



# Turkish Music for Solo Violin

SAYGUN • TÜRKMEN • CETİZ



**Ellen Jewett, Violin**

## **Ahmet Adnan SAYGUN (1907–1991)**

### **Violin Partita, Op. 36 (1961)**

Ahmet Adnan Saygun, born in 1907 in Izmir – considered to be one of the most western-oriented cities in the Ottoman Empire at that time due to the large Greek minorities – was influenced by his father’s love of *Sufi* music. He received a rigorous education in Turkish *makams* and modal theory as well as mathematics, science, French, history and Western musical theory, and by the age of 15 had translated numerous harmony and counterpoint textbooks from French to Turkish. As a teenager, Saygun was witness to tremendous political and social turmoil as the weak empire of the Ottomans, having been allied with Germany in the First World War, lost tremendous power and territory to Russia, England and France.

Following the war of independence from Western powers in 1923, Atatürk, the president of Turkey, began the enormous task of modernisation as well as the formation of a new nation. He focused on unification of the population by pursuing the ideology of ‘Turkishness’ in the wake of 500 years of multi-ethnic Ottoman control. In addition to organising huge exchanges of ethnic populations, this meant deliberate disassociation with the Ottoman past in terms of language and music – both of which were heavily infused with non-Turkish elements. In terms of music, Atatürk spoke of the ‘depressive effect to the population’

of listening to Ottoman-influenced Turkish art music that he considered degenerate and corrupt with its Arabic influences. Atatürk also believed that the lack of polyphony in this music was symbolic of the stagnancy of the culture in general. With a sense of urgency and demand for radical reform, he provided for a group of the brightest minds to study in Europe. Saygun studied in Paris from 1928 to 1931, including at the Schola Cantorum with Vincent D’Indy. He returned to Turkey and was one of the first composers working in a Western classical style of composition, both as an educator of Western classical music and as a researcher in the new field of ethnomusicology where he was particularly concerned with the classification of indigenous folk music. His publications caught the interest of Béla Bartók, who travelled with Saygun in Southern Anatolia, making transcriptions of this music and focusing on the resemblance between the Turkish and Hungarian nomadic tribal influences along with their pentatonic elements.

This four movement *Partita* is rich in Romanticism as well as folk elements, often expressed by melodies built on a fourth – the tuning of the *kemence*, a Turkish fiddle. All the movements are linked by dense chromaticism as well as use of the Phrygian scale (called the Dorian scale by Saygun due to mistranslation of the Greek modes during the

middle ages, and his insistence on using Greek terms from Byzantine music theory). Much like the introductory movements of Bach, this work begins with an improvisation, in this case most likely inspired by the concept of *'taksim'* – an essential musical form found in Turkish traditional repertoire. The opening tonal centre is A, but immediately from the first phrase, the music wanders undecidedly between the B natural and B flat. When I began working on this piece, I met with some Turkish musicians and composers to gain insight, and was told that the opening movement was based on the *'Uşşak makam'*, a traditional mode characterised by a stepped opening gesture from G to A, and based on an attached tetrachord and pentachord from A to D and D to high A. Saygun has chosen to compose exclusively with the Western pitch system – unlike Bartók, whose seminal work for solo violin had two versions, one with microtones and one without. As he weaves a beautiful tapestry of colours throughout this dense chromaticism, it seems to me as though his obsessive use of the half step may be an expression of what had been 'lost between the notes', or 'between the worlds'. The *Scherzo* is full of virtuosic humour with the middle trio-like section containing a *'Zeybek'* – a Turkish folk dance glorifying the courage of local heroes. Inspired by the mystical identity of the *'Segâh makam'*, the *Tema con variazioni* movement is certainly the emotional heart of this *Partita*, with the thematic half-step now transformed into a languid falling seventh. This very expressive movement could stand by itself,

and is reminiscent of a tone poem or ballade. The *Finale* returns to a dizzying chromaticism and includes the brilliant evocation of a *horon* – a circle folk dance popular throughout the Black Sea region.

Although this work has never been recorded, and is very rarely performed even within Turkey, I believe this *Partita* to be a wonderful addition to solo violin repertoire as well as a fascinating portrait of the rich cultural diversity and conflicting ideologies that permeated Saygun's world.

Ellen Jewett

**Onur TÜRKMEN (b. 1972)**  
**Beautiful and Unowned (2013, revised 2017)**

Ellen Jewett commissioned *Beautiful and Unowned* after I worked as a composer-in-residence at her chamber music festival, Klasik Keyifler, in Cappadocia in the summer of 2012, which featured a 'Composers Cauldron' of new music masterclasses, workshops and concerts. She suggested that the piece could imply the theme 'The Land of the Beautiful Horses', which relates to the meaning of Cappadocia's given name in 6th century BC during the Persian invasion. This theme not only stimulated particular images in my mind, but also suited my artistic and compositional aims well. At that time I was concentrated on a concept (and I still am at different stages) that I conceived, called *'Hat'*. *Hat* – originally an Arabic word widely

used in Turkish especially in association with calligraphic arts – literally means ‘a line’. The composer first communicates, then attempts to reveal a line made up of *makams*, modes and melodic conventions in Turkish traditional music, in succession. If there is one strict principle of this process, it is to preserve the purity of *makams*, and not to mix them with any other structural pitch materials. *Makams* melt into each other throughout the revelation of the line, which is only an incident in an endless pitch space woven with resonance phenomenon. I have always disregarded the cultural connotations of *makams* as I believe culture is a living spectrum that cannot be categorised. I am interested in the existentialist queries that they may propose. In this context, I’ve realised that *Hat* is about exploring interspaces in between poles in active kinesis, such as object/subject, figure-non-figure, but most basically past and present; yet such processes basically depend on reminiscences both personal and collective. Therefore, my personal memories about Cappadocia (and the Klasik Keyifler festival) cannot be separated from collective memories inherited in the town’s unique dreamlike atmosphere that exhibits remote layers of time concretely in its shockingly eclectic architecture (both human and nature-made) and landscapes. I believe that this is what *Beautiful and Unowned* is all about.

**Onur Türkmen**

**Mahir CETIZ (b. 1977)**  
**Soliloquy (2016)**

Soliloquy is a term that is used to describe the action of speaking oneself, both in dramatic arts as well as in real life. In dramatic arts, these sections are sometimes called monologues, and they reflect the character’s psychological states and flux of emotions. Furthermore, as they are delivered when the character is in solitude, they do not necessarily address the audience; these are the unique sections where the character’s psyche is exposed in its most transparent form with her/his passions and vulnerabilities.

This piece for solo violin, commissioned by Ellen Jewett, has similar features to the notion of soliloquy in terms of moving from one musical state to another without any logical thread. Instead, the order of musical ideas and their relationship gives an impression of free associations. Relatively limited number of gestural ideas manifest themselves in different ways through variety of timbral and harmonic material. At certain points the piece progresses in an improvisatory style somewhat corresponding to the evolution of ideas and emotions that we experience in our daily lives.

**Mahir Cetiz**



## Onur Türkmen

Onur Türkmen is a Turkish composer whose work mainly centres upon two concepts: 'Hat', contemplations on Turkish music *makams* and instruments, and 'Ritualistic Drama', that focuses on interconnection between poetry, drama and ritual. His pieces have been performed by many different ensembles at the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, MaerzMusik, International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM), November Music, Schiermonnikoog and the Istanbul Music Festival, the German Historical Institute International Musicology Congress, the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, and MUSMA among others. His first two 'Ritualistic Dramas', *Sailing to Byzantium* and *Songs from a Circle* have been performed by the Yurodny Ensemble in 2016 and Diamanda La Berge Dramm in Amsterdam in 2018 respectively. He has also closely collaborated with the Hezarfen Ensemble and Klasik Keyifler. Türkmen studied composition at the Berklee College of Music and İstanbul Technical University's MIAM with Pieter Snapper and İlhan Usmanbaş. He is an assistant professor and assistant dean at Bilkent University's Faculty of Music and Performing Arts in Ankara.

[www.onurturkmencomposer.wordpress.com](http://www.onurturkmencomposer.wordpress.com)



## Mahir Cetiz

The compositions of Mahir Cetiz include works for orchestra, acoustic ensembles of different sizes, solo instrumental works and pieces for electronics. As an active conductor and pianist, Cetiz is continuously engaged in the performance of new music. His compositions have been performed by such ensembles as the International Contemporary Ensemble, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Wet Ink, Accroche-Note, the New York and BBC Philharmonics and the Tonhalle Orchester Zürich.

As a composer, his primary interests include musical traditions of the Middle East, India and Indonesia, medieval polyphony, microtonality, music and language, as well as the perception of musical gestures. A recent recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, Cetiz earned his doctor of musical arts degree from Columbia University, New York where studied with Fred Lerdahl, Fabien Levy and Tristan Murail. He is also the recipient of The Musician of the Year Award given by the British Council. He has taught at Bilkent University, Ankara and is currently a lecturer at Columbia University, New York.



## Ellen Jewett

Ellen Jewett has enjoyed a varied career, performing in major concert halls worldwide. She was a member of the prize-winning Audubon Quartet for eleven years, which was critically acclaimed by *The New York Times*. The ensemble also coordinated an intensive string quartet seminar every summer at the Chautauqua Institute. As an advocate for new music, Jewett has worked with many composers and performed countless premieres. Other chamber music collaborations include performances with Yo-Yo Ma, Maxim Vengerov, Colin Carr, Johannes Moser and Idil Biret. Jewett studied with Joyce Robbins, James Buswell and Josef Gingold. She has performed as concertmaster of the Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra and the Bilkent Symphony Orchestra, Ankara, and is the founder and artistic director of Klasik Keyifler, a chamber music festival in Cappadocia. She has served on the faculties of McGill University, the State University of New York – Stony Brook University, Ithaca College and Ankara University. Jewett has recorded for Centaur Records, Chandos, Albany Records and Newport Classic.

[www.ellenjewett.com](http://www.ellenjewett.com)

Acclaimed violinist Ellen Jewett's explorations of Turkey's musical traditions led to her discovery of Saygun's *Partita*, a dense and expressive sister to Bartók's solo sonata that weaves a beautiful tapestry of colours by combining a rich Romanticism with traditional folk elements. Onur Türkmen's *Beautiful and Unowned* is inspired by the unique dreamlike atmosphere of Cappadocia, while Mahir Cetiz's *Soliloquy* is a monologue that ranges from cries to whispers. Both of these recent works were commissioned by Ellen Jewett, and the entire programme was recorded in the unique acoustics of a hand-carved Cappadocian cavern.

# Turkish Music for Solo Violin

## SAYGUN • TÜRKMEN • CETIZ

**Ahmet Adnan SAYGUN (1907–1991)**

Violin Partita Op. 36\* (1961) 27:48

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|----------|--------------------------|-------|
| <b>1</b> | I. Preludio              | 6:47  |
| <b>2</b> | II. Scherzo              | 3:40  |
| <b>3</b> | III. Tema con variazioni | 13:17 |
| <b>4</b> | IV. Finale               | 3:58  |

**Onur TÜRKMEN (b. 1972)**

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|----------|-----------------------|-------|
| <b>5</b> | Beautiful and Unowned | 19:45 |
|          | (2013, revised 2017)  |       |

**Mahir CETIZ (b. 1977)**

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|----------|------------------|-------|
| <b>6</b> | Soliloquy (2016) | 17:27 |
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**\*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

## Ellen Jewett, Violin

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