royal guests, or at least we have no details if the Shah of Persia in 1873, or the Emperor and Empress of Brazil visited the theatres of Istanbul in 1876 (the Emperor visited one theatre surely).⁵⁹

⁵³ *Revue de Constantinople*, 9 April 1876, 34-36.

⁵⁴ *La Turquie*, 4 April 1870, 1.

⁵⁵ Although the Shah was invited to a theatre in Moscow almost immediately when he arrived. Naṣr al-Dīn Shāh, *The diary of H.M. the Shah of Persia, during his tour through Europe in A.D. 1873* (By J.W. Redhouse. A verbatim translation) (London: Murray, 1874), 37-38.

⁵⁶ For instance, *Al-Jawā‘ib*, 20 July 1870, 1.

⁵⁷ Interestingly, we have no news if Khedive Ismā‘īl ever visited the Naum or any other smaller theatre in the 1870s but we cannot exclude this possibility when he lived in Istanbul in the beginning of the 1850s. One reason is that a theatre was built in the public gardens of Ismā‘īl’s Emirghan Palace. *Levant Herald*, 9 June 1875, 199.

⁵⁸ Butler, *Court life in Egypt*, 291-292.

⁵⁹ *Revue de Constantinople*, 8 October 1876. The imperial couple probably did not visit the theatres in Egypt where they arrived in December. *La Turquie*, 20 December 1876, 1. However, Metin And gives (And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 108) that in Istanbul they indeed watched *Leblebici Horhor Ağa* based on *Sabah*, 30 Eylül (September) 1876 (11 Ramaḍān 1293); although does not provide the exact location. However, it is not correct, because *Sabah* 21 Ramaḍān 1293, 2 there is a news that the Emperor

After 1881 the Municipality Garden of Tepebaşı (Petits Champs) included a more or less large hall where during the summer performances could be given (Théâtre des Petits Champs, Tepebaşı Tiyatrosu) and this might have been considered as a proper place for visiting sovereigns. For instance, in 1884 news spread that Prince Rudolph and his wife from the Habsburg Monarchy planned to visit this theatre and the impresarios organized a special evening for them (“l’honneur du couple imperial”) that included an Ottoman Turkish language performance (*Leblebici Horhor Ağa*) at Petits Champs.⁶⁰ But I am not certain if they visited the theatre finally.⁶¹

In the 1880s, performances were also given in Europe for visiting “Orientals” as a diplomatic/courteous gestures: in Stockholm in 1889, at the Eight International Congress of Orientalists, the Egyptian Delegation (led by ‘Abd Allāh Fikrī Pasha) was taken to the theatre to watch *Aida* as a polite gesture (in fact, this performance was organized for the whole conference). This was appreciated by the secretary of the mission, the son of Fikrī Pasha, Amīn Fikrī, who “thought [*Aida*] a particularly appropriate choice.”⁶²

The use of theatres in Cairo and Istanbul by visiting royal personalities seems to affirm that power and theatrical symbolism were bound together. For those rulers – Khedive Ismā‘īl or Sultan Abdülaziz – who wanted to join the European diplomatic-symbolic concert, theatres offered a convenient place to secure the friendship of the

visited the on the evening of 19th the Variété Theater (must be Théâtre des Variétés) without providing the exact name of the play. Around this time Benglian took over the leadership of Tchouhadjian’s opera/opera troupe.

⁶⁰ *Moniteur Oriental*, 15 April 1884, 3.

⁶¹ And is sure based on *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, 18 April 1884, 1725. And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 108. I could not consult with this number.

⁶² Reid, *Whose pharaohs? Archeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I*, 250. See also *La Turquie*, 28 September 1889, 2 how the journalist mocks the Egyptian delegation.

visitors and reaffirm their positions as modernizing sovereigns and members of the world wide elite.

Cairo, Qardāḥī and ʿUrābī: 1882

In contrast with opera productions in Italian or French, embodying Western European tastes and modalities, in Cairo the new music theatre troupes demanded, as we have seen, the use of the state theatres, too. Egyptian/Syrian music theatre was often politicized and connected to the ruling family, governmental high officers, or rich men. It was the case of James Sanua, whose theatre was encouraged (1871), then suppressed by the Khedive Ismāʿīl; with Muḥammad Unsī (1872), whose theatre plan was backed by Draneht Bey and Khayrī Pasha, but never realized; Salīm Naqqāsh, who migrated to Egypt with the explicit encouragement of the Khedive Ismāʿīl and Draneht Bey (1875/76); or Yūsuf Khayyāṭ, who was, after all, supported by the Khedive Ismāʿīl (in 1878-1879).⁶³

However, as was shown, the European style entertainments contributed to the debt of the country and indirectly led to the forced abdication of Ismāʿīl and later to state bankruptcy and foreign control. When the discontent of Egyptian military men forced the new Khedive Tawfīq in February 1882 to convene a new government, where Aḥmad ʿUrābī became Minister of War,⁶⁴ Qardāḥī also prepared his Arab Opera troupe.

In the previous chapters on Qardāḥī and Ḥijāzī, the events and artistic side of their performance in the Khedivial Opera House during April 1882 were explored.

⁶³ Cf. Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 138-142.

⁶⁴ Donald Malcolm Reid, "The ʿUrābī revolution and the British conquest," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt Vol. 2. Modern Egypt from 1517 to the end of the twentieth century*, ed. M. W. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 217-238.

Here I would like to inquire more about the political side and the specific possibility that Qardāhī embodied vis-à-vis the French opera troupe that still received subvention from the Egyptian state. The particular political background of the performances during April 1882 – apart from the continuous tension between foreign powers, the Porte, the Khedive and the °Urābists – was a plot against General °Urābī and the trial of the supposed conspirators.

Qardāhī from the very beginning was associated with the °Urābī government whose administration worked very quickly for his interest. He submitted his request for the concession of the Opera House on 25 March 1882 to the Ministry; it was sent on the following day to the Comité des Théâtres who responded on 30 March favourably.⁶⁵ It is interesting that Qardāhī refers to an already given benevolent intention of the Government for the renewal of Arabic theatre.⁶⁶ Meanwhile *Al-Ahrām* published the news about his request, and the next day the same paper published a public letter of Qardāhī, that I already cited, entitled “An Arabic Opera” (see Chapter 6). At this time, officially no permission was given yet and even after this date, the Comité asked the Ministry to decide who would pay for the gas.

The first performance of the Arab Opera troupe was delayed to 13 April 1882 (cf. Chapter 6). This delay coincided with the discovery of a presumed plot against °Urābī Pasha and other military officers on 11 April 1882. Mostly men of Circassian

⁶⁵ Letter dated 30 March 1882, from Guy Lussac Comité des Théâtres to Ministre des Travaux Publics, 4003-037847, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

⁶⁶ Letter dated 25 March 1882, from Qardāhī to the Ministry, 4003-037847, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ. “Ashghāl °Umūmiyya Nāzīrī Sa°ādatlū Effendim Ḥazratları - Akhadhtu fī ta°lim ba°d al-riwāyāt al-°arabiyya li-jawq mişri wa-li-°ilmī °ināyat al-ḥukūma bi-ihyā° hādha al-fann al-jalīl allatī lam tatarra munāfi°a ataytu ilā Sa°ādatikum ṭāliyān al-rukḥṣa fī tiyātru°l-Ubīra li-taqdīm thamānī riwāyāt fī baḥr shahr Ibrīl al-qādim fa-iltamisū Sa°ādatakum al-rukḥṣa li bi°l-tashkhiş al-madhkūr ma° al-malbūsāt al-lāzima li°l-riwāyāt al-madhkūra wa mişār bi°l-gāz wa innanī salafān umtinna min °ināyatikum wa°l-nizārikum [!] effendim. Kataba bi-yadi-hi, Sulaymān Qardāhī fī 25 Māris 1882.”

or Turkish origin were arrested. A military committee investigated the issue.⁶⁷ While the patriotic performances of the Arab Opera were staged in the Opera House, the trial of the anti-°Urābists was ongoing and the major talk of the town. The military investigation proceeded and more suspects (48 officers) were arrested, but there were rumours that even 150 persons were taken into custody.⁶⁸ The Khedive Tawfīq was seriously considering abdication.⁶⁹

The performances by the Arab Opera troupe of Qardāḥī, starring Salāma Ḥijāzī, were extremely successful in the Opera House. Usually, the ministers of the government attended the performances, too. The Arab press, especially the journal *al-Maḥrūsa* expressed hope for more support as was shown in Chapter 6. This call can be understood as an expression that the state should support the patriotic troupe, too.

The final verdict of the military court was communicated on 30 April 1882, the day when Qardāḥī's troupe gave their last performance of *Fursān al-°Arab* (Heroes of Arabs). The presumed plot's head was °Uthmān Pasha Rifqī, former minister of war, who was actually at his time heavily opposed by °Urābī because he was an old Ottoman Turk/Circassian who, together with the Khedive, had decided that Egyptians could not rise above a certain rank in the army.⁷⁰ Some forty men were sentenced to the Sudan but the Khedive Tawfīq changed the sentence to exile only.⁷¹

Thus when the same day, 30 April 1882, Qardāḥī performed *Fursān al-°Arab* in the presence of the ministers of the state and °Urābī Pasha, there was a particular tense atmosphere. The audience's cheer was enormous as previously was shown. On

⁶⁷ Reid, "The °Urābī revolution," 229.

⁶⁸ *Al-Ahrām*, 21 April 1882, 2.

⁶⁹ *La Turquie*, 27 April 1882, 1.

⁷⁰ Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East*, 218-20.

⁷¹ Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East*, 238. The names of the officers were communicated in *Al-Ahrām*, and later in Salīm al-Naqqāsh, *Miṣr li'l-miṣriyyīn*, 4:263-266.

this evening in the Opera House, Qardāḥī as the director of the group stepped on stage and greeted °Urābī Pasha and thanked him for the already given support. This was highly unusual because so far the Khedive was thanked for his support by Arab theatre-makers, even if he did not do anything. Furthermore, other statesmen in more elevated positions were present in the Opera, like the President of the National Assembly (*Majlis al-Umma*), but they were not mentioned by Qardāḥī or at least, not in the reports.⁷² The journals expressed their hopes that the Ministry will continue the support of Qardāḥī “to raise the minaret of the magnificent Arab art.”

I do not believe that Qardāḥī necessarily wanted to stage a communal expression of political loyalty although we can easily see in all of his dramas a hero who has numerous adventures, fights against oppression and thus offers the possibility of emotional community on stage. The braveness of °Antar, a black slave hero, embodied by Salāma Ḥijāzī and his voice, offered enough potential for a political allegory.

The Arab Opera certainly presented an image of a new, modern Egyptian troupe that speaks in Egyptian Arabic, sings in Arabic, and performs for Egyptian ministers in a symbolic European (globalized?) institution that is called an Opera House. It seems that either °Urābī or the Minister of Public Works (who was in charge with the affairs of the Cairo Opera House) talked with Qardāḥī sometime in April 1882 and promised perhaps more support that encouraged the impresario to submit his already analyzed grand project for an institutionalized Arab theatre in the Comédie. This particular proposal and the behaviour of °Urābī as being greeted by Qardāḥī on stage of the Khedivial Opera House alludes to the recognition of the

⁷² *Al-Ahrām*, 2 May 1882, 2.

power of public theatre and a newly formed state policy that imagined state-supported culture including theatre in Arabic.

The Ottomans in the Opera House: Ghāzī Mukhtār Pasha and Arab Theatre (1886-7)

However, the revolution and the British intervention, then occupation stopped all plans to form any independent policy in Egypt. However, since the international situation between the powers did not let Britain annex or fully occupy Egypt, and the British actually did not want to do this (only to secure the Suez Canal), the distribution of power was very complex. After 1882, Egypt remained a “khedivate” having the Khedive Tawfiq as its ruler with the British consul general (from 1883) Lord Cromer deciding over the yearly budget of the country, army, and public works issues. The Sultan Abdülhamid II retained a certain legitimacy as the highest lord of Egypt although his power over Egyptian affairs almost vanished.

The international negotiation about the evacuation or non-evacuation of Egypt, the exact responsibilities of the British, and the new legitimacy of the Khedive took place throughout the 1880s. Especially the British-Ottoman agreement was decisive in many respects. Ghāzī Aḥmad Mukhtār Pasha (1839-1917) arrived to Cairo in December 1883 as the Ottoman Imperial High Commissioner and he was taken what he was: symbol of the Ottoman ties of Egypt. He lived in one of the best palaces, the Ismā‘iliyya, and although in Istanbul was a bit like an exile, he managed to marry his son to Khedive Ismā‘il’s smallest daughter.⁷³

Mukhtār Pasha’s situation in Egypt was not easy, since after a certain negotiation, his position as the Ottoman High Commissioner was not recognized by

⁷³ For Ghāzī Mukhtār Pasha, cf. Tugay, *Three Centuries*, 7-32; Ihsanoğlu, *Mısır’da Türkler*, 221.

the British with the argument that Egypt's ruler is the Khedive Tawfīq. However, the Khedive also was in a very sensitive position, losing his legitimacy as the Ottoman governor, but distancing the Egyptians by inviting the British troops – whose power was equally uncomfortable. These domestic and international political games were represented in the Opera House, too, during the late 1880s, and again usually at Qardāhī's performances.

Such a performance took place in February 1886 when Qardāhī – presumably without Salāma Ḥijāzī – performed again at the Cairo Opera House. *Al-Ahrām* and other journals this time increasingly took up an Ottoman attitude, thus the presence of Mukhtār Pasha al-Ghāzī, as they called him in Arabic, was especially important. Also, around this time it became increasingly clear that the original plan of British evacuation after three years of occupation was not going to happen.

Mukhtār Pasha subscribed to all performances of Qardāhī's new troupe and promised his personal attendance. This was underlined and thanked by *Al-Ahrām* who urged other *waṭanīyūn* to participate and support Arab theatre.⁷⁴ Although we know that Mukhtār Pasha spent considerable time abroad, and delivered for instance decorations in the name of the Sultan Abdülhamid in Italy and elsewhere, and as famous military man, was welcomed in the highest courts of Europe, we have no data if he ever went to theatre. His subscription must be attributed to, or at least understood as, an intention to side with Egypt vis-à-vis the Europeans.

Seemingly, his example was followed immediately by the court of Khedive Tawfīq and the ruler himself. All Egyptian and Ottoman government nobilities attended to Qardāhī's performances with Mukhtār Pasha at least two times. In 16

⁷⁴ *Al-Ahrām*, 10 March 1886, 2.

March the Khedive, his harem, Ismāʿīl Pasha Kāmil, ʿUthmān Pasha Ghālib assisted together with Mukhtār Pasha *and* Sir Wolff (Sir Henry Drummond-Wolff, that time British High Commissioner in Egypt, counterpart of Mukhtār Pasha) at the *Ḥifẓ al-Widād* performance.⁷⁵ A few days later, the Khedive with Khayrī Pasha, the old friend of Arab theatre, and Mukhtār Pasha *and* Sir Wolf enjoyed the *Harūn [!] al-Rashīd*.⁷⁶

These performances certainly could be considered as state occasions, where the elite and the power brokers manifested their support for patriotic/Arab theatre, since they were controlled by the British. The relation between Mukhtār Pasha and the Khedive Tawfīq needs more research but at this point they sat at the same performances, both supporting music theatre in Arabic. The Khedive, as we have seen, encouraged Qardāhī for the next year's concession but Mukhtār Pasha did something more: he demanded the troupe to repeat a whole performance, especially at his request. This was *Harūn al-Rashīd* that for some reason he favoured.⁷⁷ Yet, a few days later, the press states that this play will be given due to "popular demand."⁷⁸

The Ottoman High Commissioner supporting Arab theatre in the Khedivial Opera House was an unusual constellation and perhaps had something to do also with his unique situation being a representative/exile in a former province under foreign occupation, thus showing a community with the people who, in theory, were the subjects of his sovereign, the Sultan. Mukhtār Pasha became an organic participant in the elite of Cairo. For instance, in the last triumphant season of Qardāhī and Ḥijāzī in the Opera House in 1889, under his auspices the Maronite Charitable Society organized an evening. In this particular night, the secretary of the Society held two

⁷⁵ *Al-Ahrām*, 17 March 1886, 2.

⁷⁶ *Al-Ahrām*, 25 March 1886, 2.

⁷⁷ *Al-Ahrām*, 1 April 1886, 2.

⁷⁸ *Al-Ahrām*, 16 April 1886, 2.

speeches, the first praising the Sultan and identifying themselves as *‘uthmāniyyūn*, and the second was the praise of the Khedive.⁷⁹

The Ottoman-Egyptian relations thus manifested themselves also in the Khedivial Opera House in Cairo. Mukhtār Pasha had only symbolic means to represent and strengthen the broken ties with the Empire. This was not only a state representation (no less, the demonstration of power), but also a manifestation of belonging. However, in view of the British military presence these types of demonstrations of loyalties could remain only symbolic.

Conclusion

Conforming to the 19th century Western European ceremonials of showing the sovereign in the Opera House, in Istanbul Sultan Abdülmecid – intentionally or not – started to implement such occasions as belonging to a modern sovereign’s etiquette and international politics. The private theatre of Naum offered a convenient space and later his own palace theatre represented a new imperial image. This practice in the late 1850s was paralleled by Sa‘īd Pasha’s attendance in Egypt to receptions and balls, and perhaps also these were the formative years of would-be Khedive Ismā‘īl.

Indeed, in 1869 Ismā‘īl consciously used the Opera House in Cairo, built as a Khedivial/state possession to manifest his own propaganda about Egypt as an independent country, and later, in the form of *Aida*, about Egypt as an empire. While in Cairo the establishment of the Opera House provided a permanent venue of state representation, in Istanbul the fire of 1870 destroyed the Naum that was used by Sultan Abdülaziz for representations of his involvement in the international protocol.

⁷⁹ *Al-Ahrām*, 26 March 1889, 2-3.

The destruction of the Naum, however, was not balanced by rebuilding or constructing a new theatre (however Guatelli wanted this, Chapter 4) thus the Ottoman Empire was left without a state opera house.

The permanence of such a building in Cairo secured the possibility of expressing various political agendas in a European – at this time, already worldwide – institution. Although the state provided some subvention and free concession of the Opera House to foreign impresarios, too, during the second half of the 1880s almost every spring an Arab music theatre troupe (mostly Qardāhī) performed there equally supported by the Khedive and the Ottoman Imperial High Commissioner, Mukhtār Pasha.

These public manifestations of power were not (or not only) about art and taste but rather about political choices and symbolic messages to the audiences securing loyalty and preserving of an older imperial entanglement. The performances in Arabic, that, according to Khuri-Makdisi were “potentially subversive,”⁸⁰ in the late 1880s, on the contrary, can be seen as potentially reaffirming the khedivial power. Furthermore, the late 1880s was decisive from this point of view because it strengthened the belief of Egyptian patriots in the possibility of showing modern cultural artefacts as an organic part of resistance to the British domination.

⁸⁰ Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean*, 72-73.

Chapter 11.

Control: Permissions, Committees, and Censors

This chapter aims to describe the ways authorities tried to control public theatres in Istanbul and Cairo. These policies were directed at the audience, or the management, or the content of the plays. Usually, censorship is mentioned as the most important means of control. However, censorship was not the only, or the most effective way of controlling a theatre.

A notable difference between the two cities is that the Opera House in Cairo, being a possession of the state, was controlled directly by the Ministry of Public Works' Committee of Theatres from 1879, while in Istanbul, in the absence of state theatres, only indirect (legal, secret service, etc.) means could be exercised. The state bodies responsible for theatres in the 1880s in both cities expressed cultural preferences, tastes, and opinions about the usefulness of theatres. Together with the symbolic use of theatres and performances, the ruler and the state with these different initiatives ultimately participated in cultural politics.

Before Theatrical Censorship (pre-1870s)

Before the 1870s, censorship offices specializing in theatres and theatrical plays were not set up in Cairo or Istanbul. This was in contrast to the Ottoman press regulations and specialized censors; after the first Printing Law (1857) a second law was issued specifically for periodicals (1865).¹ In Egypt the press was also controlled by Khedive Ismā'īl, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the case of foreigners, and via the

¹ Donald J. Cioeta, "Ottoman Censorship in Lebanon and Syria, 1876-1908," *IJMES* 10, no. 2 (May, 1979): 167-186. Here: 168.

Ministry of Interior, in the case of Egyptian/Ottoman subjects.² However, the authorities tried to control and did control the theatres in a number of ways without having a specialized state body or an explicit legal framework.

Foundations/Licensing

The first such a way to interfere in the affairs of a theatre building was its establishment which had to be approved by the Sultan or the Legislative Council before the land law of 1867 in Istanbul and in the Ottoman Arab cities.³ After this date, licences of theatres were delegated to the jurisdiction of municipality councils. The Naum, the Palais de Cristal and its French Theatre, the theatre of Hasköy, even the theatre of Naqqāsh in Beirut had to be approved by the central authorities. These establishments are relatively well-documented,⁴ but there is a lack of information about later theatres because their licensing was no longer decided at the highest level but – most likely – by the municipalities (or the documents are not yet located). An approval was usually given for the erection of the building and for the theatrical activity.

In Egypt, we do not have documents concerning the approval of theatres in Cairo or Alexandria before 1868 but I suppose that they also had to be approved by the Egyptian administration, by the municipality or by the khedivial cabinet in some form. Nothing is available so far about the Teatro del Cairo in the 1840s, or (the presumably identical) Italian theatre near the Azbakiyya in the 1860s concerning the legal way these buildings were permitted or were possible to erect.

² Sadgrove, “The Development of the Arabic Press and Its Role in the Literary Life of Egypt 1798-1882,” 68.

³ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 260-261.

⁴ We have even the request of Mārūn Naqqāsh, A.MKT.MVL. 37/50, BOA. Cf. some other theatres: C.MF. 7381, DH.MKT. 1794/88, all in BOA.

In contrast, numerous documents testify that in Istanbul theatre-makers had to submit a formal request in order to establish a theatre before 1867, or, even to perform in such a playhouse. Usually these requests were addressed to the Grand Vizier or to the Sultan, sometimes to the Foreign Minister, usually in French, that was translated by the Foreign Ministry's Translation Office and sent to the Legislative Council. An exceptional case is the Ottoman Armenian entertainers, Hovannes Kasparyan' and Agop Vartanyan's requests that were, naturally, all written in Ottoman Turkish.⁵

The large number of these requests shows that in the 1840s and 1850s, theatrical activity, or, in general, entertainment within Istanbul, had to conform to certain conditions and was not considered to be a free activity. It was not only about establishing a theatre building, as in 1844 when Greeks did so in Izmir,⁶ or reconstructing a theatre building as around the same time on the land of Naum,⁷ but also about guest plays, especially in case of foreigners, i.e., non-Ottoman subjects. For instance, in 1841 when the Habsburg subject Basilio Sansoni wanted to perform in Bosco's theatre in Pera, this was not only an issue between he and Bosco, but was submitted to the *Meclis-i Vâlâ*.⁸ Other documents equally confirm that theatrical activity by visiting Europeans was a suspicious but not censored phenomenon.

From the 1850s there are no more examples of state interference into the relations between impresarios and theatre owners, if not requested specifically (see below). Neither Naum's, nor Manasse' troupes were requested to submit a petition,

⁵ Letter dated 12 Jumādha'l-Akhir 1265, cf. I.MVL. 139/3855; A.MKT. 193/44; A.MKT. 46/63; A.MKT.MVL. 52/16; MVL. 60/26; I.HR. 37/1691; I.MVL. 00479/021733 digital; HR.MKT. 101/40, all in BOA.

⁶ Letter dated 26 Şafar 1260 (17 March 1844), A.MKT. 10/10, BOA. Cf. *La Turquie*, 26 March 1889, 2, article about the first theatre before this one in Smyrna.

⁷ Dated 29 Jumādha'l-Akhir 1260 (16 July 1844), I.HR. 26/1229, BOA.

⁸ Letter dated 20 Rajab 1257 (7 September 1841), I. HR. 12/609, BOA.

and from the end of the 1860s, seemingly, a relative freedom of performances by European troupes is observable.

Specific Regulations

The second way in which theatres were controlled were specific regulations, written for a particular theatre by a municipality or a state authority. The first such text from Ottoman territories is from Wallachia in 1819 (that was actually largely independent).⁹ Regulations were not automatically conceived as parts of the foundation but were the outcomes of growing municipal power or responses to particular problems created by the audience. Three such regulations survived from Egypt and Istanbul – one from Alexandria (1847), and two from Istanbul (1859 – Naum Theatre, 1860 – “Istanbul Theatre”). The common characteristics of these regulations are the aims to maintain *order* within the building and around it, emphasizing mostly the intention to regulate the audience and the actors. Having only the texts, we do not know if the rules were executed. Likely, not everything was applied; furthermore, in Naum’s case, we even know that he was reluctant to deal with the regulation at all.

Artin Bey, the Foreign Minister of Muḥammad °Alī Pasha, send the 1847 regulation of the Italian theatre in Alexandria to foreign consuls. Khuri-Makdisi, when following a printing mistake in Najm’s book, dates it to 1874.¹⁰ However, this regulation was sent originally in Italian in 1847. It was intended to keep order within

⁹ Quoted in Robert Justin Goldstein, “Introduction”, in *The War for the public mind – Political Censorship in Nineteenth Century Europe*, ed. Robert Justin Goldstein (Westport: Praeger, 2000), 1-34, here: 8.

¹⁰ Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean*, 76. In fact, Najm’s is an Arabic translation of the original Italian. The text of these regulations was published first in Jeanette Tagher, “Les débuts du théâtre modern en Égypte,” *Cahiers d’Histoire Égyptienne*, 1/ 2, (1948): 192-207. Then Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, Appendix 1., 169-171.

the theatre and regulated the relation between actors and audiences by prohibiting smoking, noise, whistling, etc. while emphasizing the necessity of actors' respectful conduct towards the audience. As Sadgrove underlines, contrary to Landau's opinion, seemingly not the Egyptian subjects but the foreign population was the objective of such regulations.¹¹ A further important note must be that, as it is clear in the circular, Artin Bey considered that the Italian theatre in Alexandria as a public building – nonetheless in private ownership – should be under the jurisdiction of the municipality thus, indirectly, under the Muḥammad 'Alī's administration.

The second such regulation concerns the Naum Theatre in 1859.¹² The regulation was issued by the Municipality of the 6th District of Pera-Galata, and was publicly published also in the *Revue de Constantinople* on November 1859.¹³ The Municipality two times issued an explanation for his regulation.¹⁴ Just like the Italian theatre in Alexandria, the Naum buildings (although these had existed for at least since 13 years) were considered to be under the jurisdiction of the new municipality.

The Naum Theatre was a private property, thus the municipality had to argue that 1) A theatre is a public place and every public institution is under the direct control of the Municipality; 2) The theatre and its impresario must fulfil its engagements for the public, and for the artists in a regulated form; 3) In the theatre one can find “protection against men with bad intentions” thus order must be maintained; and 4) At the same time the Municipality is the *only* authority that can

¹¹ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 41.

¹² This regulation was not published hitherto, and also missing from Araci's otherwise excellent monograph on the Naum.

¹³ *Revue de Constantinople*, 2 November 1859, 3. The preserved original version in BOA is in HR.TO. 472/21.

¹⁴ The first was an open letter, a kind of preambulum, attached and printed with the Regulation, dated 18 March 1859. The other one was the decree of the Council that the regulation took effect, dated 24 October 1859, and it was published as the “introduction” of the regulation in the *Revue de Constantinople*, 2 November 1859, 3.

exercise its rights for surveillance. A number of the articles aimed at maintaining order and security inside the building: the audience cannot be armed (art. 29), or the municipal police (“chef de surveillance,” art. 38) would evacuate badly behaving audience members or those who disturb peaceful spectators.

The rules contained actually more than what was needed to maintain order. For instance, *taste* was taken into consideration (“la Municipalité fera droit à tout grief légitime que le Public articulerait contre toute représentation qui ne serait pas agréée”, art. 5). Or the impresario should negotiate the prices with the Municipality (art. 6), and his repertoire must be approved in advance (art. 11), or that ill artists will be checked by a doctor delegated by the Municipality (art. 27).

This regulation was a response to specific problems. Naum actually rented his theatre to impresarios who many times did not fulfil their obligations. Although the Municipality ordered that the regulation should be put visibly inside the theatre, Naum obviously hated the idea. In February 1860, he furiously wrote to the secretary of the Municipality that he never had an “external regulation” and “the new ones are in the archives of the Municipality Council where you may find them and look at whatever you are interested in.”¹⁵ This regulation, however, was cited in France as a good example for many occasions.¹⁶ It seems that again the audience that was prescribed in the regulation was foreigners or, at least, the francophone Istanbulite inhabitants.

¹⁵ Letter from Naum to Bardounni?, dated 17 February 1860, HR.TO. 472/21, BOA.

¹⁶ The decree of the Municipality is dated 24 October 1859 - an original printed version (in French) and its Ottoman Turkish manuscript translation exist in HR.TO. 472/21, BOA. The Regulation in French was also published in *Revue de Constantinople*, 2 November 1859, 3. Some of its articles were even published in France, *Le Ménestrel*, 27 November 1859, 415, and were looked at as if these were the signs of “progress of Turkish civilization.” Years later, in the battle against the whistle in theatre in France, this regulation was cited again in France as a good example: *Le Ménestrel*, 7 June 1863, 211 citing Malliot’s book, *La musique au Théâtre*.

The third surviving regulation was drafted one year later in Istanbul. The *Meclis-i Vâlâ*, the Legislative Council issued this decree, presumably for the Gedikpaşa theatre, in 1860, shortly after that the Naum Theatre got his one from the Municipality of the 6th District. Thus, one year after the regulation of the Naum Theatre, rather embodying the conceptions of the mixed Francophone Pera Municipality, this directive mirrors the policy of the Ottoman authorities towards a public space in 1860.¹⁷

This regulation or Bylaws (*Nizāmnāme*) contains that the theatre (called “Istanbul Theatre” in the document) and its artists were put under the direct jurisdiction of the police and the authority of the Municipality (art. 4., no indication which municipality).¹⁸ Since the identification of this theatre with the Gedikpaşa Theatre cannot be warranted, but very likely, it is risky to suppose any further relation between the Ottoman authorities and the Gedikpaşa. It contains only the information that the building will be used by horse circus artists (*at cānbāzları*).¹⁹

This regulation contains the first known theatrical censorship, since article no. 5 establishes a police officer with the special task to supervise and control not only the theatre but also the plays. This indicates a new official awareness since it is out of the question that any other persons than the jurists of the *Meclis-i Vâlâ* composed the

¹⁷ The relationship between the two regulations needs further research. The final decision of the Municipality of the Sixth District concerning the Naum Theatre is dated 24 October 1859, the *tanzīm* of the “Istanbul Theatre” is dated 22 March 1860. Between them there is only a couple of months. The French regulation of the Naum Theatre was publicly available. It might be that here we indeed can follow the way the Ottoman authorities used the Municipality of the 6th District as an experimental project and implemented its legislations and practice in other areas of the city.

¹⁸ First referred by Metin And to the three documents published by Rauf Tuncay in the 1960s. The first document, issued from the *Meclis-i Vâlâ* to an unidentified authority, is the Regulation (*tanzīm*) of the theatre. Tuncay, and based on him, And too, took this document as dated 1859. But this is from 29 Sha‘bān 1276 which corresponds to 22 March 1860. Today these three documents could be found in a digital *gömlük* I.MVL. 430/18931, BOA. And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 34. Tuncay, “Türk Tiyatro Tarihi Belgeleri,” 71-75.

¹⁹ Metin And identifies it with the Gedikpaşa Theatre. And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 35.

text (it is entitled as “Istanbul Tiyatrosu’na dā³ir Maclis-i Vālā’dan tanzīm olunan Nizāmnāme’dır” – “The Bylaws containing the regulation from the *Maclis-i Vālā* concerning the Istanbul Theatre”). This is the first regulation which presumably aims to educate a non-Francophone audience in Istanbul. Since they were all subjects of the Sultan, it is likely that at this point the morals of the performances were taken into consideration.

Nine years later, when in 1869 the Opera House in Cairo was opened, likely it did not have any written regulation. However, during the colonial period, there are some references to written or unwritten rules, like the smoking was prohibited in 1887 out of fear of fire by the British supervised police. Perhaps an interesting detail that however the police wanted to keep this prohibition in the theatre, they could not enter the boxes of the harem.²⁰

In general, these regulations targeted the functioning of the theatre and although in some cases already contained hints about the content of the plays, their main aim was to maintain order within the building, protecting and regulating the audience; and provide precise rules for the owner and the impresarios. These regulations were connected to municipalities and did not deal with the content of the plays.

From the 1870s, both in Istanbul, both in Cairo the central authorities also dealt with public spaces as theatres, that is, the “local” regulations of municipalities were elevated to a state level. They were no longer focused on public order but were

²⁰ “At different part of the theatre notices are posted prohibiting smoking, except in the rooms sent apart for that purpose, the police on duty see these instructions strictly carried out, except in the loges occupied as Harem Boxes, and to which they have no access.” Letter dated 28 September 1887, from the Commendant of Police Cairo City, to H.E. the Inspector General of Police Headquarters, 4003-036990, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-^oUmūmiyya, DWQ.

refined mechanisms for controlling the content of the plays and many details from the tickets to the payment of actors. These will be discussed below.

Asking for Control/Privileges

A third way in which the state was involved in the control of theatres was when it acted as an arbitrator between two theatre-makers in debates or, a theatre-maker wanted to use the state to achieve something against another one using his better connections. Such interference was usually requested by one of the parties or embassies. It is especially characteristic in Istanbul in the 1860s when there were relatively few theatres and the theatres were considered to be a special importance to the state/ruler. Moreover, since the theatre owners were Ottoman subjects, they asked the Ottoman authorities to represent them or to judge their case. In some cases, this was the request from inhabitants/rival businessmen, like in 1854 when the owners of cafes, etc., opposed the “théâtre mécanique” that was to be established in the Tepebaşı.²¹

This was the *par excellence* case of Michel Naum, an Ottoman subject, and his quarrel with the British architect Smith, that was shown in Chapter 4. Later, in 1856, Michel Naum asked the Foreign Minister and the Ottoman government to help him because the French Troupe’s impresario, Fortin, behaved in a way that put poor Michel Naum “hors de moi.” He petitioned the authorities to ask the French Ambassador to intervene because in order to avoid the disturbance of the peace, he had to close his theatre to Fortin and the French Troupe.²²

²¹ Letter dated 20 November 1854, I.MVL. 324/13828, BOA.

²² Letter dated 30 January 1856, from Michel Naum to Fuad Pasha, HR.TO 422/30, BOA.

However, there was a much stronger example in which state involvement was the interest of theatre-makers and this is the case of theatrical privileges. Such privileges or monopolies are only characteristic of Istanbul; I have no data any such privilege in the period from Egypt. In Egypt between 1869-1878 Draneht Pasha could be considered as being in a monopolistic situation since any theatre, in any language, could be only performed in the state theatre of Cairo with his permission. This, however, was not a state “involvement” since Draneht himself embodied the state (the Khedive).

In Istanbul, a “monopoly” concerning theatre means that the Sultan/State gave an *imtiyāz* to a special theatre or theatre-maker to play in general or to play in a specified language. These were only valid within the administrative territory of the capital, Dersā^cdet ve Bilād-ı Silāsa.

The first such monopoly was Michel Naum’s perhaps that was located neither by Metin And, nor by his monographer, Emre Aracı. According to Gaetano Mele, a monopoly was promised to him around 1840. (Cf. Appendix 3). We do not know therefore exactly when was Naum’s was given, for what and for what period, perhaps as a rivalry to Mele. It is mentioned earliest in 1856 vis-à-vis certain theatres that were about to be established in Istanbul (that is, in the Old City), possibly by the Ottoman Armenians, that – according to Naum – suggested bad behavior.²³ Thus Naum’s *imtiyāz* was not only about securing his market but he also played the role of the judge in the cultural competition, by the power of his privilege embodying a state-like position.

²³ Dated 24 Jumāda’l-Awwal 1273 (20 January 1857), MVL 180/25, BOA.

Certainly it existed because in his contract with Manasse in 1865 the first article announces that “Mr. M. Naum Duhany, possesseur, en vertu d’une Iradé Impérial d’une privilege qui lui confère à l’exclusion de tous autres, le droit de donner des representations théâtrales à Constantinople.”²⁴ We may also suppose that Naum got this privilege from Sultan Abdülmecid but otherwise we have no other data which would confirm its conditions.

In 1864, as was mentioned, Manasse asked for the privilege of performing in French for three years, explicitly against Naum.²⁵ The privilege was supposedly not granted because in 1865, as was shown, Manasse and Naum finally contracted, separating French language performances from the Italian ones, and again opera from any other genre. This contract was signed for two years until 1867. The reason for this is that in fact Naum’s privilege ended that year. In November 1867 a petition was submitted for the extension of the *imtiyāz*, especially for opera performances, signed by a number of the most prestigious subscribers in his theatre.²⁶

However, Michel Naum died in that year and Manasse also left Istanbul to Cairo, next year. So, in the spring of 1869 Barthélemy Giustiniani, the owner of the property that was used as Manasse’ French Theatre, also demanded a privilege. His petition was a reaction presumably to Joseph Naum’s quick move after Manasse’ departure to Egypt in October 1868 in order to regain the right to stage performances

²⁴ Contract dated 1 April 1865, I.MVL. 532/23871, BOA. Cf. Chapter 5.

²⁵ French letter dated 12 January 1864, from Seraphin Manasse to Fuad Pasha, HR.TO 445/33, BOA. Its translation is in I.MVL 860/16.

²⁶ Letter dated 25 Rajab 1284 (22 November 1867), with an undated French translation in I.ŞD. 10/505, BOA.

in French. Against this move, Giustiniani, it is said, asked for the privilege of French plays for 10 years.²⁷

The most famous monopoly is of Güllü Agop's *imtiyāz* for theatrical performances in Ottoman Turkish. Perhaps urged by a plan that was prepared under the auspices of the Grand Vizier Ali Pasha for a theatre called "Tiyatro-ı Sultānī" in the end of 1869 and early 1870, Güllü Agop managed to get a monopoly for plays (dramas, tragedies, comedies, and "vodvil") in Ottoman Turkish. The monopoly was issued by the Şūra-ı Devlet ʿUmumī (General State Council) and its Nāfiʿa Dāʿiresi dated 17 May 1870, which was published and transliterated first by Metin And. This *imtiyāz* states explicitly that he receives the monopoly for ten or fifteen years, for, in a rough translation, "theatrical activity in the Turkish language by the aforementioned Agop, being [genuinely] written or translated comedies, tragedies, or dramas or vaudevilles with the exception of plays with opera-like singing."²⁸ Thus, a few years later, Güllü Agop's quarrel with Tchouhadjian's Ottoman Opera was largely without basis (Chapter 8).

These monopolies or requests were composed for the benefit of theatre owners or theatre-makers by the sovereign or the authorities with intention to regulate a hitherto unregulated business. In Istanbul it was possible because the theatre-makers in various times were close to the authorities and could convince them of the quality they represented. In Egypt, however, the total absence of such monopolies represents that neither the theatre-makers (be those French, Italian, Syrians, Egyptians), nor the authorities considered this activity as a "trade" that had a market where free competition could be restricted.

²⁷ *Levant Herald*, 18 March 1869, 3. Cf. Translation dated 26 Jumāda'l-Akhir 1285 (14 October 1868?), in A.MKT.MHM. 423/78, BOA.

²⁸ Dated 17 May 1870, I. ŞD 18/777, BOA. And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 55-56.

Suppression Without Censorship (1870s)

One does not need censors in order to suppress or ban a play. Banning theatres or theatre plays represented a new phase in theatre control from the end of the 1860s both in Istanbul and Cairo. These cases are examples of the direct exercise of power without much legal ado.

The first indirectly censored performance in the Ottoman Empire was the pantomime of the Cirque Rancy in December 1869 that was suppressed by Draneht Bey. They put a pantomime on the programme, entitled *Un invité*, mocking the Khedive and his Parisian guests coming for the Suez Canal Opening Ceremonies. In the pantomime, a European gentleman did not want to pay for anything, saying always “I am invited.” As was mentioned this was immediately suppressed by Draneht Bey, naming it a “satire locale” and he also ensured that his objection was shown to the Khedive.²⁹

Otherwise, in Egypt during the 1870s not much suppression of European plays can be detected since Draneht already filtered them before staging. It is rather the already mentioned ambiguous attitude of Draneht towards theatre in Arabic in Cairo that can be considered as a prohibitive state policy towards theatricals. In the famous suppression of the first theatre of James Sanua, around the autumn of 1872, his role is not clear (this suppression could be equally due to the Khedive’s dislike of one of Sanua’s plays or to Draneht’s whispering who did not like Sanua’s satirical style).³⁰ However, if it existed, Draneht’s hostility to Sanua does not mean that he was against Arab theatre, only he protected his own “empire” and fought against subversive plays.

²⁹ Letter dated 26 December 1869, Draneht to ?, “Vous ferez bien de supprimer au plus tout votre pantomime, ou, pour mieux dire, votre satire locale.” Carton 80, CAI, DWQ. See also Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 50.

³⁰ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 109-112.

Although a specialized theatre supervision did not exist in Istanbul, still the police closed Güllü Agop's theatre in 1872 for a short time in April.³¹ One year later, on 1 April 1873, Namık Kemal Bey's famous drama, *Vatan yahut Silistre*, a story about the Crimean war was staged. This time, the theatre was closed, the play was banned, and Namık Kemal Bey, with other journalists, was exiled by the Ottoman authorities. It is said that during the performance, people shouted the name of Murad, the heir of Sultan Abdülaziz,³² and this was the reason for the closure, but more research is needed about this particular evening.

This event, which might also serve as a pretext to close the journal *İbret* and to exile a number of Young Ottoman intellectuals, ironically on the board of an Egyptian ship,³³ is the first occasion to the best of my knowledge (after Racy's circus in Cairo) that in the late Ottoman Empire a play was suppressed because of its *content*. This is not a case of censorship since it is not a previous but a posterior act of exercising authority, and involves much more than the brute suppression of a play. However, this suppression, as was mentioned earlier might be responsible for the large-scale making of operettas in Ottoman Turkish as a depoliticized genre. (Cf. Chapter 9.)

Another factor that intervened in the execution of plays and repertoires was war. Here, there is no space to follow – however interesting would that be – the ways theatre-makers in Istanbul and in Cairo reacted if their government was at war with another power and how this situation affected the visiting troupes. As we have seen, certainly in both Tchouhadjian's and Manasse' careers the Russian-Ottoman wars were important factors. In contrast, in Cairo there is no data whether in this period patriotic performances were organized for the Egyptian army or to express support,

³¹ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 66.

³² And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 70-71.

³³ *L'Orient Illustré*, 12 April 1873, 550.

for instance, with those who fought in the Sudan. This absence might be due to the fact that Sudan was not a war, but rather, a conquest.

Banning performances or closing theatres based on the content of the plays was a new element in the regulation of the emerging public sphere in Cairo and Istanbul. However, these were not applied by the authorities as a consistent policy and in the 1870s there were no specialized departments at police or press departments concerning theatres.

Collecting Information

A special type of state control is when the state collects information in/about the theatre via secret agents. In the 1840s, coffeehouses of the Old City were targets of secret agents in Istanbul where they recorded all gossips, rumours, etc.³⁴ I do not have data if they visited the theatres of Pera, especially the theatre of Naum under the direction of Bosco or later of Papa Nicola in the 1840s. Certainly, police reports contain some data about theatre performances in Istanbul early on.

In Cairo, secret agents during the rule Ismā'īl were sent to theatres with the orders to spy on the foreigners and had the task to report also about the personnel of the theatres, especially the Opera House. Ismā'īl' police chief, Monsieur Nardi, had some agents to collect information about the general atmosphere among the Europeans. A certain Antoine Banucci already during the construction of the Opera House, unfinished in September 1869, wrote to the Khedive about the state of affairs

³⁴ Cengiz Kırılı, "Coffeehouses: Public Opinion in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire," in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, eds. Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), 75-97.

and asked him to intervene on behalf of the ballerinas who were badly treated by Nicole Lablache.³⁵

In this regard, the already mentioned Agent Z was a very interesting individual since he not only wrote a detailed report about Arab theatre activity during 1870 but also proposed a number of suggestions. He suggested two points: to establish a society for Arabic theatre („une société patriotique d’ériger un théâtre national”) – this should be backed by the Government and would include also a school for training actors – and a legal change: the Khedive should introduce a proper copyright law for literary compositions.³⁶

We do not have information about the afterlife of this report but its existence is perhaps not unrelated to the public performances of Sanua’s theatre in 1871 (cf. Chapter 4). Certainly, other secret agents worked also in the Opera House, because in the same spring another agent, Agent X, reported about the two political factions among the Italian musicians in the orchestra,³⁷ and that this divide caused even disturbance among the dancers. Agent X also reported about a boycott against the Opera.³⁸ After the 1870s, I did not find any secret agent reports about theatricals in

³⁵ Letter dated Le Caire le 29 December 1869, to the Khedive from Antoine Banucci, 5013-003022, Usrat Muḥammad °Alī, DWQ. Lablache was at this moment the administrative director of the Opera House, *La Revue musicale de Paris* 36 n. 21, 23 May 1869, 174. “Le surintendant des théâtres du Caire, Draneht-Bey, en ce moment à Paris, vient de confier à M. Nicole Lablache les fonctions d’administrateur de l’Opéra Italien et du Vaudeville, fonctions que M. Lablache partageait avec M. Thibaut auprès de M. Bagier.”

³⁶ Letter dated Le Caire le 27 janvier 1871, to Monsieur Nardi, Inspecteur de Police au Caire from Agent Z. 5013-003022, Usrat Muḥammad °Alī, DWQ. Cf. the report in Appendix 6.

³⁷ “Parmi les artistes du Théâtre de l’Opéra, deux parties se sont formés. Les agitateurs principaux sont Baccolini et le mari de la Giovananni, ils se permettent d’adresser des correspondances anonymes a des journaux d’Italie ou ils deblatèrent contre les artistes de premiere merite qui sont: la Galletti, Calonnese, de Giose, chef d’orchestre ainsi qui contre tous les napolitains professeurs du musique qui en font partiés.” Letter dated 11 janvier 1871 from Agent X to M. Nardi Inspecteur de Police au Caire. 5013-003022, Usrat Muḥammad °Alī, DWQ. These factions very likely debated the unification of Italy in 1871.

³⁸ “J’ai été informé par quelqu’un qui l’a entendu dans une conversation qu’une personne se proposait de faire signer une protestation à tous les abonnés du Théâtre pour la non exécution de plusieurs Opéras, qui avaient été annoncés par une publication comme devant se donner pendant la saison

Egypt although there must have been some sort of police surveillance during the British occupation.

In Istanbul, contrary to the general belief there are few secret agents' reports concerning theatres or at least these are not yet found. If so, the secret agents were reporting rather about the audience than about the artists. As Merih Erol showed on the case of the Greek Orthodox community, communities with strong identity agendas were supervised and spied on during their public musical and theatrical occasions in the 1890s-1900s in Istanbul and elsewhere.³⁹ But this activity belongs to an even later phase of the expansion of state control.

Institutionalization of Control: Offices and Censors (1880s)

Laws issued in 1878, 1885, and 1888 further regulated the press in the Ottoman Empire, resulting in a tight control of speech. In Egypt, although the press law of late 1881 was strict,⁴⁰ it was not often implemented during the 1880s.⁴¹ As far as theatres were concerned, the official response to the growing power and visibility of various collectivities in public was the establishment of specialized censorship, under different guises, indicating that the policies shifted from regulation to prohibition.

This censorship concerning theatres was a practice since the 18th century in Europe, and was considered even more important than the censorship of printed materials, as in 1795 an Austrian official wrote: "this [importance] is the consequence of the different impression which can be made on the minds and emotions of the

théâtrale actuelle." Letter dated Le Caire 29 janvier 1871. From Agent X to Inspecteur de Police au Caire, M. Nardi. 5013-003022, Usrat Muḥammad °Alī, DWQ.

³⁹ Merih Erol, "Spying on Greek Orthodox ?? Music in Istanbul during the late Hamidian Regime (1876-1909)," unpublished paper, submitted to *Urban History*.

⁴⁰ The text of this law is published for instance, in Sāmī °Azīz, *Al-Ṣiḥāfa al-miṣriyya wa-mawqifu-hā mina'l-Iḥtilāl al-Injlīzī* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-°Arabī li'l-Tibā°a wa'l-Nashr, 1968), 339-343.

⁴¹ Cioeta, "Ottoman Censorship in Lebanon and Syria," 179. Cf. Al-Bagdadi, *Vorgestellte Öffentlichkeit* for Muḥammad °Abduh as a censor.

audience by a work enacted with the illusion of real life.”⁴² The censorship of music was equally important already in the 1820s in Western Europe, for instance, in France the popular song writer Pierre Béranger was put in jail because his songs in the public cafes were judged to be “1000 times more contagious” than printed material.⁴³

Based on the material given below, theatre and music theatre were not distinguished in the case of Ottoman censors in Istanbul. Their repeated argument was that certain plays “rotted public morals,” alluding to a religious legitimacy of censorship. In Cairo, a completely different, colonial institution guarded the dignity of the state theatres but – as far as I know – did not interfere in private theatres during the period. Thus, compared to Istanbul, Egypt in the 1880s was a “free” territory for theatre-makers in any language than Abdülhami II’s Istanbul.

Cairo: Comité des Théâtres (1881-1900)

In Cairo, the khedivial al-Dā’ira al-Saniyya had to give up its “semi-state” responsibilities during 1878-79, thus the Khedivial Opera House had to be maintained by the state and its Ministry of Public Works. A committee was formed, attached to the Ministry, called Comité des Théâtres, in Arabic *Lajnat al-Tiyātrāt*, to supervise the khedivial theatres, at this time comprising the Comédie, the Opera House, and the Azbakiyya Garden Theatre. The committee’s role was to evaluate what the superintendants or impresarios offered, to advise the Minister (many times, in fact, decide), and to dispose over the budget of theatres – more or less limited to the finances of the Opera House.

⁴² Quoted in Robert Justin Goldstein, “Introduction”, 7.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 9.

Thus this Comité was a kind of interdepartmental unit, independently working between (within) the Ministry of Public Works, its Tanzīm section (“Tanzim” *Administration de la Voirie*), the Ministry of Finances, the Khedive (!) and the Opera House’ staff itself. The usual administrative routine was that an artist or an impresario or a private society petitioned the Ministry with a request which was almost automatically transferred to the Comité which agreed or not (quite explicitly refusing or permitting), and then that decision was usually communicated by the Ministry towards the applicant. In the case of agreement, let us say, with an impresario, a contract was signed between the Minister, representing the Government (the state) and the impresario, and in the contract it was usually included that the impresario is responsible to the Comité des Théâtres, for example, the 1888 contract of Melekian and Benglian.⁴⁴ (Cf. Appendix 11.)

In the 1890s the members seemed to be more active and the Comité publically awaited the vote of the subscribed audience of the Opera and then they decided accordingly what kind of performances they would invite.⁴⁵ Doing this their executive body was the re-established post of superintendant with the regulation of the personal of the Opera House as state employees in 1886.⁴⁶ The superintendent was Pasquale Clemente, an Italian pianist and likely music teacher.⁴⁷ The superintendant’s post was

⁴⁴ Dated 3 March 1888, in 4003-036990, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

⁴⁵ *La Réforme (L’Egypte)*, 23 February 1896, 2. It seems that this time there was a debate if the Opera of Cairo and the Zizinia Theatre in Alexandria should become under one administration.

⁴⁶ Letter from the Min. Trav. Publ. To the Cons. Des Min., dated 15 December 1886, signed Rouchdy [Rushdī]. Carton 2/1, Nizārat al-Ashgāl al-°Umūmiyya, CMW, DWQ.

⁴⁷ Sessa, *Il melodramma italiano: 1861-1900*, 121. It might be that at this time he worked also as a teacher since he is mentioned as the first teacher of the pianist Edgardo Del Valle de Paz (1861-1920), who was born in Alexandria and thus Clemente perhaps lived there in the 1870s. Clemente perhaps was hired first instead of aging Larose, as keeper of costumes. *Al-Ahrām*, 11 November 1886, 2.

again named, like Draneht's in the 1870s, "Administration des théâtres du khédivé d'Égypte,"⁴⁸ although with less power.

The committee's establishment was due to the vacuum and perplexity when the post of Draneht Pacha was dissolved in December 1878. The personnel of the Opera and the Comédie, their salaries, and everything connected to these buildings passed to the hands of the so-called "Tanzim" (*Tanzīm*), the authority responsible specifically for the public works of Cairo within the Ministry of Public Works.⁴⁹ In the season of 1880/81, a certain Fitzgerald was the responsible for the financial matters of the theatres, perhaps together with a certain d'Ornstein.⁵⁰ Although the supervision of the buildings remained at the Tanzim, around the spring of 1881 the Comité des Théâtres was established.

According to all extant documents, in the first years there were only two active members: J. d'Ornstein and Gay-Lussac, but perhaps Fitzgerald remained also in the committee, and it might be that Grand Bey, the head of Tanzim, was also a member.⁵¹ Their first known correspondence was issued from June 1881, when they demanded the salary of the staff of the Opera,⁵² and then informed the Minister 'Alī Pasha Mubārak that from now onwards they were responsible for the budget of the theatres, so they should employ Kuch, an accountant.⁵³ Although in the first years, the

⁴⁸ Like in a printed paper, dated 10 November 1887, from Clemente to Inspecteur du Tanzim, 4003-036990, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

⁴⁹ From Le Directeur de l'administration de la Voirie To Ministre des Travaux Publics, Dated 7 January 1879, 4003-037847, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

⁵⁰ 23 December 1881, Memorandum from the Comité des Théâtres to Ministry of Public Works,

⁵¹ Dated 1881 april 9, cf. also Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 151.

⁵² Letter dated 29 June 1881, from les Membres du Comité des Théâtres; signed: d'Ornstein; GuyLussac to Riaz Pacha, Ministre des Finances. 4003-037847, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ. Since this letter already is registered as Nr. 4. there must have been three earlier ones, but only three, which means that the committee was recently formed.

⁵³ 2 July 1881, from Les Membres du Comité des Théâtres; signed: d'Ornstein; GuyLussac, to Aly Pacha Mubarak, Ministre des Trav Publics, 4003-037847, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ. "Nous ont été communiquées de (votre lettres et les Min des Finances lettres) desquelles il résulte que

letters were signed usually by d'Ornstein or Gay-Lussac, after a while only Ornstein and a certain Barois remained. In 1886, Ornstein was certainly "Président du Comité des Théâtres."⁵⁴ Later, other members were in the committee, in 1888 members were Tigrane, Keller, Ornstein, Barois;⁵⁵ in 1889 Ornstein, Blum, Barois, Figari;⁵⁶ in 1892 Barois, Le Chevalier, Elwin Palmer, Boghos Nubar, Henry Settle;⁵⁷ in 1896, Elwin Palmer still was a member.⁵⁸

This committee was the guardian of the Opera House, with a specific European taste, maintaining the main character of the Opera House primarily for Italian and French repertoires. D'Ornstein, a Habsburg Hungarian Jew, was a private secretary to Khedive Tawfiq in 1882,⁵⁹ Gerald Fitzgerald was a Director General of Public Accounts at the Ministry of Finance,⁶⁰ while Gay-Lussac was a Frenchman, the French director (Contrôleur Général Français) of the privatized Dā'ira-1 Saniyya.⁶¹ Thus the members of the committee were European statesmen in high

vous tenir à la disposition du Comité des Théâtres le reliquat du crédit prévu pour ce service au budget du Ministère des Travaux Publics, nous avons l'honneur d'informer V E que nous avons chargé M Kuch de recevoir en notre nom le montant de ce reliquat et nous la prions de vouloir bien donner les ordres nécessaires à la comptabilité pour que la remise en soit faite sans retard."

⁵⁴ Letter dated 26 February 1886, From Santi-Boni to J. D'Ornstein Président du Comité des Théâtres au Caire, 4003-037912, Diwān al-Ashghāl al-^cUmūmiyya, DWQ.

⁵⁵ Undated letter for 1888-1889, concerning the request of Santini, about the reduction of the rent of the Azbakiyya Garden Theatre, signed by Tigrane, Keller, Ornstein, Barois. Carton 2/1, Nizārat al-Ashghāl al-^cUmūmiyya, DWQ.

⁵⁶ Copie d'une lettre adressé par les délégués du Gouvernement du Théâtre de l'Opéra à Son Excellence le Ministre des Travaux Publics, en date du 20 Mars 1889. 4003-022543, Diwān al-Ashghāl al-^cUmūmiyya, DWQ.

⁵⁷ Letter dated 7 May 1892 from Comité des Théâtres to ? in Carton 2/1, Nizārat al-Ashghāl al-^cUmūmiyya, CMW, DWQ.

⁵⁸ Amonasro, "La question des théâtres," *La Réforme (L'Egypte)*, 1 March 1896, 6-7.

⁵⁹ D'Ornstein is mentioned among the "lazy court official" of Khedive Tawfiq, as the private secretary to the Khedive, R.H. Vetch, *Life, letter, and diaries of Lieut.-General Sir Gerald Graham* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1901), 227. A John Isidor Ornstein was a secretary of the Egyptian (British) Control in September 1882, *The London Gazette*, 29 September 1882, 1. In 1891, an I. Ornstein was the vice director of the customs (Administration des Douanes), AE (1891-1892), 160; AO (1891), John Isid. Maurice Ornstein in Alexandria, 942. However, this might not be the same Ornstein. His name does not figure in Komár Krisztián, "Az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchia és Egyiptom kapcsolatai, 1882-1914," PhD diss., Szegedi Tudományegyetem, 2006.

⁶⁰ Hourani, "Syrians in Egypt," 116.

⁶¹ AE (1891-1892), 53.

positions who had their own jobs and they supervised the Opera in addition to their daily activities, which also means that probably they had no office thus were only reachable via the Ministry.

They were instrumental in the reorganization of the staff of the Opera House in 1886, and in 1887, and they also publically advertised their policies concerning the concession of the khedivial theatres in six points. For instance, the committee decided to ask a deposit from those who will get the concession,⁶² most likely due to the scandal of Santi Boni and Soschino in December 1886 (cf. Chapter 6).

However, according to the best of my knowledge, although the general framework of the Opera House was established for foreign troupes with subvention and/or with the free concession of the venue – this is what the Arab newspapers understood as the support of foreign troupes – the Comité did not refuse theatre troupes playing in Arabic, at least based on the surviving documentation. During the 1880s they only refused Yūsuf Khayyāt once when the Minister told them so, but then from 1890, increasingly other Arab artists, like al-Qabbānī. Even after this date, for instance Sulaymān Ḥaddād was let to use the Opera House in the spring of 1893 the Ministry paid the gas also;⁶³ although in 1895 he was refused.⁶⁴ However, it is clear that their main preference was the European troupes; thus an impresario promising such entertainments was preferred to the proposals from Arab impresarios that were actually proposed for a limited period (usually a month/two months) unlike the seasonal offers of the Italian or French impresarios.

⁶² “Ikhtišāṣāt Lajnat al-Tiyātrāt al-Khidīwiyya,” *Al-Qāhira al-Ḥurra*, 7 June 1887, 3.

⁶³ Letter dated 10 January 1893 from the Ministry to Suleiman Haddad. 4003-022553, *Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya*, DWQ.

⁶⁴ Handwritten French note “Le Conseil n’a pas cru devoir faire droits a cette demande.” 5 January 1895, in Carton 2/1, *Nizārat al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya*, CMW, DWQ.

The increase of refusals also reflects on the strengthening colonial state, the suspicion towards theatre in Arabic, and the establishment of alternative playhouses in Cairo. However, the Comité was not an institution of censorship although all contracts presumably contained, as an attachment, the repertoire that was also verified (and in certain cases, demanded) by the committee. In 1886, there is news that Qardāhī's repertoire was "approved" by them.⁶⁵ It must be underlined that their activity, from the mid-1880s, meant *only* the supervision of the Opera House (the Azbakiyya Garden Theatre's performances were not submitted to them, or at least, there is no data about this). They were never involved in the issues of any other theatre in Cairo, Alexandria, or anywhere in the countryside.

The Comité supervised the House and regulated the audience. In 1885, for instance, Larose warned them that during an Arabic performance,

dans quelques parties du théâtre de l'opéra Khédivial, hors de celles designés à cet égard, des personnes se sont permis, pendant une représentation, d'allumer des petites lampes pour faire du café etc au grand danger du théâtre puisque par ce moyen une incendie pourrait facilement arriver

As a reaction, D'Ornstein via the Ministry wrote a letter to al-Qabbānī and al-Ḥamūlī that they should stop this or the House will be closed. Although after this date there is no data whether they exercised such authority, the Comité's main concern remained the protection of the House from fire until its dissolution in 1900.

⁶⁵ *Al-Ahrām*, 10 March 1886, 2.

Istanbul: Tiyatrolar Müfettişliği

Contrary to this direct supervision of a state-owned venue, a refined mechanism of theatre censorship developed in Istanbul. Here during the 1880s there were only municipal or privately owned playhouses where an amazing number of French, Italian, Greek, and Ottoman (Armenian and Turkish) theatre-makers were active. As I emphasized above, after the early 1850s, as far as I know, no permission was needed for a theatre owner to invite an impresario/a theatre troupe from abroad or from other Ottoman theatres to perform in Istanbul. The data makes likely that such contracts were considered to be part of the private business. The abundance of material in this regard during the late 1880s and 1890s-1900s requires an independent investigation; here an outline and framework will be given.

The censorship of the *contents* of plays started around 1873, very likely as a reaction to the scandal, caused by Midhat's *Vatan* during the spring that year. Before printing and before performing, the written texts should be submitted to the Ministry of Education (Ma^cāref Nizāreti), in two copies. If these contained "certain expressions" and these expressions were judged as improper, the performance of the play was also prohibited.⁶⁶ Between 1873 and 1876, until the end of the regime of Sultan Abdülaziz, a large number of theatrical plays in Ottoman Turkish, Greek, Armenian, *including* the translated (from French and Italian) texts, were submitted to the Ministry; but later also some plays too, exceptionally an "opera komedyası," *Fikri Bey'in Kızı*, which received permission to be printed.⁶⁷

The Meclis-i Ma^cāref (the Council of Education, at the Ministry) gave its consent to almost all plays (or only the permissions remained) to be printed, even to

⁶⁶ 7 Sha^cbān 1290 (31 August 1873), MF. MKT. 11/95, BOA.

⁶⁷ 7 Dhu'l-Ḥijja 1295 (2 December 1878), MF. MKT. 58/119, BOA.

Para Meselesi (An issue of money), a drama in Ottoman Turkish submitted by a troublesome person, Teodor Kasab Effendi, great journalist and satirical writer.⁶⁸ This censorship office that tried to regulate and prohibit first of all, *texts*, considered the printed word as the major vehicle of ideas and did not investigate performances directly. One might suspect that this supervision was an additional element to produce more musical operettas since – as far as I know – these were not submitted to the censors, or at least I have not found any Tchouhadjian or other musicals among the papers. If this theory is convincing, then until the 1880s, music served as possible way out of control in Istanbul.

However, as a second stage of state control, a new type of supervision was developed under the regime of Abdülhamid II. Around that time when Qardāhī performed with the permission of the Comité des Théâtres in 1886 in the Cairo Opera House, a certain Hilmi Effendi was quite active in Istanbul. He was the *tiyatrolar müfettişi*, the “inspector of theatres” in Istanbul. This office was established in 1883 (1300) since the authorities, the Ministry of Police thought that in Istanbul (Dersaadet) and in general in the Empire, a number of plays “ruin the minds and public morals.” The establishment of this institution was suggested by a report in October 1882 that stated that an increased control is needed because “if the actors are not the masters of modesty and careful attention, the public mind and morals will be rotted.”⁶⁹ (Cf. Appendix 2.)

They suggested to the Ministry of Interior that first, the Publication Supervision Office should write a confirmation for every theatrical play and second,

⁶⁸ 19 Jumāda'l-Akhir 1292 (23 July 1875), MF.MKT. 29/54, BOA.

⁶⁹ 13 Dhu'l-Hijja 1299 (26 October 1882), Y. PRKA. 4/2, BOA.

that a theatre inspector should be named.⁷⁰ This was also reported in the Ottoman and French press of Istanbul. The position was set up as a separate unit within the Ministry of Interior, *Tiyatrolar müfettişliği* (“inspectorship of theatres”), Theatre Inspectorship. A certain Hilmi effendi was named as the inspector in May 1883.⁷¹

Thus, not only an inspector was appointed but also the Publications Office, which gave the permissions for printed materials, was again involved in theatrical matters. For instance, in 1884 a person, called Aristot Effendi was responsible in the Office not only for the Greek press but also for the Greek theatrical plays.⁷² This institution or rather a *network* of state departments constantly investigated the content and the execution of the theatre performances. The Theatre Inspectorship was not a secret institution, since its establishment and activities were sometimes communicated in the journals. Thus it was a state authority which was a “caretaker” of theatres, *not* (only) a censor.

The activity of Hilmi effendi, the *müfettiş*, is highly interesting because he not only visited the theatres regularly but also suggested numerous reforms. There was a plan that Hilmi Effendi should be substituted with someone familiar with more (European) languages in February 1885,⁷³ but he remained in place as well since in August same year he wrote a suggestion to the Ministry to provide the theatres with respiration windows (“soupleaux” as the *Moniteur Oriental* reported) and thermometers in order to check the cholera.⁷⁴ Hilmi effendi in 1885 was suggested to

⁷⁰ Note dated 21 Rajab 1300 (28 May 1883) ZB. 13/75, BOA.

⁷¹ *La Turquie*, 4 July 1883, 1.

⁷² 8 Sha[‘]bān 1301 (3 June 1884), I.DH. 918/72868, BOA. It seems that at that time Aristot Effendi, Ömer Bey, Mustafa Bey, and Manasse Effendi (must be another Manasse than Seraphin) worked in the Office, presumably responsible for Greek, Ottoman Turkish, Armenian (perhaps Bulgarian?) languages.

⁷³ *La Turquie*, 8 et 9 February 1885, 1.

⁷⁴ *Le Moniteur Oriental*, 13 August 1885, 3.

be rewarded with a medal not for his professional activity but because he saved a life of a child in the sea.⁷⁵

The *Tiyatrolar müfettişliği* as a central authority was empire-wide effective and regulated the texts, including the translations and the venues. They warned the provinces that their decisions together with the Ministry of Police must be taken seriously.⁷⁶ During the late 1880s and early 1890s, the Theatre Inspectorship, including Hilmi effendi and other inspectors, was more and more active, but they were helped by a number of other institutions in the control of theatres and theatricals.

For instance, by 1892 the censorship office at the Bâb-ı ʿĀlî together with the Police, censored very carefully even the French plays' content, deleting the words which "cannot be pronounced." *L'Avare* of Molière, was for instance judged to contain "no harm" (*ba's yokdur*), but in French the censor Marcopoulo noted: "Mots rayés qu'il ne faut absolument pas prononcer" were "juif, arabe, Turc, Turquie, Grand Turc."⁷⁷

In this year (1892), five more inspectors worked at the *Tiyatrolar müfettişliği*, and they were seemingly busy and also experienced some resistance, since in 1894 the police was ordered to secure their entrance to any kind of theatre in case of necessity.⁷⁸ They must have very much work since a list of prohibited plays in 1895 contained (in Salonika) 63 Ottoman Turkish titles (including *Leblebici Horhor Ağa*, *Çengi*, etc); 22 French titles, 6 Italian, 27 Greek, and only 2 Armenian titles,

⁷⁵ Letter dated 17 Muḥarram 1303 (26 October 1885), I.DH. 970/76607, BOA.

⁷⁶ 6 Şafar 1304 (4 November 1886), DH.MKT. 1375/98, BOA.

⁷⁷ List dated 6 Mayıs 1308 (rūmî, 18 May 1892), BEO. 21/1512, BOA.

⁷⁸ 12 Jumāda'l-Akhir 1302 (11 December 1894), MF.MKT. 244/24, BOA.

altogether 120 works.⁷⁹ This list suggests a very conscious and widespread censorship activity since this list contained musical pieces as well.

By the 1890s, the Ottoman control over theatres was extended to non-Ottoman territories. One can safely say that this means that the Empire established policies towards cultural production and realized that its cultural image needed supervision. Or, the Empire and the Sultan was regarded as the guardian of this image of all Muslims, as first explored by Selim Deringil.⁸⁰ The successful attempt to suppress a play about the Prophet Muḥammad in Britain, demanded by the Muslims of Liverpool, was even reported in *Al-Ahrām* in Egypt.⁸¹ However, the activity of the *Tiyatrolar müfettişliği* still needs a more thorough, focused research, based on the quite large number of documents available in the BOA.

The Destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theatre (1885?)

Before concluding the discussion of policies by which the authorities tried to control subversive or imagined subversive contents and performances, I would like to explore a famous case as an extreme example of the official fear from subversive plays.

We do not know if Hilmi Effendi had anything to do with the famous case of the Gedikpaşa Theatre. In popular urban mythology, the destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theatre means the end of the Ottoman Theatre troupe and this event is generally regarded as the end of “free”/ “Turkish”/ “Ottoman” theatres in Istanbul, or, with theatre in the capital, in general. The prohibition of two plays by Ahmed Midhat, *Çengi* (The Dancer) and *Çerkez Özdenleri* (Circassian Beys), and the end of the

⁷⁹ Booklet entitled “Drām ve Komdi Kompanyalarınca icrāsı mamnū^c olan piselerin isim-i [?] mubeyyin daftardır.” 22 Rajab 1312 (19 January 1895), DH.MKT. 334/25, BOA.

⁸⁰ Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 142-143.

⁸¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 10 October 1890, 1.

building are in close connection with each other; however, this was certainly not the end of Ottoman theatre in general, nor the Ottoman Theatre as a group/business.

In 1884, the Ottoman Theatre group was under the direction of Minakyan Effendi, Güllü Agop being associated with the Yıldız Palace Theatre of Abdülhamid II.⁸² As a usual practice, the troupe played in numerous districts of Istanbul, not only in the Gedikpaşa Theatre. It must be noted and underlined again and again, that the Ottoman Theatre group was not identical with the building of the Gedikpaşa Theatre, even though the Istanbuli French and Ottoman press often mixed the two. In fact, during the Ramađān of 1301, in June-July 1884 a French troupe played in this theatre, under the direction of Mme Robert.⁸³

On 30 October 1884 was the premiere of *Çengi*, an opéra-comique in Ottoman Turkish with obvious success in the Gedikpaşa Theatre. The group was under the direction of “Menag effendi” and in the leading roles Mme Caracache played *Çengi* while Tchaprazian the role of Danish.⁸⁴ Very soon the company planned to play *Çengi* in Pera in the Verdi Theatre. However, we have only information about the premiere of another play of Ahmed Midhat in the Verdi Theatre on 10 November 1884, *Çerkez Özdenleri*, which was translated to French as “Beys Circassians.”⁸⁵

Meanwhile, the existence and success of *Çengi* and in general, the theatrical activity of Ahmed Midhat, was evaluated as an effort to create a “national theatre” that was also reported in the French press. This “national theatre” meant also that the article demanded a proper national theatre judging the Gedikpaşa Theatre as “un edifice impropre pour un ville comme Constantinople.” The author thought that “the

⁸² And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 95.

⁸³ *Osmanlı* 1 November 1884, 1. *Le Moniteur Oriental*, 24 June 1884, 3.

⁸⁴ *La Turquie*, 2 et 3 November, 1.

⁸⁵ *Le Moniteur Oriental*, 11 November 1884, 3.

liberty of the public” should create a new theatre (“Il faut que la liberté du public crée un théâtre”).⁸⁶ In fact, during these days, Ahmed Midhat published in his *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* a remarkable article about the “History of Theatre.”⁸⁷ (See below)

Soon, on 11 November an article was published in *Tarik* about a proposed regulation of theatres.⁸⁸ For much surprise, after two weeks, on a Monday, 24 November 1884, the *Tarik* and, following it, the Istanbulite French journals, announced that both *Çengi* and *Çerkez Özdenleri* are prohibited because they are “contraires à la moral et à la religion musulmanne.”⁸⁹ However, both *Osmanlı* and *Le Moniteur Oriental* provides a curious detail:

Our information permits us to doubt the truth of this assertion, which is perhaps a little bit malicious but certainly not at all spiritual. Here is what it is about: H.H. the Sultan, anxious to spread the education more and more, have bought the Theatre of Gedikpaşa in Stamboul a dozen days before, in order to transform it into a school where primarily the Arabic language will be taught. After this purchase the troupe of this theatre was invited to give its performances elsewhere, which is the reason that the *Tchengui* and *Tcherkess Uzdenleri* cannot be given in this hall.⁹⁰

The paper also refers to the trustworthy nature of the author, Midhat Effendi, who is very much loyal to the Throne (so he was surely not rebellious in the journalist’s view), and who tried to defend the policy of the Sultan. Thus it seems that the *Moniteur Oriental* wanted to suggest that there is no ban, or at least, wanted to defend Midhat Effendi (a fellow journalist by the way) publicly. This news was repeated by *Osmanlı*.⁹¹ The *Tarik* soon replied in a very frustrated way to the *Moniteur Oriental*

⁸⁶ *Osmanlı*, 1 November 1884, 1 and 8 November 1884, 1. *Le Moniteur Oriental*, 8 November 1884, 3.

⁸⁷ *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, 2 Şafar 1302, 3-4.

⁸⁸ *La Turquie*, 11 November 1884, 1.

⁸⁹ Quoted in the *Le Moniteur Oriental*, 24 November 1884, 2. Also cf. the brief announcement in *La Turquie*, 23 et 24 November 1884, 1-2.

⁹⁰ *Le Moniteur Oriental*, 24 November 1884, 2.

⁹¹ *Osmanlı*, 25 November 1884, 1.

which in turn accused the Ottoman journal of “immorality, perversion and lack of education.”⁹² However, apart from the journals’ debates, a number of governmental documents,⁹³ hitherto unpublished, help us to decide if it was a real censorship (which is the major narrative)⁹⁴ or a simple misunderstanding, since it is true that the performances were given after 9 November in Pera.

Sultan Abdülhamid II very likely personally ordered the ban. A note was composed on 21 November 1884 (2 Şafar 1302), on a Friday, at the Imperial Court’s Chief Secretary.⁹⁵ The document evokes that “on Tuesday and Thursday evenings in the Ottoman Theatre of the Gedikpaşa [district] *Çerkes Özdenleri* and *Çengi* plays were performed” which indicates that at least on 18 and 20 November the company returned to the Gedikpaşa Theatre and these performances were the final ones before the ban.

The document refers to the journal *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* and claimed that its content spread bad morals in the Empire. Indeed, the 1 Şafar 1302 number of the *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* on its title page included an article entitled “Özden Çerkes”⁹⁶ quoting from the play. The imperial note judged this article and the plays as against the public morals, and that these are also again the principles of theatre “because in a state, the theatres must serve the correction of the morals of the state.” Thus, it is ordered:

Therefore, the compositors of such plays must pay special attention also to the application of the meanings of the word “freedom” in a proper and legal way, as it

⁹² *Le Moniteur Oriental*, 25 November 1884, 2-3.

⁹³ The following documents concern this issue in the BOA: DH. MKT. 1408/101, and its copy, DH.MKT. 1406/49, the first draft of the note in MF.MKT. 85/60 and the final note in I.DH. 936/74108. It is copied also in Y.PRK.A 4/2, among the orders of the Grand Vizier’s Office.

⁹⁴ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 100-102. And does not note the remarks of the *Moniteur Oriental*.

⁹⁵ 2 Şafar 1302 (21 November 1884), I.DH. 936/74108, BOA.

⁹⁶ *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* 1 Şafar 1302, 1.

suits to the plays. Hence from now onwards, such plays, which are contrary to the proper behaviour and customs, which destroy the morals, absolutely and extraordinarily forbidden. [To these] Great attention must be paid. In fact, if the officer called “the theatre inspector” with this name is in service and does not do his job then he himself also has to be warned strongly.

This note clearly shows that both journals, the Ottoman Turkish *Tarik* and the Ottoman French *Moniteur*, were the mouthpieces of the Ottoman government, one announcing the fact of the “true” censorship, and the other defending the Sultan by a fake argument. Ahmed Midhat Effendi immediately tried to defeat himself in the *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* with a long article.⁹⁷

However, it is still not clear how this ban of the plays was connected to the theatre building in Gedikpaşa. The note was transferred to the Grand Vizier’s offices, and then this office transferred the order to the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Interior.⁹⁸ This was a Saturday. On Monday, as we have seen the news about the ban became public and the papers started to make a fake (?) debate, hiding the fact of the ban with the news about educative intention of the Sultan. For the documents concerning this ban in the BOA, see Table 11.1

⁹⁷ *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* 3 Şafar 1302, 2.

⁹⁸ Dated 3 Şafar 1302 (22 November 1884), Y.PRK.A. 4/2, BOA.

Table 11.1

Documents concerning the ban of *Çengi* and *Çerkez Özdenleri*, 1884

Archival location, BOA	Dated	Original or Copy	Content	Who to who
Y.PRKA. 4/2		<i>Copy of an original dated 13 Dhū al-Ḥijja 1299 (26 October 1882)</i>	<i>Report about Güllü Agop and his companions</i>	<i>Grand Vizier to Ministry of Interior (Appendix 2.)</i>
I.DH. 936/74108	2 Şafar 1302 (21 November 1884)	Original (?)	The ban of <i>Çengi</i> and <i>Çerkez Özdenleri</i>	(Sultan) The Imperial Court's Chief Secretary to ? (Grand Vizier? /the Ministry of Education?)
Y.PRKA. 4/2		Copy of an original dated 3 Şafar 1302 (22 November 1884)	The ban of <i>Çengi</i> and <i>Çerkez Özdenleri</i>	Grand Vizier to Ministry of Education and Ministry of Interior
MF.MKT. 85/60	26 Şafar 1302 (15 December 1884)	Draft	The ban of <i>Çengi</i> and <i>Çerkez Özdenleri</i>	Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Interior
DH.MKT. 1406/49	27 Jumāda'l-Akhir 1304 (23 March 1887)	Copy	The ban of <i>Çengi</i> and <i>Çerkez Özdenleri</i>	Ministry of Interior to the Police
DH.MKT. 1408/101	6 Rajab 1304 (31 March 1887)	Copy	The ban of <i>Çengi</i> and <i>Çerkez Özdenleri</i>	DH.MKT 1406/49 copied for the Grand Vizier

In fact, the building of the Gedikpaşa Theatre was indeed bought by the Sultan Abdülhamid for the purposes of a school. This purchase is not exactly defined and we do not know if Ömer Bey was still the owner (cf. Chapter 4). A later document, referring to the purchase from 1888, only mentions that with the intention of establishing a school, the Sultan ordered previously to buy the theatre,⁹⁹ It is not known when it was destroyed but in the AO (1885) its name is already missing from the theatres.¹⁰⁰

The myth of the destruction is thus perhaps true but it was hidden behind a symbolic act of building an Arab school. In popular and administrative memory, the Theatre's place was for a long time preserved;¹⁰¹ even today its street is called Tiyatro Caddesi. Its destruction is perhaps among the reasons that Benglian's operetta company went to Cairo next year, in 1885.

Conclusion

The state was throughout the 19th century intimately connected with the theatres in the two cities. In Cairo, the 1868-1871 establishment of theatres not only meant a state/khedivial subsidy but also that the Egyptian state/ruler could directly control the artistic activity, use the spaces to visualize its political intentions, and limit critical or subversive utterances. In Istanbul, the absence of a state theatre, and thus the absence of a state "selection" on the one hand and the large number of privately owned

⁹⁹ 25 Jumādha'l-Akhir 1305 (9 March 1888), I.DH. 1071/83984, BOA. However, I am sure that the actual purchase should be documented in one of the palace account-books. Needs more research., cf. also 8 Jumādha'l-Akhar 1305 (21 February 1888), I.DH. 1072/84101.

¹⁰⁰ AO (1885), 386-387.

¹⁰¹ Even in 1909 in some official correspondance, the place is called "in the place of the old theatre." Cf. DH.MKT. 2762/59, 2770/48, 2719/66, BOA.

theatres on the other, lead to a much refined, composite machinery to control these spaces.

It is not censorship *per se* via which rulers/governments exercised their power of manipulating artistic production but via supervision, selection, providing or denying subsidies, and simply banning certain plays. I tried to argue that state involvement in many cases was the interest of theatre-makers, especially in the case of privileges in Istanbul, but in Cairo Arab theatre-makers also heavily hoped for state subventions. In addition, these policies towards control reflected not only the state, but the process as the state followed civil activities, and increasingly extended its sphere of authority.

The processes and mechanisms of state control contained also an element of cultural preferences and influenced the final outcome of repertoires. The state became a defining member of art production and chose among the possible visions and offers. Here we can see a point at which the ruler is increasingly detached from the state in his personal preferences (like performances in Abdülhamid's Yıldız Palace Theatre) while the image what the state provided for foreigners or for its own subjects is without such a preference. Although the absence of a state theatre in Istanbul can be also attributed to financial reasons, this absence and the final destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theatre still meant that the state could not and did not want to offer any possibility for theatrical plays in Ottoman Turkish.

On the contrary, during the 1880s in Cairo with Qardāhī and Ḥijāzī being increasingly associated with the Opera House and the Khedive, a certain closeness was established between the governing elite and theatre in Arabic. Finally, in the 1890s the Opera was more or less closed to Arab theatre-makers, first because of

Qardāhī's failure in Paris, and second, because the subversive content of the plays could disturb the colonial order of things.

In both cities, theatres and performances served as a screen via which the authorities could communicate with audiences. While in the first half of the 19th century these were largely foreigners, in my period the most important initiatives focused on those audiences who were under the jurisdiction of the Ottoman Empire or the Khedive. After all, it is the audience that was the ultimate target of even the censorship office. An inquiry into those audiences in Cairo and Istanbul will close this study.

Chapter 12.

The Audience: New Collectivities

In contrast to the previous chapters in this section, where largely the state initiatives were introduced, in this chapter I would like to argue that in Cairo and Istanbul, audiences invented themselves, despite the partial involvement and later supervision of the states. Their active participation was a decisive factor in early cultural politics.

Everything that was previously shown in this work was made for, centred on, targeted, tried to satisfy, educate, regulate, teach, and gain from the audience. Buildings were built to house them, troupes were brought for their pleasure, plays and music were composed, rehearsals and money were invested, and finally, regulations were issued to protect and educate them. All these created a context in which people could experience being a members of audience.

Thus, it is surprising that the audience is almost absent from histories of 19th century Arabic¹ or Ottoman Turkish theatre.² Although 20th century Egyptian or Turkish media-studies focus on the rise of mass audiences and stardom,³ these usually lack a historical dimension dating back to the 19th century. Filling this research gap, this chapter aims to shed light on the evolution of audiences (in Arabic, *al-nās* – “the people,” *al-jumhūr*, *al-ḥudūr* – “the public/those who are present,” *al-mutafarrijūn* – “the beholders;” in Ottoman Turkish *huzur* – “those who are present,” *seyirci* – the

¹ Histories of Arab theatre mention the audiences but usually only in passim. An exception is Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean*, 70-71.

² As far as I know, it is only Metin And who dedicated a chapter to “The Audience and The Press,” although he handles the audience as part of the “publicity” rather than the “public.” And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 107-124.

³ Especially cinema-studies, like Malek Khoury, *The Arab National Project in Youssef Chahine’s Cinema* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2010) or Virginia Danielson, *The Voice of Egypt: Umm Kulthūm, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

public, or simply *halk* [*khalq*], people) in Istanbul and Cairo between 1867 and 1892. However, in view of the abundance of materials this chapter cannot provide a full overview, only it can offer certain aspects and starting points for later studies

In this period, in these cities, “audience” means an urban gathering in a secular (music) theatre occasion. Every performance could be attended by different individuals. These members of an audience, just as elsewhere, were composed of spectators and listeners.⁴ The central problem of audience studies, namely, if an audience possessed an independent existence prior to their identification as an audience,⁵ is also problematic in case of theatre audiences in Cairo and Istanbul. The relations to an imagined or real collectivity, like the nation, that the audience embodied in a theatre, must be problematized for this period.

Problems 1: Audience-Studies

What type of knowledge can we gain with the study of the audiences? There are three main paradigms of audience studies: behavioural (the audience as individuals that are “affected”); incorporate/resistance (the audience as a target of ideologies that results in incorporation or resistance); spectacle/performance (the audience as socially constructed and mediatised, resulting in the reformation of everyday life).⁶

The incorporation/resistance paradigm in general is applied for the 19th century audiences. Out of those few studies that explicitly dealt with theatre audiences in the late Ottoman Empire, Khuri-Makdisi understood Muslim/Christian Arab

⁴ Denis Mcquail, *Audience Analysis* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997), 2-3, 8.

⁵ Mcquail, *Audience*, 26.

⁶ Abercrombie and Longhurst, *Audiences*, 37 (Figure 1.1). Abercrombie and Longhurst suggest the spectacle/performance type of method particularly as the method for investigating the new types of audiences, with the effects of globalization.

audiences as targets of radical ideologies,⁷ thus joining (perhaps unintentionally) to the incorporation/resistance paradigm in terms of Ottoman audiences. The audience of theatre performances in Ottoman Turkish in Istanbul is, *in passim*, regarded as a political mass⁸ or as participants in an “imagined Ottoman civil society.”⁹ The union of entertainment and politics also characterizes other 19th century theatre audiences, like the one in the US.¹⁰

However, using the audience only as a receiver of political ideologies loses important aspects of theatre going, including the delicate mechanisms via such an ephemeral collectivity like an audience came into being at all. Approaches of the incorporation/resistance paradigm not only disregard the pleasure and joy that people feel watching and hearing a good piece of music theatre but also the changes in their everyday life-experience.

My basic assumption is that being an audience member in a theatre in Istanbul or Cairo was a new experience both for the cities’s established population and the newcomer Western Europeans. The attendance in a closed (or an open-air) space in order to enjoy music theatre with theoretically unrestricted participation was something new in these Ottoman capitals. Thus in my view while the audience was indeed the target of political ideologies, or were considered as a market by the theatre-makers, in the theatre stalls much deeper changes materialized: new social behaviour, a new “culture,” new gender roles, new ways of expressing emotions, and new types

⁷ Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean*, 70, asks the question about “who actually made up the audience at most of the performances?” She replies that in the case of charitable evenings, members of the underprivileged class were included, 71. This seems to be an interesting point, since charitable evenings were organized in order to collect money for the poor, thus actually this contribution was awaited from the privileged classes, see later in this chapter.

⁸ Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 128-129.

⁹ Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire*, 124-125.

¹⁰ Richard Butsch, *The Citizen Audience* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 26.

of visibility in the context of various Ottoman and non-Ottoman citizens who were already accustomed to theatres in Europe.

This novelty was dampened in several ways but still theatres brought a new type of entertainment and experience to many. Studying the audience of theatres in Cairo and Istanbul we can access much more than the spread of political ideologies or the making of a nation. The construction of new social collectivities and the transformation of consumption habits allude to strategies in which people adopted to new contexts.

Problems 2: Diversity in Cairo and Istanbul

Cairo and Istanbul as multiethnic, multireligious, multilingual locations with Turkish/Turkic, Arab, Greek, Armenian, Jewish, Bulgarian, Bosnian, Albanian, Italian, French, etc populations and with large number of tourists and by-passers in the late 19th century offer an extremely complicated field for the study of urban audience who gathered for a theatrical evening.

In 1886, Istanbul had a population of 851526 that means it was doubled in approximately 40 years, because in 1844 the city and its suburbs consisted of around 391000 inhabitants. Out of these, approximately 100000 were non-Ottoman subjects, approximately 14%. Muslims composed 44% of the population, Greek Orthodox 17.48%, Armenian Gregorian 17.12%, Jewish 5.08%, etc. In Pera, where most of the theatres were, 47% was the foreigners' percentage, 32 % the non-Muslim Ottoman subjects, and a considerable 21% Muslims.¹¹ In Cairo, the census of 1882 gives 374838 while the census of 1897 provides 570062, that means that the population also

¹¹ Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul*, 37-38.

doubled compared to the figure of 1846 (256679).¹² The percentage of the resident “Europeans” was low, 82000 in the whole country according to the census of 1882, among which at least 35000 were Greeks from Greece (and non-Ottoman subjects).¹³

These figures are intended to exemplify the diversity and the urban growth of the period and the relative small number of Europeans in Cairo and Istanbul. Theatres were not necessarily visited only by those who lived permanently in the cities or the district; for instance, in 1872 a journal remarked that more and more Westernized Muslim Turks are coming to Pera to attend theatricals (presumably from the Old City).¹⁴ However, especially in such a compartmentalized city as Istanbul, access to theatres was largely limited by the distance between one’s house and the theatre building. Another feature in this respect was the alternate modes of living/classes – for instance, in 1891 Tchouhadjian’s *Zemire* was performed for workers in Istanbul in matinee performances or for those who could not stay at the evening in the city.¹⁵

On the one hand, solutions to the problem of a framework in which to analyse this diversity were to narrate a linguistically/racially defined (like Najm, Arabic, or And, “Turkish”) or a territorially/racially defined (Sadgrove, Ismā‘il, “Egypt”) theatrical activity as pre-histories of present conditions. But in this approach the Ottoman wider context in many cases was left out. In most of these narratives, the audiences are uncritically imagined as participants in building linguistically/racially/territorially defined national cultures.

On the other, nostalgic narratives of cosmopolitanism took this diversity as a special feature of a *belle époque*, when living-together was an undisturbed life-

¹² Baer, *Studies in the social history of modern Egypt*, 134-135.

¹³ *Baedeker Egypt - Handbook for Travellers* (1885), 53.

¹⁴ *Levant Herald – Daily Bulletin*, 5 February 1872, 2 [994].

¹⁵ *La Turquie*, 18 April 1891, 1. Also later, 25 April 1891, 2.

experience of rich, multilingual families.¹⁶ In these texts, theatres are remembered as cages of the cosmopolitan society.¹⁷ The recent critique of nostalgia, especially concerning Alexandria, the *par excellence* case of cosmopolitanism,¹⁸ aims to explore a more complex attitude towards diversity, in which the poor foreigners,¹⁹ or Egyptian Arabs also participated.²⁰

I am not sure if – based on the investigations of the audiences in theatres – a clear-cut distinction can be made between patriotic or cosmopolitan audiences. The 19th century urban diversity of these capitals needs to be framed in a way in which both the proto-national initiatives and the cosmopolitan individuals in an imperial or post-imperial context could be united according to a common significance pertaining to historical change.

The diversity and the large number of those persons who were multilingual in these large urban centres thus not only offer the possibility of parallel histories, that can be even mutually exclusive, but also makes it uncertain whether an audience in a theatre in this period in these cities can be analysed meaningfully as a collectivity. In what follows, I try to avoid detailed statistics since that would require a separate essay. I am more interested in the formal and informal ways in which people were informed about a performance and the other reasons that were given for attending a performance apart from joy and entertainment. Via these mechanisms of organizing

¹⁶ Menetti, *Paris along the Nile*; Mostyn, *Egypt's Belle Epoque: Cairo and the Age of the Hedonists*, etc.

¹⁷ Mostyn's characteristic chapter is "The Finest Opera House in the World," 72-82.

¹⁸ In general, see the critique of nostalgia for Alexandria, Khaled Fahmy, "For Cavafy, with love and squalor: some critical notes on the history and historiography of modern Alexandria," in *Alexandria – Real and Imagined*, eds. A. Hirst, and M. Silk (2004; repub., Cairo: AUC Press, 2006), 263-280. R. Mabro, "Nostalgic Literature on Alexandria," in *Historians in Cairo*, ed. J. Edwards (Cairo: AUC Press, 2002), 237-65.

¹⁹ Hanley, "Foreignness and localness in Alexandria."

²⁰ Khaled Fahmy, "For Cavafy, with love" and "Towards a social history of Alexandria," in *Alexandria – Real and Imagined*, 281-306.

the audience we may find answers to the types of imagined or real collectivities that were current in this period and that used cultural artefacts to strengthen the relations between would-be participants of these collectivities.

Diplomatic Society in Theatres

An organizing principle of audience in a theatre in Cairo or Istanbul were the ambassadors and the individuals – merchants, their families, high ranked military men, protected persons, famous artists – around them. Ambassadors offered a possibility to all these persons to intermingle and to meet with other members of the local elite. Thus diplomatic society was composed of diverse, elite individuals who gathered for momentary experiences.

In contrast to German diplomats in the US selling German symphonic music,²¹ European ambassadors and consuls in 19th century Istanbul and Cairo did not participate *directly* (apart from some sporadic cases) in exporting their countries' music or theatre to these capitals. Embassies organized musical evenings but many times these were not “imports” but used the resident Europeans or “protected” artists in Pera/Beyoğlu.

However, with their growing political and economic influence from the 1850s, European diplomats in the Ottoman Empire had an important role in structuring social life. In Istanbul, the “Pérote” society grew out largely of diplomatic events: balls, receptions, concerts, as cultural and social meetings. Even if such an occasion was not organized at an embassy, the ambassadors often acted as patrons or were asked to be “protectors.”

²¹ Gienow-Hecht, *Sound Diplomacy – Music and Emotions in Transatlantic Relations*.

The wives of the ambassadors/consuls maintained a very important role in organizing these events. Already in 1835 the wives of the foreign ambassadors formed a theatre group as a private entertainment.²² They often themselves initiated charitable evenings, or were responsible for their respective compatriots as moral examples of their community in the given location, like “the British in Cairo.” They were the first ladies, models of those who were under the jurisdiction of the their husband or the country he represented. For instance, during the 1880s, the initial decade of the British occupation of Egypt, it was Ethel Errington, the wife of the British Consul, Sir Cromer, who was the first lady of the diplomatic society.²³ In Istanbul, there was a constant rivalry between the French and the British first ladies of the embassies.

Being invited to an ambassadorial ball was a sign of importance and social status. Although partly this was the case in Alexandria from the 1830s with the consuls and their “consular society,”²⁴ in Cairo it is the 1860s when diplomats became centres of the social life of the elite as well. Receptions in the 1880s became a regular feature of Cairo (and Alexandria); not only through the great powers’ diplomats (like the Barrings who gave “almost every week” a ball)²⁵ but also by Egyptian statesmen, like Nubar Pasha. In some of these occasions the Khedive or his sons were also present, but he never brought his wife or daughters.

As was shown, Sultan Abdülmeçid established this practice in the 1840s/1850s visiting ambassadorial receptions²⁶ and the Naum Theatre as well.²⁷ In

²² *Le Ménestrel*, 4 November 1835, 4.

²³ Owen, *Lord Cromer*, 253-254.

²⁴ Scott, *Rambles in Egypt and Candia*, 1:47.

²⁵ Quoted in Owen, *Lord Cromer*, 253.

²⁶ Hornby, *In and Around Stamboul*, 216-221.

²⁷ Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*, 175-179.

turn, ambassadors and royalties were invited to the palace theatre, the Dolmabahçe theatre, which during the last years of Abdülmecid could be considered as a semi-public theatre. The diplomats were usually invited to any important occasions of the imperial family, like the marriage celebrations in 1858, when they together with the Sultan watched the performances of Cirque Soullier.²⁸

The relations between ambassadors and rulers in the theatre were not completely informal. In Istanbul, Sultan Abdülaziz in February 1869 visited the Naum Theatre for *Faust* after which in the salon of Naum's flat (which was adjoining his Theatre), he received the ambassadors. He did not want to mingle with the audience so a separate "throne" was set up in the private salon.²⁹ The diplomats and their entourage, just like the Sultan and his entourage, could meet in a semi-formal residence.

In Cairo, diplomatic society around the diplomats first gaining power in the 1850s, developed to be in the late 1860s a powerful and visible informal network. It included Turco-Egyptian notables, high statesmen of the Egyptian administration, princes of the Khedivial family, resident European bankers, merchants, artists, but also visiting European aristocrats or scientist, famous men. The diplomatic society, as we have seen, here was closely connected to the state representation in theatres because this was the intended audience, at least by Khedive Ismā'īl who personally *invited* the ambassadors or famous visitors to the Opera.

For instance, during the first autumn season of 1869 both in the Opera House and the Comédie the following persons had reserved places: in the Opera the Khedive had the loges n 2 left, n 10 right, the Police Prefect got loges n 7 right, there were

²⁸ *Journal de Constantinople*, 23 June 1858, 4.

²⁹ *Levant Herald*, 8 February 1869, 3.

eight places maintained for the police officers (two from the municipal and four from the secret police?, two as “regis police”), five places were paid for journalists including the Havas agency, one place went for the Director of the Circus (this time Rancy), for the doctor of the Khedive, for M. Millie du Trovatore and for Paternoster Bey. In the Comédie, Ismāʿīl got loges n 13 and 14, and again places were reserved and paid for the Police Prefect, Paternoster Bey, four journalists, eight (!) policemen, and the Doctor.³⁰ However, apart from these, the Dāʿira paid for occasional visitors like foreign princes or guests of the sons of the Khedive.

The Opera House could host some hundreds of people, the Comédie was much smaller. Both theatres were supervised by eight police officers in the audience, and the Prefect was always there, just like the Press Office’s Head, Paternostre Bey. It affirms our data already given in Chapter 12 that Ismāʿīl did not trust in public order, especially not the Europeans, and posed a strict supervision over the public theatres in Cairo, by securing places for the police among the audience.

His intended audience was, however, diplomatic society. Let me repeat the quotation about the premiere of *Aida*:

[T]he Khedive with all the princes were there, and the Khadivah was present, and the Egyptian princesses were in the Royal Harem Boxes, the fronts of which were covered in with thin lattice work, through which one could see, hazily, the forms of the ladies, with their diamonds and precious stones sparkling as they moved to and fro in the large royal box. All the Consul-Generals and their wives were present, the ministers and the Khedival staff officers in their brilliant uniforms while in every box were many lovely women, resplendent with jewels.

This underlines that Khedive Ismāʿīl’s state representation, analyzed in Chapter 10, was intended especially for this diverse diplomatic society, the khedivial family,

³⁰ Letter dated 14 January 1870, from Draneht to “la Daira des affaires particuliers de Son Altesse le Khédive,” Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

(would-be) rich ladies, and Egyptian governmental officers. Later, among the audience members, as we have seen, the Ottoman representative, Mukhtār Pasha equally figured. This particular society that met at distinguished events in the Opera House in Cairo (which in fact was the venue where it was created during the 1870s and 1880s), dissolved largely in the 1880s in Istanbul. Here, there was no state Opera House, a number of entertainment institutions provided various meeting occasions, and most importantly, the Sultan retired from public theatrical occasions.

This diplomatic society, which included the local statesmen and high military officials, were of interest to Draneht, Manasse, Qardāhī, Benglian, too. However, apart from Draneht serving the Khedive, all these cultural brokers had other interests and aims, the most important being the economic interest (to make their enterprise profitable). A number of other aims patriotism, diffusion of modern ideas, culture and civilization, etc., also were proclaimed by various impresarios at various times as was shown. The audience was the source of income that was the only way to secure the existence of a theatre troupe in the absence of state subsidy.

Theatres and Communities

The diplomatic society was a very ephemeral, special type of elite collectivity, that only occasionally gathered. Other types of easily definable collectivities out of which sometimes in theatre an audience was formed or forged, were linguistic/racial/religious minorities.

For instance, the *raison d'être* of theatres in Cairo was sometimes bound to their audience. Thus already around 1874, one of the main argument for abandonment of the Comédie was that no one, except the French, really visited it. Most likely Draneht Bey wrote the following lines:

Je dois dire en outre qu'à la Comédie les Grecs, les Israelites ainsi que les Indigènes viennent rarement et ne conduisent presque jamais leur familles. Les familles Italiennes ne fréquentent plus ce théâtre. Les étrangers: Américaines, Anglais, Allemand ne viennent que très peu.³¹

In this letter we find two categories of audiences: the foreigners (Americans, English, Germans, and perhaps the French), and the non-foreigners. This last category is composed of the Greek, the Jews and the “natives”, likely the Muslim/Christian Egyptians. Draneht Bey, himself a Frenchified Greek emigrant, who could thank his career to the Ottoman/Egyptian ruling family, and personally the Khedives, constructs these categories in order to argue (with a touch of cultural supremacy) that the Khedive should suppress the French playhouse to save money.

In Istanbul, special linguistic borderlines largely shaped the audiences. Imperial languages like French or Ottoman Turkish could collect a number of various people, but for instance, Greek or Armenian was the language of a community of what only its members spoke thus a theatrical performance in Greek was presumably visited largely by Greeks, like in 1883 when the Verdi Theatre in Pera was usually called “théâtre grec”³² because most Greek theatre troupes played here, not disconnected with the fact that the owner was a Greek (cf. Table 4.1).

Inventing the Arab audience in Cairo: al-umma in the Theatre

Arab theatre-makers imagined their own audience in Egypt, largely within the already analyzed framework of theatre as a means of public education. In Egypt, this was a discourse backed by the journalists, too.

³¹ Undated, unsigned letter. “Note annexé au projet de Reorganisation des Théâtres.” Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

³² *La Turquie*, 11 et 12 November 1883, 1-2,

In 1870, it is Abu'l-Su'ūd or Muḥammad Unsī at the *Wādī al-Nīl* who repeatedly maintained that opera is useful for learning (“there are some things which cannot be learned otherwise only by watching performances and arts”),³³ while in 1871 James Sanūc held a speech in the beginning and at the end first performance of an Egyptian operetta and explained the details of the play.³⁴ These early efforts comprised efforts to learn theatre and learn *via* theatre.

Unlike Ṭaḥṭāwī who described and translated the concept of theatre in general, the new Arab Syrian theatre-makers in Egypt understood theatrical education as a *practice*. In the 1870s in Arabic the “benefits” (*fawā'id*) of theatres was an often-used expression in connection with success in “civilisation” (*tamaddun*). The Syrian understanding of theatre was analysed by partly by Khuri-Makdisi.³⁵ Before leaving Beirut for Cairo, in *al-Jinān* Salīm Naqqāsh wrote a long article to explain theatre as a means of civilization in 1875.³⁶ He argued that “the love of homeland is the best way to tie public interest to private ones [...] this is what people understand by *tamaddun* which Europeans spread through halls of acting. [These] are means to spread principles that are the basis of the country's progress and its means of civilization.”³⁷ This is why the audience should come to the theatres and this is why the authorities should subsidize it.

This argumentation was kept throughout the 1880s by the Syrian impresarios in Egypt, even using word for word the same phrases. The ultimate alliance between theatre as a means for progress and for patriotism was secured during the spring of

³³ *Wādī al-Nīl*, 1 February 1870 (1869 is a printing mistake on the title page), 1285.

³⁴ Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre*, 94.

³⁵ Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean*, 63-67.

³⁶ Salīm Effendi Khalīl Naqqāsh, “Fawā'id al-riwāyāt aw al-tiyātrāt aw nisbat al-riwāyāt ilā hay'at al-ijtimā'c,” *Al-Jinān*, 1875, 72-77.

³⁷ Naqqāsh, “Fawā'id al-riwāyāt,” 74. I modified slightly the translation of Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean*, 65.

1882 in Cairo. We already have seen the activity of the Arab Opera troupe when Qardāhī submitted his petition for the Opera House for the next season. However, there was another one, a Syrian-Egyptian petition, by the Egyptian °Abd Allāh Nadīm and the Syrian Yūsuf Khayyāt who submitted a hitherto unknown letter to the Ministry of Public Works for a concession of the Comédie in Cairo for the season 1882-83, and they argued:

Your Excellency knows very well that the art of representing historical and non-historical events, called theatre, is among the means to enlighten the ever-circulating views of the souls. The powerful states paid attention and effort to the renewal of the people's [*al-umma*] views and to the shaping of their exhortations' expression and to guide them via the scenery of situations. But since all the nations [*al-umam*] worked hard to create plays about their own history, in the language of their people, including some events of the other nations, as a result they understand [theatre] easily because their people [*al-umma*] already possess the capacity to gasp the essence of the play.³⁸

Al-umma, the Arabic word denoting the community of believers here is used to refer to the citizens of a country who are in a competition with other *umam*, with other countries. Via the transformation of the citizens one can join this competition. (Cf. the full text in Appendix 8.)

When a few weeks later Sulaymān Qardāhī submitted his request to the Ministry, he emphasized explicitly the benefits of theatre for the “people,” the “garden with mellow fruits of refinement” (see the whole letter in Appendix 1):

You know very well, His Excellency, what refined benefits are for all nations in theatrical plays. Indeed, the plays – and I do not exaggerate, His Excellency – contain a knowledge that counts among the causes of success and means of civilization since these plays are mirrors of various matters, and help us become familiar with ideas. These plays are a school for the people to learn what cannot be learned from the

³⁸ Letter without date, (sealed as 10 April 1882, transferred to the Comité des Théâtres 13 April 1882), from °Abd Allāh Nadīm and Yūsuf Khayyāt to the Ministry of Public Works, 4003-037847, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

[traditional] education. Honour derives from them in the form of entertainment. Indeed, the theatricals – and I do not exaggerate their definition – are one of the most important channels to educate the minds. [Theatre] is the kindest teacher and the best scholar; it is a garden with mellow fruits of refinement that can be harvested by anyone.³⁹

Although this is a petition for subvention and for the establishment of a large national theatre troupe, Qardāhī's letter contains none the less the argument that theatre (and in his understanding, this is music theatre) is *accessible* to anyone *unlike* schooling. Khayyāt and Nadīm's petition alludes to the task of the government in the renewal of people's mind. Both conceptions imagine the audience as an object of education that is, after all, the task of the government. This imagination of audience aims at *al-umma* that I translated as "people" but its main meaning is "community" (also in the sense of the community of Muslims). This imagination about the community as an audience of theatres is certainly aims more than the elite, it aims those who are not yet educated enough.

Attracting the Elite in Cairo (1880s)

The third revival of Arab theatre in Egypt in 1884 still carried this understanding but complemented with the more and more active involvement of people from all segments of society, instead of the government. The journals, like *Al-Mahrūsa*, stated (à propos Yūsuf Khayyāt) that "we are sure and the foreigner observers are also sure that our people know very well the benefits of the theatrical plays, the goal of acting in public theatres, the importance of being present (*al-da'wa ilā ḥudūri-hā*), and [the importance] of the cooperation for the supply of the actors' needs that they can

³⁹ Letter without date, (sealed as 3 May 1882, transferred to the Council of Ministers 7 May 1882), from Sulaymān Qardāhī to the Ministry of Public Works, 4003-037847, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-ʿUmūmiyya, DWQ.

continue the plays' advancement in patriotic societies (*al-mujtam'āt al-ahliyya*), so they can carry on what they have seen previously from this art."⁴⁰

Seemingly, Qardāhī's and others were successful in bringing Arabic-speaking audience to the theatres, since, from 1884/5 Arabic performances in Cairo and Alexandria (and perhaps also Ṭanṭa, Zagāzig, etc) were full with spectators. The reports say usually that the hall of the theatres were "*ghāṣṣatan bi'l-nās*" "packed with people" or "*hāfilān bi'l-ḥudūr*" "filled with the audience." The words used for renewal, revival (*tajdid*, *iḥyā'*, etc) were usually attached to the announcements. According to the press at least Egyptians remembered very well the theatrical activities before 1882 and happily participated in the renewed performances.

Thus not only the theatre-makers but also the Arabic journals backing them called for the support of the theatre in Arabic with attendance as a support for a patriotic project. This, however, represents a shift from asking the government to asking the people, including the elite to attend at theatrical performances. As we have seen, Qardāhī especially was keen on publicly calling the attention and benevolent intentions of the Egyptian elite when he organized his guest plays at the Opera House. *Al-Ahrām* regularly called the attention and thanked the benevolences of the *dhawāt* and *a'yān*. Even religious personalities, such as Ḥasan Ḥusnī (Al-Ṭuwayrānī) wrote a lot about theatre in Arabic.⁴¹ This shift is natural because the British supervised the Egyptian government and the theatre-makers in a way, allied with the Egyptian elite, even with the Khedive in order to "educate the minds."

But there were indeed members of the audience of the Opera House who were wealthy and neither Egyptian Arabs, nor Ottoman Turks. A unique list from 1885

⁴⁰ *Al-Mahrūsa*, 14 November 1884, 4.

⁴¹ Ḥasan Ḥusnī (Al-Ṭuwayrānī) "Al-Tashkhīṣ," *Al-Nīl* 10 July 1892, 2.

contains 230 names who were subscribed to the Opera House during the season of 1885-86. This list, collected by Santi Boni and Soschino to back their request for the next season's concession (that finally, as we have seen, failed) are composed of people whose profession could be regarded as "elite" that time: diplomats (on their top Sir Wolff, the British ambassador), high ranked military men, lawyers, doctors, bankers, directors of companies, etc. Apart from one or two names, none of them sounds Arab Egyptian but mostly Italians, French, British.⁴² This might be attributed to the fact that Santi Boni were Italians who might have better connections to their compatriots than to any other nationals. All of these were subscribed to *their* season. (Cf. Appendix 10).

In contrast, there is abundant evidence that that the Egyptian Arab and Ottoman Turkish elite in Cairo attended performances in Arabic. For example, for Qardāhī's performance on 2 March 1887, a bunch of Egyptian official dignitaries arrived: the Khedive Tawfīq with Ismā'īl Pasha Kāmil, Tonino Pasha, °Abd al-Rahmān Pasha Rushdī (Minister of Public Works), °Uthmān Pasha Ghālib (Mayor of Cairo), Muḥarrām Pasha, Ibrāhīm Pasha Tawfīq, and other notables. It is interesting that the troupe performed °*Antara*, the same piece what they played in 1882 in the presence of °Urābī.⁴³

But the most complex elite audience could be observed in 8 March 1887, when the Arabic °*Ayida* was played for the benefit of the Maronite Society, under the patronage of Aḥmad Mukhtār Pasha al-Ghāzī (the Ottoman Sultan's representative). This already mentioned event is curious since the Khedive did not come, but present were Nubar Pasha, at that time Prime Minister, and all the others previously

⁴² List dated 27 Mars 1886, 0075-008613, Majlis al-Nazzār wa'l-Wuzarā°, DWQ.

⁴³ *Al-Ahrām*, 3 March 1887, 2.

mentioned. Exceptionally, the French and the Italian Consul-Generals were present, with some British officers, but the majority were Ottoman subjects.⁴⁴

Pride and Relaxation

In the late 1880s, Egyptian music theatre in Arabic became an object of *pride* in the press. Apart from the already cited reports from the 1870s, a description worth to mention was published in 1885. The review (written in the first person) enthusiastically welcomed the revival of Arabic theatre in Egypt and emphasized: „[the new troupe of Yūsuf Khayyāt] doubled by the language of joys for everyone whose patriotic freedom-loving [sentiment, *aryaḥiyya*] was shaken by their activity.”⁴⁵

The absence of Europeans from a performance indicated also that a theatre/a theatrical evening was entirely “ours.” This happened and was noted as such in 1889 when ʿAbduh al-Ḥamūlī in the Opera House had three musical evenings and of which an Egyptian nobility said: “How wouldn’t I be happy [...] when here I see only Orientals, there is not even a European cap among us, the same in the loges, and this proves us the freedom-loving [*aryaḥiyya*] of the Orientals.”⁴⁶ This description naturally involves the proud exclusion of Europeans and connects the theatre to liberty.

To exclude Europeans is understandable in an occupied territory. The British soldiers had their own entertainments (for instance, had their own military music band in the Azbakiyya Garden),⁴⁷ and even perhaps their own theatre. This later might have

⁴⁴ *Al-Ahrām*, 9 March 1887, 3.

⁴⁵ *Al-Maḥrūsa*, 8 January 1885, 3.

⁴⁶ *Al-Ahrām*, 3 March 1889, 3.

⁴⁷ Which was even noted in Istanbul, *La Turquie*, 23 August 1887, 3.

been the Politeama in Cairo, which was, for instance, used for a celebration of General Stephenson in January 1887 where many English soldiers and policemen were present.⁴⁸

Theatre was nevertheless also considered “a relaxing side of the civilization” as perhaps Draneht Bey remarked to the reporter of *Al-Jawā'ib* in 1871. Fifteen years later, in 1886, the magazin *Al-Laṭā'if* praising Qardāhī's theatre noted that

When humans attain civilization, their souls start to long for luxuries. So they make an effort to gain these and spend enormous amounts. We cannot blame them because they are wretched in their nature and this activity does not cause any harm if it is restrained within the limits of correct behaviour and humour. It is incontestable that acting in public places is the best of the luxuries regarding joy and usefulness.⁴⁹

Thus slowly a counter-discourse started to develop in the press that theatres can be also harmful to the audience who are also human beings. Yet, this did not stop a commander of the Egyptian army to bring approx. 160 Egyptian soldiers to a performance of Qardāhī in January 1887. They were lead by their commander “who brought them to the theatre to free their minds and to ease their souls from the daily problems.”⁵⁰

It is not exactly clear what type of relation can be established between the petitions of Arab theatre-makers, the news and propaganda of the Arabic-language press, and the already shown success of Arab theatre in Cairo. Although there is much more, detailed material concerning the audience of the Cairo Opera House, these should be the object of a separate study in order to preserve the balance of comparison with Istanbul.

⁴⁸ *Al-Qāhira al-Hurra*, 5 January 1887, 2.

⁴⁹ *Al-Laṭā'if*, 1886, 175-176.

⁵⁰ *Al-Ahrām*, 13 January 1887, 2-3.

Attracting the Audience in Istanbul

In Istanbul during this period we have less material from the theatre-makers reflecting their concepts of the audience in order to convince power brokers. Here the discourses in Ottoman Turkish and French around the involvement of various people into theatre started much earlier than in Arabic. Plural practices could be observed by impresarios who based their imagination of the audience on various, sometimes contradictory sets of arguments. From Istanbul we have some unique testimonies how theatre-makers wanted to imagine, educate, and charm their audiences.

One important text is the already cited letter of Manasse from 1868 inviting the mothers and their daughters to the French theatre in order to study:

Where else can one acquire a better French? Where else can one be initiated into the fine manners? Where else can one pick up the original Parisian tricks? Where else can one go to *copy* the fashions and the outfits? (As some say): *the fool invented fashion, and the wise conforms to it.* [Manasse' own italics]⁵¹

Thus he begs the mothers in Pera to let their daughters come to the French Theatre. Manasse at the same time complains about the often-changing taste of the citizens because they always demand new pieces and new actors while in France “the directors only have to renew some of their minor actors occasionally.”⁵² This understanding of the audience to improve their French and their fashions can be compared to Draneht's remark of 1871 about the existence of theatres in Cairo as signs of mature civilization.

Between 1869 and 1873, as we have seen, theatre activity was connected very much to the Young Ottomans, reforms, and patriotism; thus one certainly expected audience were the high functionaries of the Ottoman state. From the moment of the

⁵¹ *Levant Herald*, 14 September 1868, 1.

⁵² *Ibid.*

imtiyāz of Güllü Agop, he and others, too, counted on the state as an audience, not only financing his theatre but also in 1870 he in fact waited for the “vükelā-yı fehīme” to come and attend at the performances.⁵³

In Istanbul, theatre in Ottoman Turkish was encouraged as a part of public education, too. One interesting example is the establishment of a Theatre Committee (*Tiyatro Komisyon*) in January 1870,⁵⁴ and its public understanding of theatre as means for education. It is not really clear if the definition of theatre here is that of the journalist or that of the Theatre Committee, but here is what was written in this announcement:

One can profit from plays like the opera, drama, tragedy, and comedy, which represent different events and stories in the theatres by example. Via these plays good morals and virtues are praised while bad behaviour is condemned. Good examples are shown and these will be not hidden from those who pay attention.⁵⁵

Based on this understanding, and to help the translation of plays to different “Ottoman languages,” the Committee was established by a number of leading personalities, on their top Halil Bey (advisor of the Foreign Ministry) and Salih Bey (the Head of the 6th District’s Municipality). We have no more information concerning this organization or private society but it is sure that it was not a state initiative but rather a statesmen’ initiative.

In Istanbul, ladies especially counted among the desired members of the audience, not only, as Manasse phrased, to imitate French fashion via French

⁵³ And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 109.

⁵⁴ *Mümeyyiz*, 25 January 1870, 2.

⁵⁵ “Tiyatrolarda icrā olunan ve opera ve dram ve trajidī ve komidī ta°bir kılınan oyunların °ibret bahş kâ°ināt vakāyi° ve hikāyātdan °ibārāt olup siyerayidinlerin ma°nān istifāde eyledıkları ve isnā la°biyātda ahlak-ı hasana ve fadā°ilin senā ve madh ve ahlak-ı sayya°anın zemm ve kadh olunduđu görilerek kasb-ı intibāh ve °ibret olunduđu ve arbāb-ı dikkat khafī deđildir...” *Mümeyyiz*, 28 February 1870, 2.

performances, but also visiting performances in Ottoman Turkish as a sign of progress and as a potential market. Already in the 1850s, the troupe of Hovannes Kasparyan started to welcome especially ladies to the audience, offering grilled loges.⁵⁶

Güllü Agop had various strategies to bring ladies to the Gedikpaşa Theatre during the 1870s. In the beginning, he did not ask money from the ladies who anyway remained predominantly Armenians. Later, ladies got cheaper places in the theatres than men. In the end of the 1870s, in the *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, he advertised that for ladies, they prepared grilled loges (*kafesli localar*), and that they can come to the theatre just like to the mosque. Furthermore, he reassured everybody that it is permitted by the City Municipality (Şehremaneti) and thus it is lawful to come to the theatre.⁵⁷

Yet, the Muslim ladies' participation was interrupted during the reign of Abdülhamid II, when in 1884 measures were taken to explicitly prohibit Muslim ladies to enter the theatres of Üsküdar, Kadıköy, and Yeni-Bahçe.⁵⁸ Islam and the presence of ladies in the theatres were thus connected to and within the state policies. I do not know what was the consequence, if any, of these regulations.

As we have seen, theatre experiments were suppressed in 1873 already in Istanbul. This caused theatre-makers in Ottoman Turkish to abandon their attempts to involve the state and they turned directly to the audience. In this regard, an important piece is a text of Güllü Agop from 1875, first published by Metin And. In it he says:

⁵⁶ And, *Osmanlı*, 111.

⁵⁷ Quoted by And, *Osmanlı*, 111.

⁵⁸ *Le Moniteur Oriental/The Oriental Advertiser*, 28 April 1884, 3.

In order that those who love and need the representation of the deeds of our ancestors by spectacle in theatres, could study (*ibret göstermek üzere*) these, a playhouse, the Ottoman Theatre, was established in our state. Until now the Exalted Government's benevolence and care with the state's kind intention to help progress (*terakki*) in fact supported [the theatre] and gave an example. However, due to some exceptional circumstances, in this year the expenses exceeded the incoming patronage, and the stability of the theatre is deranged. Thus, to increase both this balance and at once create regularity, a new plan is necessary to consider [...] In order to realize our plans, we beg our first and last asylum, the zeal of the people, their kindness and generosity, to which we can only be sure to count on.⁵⁹

This clearly shows that around this year, Güllü Agop gave up any hope to count on state support but asked the people to support directly his theatre through their attendance. This also means that the audience of Ottoman Turkish plays in Istanbul increasingly had to be treated as a market and the only possible income of the Ottoman Theatre.

Of all these developments in Istanbul, the arguments concerning theatre as connected to patriotism and to progress were less emphasized. For instance, I have never found with an article about theatre in Ottoman Turkish that would express such pride as in Arabic.

The press, both the Francophone and the Ottoman Turkish/Armenian, backed the theatre-makers in their experiments. Just like the case of Salīm Naqqāsh or °Abd Allāh Nadīm, in Istanbul a number of journalists were active participants in the production of plays, although separated from the staging process. Important personalities, among others, are an Armenian, the already mentioned Theodor Kasap, another Armenian writer, Agop Baronyan, and the already cited Ahmed Midhat who also was a politically engaged intellectual.

⁵⁹ *Vakit*, 4 November 1875, 3. Cf. also And, *Osmanlı Tiyatrosu*, 110-111 (he gives 5 November 1875, but the journal is dated 5 Teşrin-i Evvel 1875).

Between 1874 and 1876, Agop Baronyan set up even a satirical journal, called *Tiyatro*, that regularly emphasized the importance of theatre as a problematic issue of social regeneration, mostly in the forms of dialogs. In *Tiyatro* various anecdotes, comical stories, criticism of theatre-makers, debates between Güllü Agop and Tchouhadjian, and caricatures were published. This journal was less about theatre than about using textual theatrical forms in order to express certain judgements and mostly was written in the colloquial. Thus it offers a good material to study the transformation of written *‘Osmanlı*.⁶⁰

Ahmed Midhat, apart from writing theatricals, dealt with theatres also scientifically when – just on the eve of the ban on his *Çengi* and *Cerkes Özdenleri* – wrote a history of theatre in his journal *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*.⁶¹ However, this history of theatre was stopped after two numbers, and Ahmed Midhat’s name also disappears for a while from the journal, and Mehmed Cevdet became the editor.

Societies

After showing the argumentations and imaginations about the audiences, their education, and the competing offers for them, let us see how an audience was brought together. As I alluded earlier, theatre and press both in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish are inseparable from each other. The periodicals publish announcements, articles to call the people to the audience, and framed theatrical activity in a language that was civilizational, educative, and many times political.

But there was a perhaps even more important agent between the audience, the press, and the theatre-makers. Apart from being an individual choice to attend a

⁶⁰ I have no knowledge that apart from Metin And, anyone dealt extensively with this journal.

⁶¹ *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, 2 Şafar 1302 (21 November 1884), 3-4 and 6 Şafar 1302 (25 November 1884), 3-4.

performance both in Cairo and in Istanbul, there was a way to summon individuals in the name of a collective cause. A hitherto understudied aspect of theatres in late 19th century Cairo and Istanbul is their relation to charitable, cultural, and political non-governmental societies (in many cases, these three aims were unified).

Considering the immense role of these organizations in structuring social life and collecting money, it is surprising that there is very few scholarly literature about late 19th century Egyptian or Ottoman Turkish (charitable) societies.⁶² After Jūrjī Zaydān,⁶³ who recognizes that 19th century Egyptian societies were new both in their aims and their forms,⁶⁴ it is only Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il who tried to survey the societies (in connection with theatres), but only those in the 1890s and after in Egypt.⁶⁵ I have no knowledge of such a survey concerning Istanbulite societies.⁶⁶

Societies in the 19th century (established first in the 18th century) worldwide played a crucial role in collecting knowledge and organizing social and political life. In various degrees with the involvement of the governments, these became established as expressions of “civil” activity, sometimes amateurish, sometimes highly professional. These organizations started to appear in the late Ottoman Empire

⁶² Jurjī Zaydān is almost the only one who dealt with societies in Egypt in detail. However, a nice introduction is Majdī Sa°id, “Al-imām al-Shaykh Muḥammad °Abduh wa'l-jama°iyyat al-ahliyya,” in *al-Imām Muḥammad °Abduh mi°at °ām °alā rahīli-hi (1905-2005)*, eds. Ibrāhīm al-Buyyūmī Ghānim and Ṣalāh al-Dīn al-Jawharī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrī, Dār al-Kutub al-Lubnānī, Bibliotheca Alexandrina), 675-737. In Turkish there are a number of studies concerning Ottoman societies, one is Mehmet Ali Ünal, *Osmanlı müesseseleri tarihi* (Isparta: Fakülte Kitabevi, 2002) but I had no access to this book.

⁶³ Zaydān, *Ta°rikh ādāb al-lughā al-°arabiyya*, 2:4:427-454, classified the “scientific and cultural” (*al-jam°iyyāt al-°ilmiyya wa'l-adabiyya*) societies basically according to geographical location (Syrian or Egyptian, foreigner or Arabic in Egypt, even American) or their purpose: scientific (*°ilmiyya*), charitable (*khayriyya*), clubs (!, *andīyya*), political (*siyāsiyya*), cultural (*°ilmiyya-fanniyya, adabiyya*), charitable educational (*khayriyya ta°limiyya*), and theatrical (*jam°iyyāt al-tamthīl*).

⁶⁴ Zaydān, *Ta°rikh ādāb*, 2:4:427. “tashiddu azr al-°ilm wa'l-adab wa ta°khud bi-nāṣir ahli-hā wa-hiya min thimār al-tamaddun al-ḥadīth fī Urūbā, °alā athr intishār al-ḥurriyya al-shakḥsiyya wa-tā°yid huqūq al-afrād.”

⁶⁵ Sayyid °Alī Ismā°il, *Ta°rikh al-masraḥ al-miṣrī*, 233-262.

⁶⁶ Concerning art societies, the German song-association, the Teutonia is described in Akyoldaş, “Instrumentalization of music in the late Ottoman Empire: The case of the Teutonia.”

also, like in 1847 the Beirut-based *Jamʿiyya al-Sūriyya li'l-ʿUlūm wa'l-Funūn* (The Syrian Society of Sciences and Arts).⁶⁷ In the Ottoman Empire both Europeans and non-Europeans created these associations, including all kinds of literary and political/semi-political societies. The Ottoman statesmen themselves initiated societies as parallel organizations to state initiatives. One such a semi-governmental society was the famous *Encümān-ı Dāniş* in 1851.

Charitable societies represented a new type of non-governmental organizations, usually based their legitimacy on religious affiliation (like Armenian Catholics' charitable society) or political collectivity (like the charitable society of Austro-Hungarians in Egypt). The new Muslim charitable societies were based on the old Islamic traditions of *ṣadaqa* that have met with the modern invention of "human care" and thus the *khayriyya*-societies were established. These could be seen as modern embodiments of Islamic religious traditions.

Charitable societies (*société de bienfaisance*, in Arabic *al-jamaʿiyya al-khayriyya*, in Ottoman Turkish *cemʿiyet-i hayriyye*) supported schools, hospitals, literary or religious activities, helped the poor, served as organizers of community life, strengthened identities and loyalties, and, many times worked as unofficial organizations with political agendas. They were not against the governments, rather, fought to be included in the agendas. Especially European charitable societies were involved in international politics also.

The earliest non-European society⁶⁸ in Alexandria was perhaps the *Mār Manṣūr* (established in 1833), another European/Egyptian was the *Institut Egyptien*

⁶⁷ Stephen Paul Sheehi, "Inscribing the Arab Self: Buṭrus al-Bustānī and Paradigms of Subjective Reform," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 27, no. 1 (2000): 7-24.

⁶⁸ Majdī Saʿīd, "Al-imām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh wa'l-jamaʿiyyat al-ahliyya," 686, states that the establishment of societies in Cairo started only after 1882, but it is false.

(*Majlis al-Ma'ārif al-Miṣrī*, 1859). Of the early and short lived Egyptian Arab learned societies notable are the *Jam'iyat al-Ma'ārif* (established by Ibrāhīm al-Muwaylihī and Muḥammad °Ārif Pasha, 1868), *al-Jam'iyat al-Khayriyya al-Islāmiyya* (on the impulse of °Abd Allāh Nadīm, 1879), *al-Jam'iyat al-Sharqiyya* (Ya°qūb Artin, Fakhrī Pasha, Sulaymān Abāzah, 1877), and the revolutionary *Jam'iyat Miṣr al-Fatāt* (al-Afghānī, Adīb Ishāq, Salīm Naqqāsh, etc?).⁶⁹ The most important charitable society (also in connection with theatre) was *al-Jam'iyat al-Sūriyya al-Urthudhuksiyya*, established in 1875 in Alexandria.

Specific theatrical societies (*jam'iyat al-tamthīl*) were also established, according to Zaydān first in Syria (perhaps Beirut), with the aim of “studying theatre and supplying whatever is needed in money, etc.”⁷⁰ In Cairo, in 1871 the *Society of the Establishment for Arabic Theatres* (*Jam'iyat Ta'sīs al-Tiyātrāt al-°Arabiyya*) was established connected to James Sanua's theatre. He formed later a number societies, too.⁷¹ A famous case is °Abd Allāh Nadīm's school society (*Jam'iyat al-Funūn wa'l-Ādāb*) which arranged two plays in the presence of Khedive Tawfīq in 1880.⁷² However, these theatrical societies could not mobilize money or support among their members, since these may have been only organizations between the actors themselves.

In Istanbul numerous charitable societies were established among Ottoman Christians (Armenians and Greeks), and also in the Francophone mixed population of Pera/Beyoğlu since the 1850s. Ottoman statesmen established semi-governmental societies, like Ali and Fuat Pashas' *Cem'iyet-i °Ilmiyye-i °Osmaniyye* (Ottoman

⁶⁹ Abdel-Malek, *Idéologie et renaissance*, 285-286.

⁷⁰ Zaydān, *Ta'riḥ ādāb*, 2:4:456.

⁷¹ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 97-100.

⁷² Zaydān, *Ta'riḥ ādāb*, 2:4:456, Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 146.

Society of Science), that was an organization of public education and also published a journal (*Macmū^ca-ı Fünun*). The most notable Ottoman Muslim society is the *Red Crescent* (1877, established for the support of the Muslim soldiers of the Russian-Ottoman war). In the 1870s, several Ottoman political societies were established which were loosely connected to the Young Ottomans who themselves were a kind of society (*İttifāk-ı Hamiyyet*, usually translated as “Patriotic Union”). The most famous is the *Military Donations Society* that sent clothes to soldiers in Bosnia, and with the clothes, patriotic messages.⁷³

However, these sometimes secret Ottoman societies were not closely involved in theatres, although some of their members, like Namık Kemal and Ahmed Midhat, were literary men and wrote even theatricals. Perhaps one very short lived theatrical society was the already cited *Commission* to support Ottoman Theatre. Unlike in Egypt, the theatrical groups playing in Ottoman Turkish were never organized as associations for a “higher” goal.

In both cities, charity was regarded a social duty, a habit, something which was expected from the rich citizens. As one of the Egyptian French journals noted “[l]a Bienfaisance a toujours eu au Caire une sort de pouvoir magique, rien n’arrête le public cairote lorsqu’on fait appel à sa générosité.”⁷⁴ In Istanbul, charity was also an indispensable means of feeding the poor. This “magical power” of charity was due many times to the competition between various communities (mostly on religious basis) or to the self-congratulation of the rich. Even from Paris the expatriate Greeks looked with keen eyes on what is going on in Pera/Istanbul (for them, Constantinople)

⁷³ Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, 75.

⁷⁴ *Le Bosphore Egyptien*, 22 January 1885, 4.

and compared the charitable activities of French ladies in Paris and the Greek ladies in Pera.⁷⁵

The late 19th century “bal” or “charitable evening” was an expression of community and communities. Apart from being an entertainment of the society, these soirées were serious contributors to education and cultural activities, as one of the memoirs narrates:

Un bal à Péra, c’était un gros événement qui mettait la société sens dessus dessous. Chaque communauté avait le sien. Tour à tour, se succédaient le bal grec, le bal arménien, le bal israélite, le bal italien, annoncés par des affiches. [...] Ces fêtes étaient toujours placées sous les auspices d’un ambassadeur pour que l’affluence y fût plus nombreuse et pour qu’elles eussent plus d’éclat. [...] Le bal était un terrain neutre où fusionnaient sous le même habit noir l’indigène mêlé à l’étranger. [...] Hâtons-nous d’ajouter que ces fêtes avaient un but utile, *philantropique* comme disaient les affiches et que la recette servait à venir en aide aux établissements charitables de la communauté qui les organisait. Si l’on n’avait pas dansé à Péra, plus d’une école aurait fermé ses portes, plus d’un hôpital aurait dû refuser des malades.”⁷⁶

A public ball thus was considered to be of social utility by the elite as a non-governmental resource. However, in the 1870s, in Cairo, Muslim charitable societies were considered to be worth of government support. In fact, these Egyptian societies struggled for being recognized and included in policy making.

In an early article, Muḥammad °Abduh discussed the relation of the Egyptian government (Riyāḍ Pasha) and the patriotic, Egyptian charitable societies (basically the *Al-Jam‘iyya al-Khayriyya al-Islāmiyya*, and *Al-Jam‘iyya al-Maqāsid al-*

⁷⁵ M. Nivolaidès, “La Charité des dames françaises de Paris et des dames grecques de Péra,” *L’Orient*, 5 May 1889, 357-359.

⁷⁶ Bertrand Bareilles, *Constantinople – Ses Cités Françaises et Levantines* (Paris: Editions Bossard, 1918), 106-107.

Khayriyya). He recognized the usefulness of such organizations for the Muslim Arab Egyptians and hoped for governmental support.⁷⁷

Another author writing during the British rule in 1886 explained that all the foreign communities (*li-kull millat min al-ajānib*) in Egypt have their own charitable society, regardless of their small number. The Greek Catholics, the Greek Orthodox, the Maronites, the Armenians, and (as two distinct categories) the religious communities (*tāʿifa*) of Jews and Copts all possess their societies, schools and hospitals. (These were considered as *ajānib*!) However, for Muslims “although we are more than 5 million and we possess the majority of governance we have only two society, the Tawfīq Charitable Society and the Society of Benevolent Intentions.” The first (*Jamʿiyyat al-Tawfīq al-Khayriyya*), with the presidency of Prince ʿAbbās, counted more than 1200 members that provided the organization an income of 250 pounds monthly. In the second, *Jamʿiyyat al-Maqāṣid al-Khayriyya*, 400 members provided more than 80 pounds monthly, with the presidency of Prince Muḥammad ʿAlī.⁷⁸

It was not rare that charitable societies expressed political preferences. In Cairo we can find societies who held public evenings in theatres as expressions of Ottoman loyalty, like, as we have seen, in March 1887 in the Cairo Opera House, the Maronite Society of Benevolent Intentions (*Jamʿiyyat al-Masāʿī al-Khayriyya al-Mārūniyya*) organized an evening for the honour of Sultan Abdülhamid II with his High Comissioner in Egypt, Ghāzī Aḥmad Mukhtār Pasha.⁷⁹ But let us investigate

⁷⁷ “Our Government and the Charitable Societies.” Republished in Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *al-Aʿmal al-Kāmila*, 5 vols (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1993), 2:5-7. Originally *Al-Waqāʿiʿ al-Miṣriyya*, 19 October 1880.

⁷⁸ *Al-Ahrām*, 12 February 1886, 1-2.

⁷⁹ *Al-Qāhira al-Ḥurra*, 12 March 1887, 2.

what was the exact relation between charitable societies and early music theatre in Arabic.

Charitable Societies and Theatre

Charitable societies not only used theatres for balls, although charity balls in Cairo were held in the Opera House from around 1872 regularly,⁸⁰ while in Istanbul the Naum was used already in the 1850s for society/community balls.⁸¹ Many times charitable societies, together with journalists, were ardent supporters of theatre in Arabic or Ottoman Turkish. In Cairo, they were involved in Arab theatrical activities from around 1879. First, these were Arab Christian (Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Maronite, or Coptic), or Jewish organizations, later Egyptian Muslim associations, too.

Schooling and theatre were connected very much in Alexandria and Cairo, either as the schools tried to raise funds via organized performances in a theatre, or the schools themselves gave space for theatricals. Even closer relationships can be observed in the case of Sulaymān Qardāhī who was associated with the school of his wife in Alexandria, or °Abd Allāh Nadīm who was director of a school for poor Muslim children in Alexandria, established by his charitable society (*al-Jamʿiyya al-Khayriyya al-Islāmiyya*) and was also a writer/translator of plays.⁸²

Already in the summer of 1880, the school of Qardāhī's wife organized a performance in the Zizinia, with the aim to give the profit to the Charitable Society of the Greek Catholics in Alexandria, but also using this occasion to distribute the

⁸⁰ The earliest society ball I could locate in the Khedivial Opera House was on 3 April 1872, Société de Secours Italienne. Table of expenses and incomes dated 16 April 1872, Carton 80, CAI, DWQ.

⁸¹ Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu*, for instance 207 about an evening of the Association des Dames de Charité in 1853.

⁸² Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 145.

annual prizes of the students. In the presence of Khedive Tawfiq, the children played *Télémaque* in Arabic,⁸³ thus uniting three aims (school, charity, theatre). Around the same time, °Abd Allāh Nadīm founded the *Jam‘iyyat al-Funūn wa’l-Ādāb* (Society for Arts and Literature) in his school,⁸⁴ and Coptic children also entertained the Khedive.⁸⁵ Based on these experiments, it is no surprise that in the later years theatre-makers put an extra accent on the educational features of theatre as was seen above.

During the spring of 1882 Qardāhī could mobilize an unprecedented audience in the Cairo Opera House. It might well be that his whole theatrical enterprise was established in view of a charity evening – in January 1882 the *Jam‘iyyat al-Tawfiq al-Khayrī* and the Greek Catholics (*Jam‘iyyat al-Rūm al-Kāthūlik*) agreed to give an evening (a ball) in March in the Cairo Opera House,⁸⁶ which was later perhaps transformed to back Qardāhī. (?)

After the °Urābī revolution and the British occupation that cut all theatrical activity started during the spring of 1882, the union of Egyptian Arab charitable societies and Qardāhī’s theatre from 1885 was in full blossom. As I argued, he was successful in the competition with other Arab impresarios, Qabbānī and Khayyāt, because he engaged Ḥijāzī and Egyptian musicians; and was also backed by the charity organizations. In 1886, the *Jam‘iyyat al-Tawfiq al-Khayrī* (Tawfiq Charitable Society) advertised one of his performances as for their benefit (scheduled to 15 March, *Ḥifẓ al-Widād*).⁸⁷ In 1887, his troupe played for the benefit of the Greek

⁸³ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 144.

⁸⁴ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 147.

⁸⁵ Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 149.

⁸⁶ *Al-Ahrām*, 19 January 1882, 2.

⁸⁷ *Al-Ahrām*, 5 March 1886, 2.

Orthodox (Syrian) Society, the Maronites,⁸⁸ and the Egyptian Brotherly Union (*Al-Ittihād al-Akhawī al-Miṣriyya*), too.⁸⁹

Not only Qardāhī but other Arab artists received support or actually they supported the charitable societies. An often quoted case is when in 1881 for the request of the Jewish Charitable Society (*Al-Jamʿiyyat al-Khayriyyat al-Isrāʾīliyya*) the Syrian actor-director Yūsuf Khayyāṭ prepared a drama in Arabic in the Opera House (Cairo with a permission from the Khedive Tawfīq).⁹⁰ Later the great singer ʿAbduh al-Ḥamūlī was asked by the Greek Catholics' Charitable Society to contribute to a charity evening in the Opera House.⁹¹ However, the occasion was postponed so instead of ʿAbduh, the troupe of Yūsuf Khayyāṭ performed *al-Zulūm* starring Salāma Hijāzī who “won a complete victory over the hearts” of the Syrian-Egyptian elite.⁹²

ʿAbduh al-Ḥamūlī sang in Alexandria for the benefits of the Charitable Tawfīq Society (*Jamʿiyya al-Tawfīq al-Khayriyya*) in 1886.⁹³ One year later in the Cairo Opera House for the benefit of the Free Jewish Schools (*Al-Madāris al-Isrāʾīliyya al-Majjāniyya, Ecoles Gratuites Israélites du Caire*) in 1887 and his benevolent intention was thanked by the *Al-Ahrām* as well.⁹⁴ Throughout the 1880s (and later too), the relation between schools, charity and music theatre in Arabic remained.

⁸⁸ *Al-Qāhira al-Hurra*, 13 April 1887, 2.

⁸⁹ Like in March 1887 the Maronite Society thanked Qardāhī for his performance of the *ʿAyida*, of what 6000 franks were the income. *Al-Ahrām*, 9 March 1887, 3.

⁹⁰ The first announcement gives 11 April, in *Al-Ahrām*, 31 March 1881, 3. In the *Al-Ahrām*, 7 April 1881 the date 10 April is given. In *Al-Ahrām*, 16 April 1881, 3 this date is given as Sunday evening (*masāʾ al-Aḥad*), thus it was without question on 10 April 1881, Sunday. Cf. Sadgrove, *Egyptian Theatre*, 151.

⁹¹ *Al-Ahrām*, 26 February 1885, 2.

⁹² *Al-Ahrām*, 17 April 1885, 2.

⁹³ *Al-Ahrām*, 12 April 1886, 3.

⁹⁴ *Al-Ahrām*, 24 March 1887, 2.

In this regard, a seemingly ephemeral foundation was the Patriotic Society of Literary Knowledge (*Jamʿiyyat al-Maʿārif al-Adabiyya al-Waṭaniyya*) that started to organize theatrical evenings for the benefit of the school “*Al-Najjāh al-Tawfiqiyya*”, under the patronage of the Khedive, in March 1887 in the Opera House.⁹⁵ Under this society we can only find Shaykh al-Dasūqī Badr who established the school and requested two performances in the Opera (30 March and 17 April 1887).⁹⁶

Charitable societies sometimes made a joint effort to hold a common evening with a common audience. For instance, the Coptic Society of Benevolent Intentions (*Jamʿiyya al-Masāʿī al-Khayriyya al-Qubṭiyya*) and the [Civil?] Society of Greek Catholics (*Jamʿiyya al-Rūm al-Kāthūlik [al-Mulkiyya?]*) organized a common theatrical evening with Arabic theatre for 6 April 1887, under the patronage of the Khedive.⁹⁷ In this month other charity organizations (perhaps the same ones with different name) organized Arabic theatricals in the Opera for the benefit of the *Najjāh* School.

Not only charitable societies organized entertainment evenings. For instance, in 1891 a special musical evening was held for the benefit of a poor family, with singers ʿAbduh al-Ḥamūlī and Yūsuf Khaffāja in the company of Aḥmad al-Laythī and the *takht* of Muḥammad al-ʿAqqād. The journal *Al-Ittiḥād al-Miṣrī* advertised the occasion and hoped that the capital’s elite audience will contribute to this evening “out of motives of human respect and proper mercy.”⁹⁸

⁹⁵ *Al-Qāhira al-Hurra*, 29 March 1887, 2. *Al-Qāhira al-Hurra*, 16 April 1887, 2.

⁹⁶ Letter dated 17 March 1887, to Tanzim from Chef du Service Administratif, 4003-036990, Niẓārat al-Ashghāl al-ʿUmūmiyya, DWQ. Later al-Dasūqī will cause some problems, 4003-022543, Niẓārat al-Ashghāl al-ʿUmūmiyya, DWQ.

⁹⁷ *Al-Qāhira al-Hurra*, 23 March 1887, 2.

⁹⁸ *Al-Ittiḥād al-Miṣrī*, 19 March 1891, 2.

These examples show a very delicate interplay of several factors. Theatre audiences were asked to support theatre in Arabic because they were supposed to have an alliance with the actors in the advancement of the society. In turn, the actors were asked to perform some evenings for the benefit of the societies who gave the income usually to schools or hospitals. The societies, however, also advertised the plays and in tandem with the journals called for the participation of the rich compatriots. This system established infrastructurally the early *Nahda* in the 1880s, and played out patriotic, educational, and economic interests in the context of the patriotic and cosmopolitan experiences.

In Istanbul, I have no knowledge about such well-connected interests between charity organizations, public education, patriotic ideology and theatre in Ottoman Turkish. Various communities indeed organized charitable occasions, or certain individuals for good causes, like we have seen, to support Tchouhadjian after his house was burnt, or for the soldiers in war. However, these were mostly purely musical evenings, sometimes the auspices of the Grand Vizier or the Sultan himself. Although singing hymns in Ottoman Turkish for the glory of the sovereign was in practice during these occasions, music theatre was not performed.

Conclusion

The theatre audiences remained the most problematic point of my research. In Istanbul, between approx. 1869-1873 the Ottoman Theatre could imagine its audience in connection with the state initiatives of patriotic loyalism and ‘*Osmanlılık*, Ottomanism. After 1873, this possibility ended, and music theatre-makers in Ottoman Turkish could not and did not want to establish a connection to political ideologies, thus the audience remained primarily a market. In contrast, after the early

1870s when the French and Italian performances were visited by members of the diplomatic society, including the Egyptian ministers of Khedive Ismāʿīl, after the British occupation a certain alliance can be observed between Egyptian notables, charity societies and Arab theatre-makers. To this alliance, unexpectedly, even the Khedive and the Ottoman High Commissioner in Cairo also joined.

Through this short survey of theatre audiences and their organizing principles the state's role seems quite small. In Cairo, the Khedive in the 1870s, and the state in the 1880s secured the Opera House as a building, but – apart from diplomatic society – they did not invite or directly organize audiences, especially not for theatre in Arabic. In Istanbul, the situation is the same: although in the beginning of the 1870s some sort of state support was given to the Ottoman Theatre, this did not include direct policies to attract the audiences. In neither city was the theatrical audience considered by the states a potential material to educate.

Thus, in both cities, audiences emerged along various networks of connections, loyalties, interests, curiosities, and human vanities, various diverse groups of momentary experiences. These ephemeral collectivities either had an external referent, stable collectivity – like the geographical or linguistic nation, or, the religious community – or had not, and only came to existence in public occasions, like in a theatre, where the experience of diversity constituted a salient feature. This latter case, that is typical of the diplomatic society, is usually what is called cosmopolitanism.

The audiences were the ultimate targets and outcomes of the cultural proposals that the theatre-makers offered to the states. However, in the competition for the audience and the financial resources, the state itself became one of the competitors. In Istanbul by resigning from the support of theatre in Ottoman Turkish, the state also

lost any way to supervise theatre performances. In Cairo, the state was conscious about the audiences, also because simply partly it accepted the argumentation of the theatre-makers about the educative importance of theatre. However, since this acceptance meant only the free concession of the Opera House and nothing else, in a colonial situation, when foreigners decided over the budget of the state, the audiences emerged quite independently from the central initiatives. The cultural politics of the thirty years under analysis ultimately shows the failure of the state in Istanbul to regain loyalties of audiences – that was compensated by increasing measures of censorship and surveillance – while in Cairo this loyalty was transformed to an increasingly visible image of the alliance between the Khedive, his elite, and the ordinary Egyptians against British rule. Audiences of music theatres represented blurred collectivities in constant negotiation, to carve out, appropriate, and invent new culture(s).

Conclusion: Cultural Politics and Mellow Fruits

In this dissertation I explored what was behind “a garden with mellow fruits of refinement.” This garden was cultivated by a number of gardeners who believed in the connection between civilization/culture and progress. As good gardeners they not only boasted with its “mellow fruits,” but also wanted to invite certain people to the garden and sell the fruits. The debate about what to plant, who to invite, and how to cultivate the garden is what I called cultural politics. Keeping the metaphor, cultural politics was, after all, about whose garden is this plantation.

Gardens were not everywhere and their fruits were often bitter. Theatre in Arabic as a garden in Cairo found no similar expression in Ottoman Turkish in Istanbul. The framework of my research was an entangled comparison between the two capitals, Cairo and Istanbul, as rival but connected urban centers that imitated, resisted, and used each other. Both were centers of power and markets of music theatre. Thus this study is a critical contribution to the grand narratives of empires and colonialism in the late 19th century.

Apart from presenting new material and establishing hitherto unknown relations between the two cities and individuals, this dissertation showed the making of music theatre as a competition. This competition pertained to much more than access to state resources. It was for the audiences. It comprised visions about possible ways of being civilized, various solutions of how to cope with worldwide fashions and cultural hegemonies, possibilities of self- and public education, cultural images in the public space, business and money, loyalty and resistance, collectivity and class. Ultimately it is in this competition that the power brokers in Cairo and Istanbul redefined their responsibilities.

Keeping the important roles of the state and the rulers in the social and political transformation, this study demonstrated that the representatives of the state became competitors in the quest for audiences. Wanted or not, the state in these cities became one of the cultural brokers. In Cairo, this might be an intended consequence of Khedive Ismā'īl, while in Istanbul, due to numerous reasons, the state/the Sultan Abdülhamid left the theatres. Thus the audiences became targets of prohibitive and regulative proceedings. In Istanbul, this exactly led to the opposite, namely, the continuous presence of the state in public theatres. This control was partly undermined by employing music and inventing new music theatricals.

A paradox constellation discloses in both cities. The representatives of the state – the highest administrators and rulers of the central administration – did not accept the (new) principle of the (constitutional) state according to which the income of the state should be used for the benefit of its citizens, including their entertainment, and according to their suggestions. They did realize the power of music theatre over audiences but in both official administrations decisions were made to avoid the full subsidy of theatres. These decisions could be attributed to a number of variables that indeed changed during the period in question.

In Cairo a constant experimentation went on between partly financing music theatre in Arabic but also maintaining, and in fact, preferring a European-style infrastructure of theatres (largely by loans). The decision-makers in financial matters of the state budget - before 1878 the Khedive Ismā'īl and after that date, British and French controllers – only partially were interested in answering the demands of Arab impresarios. It gives a special flavour that most of the leaders of theatre troupes were Syrians in the period. In the 1880s, when these spoke in the name of *waṭan* and Arabic language, an additional element of resistance against British colonial rule

surfaced the news about their performances and their demands. Even if the theatre-makers themselves were perhaps not politically engaged, in the news their experiments were transformed in a language that suggested many political implications. Thus by 1888, Sulaymān Qardāhī almost made an alliance with Khedive Tawfiq in order to show a symbolic coalition between the Egyptian elite and “the people” (*al-umma, al-nās*). This attempt failed not only because of Qardāhī’s banal scandal in Paris but also due to the mature power of the Comité des Théâtres, the establishment of alternative theatres for Arab theatricals, and the rivalry between the impresarios themselves.

In Istanbul, the general involvement of private capital in establishing theatre buildings and the absence of a state opera house originate in a number of reasons. One such reason may be the lack of money that otherwise posed no obstacle for financing other cultural institutions, like museums. Based on this study, I explain this situation with the presence of the various communities and the structure of imperial power in Istanbul – there was no attempt made to forge a symbolic coalition between the sovereign and his subjects (apart from religion) that could be represented by an opera house at least for elite use. This absence did not make possible for Ottoman impresarios to effectively argue for the advancement of “the people” at the decision-makers. That in Istanbul the leaders of theatre troupes were Ottoman Armenians is again an additional colour that contributed to the uneasiness to argue in the name of a common collectivity. Yet, to repeat, the absence of a state theatre in Istanbul is among the reasons that paradoxically led to the involvement of the state in theatrical issues with different types of control.

With these very complex processes, the power brokers of the state became also cultural brokers. Khedive Tawfiq refusing Yūsuf Khayyāṭ or Sultan Abdülhamid

II banning *Çengi* not only made a negative decision but were also involved in shaping culture. Especially Ottoman censorship – as they themselves argued – was necessary for “the people’s morals,” thus the state competed for the audience with individual theatre-makers. This involvement in both cities brought the state down, since it was forced to deal with demands and with such cultural products for what it had no expertise previously.

Furthermore, reconstructing the lives of selected music theatre impresarios and artists – Manasse, Draneht, Qardāhī, Benglian, Hījāzī, Tchouhadjian, in their relations with other cultural and power brokers – I explored the ways in which private individuals were active in cultural change. They were not independent from the states or the rulers but they all had their own conceptions about the ways music theatre should be used. The competitive nature of cultural visions partly dissolves the two-sided framework of the state, being the initiator and controller of change on the one side, and on the other side the manipulated non-governmental agents. The cultural visions and activity from below contributed to and modified significantly what certain statemen or rulers imagined about official and non-official public space. Individuals were the driving force behind the production of new types of culture.

In a larger perspective, my narrative demonstrated the various ways the Ottoman Empire and the emerging Egyptian (colonial) state were incorporated into worldwide consumption habits and fashions, including public ceremonies of state power. Cairo and Istanbul emerged in this regard as markets of Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, French, Italian music theatre. It is via the everyday dealings of impresarios or other theatre-makers that the micro-processes of relations between various European cities with Cairo and Istanbul were unearthed. Mostly individuals with Ottoman

citizenship, usually working at their own risk, initiated and built up these relations from Cairo or Istanbul to (Western) Europe and *not* vice-versa.

With new forms of self-expression, new repertoires emerged, which, in the case of Tchouhadjian and other Istanbulite composers, represented a new modality of Western European music, while in Cairo, this repertoire was the fusion of Egyptian *tarab* with acting and European polyphony. Apart from these two distinct results, a number of hybrid and ephemeral entertainment forms appeared, like *kanto* in Istanbul or the Franco-Egyptian songs in Cairo. At the beginning of the 20th century, in both cities new phases of music theatre development came to the forefront, in Cairo and Alexandria Egyptian songtheatre, whose major representative was Sayyid Darwīsh, while in Istanbul, after 1921, the young Republic focused on opera and Western music in Turkish.

These later developments bring further inquiries about the relation of the state and private individuals in the 19th century. The results may question prehistories of post-Ottoman nation states regarding the constellation of patriotism, cosmopolitanism, imperialism, and colonialism. The arguments of theatre-makers about theatre as a means of civilization and progress disclose a basic acceptance of the worldwide parameters of success, heavily dominated by cosmopolitan ideas. The association of these arguments with the love of the homeland in Cairo, and the failure of such a discursive union in Istanbul, had serious and paradoxical consequences in the ways the two distinct nationalisms emerged at the turn of the 20th century. The understanding of early patriotism as an expression of cosmopolitanism keeps open the gates for rethinking late 19th century social transformation as a particular moment of history when the garden of music theatre was expected to bring mellow fruits.

Appendices

Appendix 1.

Sulaymān Qardāhī's Proposal, Cairo, 1882

Transcription and English Translation

Undated letter, (sealed as 3 May 1882, transferred to the Council of Ministers 7 May 1882), from Sulaymān Qardāhī to the Ministry of Public Works, in 4003-037847, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

Transcription

Proposition Kardahi pour representations arabes

[Sealed] 3 Māyū 1882

Soumis au Conseil des Ministres par note en date du 7 Mai 1882, n. 102

Ashghāl-ı °Umūmiyya-ı Nāzirī Sa°ādatlū Effendim Ḥazratları

Ghayri khafī °an Sa°ādatikum mā fi'l-riwāyāt mina'l-fawā'id al-adabiyya li-kulli umma fa-inna'l-riwāyāt wa lā azīd Sa°ādatakum bi-hā °ilmān ta°uddu min asbāb al-najāh wa-wasā'il al-tamaddun idh hiya mir'āt li'l-aḥwāl wa-mīdān li-fursān al-afkār bal hiya madrasa li'l-sha°b yata°allam fī-hā mā lā yu°allam min al-ādāb wa-yatanāwal min-hā al-jidd fī ma°riḍ al-hazl fa'l-riwāyāt wa-lā azīd-hā ta°rīfān min ahamm al-masāyil li-tahdhīb al-°uqūl wa-hiya alṭaf muhadhhib wa-aḥsan mu°addib wa-hiya bustān yāni° bi'l-ādāb thamāra dāniya al-quṭūf li-kulli insān wa-la-qad ḥamalatnī al-ghayra °alā hādha'l-fann al-jamīl ilā muḥāwalat naqli-hi ila'l-lugha al-°arabiyya wa-

itqāni-hi ḥattā nastaghni bi-hi fi lughati-nā °an-hu fi'l-lughāt al-ajnabiyya fa-
 shammartu li-hādhihi'l-ghāya °an sā'id al-jidd wa'l-ijtihād wa badhdhaltu la-hā al-
 dirham wa'l-dīnār ghayr mushfiq °alā nafsī wa-lā rāhim māli ḥattā anfaqtu °alā dhālik
 kullamā ahraztu-hu bi'l-ta°ab wa'l-jidd wa-kuntu °alā thiqa min anna'l-ḥukūma al-
 saniyya ayyad-hā Allāh tamuddu lī yad al-musā°ada lammā a°hadu fi wulāt al-umūr
 min al-ghayra °ala'l-adab wa'l-raghba fi ihyā° hādha'l-mashrū° al-mufīd wa-rufi°a
 manāra fa-li-°itqādī dhālik lam asif °alā badhl al-nafs wa'l-nafīs wa-lam akhsh min al-
 rujū° bi'l-khayba fa-allaftu jawqān °arabiyyān waṭaniyyān li'l-tashkhīṣ ṣaraftu al-
 °ināya fi sabīl intiqā° afrādi-hi min kull dhī labāqa wa-ahliyya li'l-ishtighāl fi hādha'l-
 fann al-jalīl min ḥaythiyya al-ijāda fi'l-tamthīl wa-ḥusn al-ṣawt wa-°udhūba al-alfāz
 wa-mā shākil dhālik mim mā huwa lāzim ḍarūrī li-kull mushakhkhiṣ fa-jā° wa'l-ḥamd
 li'llāh bi-ghāyat fi'l-itqān wa-qad shahidat sa°adatukum ḥafẓu-hā Allāh bi-dhālik wa
 kufātī bi-hādhihi shahāda jiz°ān °alā at°abī wa-lam takun al-riwāyāt allatī
 shakhkhaṣtu-hā illā anmūzajān lammā ana °āzim in shā° Allāh °alā tashkhīṣ fi'l-
 mustaqbal mina'l-riwāyāt al-muntakhaba al-muntaqāt mim mā yuwāfiq adhwāq ahl al-
 bilād wa-yufīd al-jumhūr wa-yaksib-nā riḍā wulāt al-umūr wa-sādat al-qawm wa lā
 aqtaṣir °alā °adad al-mushakhkhiṣīn bal lā budda min ziyādat °adadihim wa-taḥsīn al-
 aḥwāl min kull wajh ka-tanghīm mūsīqā °arabiyya wa-mā shākil dhālik ḥattā yablagh
 °adad al-mushakhkhiṣīn thalāthīn nafarān wa-°adad al-mushakhkhiṣāt khamsat °ashar
 wāḥidatān wa °adad min al-khidam wa'l-ḥasham wa-l-tābi°in wa-rijāl al-mūsīqā wa
 lakin lā budda lī fi kull dhālik min musā°ada sa°adatukum khaṣūṣān wa-musā°ada al-
 nazzār al-fakhkhām wa-umarā° al-bilād wa-kirāmi-hā wa-lā ghinan lī al-batta °an
 dhālik idh bidūn anzār sa°adatikum wa-°addikum lā ablagh al-ghāya allatī urīdu-hā
 wa-lā yanjaḥ al-mas°ā fa-ana altamisū min sa°adatikum an tamudda-nī bi-yad al-
 °ināya wa'l-musā°ada wa-tashmal-nī naẓara-hā wa lastu fi rayba min dhālik lammā

a°hadu fī sa°ādatikum min al-ghayra wa'l-raghba fī musā°adat kull mashrū° min-hu
 fāyida °umūmiyya wa-sa°ādatukum ūlā bi-kull jamīl wa-faḍl wa-ana rāfi° ilā
 sa°ādatikum ma° hādhihi'l-°arīḍa brūghrām ubayyin fī-hi mā laysa min °anī °an
 tibyāni-hi li-uhīṭ sa°ādatikum °ilmān bi-mā hinālik wa'lladhī asālu-hu wa-arjū-kum
 bi-hi huwa takhšīš alfin ginēh fī muqābalat al-mušārīf allatī yastalzim-hā hādha'l-
 mashrū° wa-abwāb šarf hādha al-mablagh zāhira mubayyina fī'l-brūghrām fa-
 yataḍḍaḥ min-hu li-sa°ādatikum kayfiyyat šarfi-hā wa-luzūmi-hā wa'l-amr amrukum
 Effendim

Kataba-hu bi-yadi-hi

Sulaymān Qardāḥī

With other pen in Arabic: qalam afrankī

Translation

[In French:]

Kardahi's proposition for performances in Arabic.

[Sealed in Arabic] 3 May 1882

Presented to the Council of Ministers with reference to 7 May 1882, n. 102

[In Ottoman Turkish:]

To His Excellency, the Minister of Public Works.

Sir,

[In Arabic:]

you know very well, Your Excellency, what refined benefits are for all nations in theatrical plays. Indeed, the theatricals – and I do not exaggerate, Your Excellency – contain a knowledge that counts among the causes of progress and means of civilization since these plays are mirrors of various matters, and help us become familiar with ideas. These plays are a school for the people to learn what cannot be learned from the [old] education. From these plays seriousness derives in the form of entertainment. Indeed, the plays – and I do not exaggerate their definition – are one of the most important channels to educate the minds. These are the kindest teachers and the best scholars; they are a garden with mellow fruits of refinement that can be harvested by anyone.

Indeed, a strong zeal for this fine art has taken me to try to use it in Arabic until we will be able to perform in our language perfectly and we won't need [theatre] in foreign languages anymore. Thus I prepared for this goal seriously and with great effort, and I have spent dirham and dinar without taking care for myself. There was no mercy for my wealth until I spent for this goal everything that I preserved so far with serious difficulty.

I was sure that if I ask the Exalted Government, may God support them, they will give a helpful hand when I notify the leaders about my zeal in refined education and my passion for the renewal of this useful project. As if I would raise a minaret, my conviction was so strong that I did not regret to spare soul and priceless values and I did not fear that I would finish with failure.

So thus I composed a patriotic Arab troupe for acting. I took great care in the selection of the members from those who possess gracefulness and ability to work in this splendid art, like excellent dignity in acting, beautiful voice, sweat expressions and anything else what is necessary for every actor. And it became indeed, thanks to God, completely perfect. Your Excellency, may God preserve you, already has seen this [success]. My assurance in this proof is part of my troubles because the plays we staged were only a sample. Therefore I am determined, if God wants, to make theatre in the future with goodly selected plays which suit the taste of the people and are useful for the public. We already gained the approval of the leaders and the noble of the people.

But I am not content with the number of the actors, thus I want to extend their number and improve their conditions from all aspects, like singing Arabic music and what else is needed. Thus I want to raise the number of the actors to 30 and the number of the actresses 15 each, and also the number of employees, servants, lesser

servants, and musicians. But I have no other choice to achieve this than to apply for Your Excellency's help specifically, and [in general] to the help of the Exalted Ministers, and the wealthy and the noble of the country. For me this is indispensable since without your consideration and your help I cannot achieve the goal I want and I will not be successful in my effort.

Therefore I ask Your Excellency to give me a helping and careful hand and bestow on me your consideration. I have no doubt about this because I know that Your Excellency possess a great zeal to help all projects that have public benefits, and Your Excellency is always the first in the beautiful and the gracious. I submit with this petition to Your Excellency, a table [a program], in which I explain what is necessary to demonstrate, to make Your Excellency acquainted with what it is about and what I request.

What I need from You, what this projects needs, is the sum of 2000 [Egyptian] pounds for the expenses. The details of spending this sum are clearly explained in the table [the program] humbly and faithfully, thus the justification and the necessity of the needed amount will be evident for Your Excellency. The issue is now at your power.

He wrote this with his own hand.

Sulaymān Qardāhī

[With other pen]: French [Translation] Office

Appendix 2.

Order About the Supervision of Theatres, Istanbul, 1882

Transcription and English Translation

Copy of a vezirial letter dated 13 Dhu'l-Ḥijja 1299 (26 October 1882) written to the Ministry of Interior, in Y.PRK.A 4/2, BOA.

Transcription

Bāb-ı ʿĀlī

Dāʿire-i Sadāret ʿUzmā

Mektüb Kalemi

ʿAded:

13 Dhu'l-Ḥijja 1299 tārīhinde Dāhiliyye Nezaret-i celīlesine yazılan tezkere-i sāmīyye sūretidir

Dersaʿādet'le Memālik-i Mahrūse'nin sāʿir baʿz cihetlerinde Güllü Agop ve emsāli aṣhās taraflarından tiyatro ve ana mumāsil mahaller teʿsīs ile icrā-i luʿbiyyet edilmekte [?] olub bu gibi oyun yerlerinde cidden izhārı kābil olmayan mefāsīd-i mazzaret melāʿib vāsita ile tasvīr olunabileceği ve oyuncular edeb ve dikkat sāhibi olmazlar ise ezhān ve ahlāk-ı ʿumūmiyyeyi bozacakları cihetle medeniyyeti bir kemāl [?] olan memleketlerde bile bunlardan nice defʿa fāʿide yerine mazzaretler görülmüş olmasına bināʿen baʿd ez in o misillü oyun mahallerinde oynadılacak piyesler evvel

emrde Matbū[°]āt İdāresince tahkīk ile oradan tasdīk etdirilmedikçe icrā-i lu[°]biyyet olunması ve tasdīk olunacak piyeslerin tatbīkātında hilāf-merzī ahvāl vuku[°]nı men[°]en Şehr-i Emānet-i celīlesinden me[°]mūriyyet teftīşiyeye bulundurulması lāzım geleceğinden ana göre iktizā edenlere tebligāt-i lāzime icrāsı ve taşralarca da bu gibi lu[°]biyyātın ahālisinin efsād-i ahlākı ve sefāhat inhimākı gibi te[°]sīrāt-ı mazzaresi olub bu bābda bir usūl ve kā[°]ide vaz[°]cı derdest olmasile ol vakte değın ādāb ve ahlāk-ı [°]umūmiyyece irās-ı fasād ve mazār edebilecek oyunların oynadılammaması dikkat mütemādiyye icrāsı zimninde telegrāf ile bi'l-cümle vilāyāt ve müstakil mutasarrıflıklara ve sāyā-i ekīde ifāsı husūsuna himem-i [°]āliyye-i āsafāneleri hazret/mahsuslar [?] buyurulmak bābinda [?]...

Translation

The Sublime Porte

Administration of the Grand Vezier

Office of Letters

Number:

Copy of a vezirial letter dated 13 Dhu'l-Ḥijja 1299 written to the Ministry of Interior

Güllü Agop and similar persons in many parts of the Well-protected Domains and at the Threshold of Felicity established theaters and similar houses to perform plays. In such playhouses so harmful iniquities are performed that could not be shown by the intermediary of plays. If the actors are not masters of modesty and careful attention, the public mind and morals will be rotten. Even in countries with perfect civilization [?], too, instead of useful things often iniquities are shown by these [actors]. Consequently, hereafter, if the entertainments and their performance in such playhouses are not verified beforehand and confirmed by the Publications Supervisor Office, and if there is any disapprovable circumstance occurring that leads to prohibition, then the City Prefecture must investigate these officially. Until this issue is not regulated, the necessary information should be given to these mentioned [offices], and in the countryside too, about the theatremakers' shameful behaviour and harmful influences. Such plays, which contaminate leprously the public morals and behaviour, must be continuously supervised carefully. Their execution must be prevented and this must be telegraphed to the provinces, and to the autonomously governed territories. In this matter a dully performed action is requested from the responsible vezirial officers [?]...

Appendix 3.

Gaetano Mele's Letter to Sultan Abdülmeçid, 1857

Excerpts

Letter dated 5 April 1857, in HR.TO. 427/30, BOA.

Text

Sa Majesté le Sultan Abdul Medgid [!] Khan Empereur des deux Mondes

Sire

Ayant eu à votre passâge à l'île de Candie l'immense bonheur d'embrasser les genoux sacré [!] de votre Majesté j'ose de nouveau me jeter [!] aux pieds de votre sublime trône, en priant, le plus genereux souverain du monde, de bien vouloir confirmé par nouvel ordre la Propriété du Théâtre du Tacsim; place dont j'étais rédevable [!] à la generosité du Sultan Mahmoud votre august père de très glorieuse memoire, et que votre Majesté à son événement au trône s'est daignez m'accorder avec titre de prévilége [!].

Lorsque j'eus l'honneur de donner des spectacles à Dolma-Bagddjé à la fête du Mariâge [!] de l'auguste Princesse avec l'illustre Fety Achmet Pacha; le Dragoman de l'ambassade Sarde et autres me dire [!]: sa Majesté le Sultan est très content de vous, démandez lui une grâce, il vous l'accordera... C'est alors que je demandais une [?] propriété de terrain du Tacsim pour y elever un Theatre grandiose [!], digne

monument de votre glorieux règne. On m'offrit en même temps le Taïne pour 40 chevaux[,] une solde pour ma famille et un emploi pour moi, mais, je remerciais tout de bonté, réitérant seulement [!] ma demande du Theatre. En effet quelques jours après j'ai reçu de son Altesse Féty Achmet Pacha deux copies de votre firman sacré. Son Altesse me disait en même temps que la prévilége [!] que votre Majesté s'était daigné m'accorder, me mettait en plein pouvoir de commencer immédiatement la construction du Theatre, ayant la bonté de m'assurer 200000 [?] abonnements piaster [?].

Je serait inutile d'entretenir votre Hautesse de la beauté et grandeur du theatre. Déjà 5 rangs de loges, avec une maison à côté étaient terminés, et pour achever tout à fait cette oeuvre classique, j'avais vendu mes propriétés en Italie [one unreadable word] me fixer pour toujours sous les genereux auspices de votre sublime Majesté.

Son Altesse Féty Achmet Pacha eut encore la bonté à me demander une note des frais nécessaire [!] pour donner à l'ouverture du Theatre Grande Opera en Musique avec grand ballet. Ayant faite une note exact d'un million de piasters, je m'acheminai le lendemain vers le ministère pour consigner ma note... mais, oh, malheur!!! Je vis tout sang par terre et les escalier et je dus apprendre avec une douleur extrême que mon bien aimé protecteur le bienveillant et honorable Féty Achmet Pacha était tombé en disgrâce.

J'ai voulu m'adresser à son Altesse Begid Pacha, mais par malheur son Altesse allait partir en jour même pour Paris.

Cependant mon malheur n'était pas encore arrivé en comble, puisque peu de jours après vint le feu au Théâtre et le sinistre tellement que le lendemain ne me restait pas même une seule chemise pour couvrir mes innocentes créatures.

[...] Mehmet Ali Pacha alors Gouverneur de Tophane [...] m'ordonna au nom de Votre Majesté de faire une évaluation [...] pour être indemnisé.

[...] mais Mehmet Ali Pacha me dit (: Maintenant il faut atteindre j'usqu'à [!] ce que l'on ne parlera plus à Constantinople de l'incendie de votre théâtre :)

[Mele leaves Istanbul, travels]

[...] je dus m'arrêter à mon passage à Alexandrie pour dirigé les fêtes de Juillet 1856 dont j'ai rendu les spectacles extra-ordinaireusent splendide comme le peuvent attestant [!] leur Altesses Neggib et Begid Pacha.

[...] je me jette aux pieds de votre sublime trône en invoquant et priant infinirement [!] sa Majesté de vouloir bien se daigner m'accorder dans sa toute clemence avec la propriété du Théâtre du Tacsim me faire delivré un passport ottoman, puisque depuis 18 ans que je suis dans les états de votre Hautesse; je crois avoir le droit d'être entièrement votre sujet.

[...]

Gaetano Mélé

Appendix 4.

Emine Hanım's Complaint, 1862

Transcription and English Translation

Letter dated 17 Muḥarram 1279 (15 July 1862) in I.MVL. 471/21360, BOA.

Transcription

Ma°rūz cāgir kemīneleridirke

Der-i °Āliyye'de Gedikpaşa civārında kā°in mutasarrif olduğum °arsa üzerinde bulunan bir bāb cānbāz-tiyatrohānesi bundan akdem bā-irāde-i seniyye ve bā-ımtiyāz-i mahsūse ve Meclis-i Vālā ma°lūmātile kuşād olunduğu derkār isede Evkāf-ı Hümāyūn-ı Hazīne-i celilesince buna dā°ir henüz kesb-i ma°lūmāt edilmediğinden bu def°a nizāmī vechile āhere ferāgi icāb eder ise yed-i islāma furūht eylemek üzere teba°-ı Devlet °Āliyye-den İstefanāki Kara Teodoriye [°Qārā Tūriyye] ferāg olunmak için takrīre gidildikde mahall-ı mezkūr zāten konak olması cihetle mu°ahharen tiyātro inşāsınca Meclis-i Vālā'nın ma°lūmātı olduğuna dā°ir bir kıt°a tezkere-i sāmiyye vurūd etmedikce emr-i ferāgatin icrā olunamayacağı cāriyyelerine ifāde olunmuş olmasile lūtfen ve ihsānen ol bābda muhtācı bulunduğum bir kıt°a-ı tezkere-i sāmiyye-i asafānelerinin Şeref-i nazīrine °ināyet ve ihsān buyurulmuş niyāz ve istirhāmına casāset [°] kılınmış olmağın ol bābda ve her hālde emr-ve-fermān hazrat bey [°] ül-emrindir

Fī 17 Muḥarram 1279

Ben

Emine cāriyyen

Translation

Submitted petition from humble servants

An issue concerning my piece of land in the Gedipaşa district of the Sublime Porte. A while ago the Circus-Theatre being opened by the order of the Sultan, with a special privilege, and with the knowledge of the Meclis-i Vālā, and was in use by the Treasury of the Evkāf-i Hümāyūn. Yet the information concerning this was not given. Last time an estimation was asked because of the transfer of my property according to Islam to the Ottoman subject, Kara Teodor from Istefanak [?]. But in the aforementioned place only a konak is [registered], after which the theatre was established with the knowledge of the Meclis-i Vālā. Without a letter containing this acknowledgement the transfer of property is not possible. Thus I beg that with this explanation an illustrious letter by the Grand Vizier's respected men which in this issue for my request should be [written]. Examine this important matter, which is at your hand your Excellency [?].

On 17 Muḥarram of 1279.

I, Emine, your slave

Appendix 5.

Guatelli Pasha's Proposal, 1871

Excerpts

Transliteration and English Translation

Ottoman Turkish translation of a presumably French or Italian original, in ŞD. 2394/47, BOA. The draft(s) are in HR.TO. 454/62, BOA. The original (not yet located) is said to be dated 11 May 1871, the translation is dated 27 Jumāda'l-Awwal 1288 (14 August 1871).

Transliteration

Bāb-ı ʿĀlī

Nizāret Hāriciyye Celīle

Tercüme Odası

Mesned-i Celile-i Sadāret-i ʿUzmāya fī 11 Māyis 1871 tārīhile Guatelli Paşa tarafından takdīm kılınān ʿarīzanin tercümesidir

[...]

Beyoğlu harīk-i kebīrinde Altıncı Dāʿire-i Belediye dāhilinde vākīʿ ebniye-i sāʿire sırasında Naʿūm'in Tiyātrosu dahı muhrek ve hākser olmuş olduğundan olvakıtdan ve gerek Beyoğlu ve gerek bi'l-cümle Dersaʿādet sekenesi kendilerince mūcib-i istifāde

olan bir eğlenceden mahrûm kalmışlardır sâ'îye-i fuyûzât mâye-ı Saltanatı Seniyyede eser-i taşvîk hayr-ı refîk cenâb Vekâletpenâhîleri ile  asrımız medeniyetinde gün be-gün kesb-i terakki etmekte olan Dersa adet sekenesi için buyucek [?] bir tiyatronin te'sîs luzûmı cumle  indinde musaddak olduğundan bunin tafsîlâtile zât-ı hakâyik banî-i Sedâretpenâhîlerine  arzı ve inhâsında mucânibetilerim za atımce muhtassiran sarfısı

[...]

Beyoğlu vustanda devlete  â'id bir  arsanın müddet muayyene ile mucânân tarakı isti dâsına ihtiyâr eylerim. Muharrir-i imzânin taraf saltanat seniyyeden i tâ ve ihsâm taleb ve isti dâs eylediği imtiyâz bir vech âtî bayân olunur.

1. Tepebaşı kurbında vâki  Tozkopârân caddesinde olup el-hâleti hazihi mu attal ve devlete  â'id olan dört bin zirâ  murabba  vus atinde bir  arsanın yirmi beşer sene müddetle muhtassiran temettu  ve istifâdesi bâ-irâde-i seniyye muharrir-i imzâye terk buyurulacaktır işbu  arsanın mevk -i ve şekli melfûf harîtada gösterilmiştir.

2. Muharrir-i imzâ mezkûr-i  arsa ol-vechile terk olundukda üzerine munâsib bir tiyâtro ile ona marbût vâradasına mahsûs ebniye-i sâ'îre-i inşâyacak

[...]

3. Mazkûr-i tiyâtrü Tiyâtro Imperiyâl  Azîziyye isimile müsammâ olacaktır

4. Muharrir-i imzâ a mâlât ikmâl olunup tiyatro dahı kâmilân meydane gelenceye

[...]

5. İşbu teşebbus-ı  umûmiyye fâ'idesincin olmasına mabna-ı imtiyâzı muddeti olan yirmi beş sene zarfında kâfe-i tekâlîfden mu âf olacaktır

[...]

6. İmtiyâz muddetin inkizâsinde sâhib-i imtiyâz tiyatroyi ol-vakt bulanacağı henitle ve terk olunan °arsa üzerine inşâ edilmiş bi'l-cumle ebniye ile Devlet-i °Âliye rod ü taslîm etmeği ta°hhüd eder.

[...]

7. Sâhib-i imtiyâz a°malât âtasında ve yâpunların hitâmından sonra imtiyâz fermânını bā-afrâddan berine ve yâhud işbu teşebbus için luzûm görünen ve acık hisasındatına munkasim olan ser-māye ile mahsūsân kılınacak [...] [?]

Translation

The Sublime Porte

The Exalted Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Translation Office

The translation of a petition, dated 11 May 1871, submitted by Guatelli Pasha to the Office of the Grand Vizier

[...]

In the great fire of Pera a number of buildings burned down within the Municipality of the VI. District. Among them was the Naum Theatre that became ashes, thus both the inhabitants of Pera, and in general those of the Threshold of Felicity, are left without entertainment since then. The Ottoman Empire is a source of all abundant gifts of Providance, its leaders are friends of good deeds and they stimulate the works of art, fostering day by day the progress of the civilization of our age. So the necessity

of the establishment of a large [?] theatre for the inhabitants of the Threshold of Felicity is admitted by everyone. Based on these details, the Grand Vizier's request and communication, I gathered information humbly about the expenses in short, preparing and putting forward a plan, both in Italy and in the Threshold of Felicity about theater establishments and I tested many buildings.

[...]

and I choose in the middle of Pera a piece of land that belongs to the Exalted State and I demand it freely for a given period. The writer of this signature [the undersigned? hitherto undersigned] asks from the Ottoman Government to grant a permission in terms of the following explanation.

1. In the vicinity of Tepebaşı [perhaps in the original Petits Champs des Morts] in the Tuzkoparan street there is a piece of land presently belonging to the Exalted State, of 4000 m². The right to derive profit from this land for 25 years should be given by an imperial order to the undersigned. A plan of the shape of aforementioned territory is attached. [The plan is drawn by the architect Barborini.]

2. The undersigned, on the aforementioned land that is given to him in this way, will establish a theatre and other necessary buildings connected to this theatre.

[...]

3. This theatre will be called Imperial Aziziye Theatre [perhaps in the original Théâtre Impérial Aziziye].

4. The undersigned will accomplish the theatre in a perfect shape.

[...]

5. Since this will be an establishment for public benefit, for the period of the permission/privilege, that is for 25 years, the building should be exempted completely from all taxes.

[...]

6. When the permission is over, the owner of the theatre's permission at that time, must obligatorily return all buildings that were established in this territory back to the Exalted State.

[...]

7. The owner of the permission, after the end of construction works, will make a private section for the permitted individuals and others, in the open and visible section of this establishment with a special capital. [?] [...]

Appendix 6.

The Report of Agent Z About Theatrical Activity in Arabic, 1871

Letter dated 27 January 1871 to Mr. Nardi, the Inspector of Police in Cairo in 5013-003022, Usrat Muḥammad °Alī, DWQ.

Text

Le Caire le 27 janvier 1871

A Monsieur Nardi, Inspecteur de Police au Caire

Copie

La population du Caire manifeste le plus grand désir d'obtenir un théâtre adapté à sa langue, à ses coutumes et à ses tendresses.

Plusieurs jeunes gens s'étaient déjà réunis l'année écoulée dans le but de représenter un drame de metastasio: *l'Alexandre dans les Indes*, qui avait été traduit en langue arabe. S'ils ont échoué dans leur projet, c'est qu'ils ne possédaient pas les qualités d'esprit et l'éducation voulues et qu'ils n'avaient aucune connaissance de l'art théâtral, ni personne d'expert dans la matière qui put les seconder.

Lorsque par une édition imprimée, les drames arabes composés par un Syrien et représentés avec succès à Beyrouth, furent connues au Caire, ce désir chez la population se manifesta plus efficacement de même qu'après une conférence sur les théâtres arabes qui fut tenue dans le courant de l'année précédente à l'hotel d'Orient.

La famille Cataui, riches banquiers de cette ville avait donné dans son sein quelques représentations de Comédie Française et elle avait volontiers continuée ce divertissement en donnant quelques dramas arabes si un deuil domestique n'en eut interromper le cours.

Le public n'as pas moins accueilli avec un sensible plaisir la publication qui a été faite par les soins d'une typographe de cette ville, du Don Juan, du Moïse et du Barbier de Seville.

Le redacteur du journal arabe a aussi trouvé les sympathie de ses lecteurs en insérant dans les colonnes de son journal quelques extraits des ballets : Le jugement de Paride et de la Brahma et en faisant envisager au public dans les avantages moreaux que produit le théâtre.

La population du Caire est d'autant plus favorable à cette manifestation, quand elle considère que ses sentiments religieux ne seraient pas froissés en voyant des femmes chrétiennes et Israélites monter, sur le scène. L'introduction de théâtres européens a contribué à réaliser en partie dans cette contrée des progrès qui assurent aux étrangers ainsi qu'aux femmes sans voiles vetuès à l'européenne le respect qui leur est dû, la population est loin d'ignorer que le théâtre veut l'imitation des coutumes et des moeurs et que dans cette circonstance des préjugés qui n'ont plus raison d'être seraient absurdes.

Il est connue déjà que dans la Syrie, il serait très facile de trouver des artistes qui ont déjà fait leur preuve et qui certainement seraient bien moins coûteux que ceux de la Comedie Française. Au sujet le bruit court que ceux-ci doivent bientôt être licenciés, c'est donc une espérance qui peut faire entrevoir la prochain création d'un théâtre indigène.

Il n'est pas douteux que de prime abord l'entreprise ne rencontre de grandes difficultés, les auteurs n'existant pas encore et il serait très difficile de les former à ce nouveau genre de composition parcequ'elle ne présente pas à leur carrière littéraire une digne compensation, mais une loi qui garantirait la propriété littéraire et il serait facile de prendre l'Italienne fixerait le droit des auteurs et en même temps dispenserait le gouvernement Egyptien des grands frais quand il se déciderait à faire lui même pour le théâtre arabe la première expérience.

La population de l'Egypte est habituée à suivre la marche du Gouvernement et quand celui-ci aura fait la première expérience d'un théâtre, il sera facile avec les fonds d'une société patriotique d'ériger un théâtre national et peut être aussi de créer une école filodramatique et musicale. Rien ne serait plus moral que de retirer par la persuasion les indigènes de ces cafés dans lesquels ils chantent le soir des chansons obscènes, où le chant et la musique est à la merci de Pédants, où les bonnes meurs sont bannies, quoi de plus moral que de détourner les indigènes de leurs danses obscènes; le théâtre aura le double but de guérir cette plaie sociale tout en élevant les hommes à la moralité et aux bonnes moeurs, il éveillera aussi les vertus civiles qui honorent une nation.

L'ont ne peut passer aussi sous silence la consideration de la bonne opinion que produirait le gouvernement de Son Altesse le Kédive quand il décréterait la lois sur la propriété littéraire (Droit des auteurs) et en faisant sous l'influence de celle-ci des traités avec des puissances étrangères. Ce ne serait pas seulement un bien pour l'Egypte mais un honneur.

L'agent Z

Appendix 7.

An Article About Seraphin Manasse, 1874

Transliteration

Article without author (likely Teodor Kasap) and without title. In *Hayal* [*Khayāl*] 15 Mayıs 1290 (27 May 1874), 1-2, on the titlepage a caricature of Manasse.

Transliteration

Seraphin Manasse beyefendi Ermeniden bozma bâshı şapkalı âyâğı kunduralı tâtlı su frânsizi Beyoğlu Frânsız Tiyâtrosu'nun mü'essis ve direktörü Fransa'dan toplayıp getirdiği aktör ve aktrisler ma'arifetiyle Beyoğlu şıklarının ahlâk-ı mürebbisi olup bu şânlı °unvânlardan fazla olarak fevk el-°âde °azametli bir de burûn mâlıkdır.

1837 sene-i milâdiyyesinde bir gün bâ'is-i hayâtı olan vâlidini beyninde tezhîb-i ahlâk husûsında cereyân eden bir mubâhisede pederı drâm vâlidesi ise komedi vâsitasile islâh olunur iddi°alarında iken Manasse beyeffendi isbât-i vücûd ederek, ne senin dediğin ve ne de onun söylediğidir tezhîb-i ahlâq operetle olur diye hırslanıp iddi°â-ı vâki°asinin isbâtını fi°lân göstermek üzere derhâl Pâris'a gitti (?) ise de babası bu vechile efkârine muhâlifetde bulunmasına tahammul edemeyip derslerini tekmiil eder etmez İstanbul'a celb ile kendini bir efendi etmek maksad ile dokuz sene kadar Bâb-ı °Âli kalemlerinde habs eder.

Insânın elinine her ne yazılmışsa bâşine gelmesi umur-ı tabi°yeden olduğundan paşalığa kadar yolu olan bir tarîkden firâr ile Ermeni tiyatrosuna giderek

bir kaç oyun yazar yazdığı oyunların makbûl olduğunu görünce efkâr-ı sâbikasına takviyet vererek yine Paris'e °avdetle bir tiyatro kompanyası teşkîl edip İstanbul'a gelerek al-yevm mevcûd olan Firansiz Tiyatrosunu te°sîs eder.

Kişin burada kazandıgını yazın Fransiz vapur ve şömindöferleri [!] kompanyalarına dökerek yedi sene İstanbul'dan Paris'e Paris'den İstanbul'a gelip gitmekte bu yolda kazanmış olduğu şân ve şöhreti dâglardan derelerden denizlerden cöllerden aşarak tâ Mısır'a kadar °aks eder.

Mısır vâlî-i vâlâşâni dahı Mısır'da bir tiyâtrü küşâd ettirmek arzusile Manasse Beyefendiye °ayâredip elimizden alır.

Bizim Manasse Beyı dergâr olan eheliyyet ve kâbiliyyeti semeresile Mısır'da dahı bir Firansiz Tiyatrosu taşkîline muvaffik olursa da °aksı olacak yâ! Shaytân'in işleri cok Süveyş (Suez) kanālının küşâdı mes°elesı meydânı çıkararak bir italyân tiyâtrosu taşkîline dahı luzûm görünüpenin idâresi dahı Manasse Beyeffendiye virilmek üzere iken °aleyhinde bir tākım intrikler başlāyıp nihāyet iftirāya uğrayarak taraf-i Hidividen habs ile bir müddet sonra tard olunur. Oradan yakayı kurtardığı gibi doğruca Paris'e gedip Dejaje [Dejazet] tiyatrosunu direktorluğunu der °ahde eder.

Tāli°-i nā-sāzı orada da peşni bırakmayıp Firansa ile Prusiya beyninde muhārebe başlar Manasse beyeffendi muhāsaraya tutulur; elindeki avucundakini yedikten sonra Paris'in fārelerini yemeğe mecbur olarak mar ? Kommün vek°alarını dahı seyr ve temāşā etdikten sonra akrabasında olup fevk el-°āde servete mālîk olan bir zāt senede yirmi bin frank ile kitābeti hizmetinde bulunmasını tekāyif edersede kabûl etmeyip İstanbul'a gelerek yine eski maşgūliyyetine devām ile müceddeden Firānsiz Tiyātrusunu küşâd eder.

Manasse Bey'in istikbāl

Bu güne [?] kadar devāmda kusūr etmiyorsa da bir gün hayātın kendine verdiği nasīlete [?] kāti° olarak sahīhān bir Türk tiyatrosu kuşād ile karagözin islāh ettiği orta oyunlarını oyunamağa bāşladıkda halk Gedikpaşa Tiyatrosunun elinden kurtulup Manasse Bey'in hakīkatan Türkce ve Türk-i ahlākı üzere te°sīs ettiği tiyatroya o derecelerde hücum ile dolacaklar ki herkes zerde pirinçi gibi bir birini yapışıp iğne uçu sokacak mahall kālınıdığından bir o kadarının dahı °evdet etmeğe mecbur olduklarını görünce sevincinden merg şādīyı uğrayacaktır. [?]

Appendix 8.

Yūsuf Khayyāt and °Abd Allāh Nadīm’s Proposal, 1882

Transcription and English Translation

Arabic letter dated 10 April 1882 in 4003-037847, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ. In the file, next to the Arabic letter there is a partial French translation, only containing the requested period, the requested place, and the names of the petitioners.

Transcription

[Sealed in Arabic:] 82 April 10 Nīzarat al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya

Ecrivain Comité des Théâtres le 13 avril 1882, no. 852

Soumis au Conseil des Ministres par note du date du 7 Mai 1882

sous no. 102.

Ashghāl-i °Umūmiyya-ı Nāzirī Sa°ādatlū Effendim Ḥazratları

Fī °ilm sa°ādati-kum anna fann tashkhīṣ al-waqā°i° al-tārīkhiyya wa-gayri-hā al-musammā bi°l-tiyātrū minā°l-asbāb al-munawwira li°l-afkār al-murawwiḥa li°l-nufūs wa-qad °atanat bi-hi al-duwal al-°aẓīma sa°iyān fī iḥyā° afkār al-umma wa-taṣwīr °ibārāt al-mawā°iz wa°l-irshād bi-ṣūrat mashhad al-aḥwāl illā an kull umma ijtahadat fī waḍ° riwāyāt min tārīkhi-hā bi-lughat qawmi-hā ma° ba°ḍ waqā°i° al-umam al-

mughāyira la-hā la-suhūla li-fahm wa-tamakkan al-umma min fahm al-maqsūr
mina'l-riwāya wa-ilā'l-ān lam tashkul firqa mişriyya tataqaddim bayna'l-umma al-
mişriyya bi-lughati-hā al-ma'lūfa wa iştīlāḥāti-hā al-ma'rūfa wa-li-hādhā °azamnā
°alā taqdīm arba°in layla fī hādha'l-°ām nushakhkhiş fī-hā riwāyāt tunāsib al-zamān
wa-ahl al-makān bi'l-°ibārat al-°arabiyya al-mişriyya fi'l-tiyātrū al-faransāwī al-
şaghīr fa-idhā wāfaqa taşaddur la-nā al-rukḥşa mina'l-ān li'l-°istidād fī hādhihi'l-
mudda ḥattā idhā wāfi Nufambir [18]82 ibtidānā bi'l-°amal muddat khamsat ashhar li-
ghāyat Mārt [18]83 bihaythu lā nukalif al-ḥukūma bi-shay° siwā'l-malābis wa'l-
makān wa-narghib al-taşriḥ bi-hādhayni ma° al-adawāt al-lāzima li'l-tashkhīş min
adawāt al-tiyātrū kamā narghib mina'l-Dīwān an lā yuşriḥ li-khilāfi-nā bi'l-tashkhīş fī
muddat al-khamsa ashhar illā bi-ittifāq ma°-nā Effendim

Kātibu-hu

°Abd Allāh Nadīm

Kātibu-hu

Yūsuf Khayyāt

Translation

[Sealed in Arabic:] 82 April 10 Ministry of Public Works

[Handwriting in French:]

The Committee of Theatres' Clerk

13 April 1882, no. 852

Presented to the Council of Ministers with reference to 7 May 1882, n. 102

[in Ottoman Turkish]

Your Excellency, the Minister of Public Works,

[in Arabic]

Your Excellency knows very well that the art of representing historical and non-historical events, called theatre, is among the means to enlighten the ever-circulating views of the souls. The powerful states paid attention and effort to the renewal of the people's views and to the shaping of their exhortations' expression and to guide them via the scenery of situations. But since all the nations worked hard to create plays about their own history, in the language of their people, including some events of the other nations, as a result they understand [theatre] easily because their people already possess the capacity to grasp the essence of the play. But until now no Egyptian troupe was formed between the Egyptian people that would conform to their own language and their own uses. For this reason we decided to offer forty evenings in this year and we would perform during these [evenings] such plays which are in accordance

with the time and the people of [this] country in Egyptian Arabic in the little French Theatre. If you agree, give us the permission from now on for the whole of this period, that is, from November [18]82 when we would start the work for five months until the end of March [18]83. We do not ask anything else from the Government only the costumes and the place, and above this we need the permission to use the necessary equipment of the theatre and we also ask the Ministry that no one else could perform during this period without our agreement.

Written by

°Abd Allāh Nadīm

Written by

Yūsuf Khayyāt

Appendix 9.

The Letter of Dikran Tchouhadjian to Nubar Pasha, 1885

Letter dated Constantinople 30 June 1885, in 4003-037911, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-
°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

Text

A Nubar Pacha Président du Cabinet Egyptien

Excellence,

Encouragé par la sollicitude particulière que Votre Excellence témoigne pour les beaux arts, je prends respectueusement la liberté de lui adresser la prière suivante.

La troupe ottomane qui a donné dernièrement une série de représentations au Caire, y laissé une fâcheuse impression relativement à l'interprétation des oeuvres du soussigné. Aussi ce dernier se dispose-t-il à se rendre en Egypte avec une troupe nouvelle et nombreuse pour y donner les mêmes pièces et autres productions musicales.

J'espère fermement d'effacer aussi la mauvaise impression de la dernière saison; mais cette tâche ardue ne peut être accomplie qu'avec l'appui et la protection de Votre Excellence, que j'ai l'honneur d'implorer pour me faire obtenir une subvention du Gouvernement Egyptian. J'ai l'honneur en même temps d'informer Votre Excellence qu j'ai désigné un délégué pour faire en Egypte les démarches nécessaires à cet effet.

Dans l'attente de voir Votre Excellence tendre une main secourable à un
artiste qui a vécu d'espérance, je l'honneur d'être de VOTRE EXCELLENCE

le très-humble et très-obéissant serviteur:

Dikran Tchouhadjian

Constantinople, le 30 Juin 1885.

Appendix 10.

List of Subscriptions to the Khedivial Opera House, 1885/86

List dated 27 March 1886, in 0075-008613, Majlis al-Nazzār wa'l-Wuzarā°, DWQ.

Text

Les soussignés abonnés et habitués du Théâtre Khédivial de l'Opéra du Caire, pendant les deux dernières campagnes théâtrales Février-Mars 1885 et Novembre, Decembre, Janvier, Février 1885-86, de l'Agence Théâtrale Egyptienne "Boni et Soschino" fondée depuis le 1880, certifient pour la vérité de n'avoir eu à se plaindre sous tous rapports de la Direction précitée laquelle a tenu sera pieusement tous ses engagements de ces deux saisons, de sorte qu'ils verraient avec plaisir leur confier pour la troisième fois la direction du dit Théâtre soit pour la nouvelle Campagne 1886-87.

Caire, le 27 Mars 1886.

[I numbered this list.]

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. S. E. Sir H. Drummond Wolff | 13. J. Schnitzler |
| 2. Le Général J. Stephenson | 14. Ch. Kazenstein |
| 3. Le Général Clery | 15. L. A. Hope |
| 4. Lord Waux of Harrowden | 16. W. C. Cartwright |
| 5. Lord Dunmore | 17. Ch. T. Bruce |
| 6. Gerald M. Portal | 18. J. Suarès |
| 7. S. E. Izzet Bey | 19. Joseph Cattaoui |
| 8. Major C. M. Macdonald | 20. J. S. Coronel |
| 9. Jacques Cattaoui | 21. N. Giro |
| 10. J. Oppenheim | 22. J. Kthanassaky |
| 11. B. Bitter | 23. Berthy |
| 12. V. Krikunmann [?] | 24. Art. Tito Tigani |

25. De Sterliek
 26. M et Mde Du Port Bey
 27. Victor Gallichi
 28. P. Pagnon
 29. Pomphée Parvois
 30. Joseph Parvois
 31. U. Prinoth
 32. A. Krieger
 33. J. Brassem
 34. Ambrose Sinadino
 35. Le docteur Comanos
 36. Le colonel Hallam Parr Bey
 37. Le général Lothrab Pacha
 38. Le colonel Ardagh
 39. Le colonel Saint-Leger
 40. Le Major Mouey [Money?]
 41. Le captain Murray (Royal Artillery)
 42. Le docteur Loverds
 43. Le docteur N. Apergis
 44. L'avocat Manusardi
 45. L'ingeneieur J. Battigelli
 46. P. Roumoli
 47. Emm. Severy
 48. Klaus Hery Bey
 49. J. Gianola et famille
 50. L. A. Horn
 51. N. Sabbay
 52. A. Hailund
 53. M. Sager
 54. Le docteur Richter
 55. Cesar de Farro
 56. Davio de Farro
 57. Auguste de Farro
 58. R. Sternous
 59. H. Cosi
 60. M. J. Santini
 61. A. Rossano
 62. M. Georges LeChavalier
 63. Charles Gravier
 64. Arillat
 65. Bertrand
 66. M. Belleville
 67. J. A. Perichon
 68. L'avocate Cecconi
 69. D. Chiarisoli
 70. Pierre Bianchi
 71. A. Bourgiae
 72. Camougli
 73. Tourneaux
 74. H. Maujeand
 75. Jauve
 76. L. Désiré
 77. V. Sabadini
 78. Sinibaldi
 79. J. S. Sinibaldi
 80. E. Mattey
 81. J. Francés
 82. Lauteire
 83. H. Belon
 84. J. Belon
 85. Paschal et Comp
 86. H. Bengé
 87. Le colonel Campbell
 88. Avocat Manusardi
 89. Le colonel J. H. Sandwich
 90. C. S. Mobuch
 91. A. Steheglow
 92. A. Ismalum
 93. Le Colonel W. J. Myers
 94. Le Captain Rouielly
 95. A. Larahudi
 96. Major A Crawford
 97. Major W. Palmer
 98. Valle (direction de la Poste)
 99. Farag bey (chef de gas)
 100. Avocat Dilberoglu
 101. Le major Maletta
 102. A. Galano
 103. L'avocat Molteni
 104. A. Jattucci
 105. G. Cerranova
 106. A. Nassif (jeune)
 107. Victor Hancy
 108. M. J. M. Rancy
 (inspection de gaz Gouv.)
 109. M. Mugard
 110. J. Kantilly
 111. G. Houres
 112. P. J. Loukas
 113. Lieutant J. W. Shalhum
 114. J. Leon
 115. J. Jabbu
 116. S. Madane
 117. E. Montobbu
 118. S. di A Miely
 119. E. J. Beusehitt
 120. J. B. Cantarutti

121. A. Pierini
 122. L. Alimentano
 123. E. Dello Sholago
 124. M. et A. Miely
 125. Roberto Jatta
 126. Dante Montobbio
 127. Rossamo e Morpurg
 128. A. Oppi
 129. P. Pilagatti
 130. A. Oswald
 131. G. Huggi Basilion
 132. H. Vildamare
 133. N. Apergis
 134. L. Ricci
 135. A. Casiragh
 136. L. Jay
 137. G. Penasson
 138. A. de Sylla
 139. Joa frères
 140. N. Gerassimo
 141. S. Craves
 142. A. Hopper
 143. G. Roth
 144. D. Bondy
 145. J. Santarelli
 146. G. Oubia
 147. C. Bonnard
 148. L. Santarelli
 149. A. Romoly
 150. B. Clava
 151. Lauzone
 152. Ar. C. Viligardi
 153. M. Bajocchi
 154. Leopardi
 155. M. Stagni
 156. U. Lucchesi
 157. Cecchi
 158. De Sterlich
 159. C. Rosenzweig
 160. C. Augiohm
 161. Blattner
 162. E. Dettorelly
 163. Saponiader
 164. C. Giordano
 165. Runaldi
 166. G. Gai
 167. R. Bracci
 168. A. Papadaky
 169. M. Adamy
 170. Auge Cerny
 171. A. Montecarboli
 172. J. Archivollte
 173. A. Chelmys
 174. H. Belon
 175. Montopha [Mustapha?]
 Frères
 176. A. Petrini
 177. E. Maneim (peintre)
 178. E. Boccara
 179. Dr G. Gherardi avocat
 180. Ingénieur Caubruggi
 181. Docteur Sconomopoulo
 182. J. Crovaioli
 183. R. Hubner
 184. J. Amatoury
 185. B. Watson
 186. K. D. Beek V. S. E. A.
 187. S. Moussally
 188. Doct. Jatron
 189. L. Pagoni
 190. R. Engelard
 191. J. Kouphodonti
 192. L. Rivalta
 193. R. Spagnouli
 194. M. De Colucci
 195. A. Glavaris
 196. G. Roth
 197. M. Lucchezi
 198. E. Janni
 199. R. Dalli
 200. J. Bortologgi
 201. R. Khunberry, maison
 de Stein
 202. E. de la Bruyère
 203. A. Fontini
 204. A. Hausselem
 205. M. Cicurel, la maison
 Harmaux
 206. Pini ingénieur
 207. Albert Dupuis
 208. Joseph D'Avrial [?]
 209. A [?] Mayer
 210. L. Gauchy
 211. Em. Bopsoural [?]
 212. G. Valassaki
 213. J. Marmola Iploral
 214. de P. Ceccarelli
 215. di Lorenzo

- 216. H. Buccianti
- 217. Dakovich
- 218. J. Condom
- 219. de Tullion
- 220. G. Angioli
- 221. R. Cioni
- 222. V. Cartonie
- 223. V. Bigazzi
- 224. Ch. Verdi
- 225. Ch. Goethe
- 226. Mattier
- 227. L. Sinibaldi
- 228. Savioggi
- 229. Kitrovo, Consul
General de Russie
- 230. Ivanoff, attaché au
Consulat de Russie

Appendix 11.

The Contract of Benglian-Melekian with the Ministry of Public Works, 1888

Copy of a contract dated 3 March 1888, in 4003-036990, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-
 °Umūmiyya, DWQ.

Text

Acte de Concession du Théâtre Khédivial de l'Opéra

Entre le Gouvernement Egyptien, représenté par S. E. Abdel Rahman Rouchdy Pacha,
 Ministre des Travaux Publics,

L'une part;

Et M. M. Séropé Benglian et Eléazar Mélikian, sujets Ottomans, élisant domicile au
 besoin au Gouvernorat du Caire;

L'autre part;

Il a été convenu et arrêté ce qui suit:

Art. 1.

Le Gouvernement concide à M. M. S. Benglian et E. Melikian [sic!] l'exploitation du
 Théâtre Khédivial de l'Opéra du Caire (salle, buffets, dépendances, etc.) pour une
 série de représentations d'opérettes, vaudevilles, drames et comédies en langue
 turque, pendant les mois de Mars et Avril 1888. Dans la concession est compris le
 matériel d'exploitation (Décors, costumes, partitions, brochures, accessoires, meubles,
 etc.)

Art. 2.

Aucune partie des bâtiments du Théâtre ne pourra être affecté par les concessionnaires à des logements particuliers.

Art. 3.

Le Gouvernement prend à sa charge les frais d'éclairage au gaz du Théâtre pendant la durée de la saison, ainsi que la mise en état des appareils à gaz, les frais de service du gaz et ceux du contrôle du matériel.

La communication du gaz sera réglementée par un contrôleur délégué par le Ministre des Travaux Publics, lequel, d'accord avec les concessionnaires, fixera un horaire pour l'ouverture des compteurs et l'allumage des diverses parties du service intérieur, grilles d'entrée, loges des artistes, foyers, etc ... Cet horaire sera affiché à la batterie du gaz de la scène et devra être scrupuleusement observé.

Le même accord aura lieu pour fixer le nombre strictement indispensable des becs, soleils ou herses à allumer pendant les répétitions particulières ou générales qui peuvent nécessiter l'éclairage au gaz.

Le tableau précité devra également porter le nombre fixé des becs, soleils ou herses à allumer dans les cas sus-mentionnés.

Art. 4.

Les concessionnaires prennent à leur charge l'abonnement à la Cie des Eux fixé à cinquante francs par mois, pendant toute la durée de la saison pour les besoins du Théâtre.

Art. 5.

Avant l'ouverture de la saison, un état des lieux (théâtre, buffets, dépendances) et des appareils à gaz sera dressé contradictoirement par M. l'Intendant des Théâtres et les concessionnaires.

Art. 6.

Le matériel sera consigné contre récépissé aux concessionnaires, au fur et à mesure des besoins de l'exploitation, sur l'envoi cinq jours au moins avant la représentation, d'une note à M. l'Intendant.

La restitution du matériel devra s'effectuer aussitôt que les concessionnaires n'en auront plus besoin.

Les concessionnaires seront responsables du matériel à eux confié. En conséquence, ils devront immédiatement réparer tout objet dégradé et remplacer tout objet manquant.

Ce matériel ne pourra sortir du Théâtre sans une autorisation spéciale de M. l'Intendant. La rentrée des objets en magasin sera effectuée par les soins et aux frais des concessionnaires.

Art. 7.

Le nombre des représentations d'abonnement est fixé à (30) trente, pour la durée de la saison, soit à raison de (4) quatre par semaine. Ces représentations auront lieu les jours de Mardi, Jeudi, Samedi et Dimanche, sauf le 15 Mars 1888 qui est réservé pour la Société de bienfaisance grecque-orthodoxe.

Les concessionnaires sont autorisés à donner, en dehors de ces trente représentations d'abonnement, cinq représentations à bénéfice hors abonnement. Ces cinq représentations seront données, une par semaine, à partir du 22 Mars 1888.

La première représentation de l'abonnement aura lieu le 8 Mars 1888.

Art. 8.

Le Gouvernement conserve le droit de disposer de la salle, des buffets, dépendances, matériel quelqu'il soit existant en magasins ou aux mains des concessionnaires pour des représentations, bals ou fêtes de bienfaisance.

Art. 9.

Les loges et places indiquées ci-dessous sont réservées ainsi qu'il suit:

2 loges de baignoire N 1 et 2 gauche à S. A. Le Khedive

2 loges de première N 1 et 2 gauche à S. A. Le Khedive

2 loges de première N 1 et 2 droite Harem de S. A.

1 loges de première N 11 aux Ministres du Gouvernement

1 loges de deuxième N 6 droite au Chef de la Police

2 fauteuils N 118 et 120 au Ministère des Travaux Publics

1 fauteuil N 162 à l'Inspecteur de Police

2 stalles N 67 et 68 aux agents supérieurs de la Police

Aucune location ou indemnité quelconque n'est due aux concessionnaires du chef de l'occupation de ces loges et places.

Art. 10

Les concessionnaires présenteront à l'approbation du Comité des Théâtres, huit jours à l'avance, le répertoire des oeuvres qu'ils se proposent de représenter dans la semaine suivante.

Art. 11.

Tout changement de spectacle annoncé devra être autorisé par le Comité des Théâtres.

Art. 12

Les concessionnaires s'engagent à observer et à faire observer par leur personnel les règlements existants ou pouvant être édictés par le Comité des Théâtres.

Tout règlement particulier convenu entre les concessionnaires et leurs artistes sera considéré par le Gouvernement comme nul et non avoué, quant à celles de ses dispositions qui ne seraient pas conciliables avec ses propres règlements, ce dont le Comité des Théâtres sera juge souverain.

Les concessionnaires seront seuls responsables vis-à-vis du Comité des Théâtres des difficultés qui pourraient survenir de ce chef et ils devront prendre à leurs risques et périls vis-à-vis de leur personnel les mesures qu'ils jugeront utiles à cet égard.

Art. 13

Toutes amendes subies, soit par les artistes, soit par les concessionnaires, en contravention des règlements quelque'ils soient devront être versées par quinzaine entre les mains du délégué désigné à cet effet par le Comité des Théâtres.

Aucune amande ne pourra être infligée si elle n'est prévue par le règlement. Les amendes recueillies ainsi formeront un fonds spécialement affecté au secours des artistes nécessiteux. Le Comité des Théâtres s'en réserve la disposition absolue.

Art. 14

Le grand tableau qu'il est d'usage de publier avant le commencement de la saison pour faire connaître les noms des artistes, les oeuvres à représenter et le prix des abonnements des loges, des places, etc... devra être soumis à l'approbation du Comité des Théâtres avant sa publication et le 3 Mars au plus tard.

Art. 15

Les concessionnaires ne pourront ni augmenter ni diminuer, sans approbation du Comité des Théâtres, les prix portés au tableau visé à l'article précédent.

Art. 16

Les concessionnaires n'auront droit, de la part du Gouvernement, à aucune subvention pécuniaire ou autre, en dehors des avantages à eux accordés par le présent contrat.

Art. 17

Les concessionnaires devront déposer entre les mains de M. l'Intendant des Théâtres, huit jour à l'avance, les sommes dues aux machinistes, contrôleurs et plaieurs???, faut de quoi le présent contrat sera résilié de plein droit.

Art. 18

Le présent contrat est incessible et sera résilié de plein droit si les concessionnaires en cédaient les bénéfices, en tout ou en partie, à un tiers.

Ce contrat sera également résilié de plein droit si les représentations ne sont pas commencées le 8 Mars 1888.

Art. 19

Les concessionnaires verseront d'ici au 15 Mars 1888 à la Caisse Centrale du Ministère des Finances la somme effective de 50 (cinquante) Livres Egyptiennes, à titre de cautionnement, comme garantie des engagements stipulés par le présent contrat, sans préjudice de tous dommages-intérêts, le cas échéant. L'inexécution du dit versement entraînera, de plein droit, la résiliation du présent contrat.

Une fois cette garantie satisfaite, le Gouvernement remboursera le cautionnement aux concessionnaires, sauf le cas où il jugerait à propos d'affecter au rapatriement des artistes tout ou partie de la dite somme de cinquante livres Egyptiennes. Il est bien entendu que cette clause n'oblige nullement le Gouvernement, soit vis-à-vis des concessionnaires, soit vis-à-vis des artistes, à opérer le dit rapatriement.

Le Gouvernement aura, en tout cas, la faculté de ne rembourser ce cautionnement, déductions faites, s'il y a lieu, des retenues qui pourraient pu être prélevées en exécution du présent contrat, que huit jours après la fin de la saison.

Art. 20

L'inexécution d'une des clauses quelconques du présent contrat, de la part des concessionnaires, entraînera sa résiliation de plein droit.

Art. 21

Chacun des deux concessionnaires assume personnellement et solidairement toutes les obligations contenues dans le présent contrat.

Le Caire, le 3 Mars 1888

Le Ministre des Traveaux Publics, signé: A. Rouchdy

Signé: Eléazar M. Mélikian

P.P. S. Benlian

Signé: Eléazar M. Mélikian

Copie

Bibliography

All abbreviations used in the thesis are indicated below, except two:

AO = *Annuaire Oriental*, established in 1880 (first under the title of *L'Indicateur Ottoman*) published yearly. Constantinople: Cervati, then changing publishers.

AE = *Annuaire Egyptian*, established in 1889, published for two years [?]. Cairo: G. Teissonnière.

A. Archival Sources

During my work I came across many documents in different archives, in different arrangements and of various nature. Here I only indicate only those archival units of which I used material. These abbreviations are used in the footnotes.

I. Archives in Cairo:

1. Dār al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmiyya [Egyptian National Archives] = DWQ

In the case of the Egyptian National Archives, I use my own abbreviation system because abbreviations are not used there. I use *two* types of indications because during my research the DWQ changed its system of catalogue and with that also the names of the archival units. Because of time constraints, I could not locate everything in the new system, but I did my best.

For the old system and its units that was based on hardcopy, handwritten catalogues, and the access was provided by request forms, I use the following:

- 1.1. Collection °Ahd Ismā'īl = CAI
- 1.2. Collection °Ābdīn = CA
- 1.3. Collection Majlis Al-Wuzarā' (Majlis al-Nazzār) = CMW
- 1.4. Collection Abḥāth = CAB
- 1.5. Collection Al-Waqā'ī' al-Miṣriyya = CWM
- 1.6. Dīwān al-Khidīwī = DK

Example:

Carton 62/1, CAI, DWQ = Carton (*Muḥfaẓa*) 62 Part (*Juz'*) 1, Collection °Ahd Ismā'īl, Dār al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmiyya, Cairo, Egypt.

If in CMW a specific ministry's subcollection is referred, I indicate that with its full name, like Nizārat al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, CMW, DWQ.

Note on the new system in the DWQ, introduced during autumn/winter 2009:

At my last visit, a new system was already functioning in the DWQ. This consists of an electronic catalogue via which one can order the documents. As a parallel security, the old catalogues are still preserved and one may ask documents in the "old" method (see above). However, the electronic catalogue contains different units than the

handwritten catalogues (for instance, there is an electronic unit called Usrat Muḥammad °Alī but there is no longer a collection of °Ahd Ismā'īl – that is supposedly included in the Usrat Muḥammad °Alī unit).

The given pieces can be approached according to their catalogue number rather than their responsible archival unit, because the united catalogue provides access using an electronic order. Thus documents are given according to the new system with their catalogue number (*al-kūd al-arshīfī*), the electronic catalogue unite, and the indication DWQ. Since I do not want to complicate my abbreviations, here I write the full Arabic name of the archival unit (that is a bit superfluous since the number already contains the archival unit's code, too).

Example: 4003-038418, Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, DWQ.

This means a document in the electronic catalogue with code 4003-038418, electronic archival unit Dīwān al-Ashghāl al-°Umūmiyya, Dār al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmiyya, Cairo, Egypt.

2. Al-Maktab al-°Arabī li'l-Taṣmīmāt wa'l-Istishārāt al-Handasiyya (The Arab Office of Designs and Engineering Consultations) = MA

3. Dār al-Maḥfūzāt = DM

II. Archives in Istanbul

Notes on the archives in Istanbul: As far as I know from the total number of approx. 14000 imperial registers (defter) 4000 are in the Dolmabahçe Palace, belonging to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism as a separate archive. The other approx. 10000 defters are in the Ottoman Archive of the Başbakanlık Arşivleri – The Prime Ministry's State Archives.

1. T. C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü (Republic of Turkey, State Archives of the Prime Ministry, General Directorate) - Osmanlı Arşivi (Ottoman Archive) = BOA

I use the abbreviations of the different sub-collections as they are indicated in the Ottoman Archive, with the transcription of the Archive, conforming to their publication *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Rehberi* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 2010), 477-507.

1.1. Maarif Nezareti = MF

1.1.1. Mekteb Kalemi = MF.MKT

1.2. Yıldız = Y

1.2.1 Sadaret = Y.PRK.A

1.2.2. Hazine-i Hassa = Y.PRK.HH

1.2.3 Askeri Meruzat = Y.PRK.AŞK

1.2.4 Arzuhal Jurnal = Y.PRK.AZJ

1.2.5 Elçilik Şehbenderlik ve Ateş = Y.PRK.EŞA

1.2.6 Zabtiye Nezareti Murazatı = Y.PRK.ZB

- 1.3. Hariciye Nezareti = HR
 - 1.3.1 Mektubi Kalemi = HR.MKT
 - 1.3.2 Tercüme Odası = HR.TO
- 1.4 Dahiliye = DH
 - 1.4.1 Mektubi Kalemi = DH.MKT
 - 1.4.2 Umur-i Mahalliye ve Vilayat = DH.UMVM
- 1.5 Iradeler = I
 - 1.5.1 Dahiliye = I.DH
 - 1.5.2 Meclis-i Vala: I.MVL
 - 1.5.3 Hariciye = I.HR
- 1.6 Sadaret = A } MKT
 - 1.6.1 Mühimme Kalemi Evrakı = A } MKT.MHM
 - 1.6.2 Meclis-i Vala Evrakı = A } MKT.MVL
- 1.7 Hazine-i Hassa = HH
 - 1.7.1 Defterleri = HH.DE
- 1.8 Cevdet = C
 - 1.8.1 Belediye = C.BLD
 - 1.8.2 Maarif = C.MF
- 1.9 Meclis-i Vala = MVL
- 1.10 BabıAli Evrak Odası Evrakı = BEO
- 1.11 Şura-ı Devlet Evrakı = ŞD

Example:

I.MVL. 471/21360, BOA = Iradeler - Meclis-i Vala, Dosya [dossier] 471, gömlek [envelope, case, i.e. file] 21360, Osmanlı Arşivi - Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Istanbul, Turkey.

Note: the first number indicates always the dossier, the second number the file.

III. Archives in Paris

- 1. Archives Nationales = AN
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(^ˆ*Ayn* and *hamza* are at their vowel – ^ˆUrābī is at U; *al-*, *de*, *d’* etc. are not considered – *al-Naqqāsh* is at N, *de Amacis* at A; authors without family names are indicated at their first name – *Osman Bey* is at O; *ç* and *ch* is at C; *ḥ* is at H; *kh* is at K; *ph* is at P; *ş* and *sh* is at S.)

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