

Turkish Music Vocabulary

Türkü – Folk Song. This is a name that describes many kinds of songs since there are several types of *Türkü*. Some *Türkü* are very simple and are similar to traditional folk dances from the various areas of Turkey. Others are very complex compositions. *Türkü* of all kinds are often adapted from the original songs and sung in nightclubs. These clubs are called *Türkü* bars.

Aşık – *Aşıks* are minstrels who play the *saz* and compose their own music. Mostly found in the east of Turkey, these minstrels are part of a long tradition of poets. The *saz* is their most important instrument. The word *aşık* means lover. These minstrels are a kind of sufi, who write songs to express their love for the divine. They write songs about many other subjects however. They also often participate in duels with each other in coffee houses. During these duels, two *aşıks* compete to see who can invent the best song on the spot. The people listening in the coffee house decide who is best after listening to many songs.

Fasıl – Originally *Fasıl* meant a suite of compositions from the Ottoman Classical tradition. Now the type of ensemble that used to play those pieces is called a *Fasıl*, as is the music they play. *Fasıl* music is now a kind of light classical of music played in nightclubs.

Mevlevi Dervishes – The Mevlevi dervishes are also known as the whirling dervishes. They are Islamic sufis who follow Mevlana Rumi, a 13th century poet, philosopher, and spiritual leader. The Mevlevi, his followers, became important figures at the Ottoman court. The music for the ceremony, where they whirl in meditation, is closely related to Ottoman classical music. The ney is a very important instrument for the melevi, and it closely associated to their music making.

Ottoman – The Turkish speaking people who ruled a large empire from the 14th century until 1923 are usually called Ottomans. But the word Ottoman really refers to the ruling elite who controlled this Empire, and not to everyone who lived in it. The Sultan was the king, emperor, head of the army, and the Caliph. In addition to the army, he controlled a large bureaucracy which ran the empire. The Ottoman armies conquered a huge area of the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe.

Roma musicians – The Roma are a nomadic, semi-nomadic, or sedentary people descended from nomads who left India and migrated into Anatolia and also in to Europe. They are commonly known as gypsies.

Janissary corps – The elite soldiers in the Ottoman army. They were loyal only to the Sultan and acted as his bodyguard. Early on in the history of the Janissary corps, the soldiers were boys taken from Ottoman holdings in Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia. These boys were converted to Islam and trained as loyal and highly skilled soldiers.

The Janissary corps had a special kind of music played by the *mehter* ensemble. This group is the forerunner of all military bands in Europe.

Sultan – The supreme leader of the Ottoman Empire. The sultan was the chief political leader, head of the bureaucracy, emperor, king, general of the armies, and caliph, the political leader of Sunni Muslims.