

Kemal İlerici (1910-1986)

Kemal İlerici was a Turkish theorist, composer, and philosopher, with a strong background in musicology and sociology. He asserted in the 1940's that based on Western tertian chords and modes of Turkish music, these two styles are unable to be harmonized together. He believed European and Turkish music were totally separate in nature. He examined both styles and concluded that while an overtone and undertone series play a certain role in chord structures and voice leading, they were not the central role in harmony. The chord building of Western harmony is based in thirds, while in traditional Turkish modes, the arrangement ends up being in fourths. Thus, a proper harmonization of indigenous Turkish modes requires quartal schemes of chord-building.

İlerici was also interested in sociology, particularly in Nationalism. He struggled with the problem of Nationalism in that particularly in non-Western experiences, national thought becomes a paradox. It appreciates the native culture and gives pride to national identity. However, it exhibits a feeling of disadvantage when comparing themselves to more developed Western nations.

These thoughts and struggles İlerici experienced during his life of Western versus non-Western music and experiences is represented by his composition. His ideals of the quartal harmony system became a primary piece of the New Turkish Music during the postwar era. This music also came at a time of great nationalist discourse across much of the world. This struggle between fusion and separation of East and West is reflected in the music of Kemal İlerici.

—Program note by Gözde Çakır

Reference:

Aydin, Yigit and Ergur, Ali. "Nationalizing the harmony? A system of harmony proposed by Turkish composer Kemal İlerici." *Proceedings of the Conference on Interdisciplinary Musicology*, (2004): 15-18.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228692510_Nationalizing_the_harmony_A_system_of_harmony_proposed_by_Turkish_composer_Kemal_Ilerici