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Hülya Adak, Rüstem Ertuğ Altınay

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Introduction: Theatre and Politics in Turkey and Its Diasporas

HÜLYA ADAK AND RÜSTEM ERTUĞ ALTINAY[1]

The idea for this special issue grew out of our concerns as scholars, teachers, audiences, and theatre-makers during a time of ever-intensifying autocracy in Turkey. The oppressive sociopolitical environment under the economically neoliberal, socially conservative, and Sunni Islamist governments of the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party), hereafter AKP, has deeply affected all aspects of theatre. Censorship and self-censorship have intensified; the distribution of public funds lacks transparency; a number of venues have been demolished while the emerging theatre spaces have served neoliberalism and gentrification; migration and recession have changed the audience profile; a number of theatre professionals and scholars have been dismissed or persecuted while others have had to leave the country for political reasons; and the control over the press and the academia affects the production and dissemination of scholarship as well as criticism.

Curiously, the dynamics of oppression have not simply curtailed artistic production. On the contrary, against all odds, independent companies flourish, especially in metropolitan centers, and minoritarian cultural producers are perhaps more active than ever. As such, theatre serves as a critical venue where artists and audiences resurrect silenced histories, build communities, negotiate the politics of subjectivity and belonging, and explore alternative visions for the future amidst constant political tension and violence.

The anti-democratic atmosphere that prevails in Turkey, combined with the effects of social polarization, political instability, environmental destruction, economic injustice, and most recently recession, has resulted in a new wave of migration from the country. This new generation of migrants comprises primarily white-collar workers, including many artists and scholars as well as members of ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities. Together with local artists, the growing Turkish diasporas in Europe, North America, and the Middle East are also producing both mainstream and alternative productions. Minoritarian communities from Turkey, particularly Alevis and Kurds, continue to use theatre in their struggle for recognition. In an increasingly xenophobic Europe, Islamic productions especially are creating controversy.[2] Diasporic communities from Turkey thus employ theatre to negotiate the politics of visibility and belonging, build communities, and intervene in national and international politics. In the meantime, the growing immigrant populations in Turkey, especially from Syria, also produce both amateur and professional theatre for similar purposes.

With its rich history and politically charged present, the study of theatre can bring a vital new perspective on the current sociopolitical dynamics in Turkey and provide important insights into the historical relationship between theatre and power in and beyond the country. The critical literature on the subject, however, has remained relatively limited, especially in English. In part as a consequence of the Orientalist legacy, European and North American scholars have primarily focused on the Ottoman popular performances such as the story-tellers known as *meddah*, the shadow theatre *Karagöz*, the farces known as *ortaoyunu*, and the *köçek*s, male dancers who entertained men.[3] The vibrant culture

of European-style theatre in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey thus went largely unnoticed by Orientalists and later international scholars. Turkey's complicated relationship with Europe has resulted in its exclusion from studies of European theatre. In many cases, Turkey is also ignored in studies on Middle Eastern theatre, which is dominated by works on Arab, Israeli, and Iranian theatre and performance cultures. These trends affect scholarship on Turkey's minoritarian theatre cultures as well. As İlker Hepkaner argues in his essay in this volume, for instance, studies on global Jewish theatre often do not cover Jewish theatre in Turkey.

Scholarship on theatre has also remained relatively limited within Turkish academia. In Turkey, most theatre departments focus on studio training and the faculty largely comprises teaching artists. In the few research-oriented departments, the language of education is Turkish and the faculty also tend to publish in Turkish, which limits dialogue with contemporary global scholarship in the fields of theatre and performance studies. Other than the few scholars in theatre and dramaturgy departments, the literature on theatre and performance in Turkey is produced mainly in departments of history and Turkish language and literature. Although these efforts have been immensely important, especially for historical knowledge production, the authors rarely utilize the theoretical and methodological tools of theatre and performance studies. An emerging hub is in private universities where a liberal arts orientation enables new possibilities for interdisciplinary research and teaching on theatre and performance.

The purpose of this special issue is to address the gap in the scholarship on theatre and politics in Turkey and its diasporas. Organized thematically and chronologically, the essays cover the period from the rise of European theatre and the transformation of Ottoman performance genres in the nineteenth century to the work of minoritarian theatres and independent companies in contemporary Turkey. While each essay focuses on a specific production, dramatic text, or performance genre, the authors situate their analyses within a broader historical and artistic framework. With this introduction, we aim to complement their work by presenting an historical overview of theatre in Turkey and its diasporas as well as a brief discussion of contemporary trends and recent productions.

An Incomplete History of Theatre in Turkey

The beginnings of European-style theatre in the Ottoman Empire were already quite political in the way they reflected the dynamics of ethnicity and migration. The first major productions, dating back to the seventeenth century, were staged by European troupes, often for a non-Muslim audience—such as a performance of Pierre Corneille's *Nicomède* staged at the French Embassy in the cosmopolitan port city of Izmir in 1657.[4] By the eighteenth century, Jewish and Christian Mediterranean European immigrants in the city formed amateur groups.[5] The first theatre in the Imperial capital Istanbul was established by a Genoese entrepreneur in the eighteenth century.[6] The embassies in Istanbul also served as performance venues. The Italian, Swedish, French, British, and Russian embassies were particularly active.[7] By the end of the eighteenth century, the palace began to support opera performances. The first known opera staged in the Topkapı Palace in 1797 was followed by other European troupes visiting the Empire under the patronage of the Sultan.[8] Non-Muslim communities continued to play a key role in Ottoman theatre world in the nineteenth century. At the forefront of these efforts was the Armenian community of Istanbul, who began to experiment with theatre in the 1810s.[9]

The popularity of European theatre and stage performances in the Ottoman Empire peaked with the institutional reforms implemented to prevent the Empire's decline and to protect its borders during the Tanzimat Period (1839–1876). The Tanzimat, meaning "reorganization," was an era of reformation in the Ottoman Empire that sought to implement institutional reforms in order to protect the Empire against European colonial powers as well as ethnic nationalist movements within its borders. The period started with the Edict of Gülhane, which promised administrative reforms, such as the abolition of tax farming, the standardization of military conscription, and the elimination of corruption, and also guaranteed the equality of all subjects of the Empire.[10] The cultural climate of the Tanzimat fostered an increasing interest in European culture among Ottoman intellectuals, which gradually transformed the popular performance cultures in the imperial capital, Istanbul. The military reforms in this period also facilitated the transformation of Ottoman performances. The

new military band Muzika-i Hümayun, founded in 1826, evolved into an applied school of music and performance. The school was crucial in the development of opera in the Ottoman Empire.[11]

As Marshall McLuhan famously states, "the medium is the message."[12] The proscenium stage, which was not used in Ottoman performance genres, and the structure of the theatre facilitated new forms of embodiment and sociality. When theatre emerged as a venue for the performance of political subjectivity, the audience's performance became at least as important as the actors'. Hence the new legal codes regulating theatre paid specific attention to the audience.[13] In the regulation of the audience's repertoire, even the timing of applause could create controversy and tension.[14] Theatre thus became a site for the transformation of the audience's *habitus*—the "durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations" that organized the ways they perceived and reacted to the social environment[15]—according to the Tanzimat ideals. Framing a specific space-time sensorium, theatre contributed to the reshaping of the forms of visibility and the production of a "common sense,"[16] which was crucial for the constitution of a Tanzimat public. An exemplary Tanzimat space, theatre became a vital part of the Ottoman "civilizing process,"[17] where audiences rehearsed and performed a new Ottoman subjectivity. As an ideological state apparatus, theatre facilitated the production and control of political subjects in ways that are discursive and performative.[18] Ottoman theatre, almost independently of the content of specific plays, thus became a political site because of its significance for the Tanzimat apparatus (*dispositif*): the system of relations among "a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid."[19]

In 1839, four theatre buildings opened in Istanbul,[20] introducing more and more Ottomans to this new performance genre. A key institution in Tanzimat theater was Naum Tiyatrosu (Naum Theatre), also known as Opera Naum. Established in 1844, the theatre was funded by the Sultan during the reign of Abdulmejid I (1839–1861) and served as the de facto palace theatre, featuring diplomatic performances alongside regular

productions.[21] When a court theatre was constructed at the Dolmabahçe Palace complex in 1859, the Naum Theatre Company also staged some of the first performances there.[22]

After the mid-1840s, the Ottoman presence in theatre increased, with new companies staging translations of European plays as well as adaptations and original works. By that time, Ottoman Armenians had already been staging plays at their schools and amateur theatres. The community pioneered the development of professional theatre in the Empire and formed multiethnic companies. An important institution in the history of multiethnic theater in the Empire was Tiyatro-i Osmani[23] or Osmanlı Tiyatrosu (Ottoman Theatre). Under the artistic directorship of Hagop Vartovyan (Güllü Agop), Tiyatro-i Osmani was certified in 1869 by the palace as the only company in Istanbul that was permitted to stage plays in Turkish throughout the 1870s.[24] The actors, playwrights, and translators affiliated with Tiyatro-i Osmani consisted of Armenians as well as Turks and other Muslims. In this company, theatre emerged as a modern aesthetic and political device connecting members of different ethnic and linguistic communities, including individuals who were not based in Istanbul, and enabled unprecedented possibilities of dialogue and debate. Over the years, playwrights such as Karekin Rişţuni as well as actors Mari Nıvart and Grand Dame Siranuş (Merope Kantarcıyan) crossed linguistic and cultural barriers, performing in multilingual productions. Such performances reveal the multiethnic and multilinguistic composition of the Empire, and how such sociocultural dynamics were manifested in theatre. [25]

Members of the Armenian community were also pioneers in Ottoman dramatic writing. According to the official historiography of Ottoman theatre, the first play written in Turkish was İbrahim Şinasi Efendi's *Şair Evlenmesi* (The Wedding of a Poet) in 1860. Already in the mid-eighteenth century, however, Mekhitarist Armenian priests in San Lazzaro degli Armeni in Venice had written plays in Turkish; they were followed by Armenian scholars at the Imperial Academy of Oriental Languages in Vienna in the first half of the nineteenth century.[26] Mainstream theatre historiography on the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, written by Turkish scholars, has either ignored these works or questioned their significance.[27] In the last decade, however, these dramatic texts have enjoyed a renewed interest with the growing scholarship on Ottoman Armenian history.[28]

In Istanbul's multiethnic theatre world, the major genres included comedies, melodramas, and musicals[29] as well as historical dramas, tragedies, and romantic dramas.[30] These popular genres engaged with the sociopolitical environment in diverse ways. Many melodramas, for instance, were about the ethical and political dilemmas of the nineteenth century, while historical plays reflected the quest for a national identity, and comedies tended to problematize the changing dynamics of labor, economics, and social organization in Ottoman society.[31] It is worth noting that these dramatic texts and performances did not necessarily imply an ultimate paradigm shift but rather bore the influence of Ottoman literary and performance genres.[32]

Many of the early works in the Ottoman dramatic canon propagated nationalisms (and not merely Turkish nationalism) and facilitated the affective and intellectual formation of an explicitly Turkish public. While contributing to the development of a shared memory, theatre also facilitated the processes of forgetting—which are both crucial for nationalist projects.[33] In nation-building processes, the constitution of a collective memory goes hand-in-hand with the dynamics of "national abjection": the construction and maintenance of borders around the self and the jettisoning of that which is deemed objectionable.[34] Ottoman theatre served as a venue for the construction of such perceptual and conceptual borders, which have multiplied and changed with the reconfiguration of power relations on the local, imperial/national, regional, and global levels. If we follow Benedict Anderson's conceptualization of the nation as an "imagined community,"[35] theatre did not simply promote specific and often competing formulations of the national imaginary with the content of the plays. It also became a site where artists and audiences could experience nationhood in embodied and affective ways. Nevertheless, since its formative years, Ottoman and republican Turkish theatre as well as diasporic productions have also challenged the political hegemony, proposing alternative articulations of identification as well as different desires for the national and broader future. Theatre thus emerged as a crucial site for the performance of national identity as well as national abjection.

Because gender and sexuality play a fundamental role in defining the politics of subjectivity and belonging as well as in our designs and imaginations regarding the future, the transformation of Ottoman

performance cultures was in many ways intertwined with the changing trends in the politics of gender and sexuality. In the 1860s, as both male and female intellectuals began to develop an interest in feminism, women's status and their participation in social life emerged as significant themes in Ottoman theatre. The first female playwrights engaged with the public debates on gender relations as well as other popular themes of the time, such as constitutional monarchy, liberty, and nationalism.[36] Women's attendance at the theatre, however, remained controversial and Muslim women were not allowed to perform onstage.

Until the reign of Abdul Hamid II, Ottoman sultans generally endorsed theatre and subsidized theatre activities in the Empire, particularly in Istanbul. Some theatre performances that were not directly affiliated with the palace were also presented as "Imperial theatre" and used for diplomatic purposes.[37] The Palace's support of theatre was accompanied by a system of surveillance that regulated the topics and themes in the performances. This system particularly curtailed political plays that could foster nationalisms or challenge the Sultan's authoritarian rule.

The emergence of theatre as a popular and political art form in Ottoman Istanbul soon resulted in explicit forms of censorship. The first major incident was a ban on the reformist political activist Namık Kemal's *Vatan Yahud Silistre* (The Motherland, or Silistra) in 1873. When the play's première at Vartovian's Ottoman Theater created patriotic fervor among the audience, the second performance was raided by the police, the theatre was banned for a time, and Namık Kemal was arrested and sent to Cyprus in exile.[38] Censorship became an even more serious problem as Ottoman intellectuals increasingly used theatre as a site of political struggle. During the notorious İstibdat Dönemi (Period of Autocracy) (1878–1908), which followed a brief period of constitutional monarchy (1876–1878), Sultan Abdul Hamid II perceived theatre as a threat. He took the necessary measures to depoliticize theatre by censoring explicitly political themes such as freedom, justice, and constitutional monarchy.[39] Despite these problems, theatre continued to flourish in the Empire. While more Turkish actors appeared on stage, new European companies were also established by Austrian, French, German, and Italian theatre-makers.[40]

With the Young Turk Revolution and the re-establishment of constitutional monarchy in 1908, political and historical plays experienced an upsurge in the Ottoman Empire, and a number of Turkish theatre-

makers established new companies, such as Ahmet Fehim's Osmanlı Komedi Kumpanyası (Ottoman Comedy Company, 1908), Burhaneddin Bey and Reşad Bey's Sahne-i Milliye-i Osmaniye (Ottoman National Stage, 1911), and Muhsin Ertuğrul's Şark Dram Kumpanyası (Eastern Drama Company, 1914).[41] The most influential theatre institution established in this period was Darülbedayi-i Osmani (Ottoman House of Beauties). Founded by the Municipality of Istanbul in 1914 as the first modern performing arts school in the Empire, Darülbedayi evolved into a professional theatre company in 1916 and formed the basis of the contemporary İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Şehir Tiyatroları (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality City Theatres).

The growing interest in theatre and the liberal political environment during the Second Constitutional Monarchy Period (1908–1920), combined with the growing Turkish nationalism, sparked a *milli edebiyat* (national literature) movement. The movement also influenced theatre. In addition to İbn-ür Refîk Ahmed Nuri Sekizinci and Musahipzade Celal, who were known primarily as playwrights, other leading intellectuals also wrote plays. Among them are Aka Gündüz, Reşat Nuri Güntekin, Ömer Seyfettin, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Mithat Cemal Kuntay, Halit Fahri Ozansoy, Yusuf Ziya Ortaç, Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel, and Halide Edip Adıvar. Adıvar was not the only female author to stage or publish plays in the Second Constitutional Monarchy Period. Others included Şair Nigar (*Tasvir-i Aşk* [Depiction of Love]), Ruhsan Nevvare[42] (*Jön Türk* [Young Turk], co-written with Tahsin Nahit), and Fehime Nüzhet (*Adalet Yerini Buldu* [Justice Accomplished] and *Bir Zalimin Encamı* [The Destiny of the Merciless]). The latter two plays were published, and *Jön Türk* was performed in Osmanlı Tiyatrosu.

The Second Constitutional Period (Meşrutiyet) was an exciting moment in theatre history also because many works that had been censored or banned during the authoritarian rule of Abdul Hamid II were staged, including Namık Kemal's *Vatan Yahud Silistre* as well as his *Gülnihal* and *Zavallı Çocuk* (Poor Child). Some of the prominent genres in this period were political plays criticizing the Union and Progress Regime, particularly its leanings into a military dictatorship after the 1913 Ottoman coup d'etat (Bab-ı Ali Baskını).[43] Such works included Bulgurluzade Rıza's *Caniler Saltanatı* (The Sultanate of the Perpetrators, 1918), Abdülhakim Hadi's *Şefika*, İhsan Adli's *Haile-i Mahmut Şevket* (Tragedy of Mahmut

Şevket) and *Hürriyet Kurbanları* (Victims of Liberty).[44] Another major trend in dramatic literature was militarism, which gained particular significance in the context of World War I, the subsequent occupation of Istanbul by British, French, and Italian forces, and the Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922). Examples important to this trend include Mithat Cemal Kuntay's *Yirmi Sekiz Kanunievvel* (28 December) and Faik Ali Ozansoy's *Payitaht'ın Kapısında* (At the Doorsteps of the Capital).[45]

With the inception of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the political significance of theatre increased even further. During the period of secular modernization and nation-building between 1923 and 1938, also known as the Kemalist Period after the president Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, theatre emerged as a crucial venue for promoting the Republic's ideals.[46] The Kemalist reforms included secularization of the legal system and education, dress reforms and clothing bans aiming at the Europeanization of bodies and the secularization of everyday life, and an alphabet reform and language reform ensuring the transition from the Arabo-Persian script to the Latin script, making texts in the former inaccessible to young generations. These administrative and cultural reforms found expression in the lively theatre scene of the 1920s and 1930s, largely funded by the government through various professional public theatre companies as well as other cultural and educational institutions. In 1936, following the recommendations of the German composer and musicologist Paul Hindemith, a State Conservatory was established in Ankara. The school would also provide training in theatre under the administration of another prominent German artist, Carl Ebert.

The Kemalist elite posited women as the key actors who would create the desired sociocultural transformation while also serving as the embodied symbols of the regime. Theatre was a crucial site for these efforts. Unlike in the Ottoman Empire, women were encouraged to participate in theatre activities, both as audience members and as theatre professionals, especially actors. Prominent female actors like Bedia Muvahhit, Neyyire Neyir, and Cahide Sonku emerged as icons and role models. In smaller towns and amateur practices, however, women's participation in mixed-gender theatre activities was considered crucial yet proved to be particularly challenging. Such theatre practices were shaped by local sociopolitical dynamics and depended on negotiations among various actors, at times providing women with resources they could not otherwise have access to, including an income from acting.[47]

In the Kemalist Period, Muhsin Ertuğrul (1892–1979) emerged as a leading figure in Turkish theatre as the founder and artistic director of several private and public companies. Between 1927 and 1949, he worked as the artistic director of Darülbedayi, Turkey's most prominent public theatre company at the time. In 1947, Ertuğrul replaced Ebert as the artistic director of Tatbikat Sahnesi (the State Conservatory Implementation Stage) in Ankara. In 1949, with the establishing of Devlet Tiyatro ve Operası (the State Theater and Opera), he became the first artistic director of this institution. Ertuğrul was also the mastermind behind the establishment of regional theatres in various cities.

Muhsin Ertuğrul's work as an administrator and theatre critic echoed the desires of Ottoman intellectuals and bureaucrats like Ahmet Vefik Paşa in terms of shaping the audience's habitus. Ertuğrul wrote essays and published announcements on proper behavior in the theatre space, asking audiences to wear clean clothes and remain silent and passive during the performances. To this end, he even took measures that extended beyond the confines of the theatre space, such as the removal of street vendors selling dried fruits and nuts near theatre venues.[48] These efforts reveal how theatre retained its importance as an ideological state apparatus producing and disciplining subjects according to the discourses of modernization and Europeanization.

As an administrator, Muhsin Ertuğrul was particularly interested in bringing translations of European dramatic works onto the Turkish stage. His artistic directorship at major public theatre companies also served the flourishing of a national dramatic canon. Under his management, Darülbedayi regularly staged the works of prominent Ottoman and Turkish playwrights.[49] Nevertheless, some theatre scholars, including Metin And, criticized Ertuğrul severely for simply imitating the most recent developments in European theatre while ignoring the Tanzimat roots of European-style theatre in Turkey and the heritage of Ottoman performance genres. Even more importantly, according to And, Ertuğrul's authoritarian approach became an obstacle for the efforts to create a national style in theatre that would combine elements from European-style theatre and Ottoman genres.[50]

And's criticism of Ertuğrul reflects an important point of conflict in Turkish theatre that peaked during the Kemalist Period: the tension between following the globalized European cultural trends and norms and working to create a national culture. Ertuğrul perceived theatre as

a pedagogical tool and believed that it was necessary to introduce the audience to "true art"—which often meant European classics as well as the work of popular contemporary European playwrights and directors.[51] Others, like the canonical novelist and playwright Reşat Nuri Güntekin, argued for the importance of adaptation to make European plays more accessible to Turkish audiences.[52] Contrary to these views, a third group represented by Nurullah Ataç and İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu defended the idea that theatre could entertain and educate the masses only if it could address the needs, desires, and tastes of local audiences.[53] These debates gained further prominence with the shift to a multi-party democracy in 1945 and under the Democrat Party regime after 1950.

The Democrat Party was founded by the proponents of economic liberalism in the Republican People's Party. As the Kemalist modernization paradigm was now abandoned for populism, the government's support for theatre and the arts remained limited.[54] While members of the government attended performances, they also implemented policies that affected theatre, such as the politically motivated appointments in public theatre (epitomized by Muhsin Ertuğrul's replacement by Cüneyt Gökçer as the artistic director of State Theatres) and the closure of two key institutions for amateur theatre practices across Turkey: the People's Houses and the Village Institutes.[55] Many plays written in this period engaged with the problems emerging from rapid sociopolitical transformation[56] and the transition to liberal economy. Playwrights like Haldun Taner and Aziz Nesin produced works where they experimented with dramatic forms.[57] Still, private companies tended to stage light comedies. An important exception was Küçük Sahne (Little Stage), which opened under the artistic directorship of Muhsin Ertuğrul in 1951.[58] Until its closure in 1957, the company staged works by Turkish playwrights like Vedat Nedim Tör as well as popular European and North American plays, such as Federico García Lorca's *Bodas de sangre* (Blood Wedding), John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, and William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, featuring the female actor Nur Sabuncu in the title role.[59] Perhaps the most influential private companies established in the 1950s were Kent Oyuncuları (City Players) or Kenterler (the Kenters), established by Yıldız and Müşfik Kenter in 1951, and Dormen Tiyatrosu (Dormen Theatre), established by Haldun

Dormen in 1957. Both companies trained actors and had a lasting impact. The Dormen Theatre was active until 2001 and the Kenters is still one of Istanbul's most respectable private companies.

The Democrat Party rule came to an end with a coup d'état in 1960. The constitution implemented in 1961 resulted in a liberal environment, which fostered political theatre. Theatre historian Eren Buğlalılar explains the development of leftist theater in the 1960s in three stages. Until 1964, most theatre practitioners and critics continued to invest in the Kemalist paradigm of secular modernization and Turkish nationalism. This was also a period when playwrights and directors like Vasıf Öngören and Genco Erkal began to experiment with the methods of Bertolt Brecht and Erwin Piscator, and epic theatre began to gain popularity in Turkey.[60] Between 1965 and 1968, with the rise of left-wing organizations, the influence of Marxist-Leninist perspectives and anti-imperialist concerns gained prominence in theatre practices of the Turkish left. Finally, between 1968 and 1971, in response to the university and factory occupations, spectacular public demonstrations, and growing conflicts, a militant political theatre emerged in Turkey.[61] In addition to socialist movements, minoritarian groups also used theatre to build community, gain visibility, and make political demands. For instance, members of the historically persecuted Alevi religious minority, whose population began to increase in urban Turkey consequent to the politics of urbanization and industrialization that had gained speed in the 1950s, staged plays that incorporated Alevi religious and cultural symbols.[62]

While political theatre is most commonly associated with socialist groups and labor unions, different groups across the political spectrum, including Islamist groups, produced theatre to propagate their agendas. Founded in the second half of the 1960s, groups like Abdullah Kars's İbret Sahnesi (Parable Stage), Hilal Sahnesi (Crescent Stage), or Üstün İnanç's İstanbul Fikir Sahnesi (Istanbul Idea Stage) served the development of political Islam while also disseminating anti-Communist discourses.[63]

The 1960s also witnessed a growing wave of Turkish migration to Europe, especially to West Germany. As Ela Gezen discusses in her essay in this volume, while Turkish migrants produced theatre in Germany and other European countries, these interactions influenced the development

of theatre in Turkey as well.[64] Western Europe also gradually emerged as a market for Turkish companies. Political theatre companies across the ideological spectrum toured in Western Europe both to obtain financial support and income and to gain the sympathy of the Turkish diaspora, whose influence on Turkey was increasing in significance.

The 1960s are recognized as the golden age of İstanbul Şehir Tiyatroları (1959–1966).[65] The decade also witnessed the launching of a plethora of private theatre companies staging plays by diverse Turkish and international playwrights and contributing to the development of various genres in Turkey, such as the theatre of the absurd. Theatre was so popular in urban Turkey that there were more theatre companies per audience in Ankara and Istanbul than in London, Paris, or New York.[66] A number of these private companies enjoyed productive careers for decades, such as Gülriz Sururi-Engin Cezzar Topluluğu (Gülriz Sururi-Engin Cezzar Troupe), Ulvi Uraz Topluluğu (Ulvi Uraz Troupe), Genco Erkal ve Dostlar Tiyatrosu (Genco Erkal and Friends Theatre), Gazanfer Özcan ve Arkadaşları (Gazanfer Özcan and Friends), and Ankara Sanat Tiyatrosu (Ankara Art Theatre).[67] Istanbul's nightclubs also opened their doors to private theatre companies, who collaborated with eminent playwrights like Haldun Taner and staged cabarets in these venues.[68]

In the 1970s, the absence of a consistent cultural policy to support private theatre companies, the increasing popularity of the television, Turkey's financial instability, growing political tensions, street violence, and attacks on theatres as well as conflicts among theatre practitioners had a devastating impact on Turkey's vibrant theatre world.[69] Many private companies disbanded, which particularly affected experimental productions and political theatre. Moreover, beginning in 1970, the government's influence on the administration of the State Theatres increased as all members of the Edebi Kurul (Literary Council) came to be appointed directly or indirectly by the government.[70]

The two military coups in 1971 and 1980 further profoundly affected Turkey's theatre world. The politics of censorship and the persecution of theatre practitioners and other intellectuals affiliated with the political left also became serious factors contributing to the waning of leftist political theatre in Turkey.[71] In the 1970s, the oppressive political environment and the state's efforts to reconstruct recent history sparked an interest

among socialist theatre practitioners in new genres such as documentary theatre.[72] Throughout the 1970s, the political instability in the country, combined with the public theatres' lack of independence, deeply affected the work of the State Theatres and the Istanbul City Theatres as well.[73]

The political oppression that began to impact theatre in the 1970s further intensified after another coup in 1980, orchestrated to suppress the political left and facilitate Turkey's integration into the global market economy with a shift from statist developmentalism to export-driven market capitalism and neoliberalism. In the aftermath of the coup, 650,000 people were arrested, 1,683,000 were blacklisted, 230,000 were tried in 210,000 lawsuits, 388,000 were denied a passport, 30,000 left Turkey seeking political asylum, and 23,677 groups and organizations had their activities terminated.[74] This violent process had a detrimental effect on Turkey's intellectual life and affected the lives of many leading theatre professionals. In addition to those who were imprisoned or left Turkey for exile, several people from the State Theatres and Istanbul City Theatres lost their jobs after the coup. Under the junta regime in the early 1980s, the witch hunt and the politics of censorship were accompanied by curfews that led to the confinement of more and more theatregoers to the home.[75] Beginning in the late 1980s, the coup itself emerged as a popular theme in Turkish dramatic literature.[76] This trend also manifested in the theme of Turkish intellectuals' post-coup crisis, which was also a popular subject in cinema.[77]

The constitution of 1982, implemented by the junta regime, was in many regards illiberal and anti-democratic.[78] Curiously, however, the constitution also listed the protection of the arts and artists among the duties of the state—which was, of course, bitterly ironic given the widespread politics of censorship and state violence targeting artists, especially those on the left of the political spectrum, including not only socialists but also left-Kemalists. Soon after the implementation of the constitution, also in 1982, the junta government implemented public funding for private theatre companies.[79] While public funding to some extent animated Turkey's post-coup theatre world, it also functioned as a disciplinary tool, creating unfair competition by supporting some companies at the expense of others—which were often politically motivated processes. In 1992, the Ministry of Culture adopted regulations

for the distribution of funds, and all aspects of these procedures (from the composition of the funding commissions to the amount of allocated funds) have remained controversial to this day.[80]

In the sociopolitical environment of the 1980s, censorship and self-censorship emerged as major problems. Individuals who were willing to comply with the government's cultural policies filled the administrative positions at public theatres. Private theatre companies were regulated through the use of public funding as an incentive as well as repressive policies, including the closure of professional organizations like Tiyatro Sanatçıları Derneği (Theatre Artists' Association). While some private theatres resorted to light comedies and musicals, others like the Ankara Art Theatre, Genco Erkal's Dostlar Tiyatrosu (Friends' Theatre) and Ankara Halk Tiyatrosu (Ankara People's Theatre) insisted on producing political theatre, and often paid a price.[81] There were also independent theatre-makers who engaged in applied research practices at institutions like Beklan Algan's Bilim Sanat Kurumu or BİLSAK (Science Art Institution), Tiyatro Araştırma Laboratuarı or TAL (Theatre Research Laboratory), or Şahika and Esat Tekand's Oyunculuk ve Sanat Stüdyosu (Acting and Art Studio).[82] In the early 1990s, Kerem Kurdoğlu and Naz Erayda's Kumpanya Tiyatrosu (Company Theatre), Devrim Nas and Hakan Pişkin's Tiyatro Ti (Theatre Ti), and Nedim Saban's Tiyatrokare Ortak Üretim Laboratuvarı (Tiyatrokare Shared Production Laboratory) also engaged in similar experimental practices.[83]

In part as a consequence of the influence of global political trends and the junta regime's suppression of political movements and labor unions, identity politics began to dominate public life in Turkey in the 1980s. This trend also shaped the theatre scene, and feminism, which had been an important element in the development of Ottoman and Turkish theatre for more than a century, was at the forefront. In the late 1980s, feminist grassroots movements had a profound impact on feminist theatre. The developments in independent theatre companies coincided with the rise of women in administrative positions in public theatres. Gencay Gürün served as the head dramaturg of the State Theatres for five years (1979–1984) and then worked as the artistic director of Istanbul City Theatres for ten years until her retirement in 1994. Yekta Kara served as the manager and artistic director of the State Opera and Ballet

between 1992 and 2000. These developments increased the visibility of women in different positions in theatre world, especially as directors and administrators. In this sociopolitical context, the works of female playwrights and plays about women's experiences also gained popularity.[84] In the 1990s, as a consequence of the ongoing urban development and rural to urban migration, Turkish playwrights' critical exploration of the body increasingly covered the relationship between the body and space alongside the questions of gender.[85]

A profound development in the 1990s was the establishment of the experimental Birim Atölye Sahnesi (Unit Workshop Theatre) in a small and alternative space within the compound of Atatürk Kültür Merkezi (Atatürk Cultural Center). This experimental subgroup of the State Theatres had the potential to challenge the orthodox bureaucratic and hierarchical structure of the institution. Birim Atölye Sahnesi asked for full autonomy for the actors in the staging process. The experiment and the demands of the group came to a halt in 1994, after they staged *Hamlet*. The name of the theatre space was changed to Aziz Nesin Sahnesi (Aziz Nesin Stage), and all new demands were rejected. Had the experimental workshop theatre been successful, it could have profoundly impacted State Theatres, possibly leading the way to further experiments on the stage and innovative dramaturgical practices.[86]

The repeal of the Kurdish language ban in 1991 was another development that had a profound impact on theatre in this decade. Kurdish theatre became gradually institutionalized under emergent organizations such as Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi or Navenda Çanda Mezopotamya (Mesopotamia Cultural Center).[87] Despite the oppressive policies targeting Kurdish people throughout the 1990s, these initiatives would develop Kurdish theatre into an important part of Turkey's theatre scene in the 2000s.

Turkey's Theatre World in Precarious Times

As we have shown so far, the history of theatre has always been highly political in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. Although its scope and institutional mechanisms have transformed, censorship has been a significant problem in theatre since the nineteenth century.[88] Its intensity,

however, has become spectacular in contemporary Turkey as the regime evolved into a disastrous combination of authoritarian neoliberalism and illiberal democracy under the socially conservative and Sunni Islamist AKP governments since 2002. As they embarked on a massive social engineering project, the AKP elite have transformed the political economy of theatre, demolished iconic venues, and produced an oppressive environment of persecution and censorship that continues to affect artistic production as well as theatre education.

A major driving force behind Turkey's loan and privatization-driven "economic boom" under AKP was construction, urban regeneration, and gentrification. These policies also facilitated the transfer of wealth as AKP strove to create a loyal bourgeoisie and helped the party earn the favor of some segments of the middle class, whose land and real estate gained unprecedented value, as well as the working class, who depended on construction and related industries to make a living. According to official data provided by the Turkish Statistical Institute, under the AKP rule, the number of theatre halls has increased from ninety-seven in 2002–2003 to 783 in 2016-2017. It is difficult to say, however, that these venues are actively used. Despite the population growth (from sixty-five to seventy-nine million), migration, and urbanization, the number of the audience has only risen from 2,750,000 to seven million.[89] The actual number of people attending performances is probably far less, given the 2016 study conducted by İPSOS stating that 66 percent of the population has never attended a live stage performance such as a concert, theatre, or opera in their lives.[90]

As public commons have been rapidly privatized under the AKP rule, a number of popular theatre venues were also closed down, such as the Taksim Stage of the State Theatres and the Muammer Karaca Theatre in Istanbul. Moreover, iconic buildings like Atatürk Cultural Center, which was located at the heart of Istanbul's Taksim Square and used by the State Theatre, Opera, and Ballet, were demolished. The government has also used religious heritage preservation as an excuse to destroy performance venues, as in the case of the Rumeli Hisarı Amphitheatre.

In the face of the high costs of production, especially venue fees and equipment, many private theatre companies depend on public funding for survival. Nevertheless, theatre-makers complain of a lack of transparency in the distribution of funds. According to some producers

we interviewed, the allocation of production grants is both political and dependent on access to certain networks within theatre circles. One producer we interviewed argued that although their company regularly received public funding until 2013, their participation in the Gezi Protests that year marked the end of this trend.

The contemporary political environment affects not only the private companies but also the artists affiliated with public theatres. The plans to fully privatize public theatre companies have not been realized yet.[91] As in all realms of the public sector, however, outsourcing labor has gained speed. Theatre professionals who are employed by the state deal with precarity as well. They are bound by Law 657 on Public Officials, which limits their engagement in any form of political activity, including public expression of their views[92]—unless they are supporting the government. Under the state of exception that followed the coup attempt in July 2016, more than twenty people associated with the Istanbul City Theatre lost their jobs.[93] The situation of municipal theatres in the predominantly Kurdish Southeast was even worse. In Diyarbakır, for instance, the trustee appointed by the government following the mayor Gülten Kışanak's arrest closed down the city's municipal theatre, which had been active for twenty-eight years.[94]

Private theatres suffer from diverse forms of political control and censorship. A notorious example of private companies' experiences with censorship is Onur Orhan's *Sadece Diktatör* (Just a Dictator), featuring the socialist actor and politician Barış Atay. The play explores the sociopolitical dynamics that produce dictators and keep them in power. Although *Just a Dictator* is not explicitly about Turkey, its critique is highly relevant for contemporary politics. In 2018, after 160 performances, the play was banned across Turkey under the state of exception. Following the ban, the Kadıköy Theaters Platform, a professional organization, started a campaign where thousands of people simultaneously read the play's text at theatres and other spaces.[95] This incident reveals how censorship also inspires spectacular performances of resistance.

Similar to the 1970s and 1980s, when artists, intellectuals, and theatre professionals had to flee Turkey because of the oppressive atmosphere, the contemporary authoritarian regime in Turkey has also outcast many artists and dramatists. As before, these dynamics have also inspired international collaborations and productions. The famous actor Memet Ali Alabora,

who left Turkey after he was accused by the government for organizing the Gezi Protests in 2013, for instance, has moved to Cardiff, Wales. He now works as the Associate Director of the independent company Be Aware Productions Limited, founded by his actor spouse Pınar Öğün in 2015. In collaboration with the playwright Meltem Arıkan and local artists, the couple stage multilingual performances. Turkey's European diasporas also provide opportunities for Turkish companies. The Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin, which emerged as a major hub for postmigrant theatre under the artistic directorship of Shermin Langhoff, now hosts major independent productions like GalataPerform's *Yüz Yılın Evi* (House of Hundred), directed by Yeşim Özsoy. Yet others, such as the Istanbul-based DOT Theatre, collaborate with international artists to create successful projects. DOT's production of the leading Scottish playwright Zinnie Harris's[96] adaptation of Eugène Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*,[97] for which they collaborated with the Edinburgh International Festival and Royal Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh, won four of the prestigious Critics' Awards for Theatre in Scotland in 2018,[98] including the Best Director award for DOT's founder Murat Daltaban.[99]

Like many other illiberal democracies, the AKP regime's characteristics have included misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia. Nevertheless, the period has also witnessed an upsurge in feminist and queer theatre production. Independent feminist theatre companies such as Grup Kafka (Group Kafka) and Tiyatro Boyalı Kuş (Theatre Painted Bird) have been at the forefront of these efforts while other companies like Oluşum Drama Enstitüsü (Formation Drama Institute) and Devrim Tiyatroları (Revolution Theatres) have also implemented feminist projects. University theatre groups such as Tiyatro Boğaziçi (Theatre Boğaziçi)[100] and projects like Sabancı University's *işte böyle güzelim* . . . (here you go my sweetie . . .)[101] contribute to Turkey's feminist theatre scene by bridging research and performance. Non-governmental organizations like Amargi have also used theatre for feminist activism. These diverse groups employed a variety of strategies to bring feminist approaches to theatre, ranging from collective dramatic writing and directing practices that challenge power hierarchies to ethnographic productions that bring intersectional perspectives on gender issues. Most of these groups also staged feminist adaptations of European and Turkish plays. Some of them, including Theatre Boğaziçi's Kadınların Tiyatrosu (Women's Theatre) and *işte böyle güzelim* . . . ,

worked towards constructing female publics by organizing performances to women-only audiences. Similarly, LGBTI-themed performances not only contribute to the creation of queer publics but also provide an opportunity for mainstream audiences to confront their transphobia and homophobia. In many cases, independent theatre companies in Turkey have been involved in political activism and it is no surprise that performers, directors and playwrights of LGBTI-themed plays are often affiliated with civil society initiatives and are activists. Many of the small, independent venues where these performances have been staged—such as ikincikat, Şermola Performans, and Kumbaracı50, all theatres-in-the round—have enabled intimacy and a sense of proximity in the interactions between audiences and actors.

Independent and Third Theaters[102] have also spearheaded productions in minority languages such as Zaza, Arabic, Kurdish, and Armenian. Theatre Amargi's 2002 production of *Yazmadan Dökülenler* (What Pours from Writing) was particularly important as a feminist production that incorporated Arabic, Zaza, and Kurdish. From 2003 onward, Revolution Theatres performed plays in Kurdish, spreading to various cities including Van, Hakkari, Antalya, Ankara, Bursa, Samsun, Denizli, and Adana. These groups are precursors to Şermola Performance, founded in 2008. The company has staged plays predominantly in Kurdish about the persecution of Kurds throughout the twentieth century. Other than a few exceptions like the Diyarbakır Municipal City Theatre, which staged plays in Kurdish, public theatres have not accommodated linguistic polyphony or staged performances in languages endemic to Anatolia and Istanbul other than Turkish.

Despite this atmosphere of censorship and political and economic oppression, a number of new theatre and performance research centers, schools for directing and playwriting, and countless theatre magazines, websites, and blogs have emerged. Today, there are approximately forty departments in Turkish universities that provide education in Theatre and related fields. Many of these departments, however, have been affected by the government's persecution of dissident scholars. The prestigious Department of Theater at Ankara University, for instance, has lost almost all its faculty.[103] Currently, the department is run by one associate professor, two assistant professors, and one lecturer, and the chair of Theater History and Theory is a musicologist. There are also several independent initiatives

such as Oyunculuk ve Sanat Stüdyosu, GalataPerform, Tiyatro Medresesi (Theatre Madrasah), Kadıköy Theatron, Müjdat Gezen Sanat Merkezi (Müjdat Gezen Arts Center), and BuluTiyatro that provide theatre training for adults. While most emerging playwrights, directors and actors trained at these institutions contribute to Turkey's independent theatre scene, others find their way into mainstream theatre as well as television, cinema, and the growing digital media industries. It is thanks to the tireless effort of these institutions, artists, scholars, and audiences that a vibrant theatre scene is sustained during difficult times in Turkey.

Special Issue Outline

This special issue features six thematically and chronologically organized essays that explore the relationship between theatre and the politics of belonging in Turkey. Our first essay, written by Murat Cankara, studies the Turkification of Ottoman popular performances during the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey. The essay builds on extensive archival research to demonstrate how dialects, accents, and ethnic stereotypes became stigmatized under the nation-state. Presenting a critical overview of the literature, Cankara questions the category of "traditional Turkish theatre" (geleneksel Türk tiyatrosu), and shows how the nationalist agenda of historians and archivists facilitated this anachronistic retrospective classification of Ottoman popular performances.

Cankara's essay is followed by another work on the histories of erasure that characterized the transition from the Empire to the Republic. Rüstem Ertuğ Altınay argues that an important aspect of Ottoman and Turkish modernization and Europeanization processes was the heterosexualization of public culture. Playwrights who experienced this sociopolitical transformation, especially the queer intellectuals who precariously negotiated the sexual politics of belonging and abjection, explored queer sexualities, identifications, practices, and desires in their works. The Altınay essay examines these important processes by focusing on the queer canonical novelist and politician Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar's 1932 problem play *Kadın Erkekleşince* (When Woman Becomes Masculine). Altınay demonstrates how the study of the neglected queer Turkish dramatic canon can provide vital insights into the politics of gender and sexuality in Turkey as well as the diverse forms of queer

political critique and provide us with an opportunity to review and revise the histories of queer Marxism and radical feminism in and beyond Turkey.

Hülya Adak studies a play by another canonical novelist and politician, Halide Edib Adıvar's *Maske ve Ruh* (The Mask and the Soul), published in English under the title *Masks or Souls?* Exploring different editions of the play published in Turkish in 1937 and 1945, and in English in 1953, Adak classifies the play as an example of absurdist drama, challenging the Eurocentrism of the absurdist canon. Adak's essay demonstrates how a feminist dissident from Turkey experimented with absurdism to criticize the authoritarian environment in early republican Turkey as well as the global political dynamics in the early years of the Cold War. Further, the essay contextualizes *Masks or Souls?* within the early phases of the European absurdist canon to illustrate how such early examples, from Eugène Ionesco to Samuel Beckett's plays, functioned as political critique.

Ela Gezen shifts the focus from Turkey to Germany to explore how the practices of theatre-makers from Turkey gained new political significance in the German context. To understand these processes, Gezen analyzes the socialist playwright Vasıf Öngören's Kollektiv Theater (Collective Theatre) (1980–1982) in light of extensive archival research. Situating the ensemble's work within the broader context of cultural production by Turkish artists and intellectuals in West Germany in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the essay shows theatre's significant role in the political debates on integration. While exploring Öngören's and other cultural producers' efforts to complicate the representations of "Turkish culture" in Germany, the essay also inquires how these early works may help us understand the politics and aesthetics of contemporary (post)migrant theatre.

İlker Hepkaner's essay studies the politics of minoritarian theatre in Turkey by analyzing the Jewish playwright Jojo Eskenazi's comedic "Moiz plays" produced in the last twenty years. Building on newly available archives, the essay demonstrates how Jews of Turkey engage with international Jewish, Turkish-national, and communal identity discourses; participate in the ongoing efforts to preserve the Judeo-Spanish language; and contribute to the establishing of transnational connections among Jews of Turkey in Turkey and Israel. The essay thus challenges the conventional definitions of "Turkish theatre" as well as the Eurocentric tendencies in the literature on "global Jewish theatre."

The last essay in this collection, written by Emine Fişek, studies the relationship between theatre and politics in contemporary Turkey by focusing on the ensembles classified as "alternative theatres." Fişek's study of Ahmet Sami Özbudak's play *İz* (The Stain), staged at GalataPerform in Istanbul in 2013, reveals how theatre responds to the politics of national memory and the contestations over the urban space. The essay thus reveals how artists negotiate the possibilities and limitations that characterize political theatre, and problematizes the political tensions that define site-specific productions in contemporary Turkey.

Studying such diverse and significant topics, which have heretofore received limited to no scholarly interest, this special issue aspires to make a crucial contribution to the critical literature on Turkish theatre and become one of the most comprehensive resources in English on the subject. Given the rich history of theatre in Turkey and its diasporas, however, our work is far from complete. The unexploited materials in the archives of Ottoman and Turkish theatre as well as the inspiring work of contemporary theatre-makers await researchers, and it is our hope that this volume will serve as a guide for future study.

Sabancı University and Freie Universität Berlin

Notes

[1] Rüstem Ertuğ Altınay's contribution to this special issue has become possible with a generous research award from Koç University's Center for Gender Studies.

[2] A noteworthy example was the mosque controversy in Austria, where children's Islamic militarist and Turkish nationalist theatre performances played a key role. See "Avusturya'da Cami Krizinin Perde Arkası: Bizi Yaktılar," *İPA News*, June 10, 2018, https://ipa.news/tr/2018/06/10/avusturyada-cami-krizinin-perde-arkasi-bizi-yaktilar/.

[3] Pioneering performance historians such as Metin And later classified meddah, ortaoyunu, Karagöz, puppetry, and the shamanistic village plays (seyirlik köy oyunları) as "traditional Turkish theatre" (geleneksel Türk tiyatrosu). This classification, however, was rather anachronistic. In many cases, the performers would not necessarily identify as "Turkish." Nor were the performances developed or created exclusively within what would become the borders of the Turkish nation-state after 1923. This anachronistic classification reflects the attempts to recuperate and Turkify the Ottoman cultural heritage in the nation-state. See Murat Cankara's essay in this special issue.

[4] Elena Frangakis-Syrett, "Capital Accumulation and Family Business Networks in Late Ottoman Izmir," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 21, no. 1/2 (2015): 55–73.

[5] Efdal Sevinçli, *İzmir'de Tiyatro* (Izmir: Ege Yayıncılık, 1994).

[6] Metin And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e Türk Tiyatro Tarihi* [Turkish Theatre History from its beginnings to 1983], 2nd ed. (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994), 91–92.

[7] Mehmet Fatih Uslu, *Çatışma ve Müzakere: Osmanlı'da Türkçe ve Ermenice Dramatik Edebiyat* [Conflict and Debate: Ottoman Dramatic Liteature in Turkish and Armenian] (Istanbul: İletişim, 2014), 32.

[8] Seyit Yöre, "Kültürleşmenin Bir Parçası Olarak Osmanlı'da Operanın Görünümü," *Zeitschrift für die Welt der Türken* 3, no. 2 (2011): 53–69 (57).

[9] Nermin Menemencioğlu, "The Ottoman Theatre (1839–1923)," *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin* 10, no. 1 (1983): 48–58 (49). The first Armenian theatre company in the Empire was founded around the 1850s in Hasköy, close to the Nersesyan School. Many leading theatre practitioners, including Mardiros Mınakyan, Bedros Mağakyan, Isdepan Ekşiyan, and Tavit Tıryants, were affiliated with this successful company. Pars Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, vol. 2 (İstanbul: Pars, 2004), 37, quoted in Uslu, *Çatışma ve Müzakere*, 52. The Vaspuragan (Van) Theatre, where Hagop Vartovyan (Güllü Agop) also performed in some of the Molière-laden repertoire, functioned until 1864. The most significant issue regarding the Vaspuragan theatre was its multilingual performances and audiences: plays were performed in Armenian, Turkish, Italian, Greek, and French (Uslu, *Çatışma ve Müzakere*, 55). In the late 1860s, Vartovyan's *Asya Kumpanyası* became one of the most significant theatre collectives, performing historical dramas narrating Armenian history (Uslu, 56). In 1869, the group changed its name to *Tiyatro-i Osmani* (Ottoman Theatre). The following year, Vartovyan's theatre became the center of all Armenian dramatic practice as well as the epicenter of Ottoman theatre in general (Uslu, 56).

[10] William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 4th ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009), 83.

[11] For Ottoman opera, see Seyit Yöre, "Kültürleşmenin Bir Parçası."

[12] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Signet, 1964).

[13] In 1859, for example, the Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances (Meclis-i Vâlâ-yi Ahkâm-ı Adliye) issued a code to regulate theatre, which also implemented detailed measures to control audience behavior. See And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e*, 70.

[14] And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e*, 70–71.

[15] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 78.

[16] Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

[17] We borrow the term from Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

[18] For Armenian nationalism, see Fırat Güllü, *Vartovyan Kumpanyası ve Yeni Osmanlılar: Osmanlıya Has Çokkültürlü Bir Politik Tiyatro Girişimi* (Vartovyan Group and New Ottomans: A Political Theatre Initiative Endemic to the Ottomans) (Istanbul: bgst Yayınları, 2008), 54.

[19] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 194.

[20] And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e*, 66.

[21] For a comprehensive study of the Naum Theater, see Emre Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu - 19. Yüzyıl İstanbul'unun İtalyan Operası* (Naum Theatre: Italian Opera of Nineteenth-Century Istanbul) (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2010).

[22] Adam Mestyan, "Cultural Policy in the Late Ottoman Empire? The Palace and the Public Theatres in 19th Century Istanbul," in *Kulturpolitik und Theater Die kontinentalen Imperien in Europa im Vergleich*, ed. Philipp Ther (Vienna: Oldenbourg/Böhlau, 2012), 135.

[23] The company's name is alternatively spelled as Tiyatro-yu Osmani.

[24] Nilgün Firidinoğlu, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Tiyatro (1870–1907)," *Tiyatro Eleştirmenliği ve Dramaturji Bölümü Dergisi* 22 (2013): 19–40 (22).

[25] Uslu, *Çatışma ve Müzakere*, 16.

[26] See G. Gonca Gökalp-Alpaslan, "İlk Türkçe Oyunlardan *Vakayi-i Acibe* ve *Havadis-i Garibe-i Keşfger Ahmed* Üzerine Bir İnceleme," *bilig* 41 (2007): 45–68; Yervant Baret Manok, *Doğu ile Batı Arasında San Lazzaro Sahnesi: Ermeni Mıkhitarist Manastırı ve İlk Türkçe Tiyatro Oyunları* (Istanbul: bgst Yayınları, 2013); and Boğos Levon Zekiyan, *Venedik'ten İstanbul'a Modern Ermeni Tiyatrosu'nun İlk Adımları* (First Footsteps of Modern Armenian Theatre from Venice to Istanbul), trans. Boğos Çalgıcıoğlu (Istanbul: bgst Yayınları, 2013).

[27] See Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi* [History of Turkish Theatre] (Istanbul: Alfa Yayıncılık, 2015); Metin And, *Şair Evlenmesi'nden Önceki İlk Türkçe Oyunlar* [First Turkish Dramatic Works Prior to Şair'in Evlenmesi] (Istanbul: İnkılap ve Aka Yayınevi, 1983) and *Başlangıcından 1983'e*.

[28] See Gökalp-Alpaslan, "İlk Türkçe Oyunlardan"; Manok, *Doğu ile Batı*; Zekiyan, *Venedik'ten İstanbul'a*; and Uslu, *Çatışma ve Müzakere*.

[29] Metin And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu 1839–1938* [Turkish Theatre in the Tanzimat and the Period of Autocracy 1839–1938] (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 1972), 320.

[30] Niyazi Akı, *XIX. Yüzyıl Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi* [Twentieth-Century History of Turkish Theatre](Erzurum: Atatürk Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1963), 13.

[31] Uslu, *Çatışma ve Müzakere*, 21.

[32] See İnci Enginün, *Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları* [New Turkish Literature Research] (Istanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 1991) and Caner Solak, "Tanzimat Tiyatrosunda Geleneksel Unsurlar" (master's thesis, Dokuz Eylül University, 2010). For the continuing influence of Ottoman performance genres on Turkish dramatic literature, see Nurhan Tekerek, *Popüler Halk Tiyatrosu Geleneğimizden Çağdaş Oyunlarımıza Yansımalar* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2001).

[33] For the role of memory in nationalist political projects, see Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Its Alternatives* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969) and Miroslav Hroch, "From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe," in *Mapping the Nation*, ed. Gopal Balakrishnan (Brooklyn: Verso, 1996), 78–97. For the role of forgetting in nation-building, see Ernest Renan, "What Is a Nation?" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 8–22.

[34] See Karen Shimakawa, *National Abjection: The Asian American Body Onstage* (Durham: Duke University Press), 2002.

[35] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Brooklyn: Verso, 1983).

[36] For the works of Ottoman and Turkish female playwrights, see Meral Harmancı McDermott, *Bastırılanın Geri Dönüşü: Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Kadın Oyun Yazarlarında Toplumsal Cinsiyet* (Istanbul: Habitus Kitap, 2016).

[37] And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat*, 23–24.

[38] Can Eyüp Çekiç, "On the Front and at Home: Women in the Modern Ottoman Epic," *Middle Eastern Studies* 52 (2016): 623–39 (625).

[39] İsmail Çetişli, et. al., *II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi Türk Edebiyatı* [Turkish Literature During the II. Constitutional Period] (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 2007), 233–34. See also Fatmagül Demirel, *2. Abdülhamid Döneminde Sansür* [Censorship During the II. Abdul Hamid Period] (Istanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2007) and Ömrüm Işıkay Gürbüz, "Abdülhamid Döneminde Sansürlenen Piyesler," *International Journal of Humanities and Education* 4, no. 8 (2018): 187–98.

[40] Menemencioğlu, "The Ottoman Theatre," 55.

[41] Menemencioğlu, "The Ottoman Theatre," 56.

[42] Ruhsan Nevvare was an alias for Hadiye Ebüzziya; Metin And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu 1908–1923* [Turkish Theater during Constitutional Rule 1908–1923] (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 1971), 115.

[43] The military coup of January 23, 1913 brought the Young Turks to power until the end of World War I in 1918. The coup was also the beginning of severe repression, violence, and coercion against non-Muslim minorities in the Ottoman Empire.

[44] And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde*, 197.

[45] And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde*, 176.

[46] For the role of theatre in nation-building and the constitution of national identity, see Alexandros Lamprou, *Nation-Building in Modern Turkey: The "People's Houses," The State and the Citizen* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015) and Elif Çongur, *Ulusal Kimliği Tiyatro ile Kurmak* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi Yayınları, 2017). For the promotion of official ideology through the content of the plays, see Esra Dicle Başbuğ, *Resmî İdeoloji Sahnede: Kemalist İdeolojinin İnşasında Halkevleri Dönemi Tiyatro Oyunlarının Etkisi* [Staging Official Ideology: Influence of Dramatic Works in People's Houses on the Construction of Kemalist Ideology] (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013).

[47] For the politics of gender in amateur theatre practices, see Alexandros Lamprou, "Negotiating Gender Identities during Mixed-Gender Activities: Amateur Theatre in the 1930s and 1940s in Turkey," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42 (2015): 618–637.

[48] And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e*, 162–63.

[49] The playwrights whose works were staged at Darülbedayi under Ertuğrul's administration include İsmail Galip Arcan, Cevat Fehmi Başkut, Musahipzade Celal, Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel, Dikran Çuhaciyan and Takvor Naylan, Ahmet Muhip Dranas, Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem, Reşat Nuri Güntekin, Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Namık Kemal, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, Ahmet Mithat, Halit Fahri Ozansoy, Nahid Sırrı Örik, Nazım Hikmet Ran, Ömer Seyfettin, Oktay Rifat, Şinasi, Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan, Mümtaz Zeki Taşkın, Ahmet Kutsi Tecer, Vedat Nedim Tör, Cahit Uçuk, and Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil. For a comprehensive study of the Darülbedayi repertoire, see Özdemir Nutku, "Darülbedayi'in Oyun Seçimindeki Tutumu Üzerine Notlar," *Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1 (1970): 69–139.

[50] And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e*, 159.

[51] Dikmen Gürün, "1950'ler ve Tiyatro Sanatının Yönelimleri," *Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi* 28 (2009): 119–29 (120).

[52] Gürün, "1950'ler ve Tiyatro," 120.

[53] Gürün, "1950'ler ve Tiyatro," 120–22.

[54] And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat*, 160.

[55] Selen Korad Birkiye, "Kültür Politikaları, Türk Tiyatrosu ve DT Örneği," *Tiyatro Eleştirmenliği ve Dramaturji Bölümü Dergisi* 10 (2007): 78–107 (83).

[56] Serkan Gıyas Çatalbaş and Nurgün Koç, "Demokrat Parti Dönemi Kültür Politikaları (1950–1960)," *Türk-İslam Medeniyeti Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi* 22 (2016): 227–46 (237–38).

[57] Müzeyyen Buttanrı, "Türk Edebiyatında Tiyatro: Cumhuriyet Devri," *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 4, no. 8 (2006): 203–44 (205).

[58] Çatalbaş and Koç, "Demokrat Parti," 235.

[59] Çatalbaş and Koç, "Demokrat Parti," 236.

[60] Sevda Şener, *Cumhuriyet'in 75. Yılında Türk Tiyatrosu* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1999), 146–47.

[61] For socialist theatre in the 1960s, see Eren Buğlalılar, *Tiyatro Ve Mücadele: 1960–1971 Arasında Türkiye'deki Politik Tiyatronun Sosyolojik Analizi* (master's thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2012), 65. See also Eren Buğlalılar, *Kadife Koltuktan Amele Pazarına: Türkiye'de Politik Tiyatro (1960–1972)* (Istanbul: Tavır Yayınları, 2014).

[62] Cemal Salman, "Türkiye Göç ve Kentleşme Süreçlerinde Alevi Deneyiminin Yeri: Bir Dönemlendirme Önerisi," *Gazi Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi* (2017): 24–51 (40).

[63] Mahmut Çetin, "Hasan Nail Canat ile Tiyatro Üzerine," Hasan Nail Canat's official webpage, accessed May 19, 2019, http://www.hasannailcanat.com/basindan/hasan_nail_canat_islam_sanatinin_yeniden_tesekkulu_1991.html. See also Mahmut Çetin, *İslam Sanatının Yeniden Teşekkülü* (Istanbul: Adım Yayınları, 1991).

[64] See also Ela Gezen, *Brecht, Turkish Theater, and Turkish-German Literature* (Rochester: Camden House, 2017).

[65] See also And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e*, 190.

[66] Gülayşe Erkoç, "1960–1970 Dönemi Tiyatro Hareketleri," *Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi* 13 (2002): n.p.

[67] See And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e*, 189.

[68] Mustafa İlber Gürtunca, *Türkiye'de Kabare Tiyatrosunun Başlangıcı, Gelişimi ve Bugünü* (master's thesis, Haliç University, 2018), 45.

[69] Erkoç, "1960–1970 Dönemi."

[70] Emre Savut, *Türkiye'de Sanat-Siyaset İlişkisi Bağlamında Devlet Tiyatroları Örneği* (master's thesis, Dokuz Eylül University, 2014), 101.

[71] Özlem Özmen, "Türkiye'de Politik Tiyatronun Gelişimi," *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 55 (2015): 415–29.

[72] Hasibe Kalkan Kocabay, "Tiyatro ve Gerçeklik İlişkisinde Belgesel Tiyatro," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Tiyatro Eleştirmenliği ve Dramaturji Bölüm Dergisi* 5 (2004): 104–131 (109).

[73] Ege Işık, *12 Mart Süreci'nde İstanbul Şehir Tiyatrosu* (master's thesis, Dokuz Eylül University, 2010), 67.

[74] Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, Ülkemizde Demokrasiye Müdahale Eden Tüm Darbe ve Muhtıralar ile Demokrasiyi İşlevsiz Kılan Diğer Bütün Girişim ve Süreçlerin Tüm Boyutları ile Araştırılarak Alınması Gereken Önlemlerin Belirlenmesi Amacıyla Kurulan Meclis Araştırması Komisyonu Raporu, vol. 1 (Ankara: Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, 2012), xiv–xv.

[75] Metin And, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Tiyatrosu* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 1983), 249; Şener, *Cumhuriyet'in 75. Yılı*, 167.

[76] Banu Ayten Akın, "Türk Tiyatrosunda 12 Eylül Darbesini Okumak," *Turkish Studies* 12/16 (2017): 1–24.

[77] Nazire Akbulut and Arzu Özyön, "1980'li Yıllarda Türkiye'deki Aydın Bunalımının Türk Tiyatrosuna Yansımaları: *Limon* Örneği," *Anemon* 7, no. 1 (2019): 167–74, and Arzu Özyön, "The Reflections of the 1980 Military Coup in Turkish Theatre: The Example of Memet Baydur," *International Journal of Language Academy* 4, no. 4 (2016): 172–82.

[78] For a comprehensive study of the 1982 Constitution, its critics, and later amendments, see Levent Gönenç, "The 2001 Amendments to the 1982 Constitution of Turkey," *Ankara Law Review* 1, no. 1 (2004): 89–109.

[79] Hakan Alkan, "Özel Tiyatrolar ve Devlet Yardımının Önemi," *Sanat Dergisi* 14 (2008): 47–52 (48).

[80] Alkan, "Özel Tiyatrolar," 48.

[81] Zerrin Akdenizli Çelenk, *1980–1990 Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Tiyatrosu'nda Oyun Yazarlığında Görülen Eğilimler ve Kaynakları* (PhD diss, Dokuz Eylül University, 1999), 399–401.

[82] For a comprehensive study on the work of Beklan Algan, see Nesrin Yılmaz Karakoç, *Tiyatro Araştırma Laboratuarı ve Beklan Algan Vizyonu* (master's thesis, Haliç University, 2015).

[83] Tamer Can Erkan, *Alternatif Tiyatrolar Ve Sürdürülebilirlik Sorunu* (master's thesis, Haliç University, 2015), 24–25. For experimental approaches to acting in Turkish theatre since the 1990s, see Melike Durak Aras, *1990 Sonrası Türkiye'de Alternatif Tiyatroda Oyunculuk Arayışları* (master's thesis, Atatürk University, 2016), 77–154.

[84] Dilek Girgin Can, "Kadınlar Bu Kez Devlet Tiyatroları Sahnesinde," *Milliyet*, October 27, 1996, http://www.milliyet.com.tr/1996/11/27/sanat/iste.html.

[85] Müşerref Öztürk Çetindoğan, "Kırsal Mitten Kentsel Ritüele Geçiş Ve Beden-Mekan İlişkisinin 1990 Sonrası Türk Oyun Yazarlığı'na Yansıması," *Tiyatro Araştırmaları Dergisi* 27 (2009): 137–60.

[86] Deniz Başar, *Performative Publicness: Alternative Theatre in Turkey after 2000s*, (master's thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2014), 58–59.

[87] Bilal Akar, *Transformation of the Kurdish Theater Field in Turkey between 1991 and 2017* (master's thesis, Koç University, 2018).

[88] For censorship in Ottoman and Turkish theatre, see Comte de Persignac (Jacques Loria), *Türkiye'de Sansür Eğlenceleri*, ed. Arda Odabaşı (Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi, 2016); Ömrüm Işıkay Gürbüz "Abdülhamid Döneminde Sansürlenen Piyesler," *International Journal of Humanities and Education* 4, no. 8 (2018): 187–98; Tahsin Konur, "Cumhuriyet Döneminde Devlet-Tiyatro İlişkisi," *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 31, no. 1–2 (1987): 307–59; Özlem Özmen, "Türkiye'de Politik Tiyatronun Gelişimi," *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 55 (2015): 415–29; David C. Stewart, "Recent Developments in the Theatre of Turkey," *Educational Theatre Journal* 6, no. 3 (1954): 213–16; Baha Dürder, "Tiyatroda Sansür I," *Türk Dili* 141 (1963): 502–4; Mine Artu, *Türkiye Tiyatrosunda Oyun Yazarlığının Gelişimi Üzerine Bir İnceleme* (master's thesis, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, 2010); Aslıhan Ünlü, *Türk Tiyatrosunda Sansür Ve Oto-sansür Olgusu (1980–1990)* (Izmir: Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, 1995); Catherine Diamond, "Darkening Clouds over Istanbul: Turkish Theatre in a Changing Climate," *New Theatre Quarterly* 14 (1998): 334–50; Arzu Özyön, "Çağdaş Türk Tiyatrosunda Sansüre Çözüm Arayışları: Civan Canova Örneği," in *Current Debates in Linguistics & Literature*, vol. 8, ed. Şenel Gerçek and Umut Balcı (London: IJOPEC Publication, 2017), 255–71.

[89] For the figures, see "Kültür İstatistikleri," *Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu*, http://tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1086. We should note, however, that the data on the audience is based on self-reporting by the venues. As we know from cinema statistics from the previous years, where the box office records are quite reliable and up to 50 percent higher than the self-reported figures, this method is far from satisfactory. For the cinema statistics, see Erkan Aktuğ, "TÜİK'in Açıkladığı Sinema Seyirci Sayısı 11 Milyon Eksik," *Radikal*, November 8, 2008, http://www.radikal.com.tr/kultur/tuikin-acikladigi-sinema-seyirci-sayisi-11-milyon-eksik-907361/.

[90] İstanbul Kültür Sanat Vakfı, *Kültür-Sanatta Katılımcı Yaklaşımlar: Şubat 2017* (2017), 12, http://www.iksv.org/i/content/226_1_kultur-sanatta-katilimci-yaklasimlar-2017.pdf. Other distressing figures from the study indicate that 39 percent of the population never reads books and 49 percent have never attended a movie theatre. The most popular activity in the country is watching television, with 85 percent of the population engaging in it.

[91] For a discussion on the AKP governments' plans to privatize public theatre companies and the measures taken in this direction, see İ. Begüm Kösemen, "Toplumu Yeniden İnşa Etmenin Kültürel Açılım Aracı Olarak TÜSAK," *Eğitim Bilim Toplum* 13 (2015): 70–93.

[92] Eren Korkmaz, "Sansür ve Ödenek Kesintisi: Karşı Refleksler ve Bağımsız Tiyatrolar," *biamag*, December 5, 2015, https://bianet.org/biamag/siyaset/169898-sansur-ve-odenek-kesintisi-karsi-refleksler-ve-bagimsiz-tiyatrolar.

[93] "Türkiye'de Tiyatronun Yasak ve Sansür Korkusu," *DW*, March 27, 2018, https://www.dw.com/tr/t%C3%BCrkiyede-tiyatronun-yasak-ve-sans%C3%BCr-korkusu/a-43141893.

[94] "Türkiye'de Tiyatronun Yasak ve Sansür Korkusu."

[95] For the call for this performance of protest, see Kadıköy Tiyatroları Platformu, "Çağrımızdır!," *Kadıköy Tiyatroları Platformu*, January 24, 2018, http://www.kadikoytiyatrolari.com/cagrimizdir./.

[96] Zinnie Harris (b. 1972) is an award-winning British playwright. Her works include *A Doll's House* (2009), *Women, Power and Politics* (2010), *The Bomb: A Partial History* (2012), *How to Hold Your Breath* (2015), and *Meet me at Dawn* (2017). DOT Theatre also performed *Meet me at Dawn* in Istanbul during the 2017–2018 season.

[97] *Rhinoceros* was written by Eugène Ionesco in 1959. Ionesco's comic allegory dystopically narrates how "humanity is trampled under the hooves of a collective social delirium"; Mark Brown, "In the Shadow of Erdogan," *The Herald*, June 17, 2018.

[98] Brown, "In the Shadow."

[99] Actor and director Murat Daltaban (b. 1966) founded DOT Theatre in Istanbul in 2005.

[100] For more information on feminist theatre, see "Feminist Tiyatro (Feminist Theatre)," special issue, *Mimesis* 12 (2006).

[101] *işte böyle güzelim . . .* is a feminist collective founded in 2002 by students and faculty members at Sabancı University. Their work has led to staged readings of oral history accounts of women in Turkey and Germany on sexuality. For the monologues they published and their staged readings, see their Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/isteboyleguzelim.

[102] Eugenio Barba's "Third Theatre" corresponds to the type of theatre and theatre professionals who are neither part of the official, subsidized, institutionalized theatre, nor avant-garde theatre. Rather, these practices and practitioners occupy a zone in between. See Ian Watson, *Toward a Third Theatre: Eugenio Barba and The Odin Teatret* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[103] Selda Öndül, "İhraçtan Öncesi ve Sonrası ile DTCF Tiyatro Bölümü," *Evrensel*, February 19, 2017, https://www.evrensel.net/haber/308848/ihractan-oncesi-ve-sonrasi-ile-dtcf-tiyatro-bolumu.