RECEP GÜL

Mübadele/Ανταλλαγή
(THE EXCHANGE)

(2012)

for Soprano, Mezzo-soprano, Narrator
and Chamber Ensemble
To my grandparents
Hasan Gül and Zeynep Gül
Acknowledgements

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First performance was given by

Despina (Soprano): Jennifer Goltz
Ayshe (Mezzo-soprano): Katherine Sanford
Narrator: Marc LeMay

Violins: Kazato Inouye, Verena Ochanine; Viola: Rachel Samson
Cello: Eric Haughen; Double Bass: Michael Flinn
Flute: Daniel Velasco; Oboe: Jennifer Roloff
Clarinet: Jason Paige; Bassoon: Scott Barlett
Percussion: Chris Sies; Harp: Rebekah Wallen; Piano: Jani Parsons

Conductor: Elliot Moore

at the University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, Michigan, April 20, 2012

Support for the first performance was generously given by the University of Michigan Museum of Art, Rackham Graduate School, the Institute for the Humanities, the Modern Greek Program, and the School of Music, Theatre and Dance.

Music and Text by Recep Gül
Narrations by Giota Tachtara

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Composer's Note

The Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, which ended the 1919-1922 Greco-Turkish War, decreed the compulsory exchange of religious minority populations in Greece and Turkey. As a result, almost a million and a half Orthodox Christians residing in Turkey and half a million Muslims residing in Greece were uprooted from the lands on which they lived for generations and were forcefully sent to the other country. The agreement not only caused a radical homogenization of the distribution of populations of the Near East, but also marked a milestone in the nationalization and modernization processes of the two countries, thus reshaping the nationalist discourses, as well as the cultural and national identities of Greeks and Turks.

My interest in the 1923 Greco-Turkish Population Exchange started in the summer of 2009 when, in a casual conversation with my family, I learned that my paternal grandparents were born in Northern Greece and were relocated in Turkey as a consequence of this mass population transfer. I was extremely intrigued by the topic, as this issue was rarely discussed in Turkey publicly. The more I have discovered, the more I have been drawn into the lives of both Greek and Turkish refugees, their culture, and their stories, which eventually led to the composition of this cantata.

The creation process for the libretto was rather complicated, considering the complexity of this important event. Approximately two million people were subjected to displacement. And among them approximately a million of the Orthodox Christians were war refugees who fled with the withdrawal of the Greek army, which had advanced into the interior parts of Asia Minor during the war. These populations were already languishing in the port of Piraeus (Athens) before the agreement was signed. In this cantata, I did not try to depict the accounts of this tragic event, known as the Asia Minor Catastrophe in Modern Greek history. I rather wanted to focus on the populations who were subjected to forced migration, thus were dislocated from their homes after the war by the decree of the Treaty of Lausanne. These remaining populations came from a wide geographical range. As a consequence of this dispersion and the variety of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences, the variety of individual experiences was numerous.

Therefore, I concentrated on two regions, one from each country, in which I found many correlations between the experiences of the Muslim and Orthodox Christian communities. These two areas are the Kavala region in Northern Greece and the Cappadocia region in central Turkey. Both of these regions were on the periphery of the Greco-Turkish war zones, and the testimonies stemming from these areas manifest a rather harmonious relationship between the two communities. The residents of these regions were directly subjected to the population exchange agreement and a significant amount of them disfavored it. Nevertheless, I do not believe one should draw generalizations from the individual experiences or to perceive any individual story as the sole truth. The nationalist discourse in Turkey and Greece for many years told the story that the Population Exchange was the only solution to the problem of co-existence during the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. It was asserted that Muslims and Orthodox Christians could no longer live together, thus these two populations should be separated. I have to admit that there were many who indeed favored this decision. Yet there were many others who objected to it, believing they could live together; these people were deported along with the exchange supporters, just because they did not belong to the right religion. My intention therefore is not to imply a grand narrative that is applicable to everyone, but rather to contribute to the discussion, which has for the most part depicted only the positive results of the population exchange.

The stories in this cantata revolve around two characters: Ayshe, a Muslim woman who lives in North of Greece with her three children after losing her husband in World War I. Her character and story are based on the stories that my great-grandmother transmitted to my extended family, and these stories were supported by other testimonies that were given by immigrants from the same region. Despina, an Orthodox Christian woman living in central Anatolia with her husband, suddenly hears of the coming deportation and sorrowfully must leave her home and the land where her family has lived for generations. Even though these two characters do not meet in person, their stories parallel each other in a number of ways, particularly how they react to the news of deportation, their languish during the journey, and the difficulties they encounter adapting to their new countries. In this work, I have constructed a space where the music mediates cultural and linguistic differences, thus transcending this divergence and allowing a site of cultural convergence where these two women meet.
I - Aria: Geliyor Askerler (The soldiers are coming)

Geliyor askerler, topluyorlar bütün gençleri
Onbe onaltı altları çocukları,
kim var kim yoksa hepsini alıp götürüyorlar
Padisah efendimiz oyle emretti diye

Cıktım uç cocugumla uğurlamaya onları
biri bir tarafında, oteki diğer tarafında.
kirk gunluk bebem kucagımda
dayananadım, attım kendimi obur tarafı
ah o ne acı, ne acı…

O gece bir ruzgar, bir yağmur
Yikildi sanki bütün daglar basına
Ah, O kara kara daglarin dili olsa da
soylese size derdimi

II - Aria: Καλά Περνούσα (We used to get along well)

Πριν από τον πόλεμο ήμαστε πολύ καλά με τους Τούρκους.
Σαν αδέρφια περνούσας
Ήρχονταν εκόινοι σε μας κι εμές πηγαίνομε εκεί.
Στις γιορτές εμείς, στους γάμους εμείς, στο θάνατο ήρχονταν οι Τούρκοι.

Και εκείνο, αν έκαναν μας πρώτους
Να μας παίρνουν κρέας
Στους γάμους μας να μας καλέσουν.
Τόλμησαν σε ένα μπλε χαρτί έξαρση,
Και έλεγαν: «Όριστε στο γαμό μας»

Καλά περνούσας
Ευχαριστούμενοι ήμαστε.

Texts and Translations

The soldiers are coming, gathering all young men
The children in the fifteenth, sixteenth year
They are taking whomever they find
Just because our sultan has ordered so

With my three children I went out to send them off
One on my left; the other on my right
My 40-day-old baby in my arms
In my ears the prayers of “farewell”
I could endure no more, threw myself to the ground
Ah, what grief, what grief

That night, a wind, a thunderstorm
As if the entire world has collapsed over me
And sing you my grief
Η θάλασσα είχε μεγάλες σκηνές, όπως και τα ταύρια και τα νήσια, στα οποία το πλοίο είχε φύγει. Ο ίδιος και ο γκριζός ουρανός, και η πλημμυρή και οι βροχές μας είχαν μακροχρόνια για το πλοίο, έφερε και απεριποίητοι.

Θεωρείται πως το πλοίο έφυγε από τον όγκο, και τον φόδο του, και κατάφευγε στο λιμάνι τους.

Σαν μέσα σε ένα αδιαπέραστο δέσιμο, που κατακοπούσε τα τσικόλαμα και οι λόγοι, εφαρμόζοντας άλλη νόηση, αναγνώρισαμε να προβλέψουμε για το πλοίο έρημο και απεριποίητοι.

Πάντα, στους ταύρους των δικών μας, μία αστραπή φουρτούνε, έναν αέρα, και κλαίονε.

Δε θέλω να πεθάνω ένα τέτοιο πρόκλημα.

Καλύτερα να πεθάνουμε στη ζωή παρά στη θάλασσα.

συγκράτησε με,

Αλλά ακούστε μου... ποτέ αυτά μου, ποτέ μου

Ας, ας τα θέματα που δε θα τα ξεκινήσουμε

For nine days we were on that ship. We asked, “Why doesn’t this ship move?”

Realizing later that it sails so slowly

What sickness! What parasites! What filth!

Goats, sheep, people jumbled one atop the other

We had an Eleni too.

We had a Mustafa in our village; he was born on that ship

Goats, sheep, people jumbled one atop the other

As if we had never seen sea before

Four days we were on that ship.

We asked, “Why doesn’t this ship move?”

Realizing later that it sails so slowly

What sickness! What parasites! What filth!

Goats, sheep, people jumbled one atop the other

We had an Eleni too. She was born in our ship.

Three or four died

Three thousand souls

We want to believe such a thing

Better to die in my land than in the sea

Forgive me,

My sister, my father, my mother, my child

for leaving and deserting you

Ah, I will never see these lands again

IV - Duett: Μαόρος: ο Οσορνός Άκδενιζιν Ορτασόντα (The sky blackened in the middle of the Mediterranean)

Είναι μέρες ημερών στο πλοίο

Σούσμος είχες ήρες θυλάστα

“κα γεμί νιε γίμεξ;?”

Αμα σικ γανς γαδέρμις ουάκι

Κα τη φετέκα! Κα τη φρόντη! Κα τη αρρώτησα

Kecler, koyunlar, insanlar alt alta ust ust.

Büzün bir Mustafa vardi koyde. O vapurda doğdu

Σέριμ ουάκι και μα Ελένη. Γεννήθηκε στον κατάρο μας

Πέθανεν τρεις τέτοια,

Κα άρχην στα πέλασε

μαόρος ο οσορνός

Ακδενιζιν ορτασόντα

Μια φοινικότονα, μια βροχή, αστράπες, βροντές, αέρες!!

ο γεμί υφε bir duruma geldi ki; battim batacak

Οι γυναικές

İstifra mi ararsin

άλλα βλαστημότοιες

hagiran cagiran mi ararsin

άλλα έκανε προσευχή

Selavatlar, ezanlar okuyan mi

και άλλα έλεγε κατάφερα στοις αυτώς

Doğuz gün oldu

Γιατί δεν πάει αυτό το πλοίο

Θα πνιγόμε!! vademizin sonu bu bizim.
V - Aria: Dokunulmamış Hiçbir Şeye (All is left untouched)

Verdiler bize bir Rum evi  They gave us a Greek house
oyle bir bahcesi var ki  With such a garden
o kadar guzel, o kadar bakimli  So beautiful, so well-cultivated

İki katlı bir Rum evi  A two-storey Greek house
O kadar guzel tavanlari var ki o evin.  With such beautiful ceilings
Nakis gibi oyma hep  Like frescos as if embroidered

Dokunulmamis hic bir seye  Nothing was touched
Ocagın üstünde yari pismis bir kap yemek  A half-cooked cup of food on the stove
Tozlu dolaplarinin arkasina sikismis gumus bir hac  A silver cross, lost behind the dusty cupboards

Ben nasıl yaarım bu yabancı evde?  How can I live in this foreign house?
Geçmişi hayaleyle  Haunted by the past
Olguya gibi bırakılmış  All is left untouched
Sanki birisi burada ölmüştü gibi  As if somebody has just died here

VI - Duet: Σήμερα Ζούμε και Πεθαίνουμε (Today we live and die) – text by Demetrios Vikela from Loukis Laras (1879) modernized by William Stroebel

Σήμερα ζούμε και πεθαίνουμε ο ένας εδώ και ο άλλος εκεί,  Today we live and die, one of us here, the other there,
Περπατάμε εκεί στη ζωή και στο θάνατο ξενιτένιοι,  wandering in life, and exiled in death.
Της προσκολλάμενης την καρδιά των τέκνων στων γονίων τα αναπαύσιμα  The hurricane of war has torn all the holy rituals down,
Τους προσκολλώντας την καρδιά των τέκνων στων γονίων τα αναπαύσιμα  Rituals that kept the hearts of children close to the graves of their children
Αμάν...

Bugünlere birimiz burada diğerimiz orada  Aman...
Yaşıyor, ölüyor, hayatta dolaşıyor ve ölümden sürükleniyoruz  Today we live and die, one of us here, the other there,
Savaşın kasırgası kutsal adetleri dağıttı ve de yıktı  wandering in life, and exiled in death.
Çocukları anne babalarının mezarlıklarına yakını yattı  The hurricane of war has torn all the holy rituals down,
Rituals that kept the hearts of children close to the graves of their children  Rituals that kept the hearts of children close to the graves of their children
Aman...

vii
INSTRUMENTATION

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in Bb
Bassoon

Percussion (1 Player)

Vibraphone, Glockenspiel, Crotales (1 octave), Medium tam tam, 2 tom toms,
Bendir (Tar), Davul (Tapan), 2 Gongs

Piano
Harp

Soprano
Mezzo-soprano
Narrator

2 Violins
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass

The Score is in C
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ix
I - Geliyor Askerler
The Soldiers are Coming

very rhythmic / bringing out a strong sense of pulse
dance like

very rhythmic / bringing out a strong sense of pulse
dance like

with a sharp, strong and articulated attack
but resonant

L.V. sempre

try to balance the dynamic with the harp
to two glock/two vib mallets

p mf 90

da o gli-zed ses li... ha the priests ların... the beautiful voices of the priests.
Ayshe waited praying as the days turned into nights.  
Feeling lost in her own village, insecure in Northern Greece.  
Those were the years of endless wars, the one atop the other, the borders changed like cycles of the tides.  
No Greek authorities protect the Muslim villages.  
She could do no more than pray and wait, wait for the day he’d come back and find them again.  
Her eyes kept searching for him hopefully, just a small hope.  
Yet no one came...
Breathing in cannon smoke, it’s the Great War people say, the First World War they’ve read in the papers of the coffee shop. Ottoman officers break down doors and tear away the Muslim men and boys.

Ayshe’s village, just outside Kavala, is left with only the cries of the women and the prayers of the old. She hasn’t moved an inch, she keeps casting about her eyes, searching for her husband, staring at the door that consumed him, staring at the door and waiting, two silent toddlers round her feet, a frightened newborn in her arms. She longs for those lost years of peace.

“Ach, those good old days!” sighs Despina, across the border, buried deep within the planes of Anatolia. She paces round the room, hands on hips, longing for the times when Christians in her village didn’t live in fear, when the church bells tolled out Easter rather than the fires or the dangers lurking in the hills. Her eyes caress the room – every corner, every piece of furniture, every stitch of her embroidered tablecloths, the icon with the dole Byzantine on the wall. Her children play outside, their shrill laughter lingers like the last reminder of the good old days.
We used to get along well
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Davul
Pno.
Hp.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.

(2+2+3)
(2+3)

f
mf
f
mf

θάνατος
να-το
το-ερί
κοι-κι
χον-ταν
τα-οι

ord.
pizz.
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Glock.
Pno.
Hp.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.

K

93

mf
περ
per
νού
nou
used
to
σα
get along
µε
me
ευ
pleased
µέ

K

41
Poco più mosso

L

43
The same smells coming from our ovens, the same foods, the same names, yet Muslims and Christians can’t share them anymore. The women no longer chat up neighbors, they keep their heads low, their windows locked. “Stay with your own kind” they advise, ach, this Great War changed everything, it’s not the Empire we’re losing but our friends down the street. The soldiers come and go, different colors, same hatred. They don’t understand.

Ayshe heard the rumors, they are going to send us to Turkey, Muslims are not welcome here any more, she bends down and listens closely to the baby’s breathing, if Allah is truly generous, He’ll take this one to heaven. She’ll manage two, but not three children; her husband now is nothing but a memory.

Across the Aegean sea, Despina cries over the same whispers, Christians are not welcome here any more, “but this is our land” she laments. Nobody pays attention. Her husband only brings back bad news from the coffee shop, bending his head lower every day over his worry beads, as if ashamed that he can’t set things aright, as if it’s his fault they can’t stay here any more.
III- Τρεις Χιλιάδες Ψυχές
(Three Thousand Souls)
* alternate between the note and the harmonic very fast

molto sul tasto

molto sul ponticello
Poco meno mosso
The day we laid the last brick in place, we had to hand the keys to someone else. The crop we planted, it’s others who will harvest it. Forgive me Mother, for leaving your bones behind. Who will weed your grave now? A whole life, how to choose what you take with you, what you leave? And the deadline is approaching: This paper signed in Lausanne, the rest of us obey. The Church, the Mosque, will they survive or will they be swept aside like us? The old people curse the year 1923 to the pits of hell.

Ayşe ties her children round her waist; a woman only has two hands, you see, and she needs them both to carry bundles. The others on the boat make fun of her village ways; she doesn’t care. This is the worst time to be without a man. She’s leaving her village behind, the lights of Kavala wink one last time behind her, her last sight of home, off now to a land about which she knows nothing, only that it’s in the new borders of Turkey. They call it Samsun, her new home.

Despina boards a boat to trace the same route in reverse, clutching her icon and mumbling prayers. She’s about to leave behind the spices of Anatolia, bound for Athens. Her children are frightened of the sea; she, of the land awaiting them. She sits on one of their bundles and digs up from within her throat the saddest song she knows. People shush her. “You’re not allowed to speak Turkish anymore.” But her heart is bleeding for her real homeland, Kappadokia, her head is reeling with old Turkish love songs.

One million souls are drenched in sea and sweat and homesickness, shivering on the crowded decks. Ach, forgive me Mother for leaving your bones behind.
The Sky Blackened in the Middle of the Mediterranean

Mezzo-Soprano
Violoncello
Vibraphone
Contrabass
Bassoon
Soprano
Violin I
Piano
Viola
Harp

© Recep Gül
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Bsn.
Perc.
Pno.
Hp.
S.
M S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Cb.

for the Mediterranean
As if all hope is gone
They fall down on their knees and kiss the ground. The ground of unknown countries, their countries now, the army tells them, you’re Greeks, you’re Turks, never speak to them again. Tents and quarantines, Red Cross smiles, local frowns, foreign accents, foreign tongues. Nothing here reminds them of the village: the people from the mountains end up languishing in swamps, the people of the sea, wrestling with barren fields.

Ayse kills mosquitoes all day long, they tell her that they bear the sickness in their blood. She’s never seen a place like this; she longs for the clear skies of her hometown, the smell of the sea, the sound of the her milkman, little bells around the goat’s neck and a singing voice in the narrow street, reassuring her that everything is going to be okay. She doesn’t know the sounds of her new village, she doesn’t recognize the smells, the voices, she reached Samsun with just two children left. Allah is truly generous.

And Despina, Despina is desperate in her degradation, every day the memory of the mansion that she left behind grows dimmer, the mansion that everyone in town admired, two storeys and balconies as broad as continents, overflowing with flowers and pots with basil. In that house, she was a lady. Now look at her, living in a tent and sharing a latrine with this whole shantytown – oh, God help us! She stares at the stars at night and tries to conjure up their faces, those who moved into her beautiful house, the house that everyone in town admired.
V - Dokunulmamış Hiçbir Şeye
(All is left untouched)
5th Narrative

Sleepless nights and homesickness. Ayshe and Despina gaze up at the same moon across the sea; they harvest, both of them, a secret in their bosoms, a secret wish to go back. They wait. They refuse to settle down, they wait and wander through their scattered dreams, dreams of a lost homeland.
VI - Σήμερα Ζούμε και Πεθαίνουμε

Today We Live and Die

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Flute} & \quad \text{c.f.} \quad \text{Rubato} \quad \text{calm and transcendental} \\
\text{Oboe} & \quad \text{pp} \quad \text{calm and transcendental} \\
\text{Clarinet in Bb} & \quad \text{pp} \quad \text{calm and transcendental} \\
\text{Bassoon} & \quad \text{pp} \quad \text{calm and transcendental} \\
\text{Gong} & \quad \text{pp} \quad \text{Medium gong} \\
\text{Tam-tam} & \quad \text{pp} \quad \text{Medium Tam tam} \\
\text{Harp} & \quad \text{pizz.} \quad \text{calm and transcendental} \\
\text{Piano} & \quad \text{p} \quad \text{Free as if improvising} \\
\text{Soprano} & \quad \text{p} \quad \text{c.f.} \\
\text{Mezzo soprano} & \quad \text{c.f.} \quad \text{Rubato} \quad \text{calm and transcendental} \\
\text{Violin I} & \quad \text{c.f.} \\
\text{Violin II} & \quad \text{c.f.} \\
\text{Viola} & \quad \text{c.f.} \\
\text{Violoncello} & \quad \text{pizz.} \\
\text{Contrabass} & \quad \text{p} \\
\end{align*} \]
More rhythmic
yet like a hypnotic dance