

MELANCHOLIC MODALITIES

*Affect, Islam, &
Turkish Classical
Musicians*

Denise Gill



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To my parents,
Jane and Douglas

Sabredin! Hüzünsüz bir neşe ve darlıksız bir bolluk olmaz.

Have patience! There is neither joy without melancholy
nor abundance without scarcity.

—Abdülkadir Geylâni Hz. (1077–1166)

CONTENTS

<i>List of Figures</i>	ix
<i>List of Examples</i>	xi
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
<i>Conventions</i>	xix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xxiii
Introduction	1
Melancholic Modalities	4
Rhizome One: Turkish Classical Music	7
Rhizome Two: Repertoires of Melancholies	10
Rhizome Three: The Practice of Affect	14
Rhizome Four: The Islamic Roots of Musicians' Melancholic Routes	18
Following the Rhizomes of <i>Melancholic Modalities</i>	22
1. The Melancholic State of Turkish Classical Music	26
Reforms as Roots	33
Cultural Policies and the Politics of Naming	39
Ottoman Music and the Turkish Nation-State	43
"Shaping Ears and Hearts": Emergent Media Practices	46
Institutional Changes for Practices of Musical Transmission	48
Neoliberalism, Islamic Movements, and the Privileges of Privatization	52
Death of a Genre	57
2. Separation, the Sound of the Rhizomatic <i>Ney</i> , and Sacred Embodiment	61
Sufism as Separation	72
<i>Hû</i> as Sound	76
<i>Hû</i> as Instrument Technique	82
<i>Hû</i> as Sacred Embodiment	84
<i>Hû</i> as Istanbul	87
From Life to Death and Sound to Silence	89

3. Melancholic Genealogies: Rhizomatic Listening and Bi-Aurality in Practice	95
Learning Melancholy, Learning Love	100
Understanding <i>Meşk</i>	101
Learning from a Master	106
Learning with Notation	108
Becoming Your Lineage	112
Bi-Aurality and the Problem of Assumed Listening Geographies	114
Genealogy, Orientalism, and Orientations	118
Listening Like a <i>Ney</i>	121
Case Studies: Listening Rhizomatically to <i>Meşk</i> Lineages	123
Learning Music as the Practice of Melancholy	127
4. Boundaries of Embodiment in Sounded Melancholy	128
Rendering Melancholy Musical	132
Embodying Gender, Melancholy, and the Boundaries Between The Body's Boundary: Melancholic Musicking and Tears	140
<i>Sema</i> and <i>Sama'</i>	149
Living with the Boundary	152
5. Melancholic Modes, Healing, and Reparation	154
Melancholy as Illness	157
Musical Modes as Music Therapy	159
Melancholy and Health between "East" and "West"	164
Iconic Melancholic Musicians: Neyzen Tevfik	167
Melancholic Musicking: "There is No Medicine"	173
Musicking as Food for the (Melancholic) Soul	177
Suffering as Remedy: What to Take Away from Melancholic Musicking	181
Conclusion	183
Theorizing Affect in Musics and Beyond	183
Bringing the Rhizomes of Turkish Classical Musicians to Bear beyond the Academy	189
Notes	195
Bibliography	211
Discography	241
Index	243

LIST OF FIGURES

- I.1 The tree metaphor versus the rhizome metaphor (illustration by the author). 2
- I.2 The four most common Turkish words used by Turkish classical musicians all translate simply to “melancholy” in standard Turkish-English dictionaries. 13
- 1.1 Ayşe and Necati Çelik, July 2013 (photograph by the author). 27
- 2.1 First line of poetry in Mevlana Celaluddin Rumi’s *Mesnevi*, Book I, written by calligrapher Farrokh Namazi. 61
- 2.2 *Ney*-s on display in Mevlana’s Museum in Konya, Turkey (photograph by the author). 62
- 2.3 *Hû* in *ebru* by Cem Yılmaz from the author’s collection (photograph by the author). 71
- 2.4 The entrance to Mevlana’s mausoleum and museum in Konya (photograph by the author). 75
- 2.5 The “vav” letter inscribed on the author’s finger rings (*yüzük*) that hold picks (*mızrap*) in place for playing the trapezoidal zither, the *kanun* (photograph by the author). 82
- 2.6 Diagram of the relationship between spiritual ideologies and musical meaning. 93
- 2.7 Calligraphy of *Hû* in *müsenna* carved into the entrance of the Yeni Camii of Istanbul (photograph by the author). 94
- 3.1 Necati Hoca’s empty *atölye* on an early weekday afternoon before students and other music professionals gather for music making and conversation (photo by the author). 104
- 5.1 Life-sized statue of Neyzen Tevfik in Maçka, Istanbul (photograph by İpek Orhon). 170
- 5.2 An invitation to sit with Neyzen Tevfik (photograph by İpek Orhon). 170

LIST OF EXAMPLES

- C.1 Standard Turkish notation of flat (*bemol*) and sharp (*diyez*) symbols according to *koma* intervals. xx
- 1.1 Pitches (*dizi*) for the ascending mode (*makam*) *Uşşak*. 28
- 1.2 Lines of improvisation introducing *Uşşak makamı*. 29
- 1.3 Outline of the basic pitches for the descending mode *Eviç* into *Uşşak* (from left to right): *eksik Segâh* pentachord melds with a *Rast* pentachord, which pivots into an *Uşşak* tetrachord. 29
- 1.4 Example of an improvisatory modulation from *Eviç* to *Uşşak makamı*. 30
- 1.5 A brief line of *taksim* (improvisation) indicating *Segâh makamı*. 34
- 1.6 The loosely rhythmic “*Tekbir*” by Buhurizade Mustafa Itri in *Segâh makamı*. 34
- 1.7 Buhurizade Mustafa Itri’s “*Salât-ı Ümmiye*” in *Segâh makamı*. 34
- 1.8 The pitches (*dizi*) of the ascending *Suzidilârâ makamı*. 36
- 2.1 The *ilahi* entitled “*Mestü hayranım*”—often also referred to by the name “*Hû demek ister*”—in *Hicaz makamı*. 79
- 2.2 The *ilahi* entitled “*Yüce sultanım derde dermanım*” by the nineteenth century composer Zekai Dede in *Suzidil makamı*. 80
- 2.3 The *ilahi* entitled “*Ya Rabbi aşkın ver bana efendim*” in *Nihavend makamı*. 91
- 3.1 Descending musical line in the style of Vecihe Daryal. 124
- 3.2 Descending musical line in the style of Ahmet Yatman. 124
- 4.1 Şerif İçli’s composition “*Derdimi ummana döktüm*” with poetry by Süleyman Nazif. 134

- 4.2 The first section of Şerif İçli's composition "*Derdimi ummana döktüm*" rendered melancholic [*hüzünlü*]. 135
- 4.3 The first section of Şerif İçli's composition "*Derdimi ummana döktüm*" rendered joyful [*neşeli*]. 135
- 4.4 "*Nihavent Longa*" by Kevser Hanım (1887–1963). 144
- 5.1 *Nağme* in Neyzen Tevfik's improvisation in *Nihavend makamı*. 171
- 5.2 *Nağme* in Neyzen Tevfik's improvisation in *Rast makamı*. 172
- 5.3 *Nağme* in Neyzen Tevfik's improvisation in *Saba makamı*. 172
- 5.4 Transcription of the piece "*Olmaz İlaç*" by Hacı Arif Bey (1831–1885). 175
- 5.5 Transcription of the *ilahi* (religious hymn) "*Dinle Sözümü*" penned by Sultan Veled, son of Mevlana Celaluddin Rumi. 180

PREFACE

In this book, I explore how a particular artistic community sounds out, embodies, narrates, and experiences melancholies in their music making. In my focus on Turkish classical musicians, I resist solely approaching musical meaning by analyzing “music” itself. This type of sonicist approach to the study of affect would not fit the ethnographic evidence that emerged in my extended fieldwork in Turkey’s western urban centers of Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, and Konya. I instead maintain integrity with my experiences as an observant researcher, archival and oral historian, student, and concert-hall performer of Turkish classical music. I claim that melancholy is an affective practice mindfully engaged by musicking individuals in collective community. This book delves into the rich and complicated world of musicians’ ideological beliefs, pedagogical histories and practices, forms of listening, and subjectivities. It uses the concepts and diverse iterations of “melancholy” to offer an ethnography of how affective practices translate musical meaning for a community of Turkish classical musicians.

Why Turkish classical music? My interest in this music genre began primarily as an aesthetic pursuit. I am fortunate to have the economic, racial, and citizenship privileges that allowed me to pursue my interest in this music genre through higher education in the United States. Increasing my knowledge of Turkish classical music was made possible only through the extended mentorship of multiple teachers in my path, beginning with my undergraduate education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Ethnomusicologist and virtuosic *kaval* (Bulgarian end-blown flute) master Donna Buchanan first opened my ears to this genre, and in my junior year, she bought her Balkanalia UIUC ensemble a *kanun* (Middle Eastern trapezoidal zither) that I coveted and taught myself on before I could travel to Izmir and purchase my own in 2003. My graduate years at the University of California Santa Barbara fortunately immersed me in *ustad* Scott Marcus’s remarkable Middle East Ensemble and exposed me to diverse collectives of Turkish, Jewish, Arab, Greek, Armenian, and Persian musicians in southern and northern California. There too I had the privilege of studying under Sonia Tamar Seeman, whose teaching and

scholarship greatly influenced early theoretical formulations of this project. In San Francisco in 2004, I first met and played *kanun* for the musician who was to become my primary teacher: Necati Çelik (b. 1955), a master virtuoso on the *ud* (short-necked lute). Necati Hoca (“Necati teacher”) to this day continues to open doors for me in Turkey, musically and socially. Since I first began fieldwork for this project in 2007, innumerable musicians in Turkey have welcomed me into their studios, ateliers, workshops, rehearsals, and homes. It is their voices, musics, expressions, stories, opinions, and feelings that make up the core of the book you hold in your hand.

My interest in affect—and specifically, the multiple iterations and diverse melancholies named and espoused by Turkish classical musicians—was initially peaked in my master’s thesis on multivalent interpretations of musical transmission in this music genre. In the course of that project, I realized that moments of music transmission—especially in the context of master-apprentice frameworks—were ultimately critical processes of inculcating correct “feeling rules” (Hochschild 1983). In my fieldwork for the dissertation, I came to understand that affect was not only that which bound the community of Turkish classical musicians together—beyond their affinity for the music—it also bound together entire groups of amateurs, patrons, and lifelong students of the genre. In other words, communities making Turkish classical music not only perform and listen together; they also “feel” together. While my initial enthusiasm led me to attempt to cover a spectrum of affective practices beyond melancholies, I quickly realized the scope of such a project was too broad. I hope that future work will consider the additional affective particularities of Turkish classical musicians as well as issues of audience reception and diverse modalities of listening to this genre of music.

I was able to access the affective circulation and socialization of Turkish classical musical meanings as someone who was inculcated into a master-student relationship with Necati Hoca. I was deemed proficient enough on *kanun*, thanks to the lessons I received from *kanun* masters Celaleddin Aksoy and the late Halil Karaduman. That Necati Hoca and I did not play the same instrument was unimportant, as I was primarily learning the arts of instrumental improvisation (*taksim*), melodic ornamentation, and repertoire from him. To Necati Hoca, I am a cherished student, albeit not a full apprentice, as I could not immerse myself in sequential years (a decade or more, preferably) of living and making music by his side. As with many ethnomusicologists, bi-musicality (Hood 1960), or becoming “fluent” in a “different” musical tradition, was a central aspect of my fieldwork process. Indeed, bi-musicality has been as a necessary method in my understanding of the intersections of affective practice and embodiment.

However, I found that my greatest insight came not from bi-musicality, but rather with a shift in the way I listened to sound, musical structure, meaning,

and historicities in music making and discourse. I have named this process *bi-aurality* and explore it further in chapter 3. My rhizomatic approach, explained in the book's introduction, and my focus on bi-aurality allow me to identify the fundamental problems of translating sonic, affective materials and practices from the musicians producing it to the normatively secular and academic format our books take. Developing bi-aural horizontal and rhizomatic listening practices was necessary for me to develop the ears to both hear Turkish classical music enough to produce it myself and to effectively listen to the diverse voices and multiplicity of opinions of Turkish classical musicians themselves. I attempt to translate these rhizomatic listening practices and use my sketch of rhizomes to oscillate between different registers of explanatory writing.

Rhizomatic analysis and listening practices make sense as an approach in both literal and figurative terms. Literally, the central instrument of the Turkish classical music canon is the *ney*, an end-blown reed flute that is itself crafted from the rhizome *arundo donax*. The *arundo donax* is a tall perennial cane that rhizomatically sprouts in the marshy regions of Southeastern Turkey. The *ney* itself rhizomatically surfaces in multiple places throughout this book: in chapter 2 I discuss how *ney*-s are constructed and the sound (*Hû*) with which one produces music on the *ney*. Famous *neyzen*-s, or master *ney* players, make appearances in moments of analysis and storytelling throughout the text. In the Conclusion, I describe my journey with a reed collector to a reed bed in the Antep region, where I witnessed and participated in the separation of botanical reeds that would eventually become *ney*-s.

Rhizomatic analysis and listening practices are also figurative. They help me identify how multiple, diverse communities of Turkish classical musicians identify, circulate, and socialize affective particularities through sound and musicking. "Melancholy" is the central rhizomatic affective practice I grab in this text, but my method of tracing how musicians perform, embody, hear, and articulate melancholies is purposefully rhizomatic to allude to the emptiness and lack of other feeling practices I do not consider in this book. With rhizomatic analysis and listening, I hope other scholars may grab, take apart, and follow different affective practices in alternate or syncretistic ways.

This book is built upon firsthand archival research and ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Turkey in major urban centers, mostly located in the western part of the country during 2004–2005, 2006, 2007–2009, 2011, 2013, and 2014. It draws on interviews—life stories, oral histories, and dialogic listening—with individuals of highly differentiated intersectional identities (in terms of race/ethnicity, class, age, gender, sexual orientation, geographic location, socioeconomic class, religious affiliation, political party affiliation, and able-bodiedness). I have recorded and analyzed over two hundred hours of music making and have detailed notes from over three dozen other events I attended for which recording was prohibited. I include insight from my

own participant-observational experience and as a performer of this music genre on *kanun* who has concertized professionally in Turkey and Europe. My participant-observation settings included regular rehearsals for two State Ensembles and less frequent visits to other professional ensembles, municipal amateur ensemble rehearsals, music lessons, intimate professional music gatherings, and performances sponsored by private industry. Accompanying consultants to a variety of locations and engaging in political events and religious rituals, I gained extensive insight about the practices of mourning, healing, historicizing, and memorializing that contribute to the crafting of melancholic modalities.

The consultants who fill these pages are professional instrumentalists and vocalists of Turkish classical music. The interpretations of my teachers' and consultants' statements and any possible inaccuracies are completely mine. Most individual musicians go unnamed in the book, per their requests. After all, interviews about music and emotion often led to retelling lessons and recalling memories and sounds that are themselves intimate. In these moments, consultants generously shared their vulnerabilities as musicians and as people. Respecting consultants' boundaries, I have chosen to identify most musicians anonymously, sometimes referring to their primary instrument or role as a vocalist. Often anonymity surfaces simply because my recorded evidence included music making in large groups that flowed in and out of talk as well as musicking (Small 1998), and I could not pinpoint the specific speaker of a given statement. In other cases, consultants have directly requested anonymity as our discussions often got into the sticky terrain of disparate political party affiliations, critical judgments about other musicians, and passionate interpretations of Turkish civil life. Some key musicians are named in particular encounters: my two beloved primary teachers, Necati Çelik (b. 1955) and Celaleddin Aksoy (b. 1961); celebrated and renowned vocalist Melihat Gülses (b. 1958); prominent *neyzen* and unarguably one of the central musicians of the current century, Niyazi Sayın (b. 1927); my first *kanun* teacher Halil Karaduman (1959–2012); and esteemed composer and violinist Ünal Ensari (1938–2016). Losing Ünal Hoca while this book was in its final editing stages rendered a feeling of urgency to share his interpretations of affect and embodiment in music. Remembering Ünal Hoca, I mourn our collective loss of a great musician, composer, teacher, and storyteller.

My own positionality in the social worlds of Turkish classical musicians simultaneously offered and disavowed particular understandings of affective practices. Necati Hoca will speak candidly about the fact that I came to him already a musician. Perhaps the most important aspect of my situatedness beyond my foreignness was that I am a heterosexually practicing cisgender woman. I spent quality time with professional women Turkish classical musicians, but as an instrumentalist first and foremost, I spent most of my time with men. I was also unmarried during ethnographic fieldwork, though I fit

into gendered social structures as a student of my teacher and was treated with respect because of my association with him. Yet I often found myself in intimate musician gatherings at which I was either the only woman or one of two women who were actively playing. The care labor that supports these music gatherings—from the preparation of the rooms to the making of the treats and deserts, to constant tea service and refilling water glasses, to clean up after our dispersal—is largely done by the wives and daughters of musicians or hired staff. In other words, much of the material in this book—from the music making to the practice of affect itself—is made possible for musicians by the women who perform domestic tasks that allow musicians the time and space to engage in their creative, artistic, and affective practices. My own teacher's wife, Ayşe Çelik, is a stunning example of an incredibly hard-working, sacrificing, and cosmopolitan hostess whose talents, food, gifts, and conversation enabled my teacher to develop a wide global network of devoted students and listeners.

As I explain in the book's conclusion, selfhood is rhizomatic as well. While most of the Turkish classical musicians with whom I work locate me primarily as a *kanun* player, this book is the interpretive manifestation of my intellectual work in Turkey in dialogue with the wide array of disciplines with which I engage, such as ethnomusicology, anthropology, Islamic studies, feminist and queer theories, and cultural studies. This book is a multilayered ethnography of sonic melancholies that result from loss on many levels (spiritual, cultural, social, political); these melancholies are affective practices experienced and enjoyed by Turkish classical musicians today. Yet the book's larger intervention lies in the rhizomatic analysis I utilize to avoid the construction of binaries and allow for the multiple—and often conflicting—interpretations of discourse and meaning. This book pushes new ground for bi-aurality: thinking and listening in nonlinear, horizontal, and spectral ways.

Melancholy remains current, almost permanently affixed to understandings of Turkishness. Turkish writers devote entire books to melancholy (Temelkuran 2016 and Pamuk 2004) and scholars unravel specific musical or sonic articulations of melancholy, suffering, and loss (O'Connell 2013, Erol 2007, Özbek 2006, Özgür 2006, Stokes 1992 and 2010). I am finishing this book in the immediate aftermath of the failed attempted coup in Turkey of July 15, 2016. The effects of the coup attempt have left some Turks with a "familiar melancholy" (Arango 2016), while other Turks voice pride because of resistance to the attempted coup and also express a vulnerable, tentative hopefulness for Turkey's political future. In the end, the failed coup has produced new forms of listening (Gill 2016) and engendered an urgency of how attentive we must be to the intersections of feeling, sound, and national belonging. It is my hope that this book elucidates the importance of listening closely to what musicians can teach us about the ways affects are practiced, domesticated, managed, performed, and cherished.

CONVENTIONS

After the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, a number of national reforms enacted profound transformations in civic life. Turkey's 1924 constitution established a secular nation-state, and removed Islam as the official religion. In 1928, the Ottoman script, based on an Arabic alphabet, was replaced with the Latin alphabet. These changes were institutionalized, and effectively taught and transferred through generations in state-sponsored educational structures. However, music reforms did not take full effect with Turkish classical musicians who continued to learn through master-apprentice relationships on the basis of oral transmission. As such, there are a number of terms, categories, expressions, and names in this book that are referred to interchangeably by my consultants in Turkish, Ottoman, Persian/Farsi, and Arabic.

In this book I adopt the following conventions. All translations from Turkish, Ottoman, Persian/Farsi, and Arabic are my own unless otherwise designated explicitly. Names and terms employ the modern Turkish spellings found in Redhouse (1997), and I use the modern standard Turkish spelling system for religious terms and place names. Following O'Connell (2013), I further do not employ the Turkish plural suffixes (-lar, -ler), choosing instead to append the English (-s) to the singular form. If the plural form occurs in a direct quote, I maintain the original spelling.

The musical transcriptions I offer in this book are all my own, based on multiple live versions observed and engaged. My transcriptions follow the conventions set in Öztuna (1990). These transcriptions reflect standard notation practices for Turkish art and classical musics, meaning that they are typically presented an octave above performance pitch and notated on a tonic according to standard representation for a given *makam* (microtonal melodic mode).

Importantly, Turkish classical *makam*-s are generally not conceived as collections of pitches (*dizi*-s) but are rather understood as groupings of microtonally inclusive intervals (*aralık*-s) that make up *makam*. The primary unit that makes up any given interval is a microtonal *koma*. A *koma* is essentially one of nine divided parts between two consecutive whole tones. Many Turkish music

theorists tend to argue that the Turkish *koma* is itself the Pythagorean comma (cf. Arel 1952, Ezgi 1953, Özkan 1984, Öztuna 1990, Yektâ 1922). Readers new to *makam* in Turkish classical and art musics specifically will notice the unique Turkish accidentals developed throughout the twentieth century to designate *koma* microtonal intervals with flats (*bemol*-s) and sharps (*diyez*-s) (Table C.1).

Any given *makam* is therefore a collection of *koma* that, combined together in particular arrangements (of trichords, tetrachords, and pentachords), have specific idiomatic melodic contours and patterns (*seyir*-s) as well as particular directionalities (descending, ascending). Musicians require a deep knowledge of *makam* to improvise (*taksim etmek*) and understand idiosyncratic microtonal inflections—themselves often learned in a master-apprentice system—that standard Turkish notation practices cannot fully represent. *Makam* should thus be understood as a complicated set of rules that govern pre-composed improvisational forms, including intra-*makam* or multi-*makam* modulations.

However, readers should know that there are many microtonal systems in operation in Turkey today; for example, Turkish folk *makam* systems differ vastly from the multiple microtonal systems used by Turkish classical musicians. In contemporary practices of Turkish classical music, *aralık*-s and *koma*-s may have different usages based on a given musician’s educational background, aesthetic preferences, and performance practices. Furthermore, intonations of intervals may differ substantially—even when performed by the same musician—on the basis of the social context of performance (concert

Table C.1 STANDARD TURKISH NOTATION OF FLAT (BEMOL) AND SHARP (DIYEZ) SYMBOLS ACCORDING TO KOMA INTERVALS

Number of <i>koma</i> in the interval	Flats	Sharps
1	♭	♯
4	♭♭	♯♯
5	♭♭♭	♯♯♯
8	♭♭♭♭	♯♯♯♯
9	♭♭♭♭♭	×

hall, religious ritual, radio performance, entertainment venue, recording studio, intimate music gathering) and when one is playing or singing as a soloist, as opposed to performing as a member of an instrumental orchestra or singing within a chorus. For English-language sources on Turkish classical and art music *makam* systems in theory and in practice, see M. Aydemir 2010 (translation by Erman Dirikcan), Beken and Signell 2006, Bozkurt et al. 2009, Ederer 2015, Signell 1997, Stubbs 1994, and Wright 1990.

In my transcribed music examples of compositions, I additionally notate the rhythmic mode (*usul* or *usûl*) utilized in the piece. I indicate the basic beats of a given *usul* in the top left corner above my notated musical examples. Within parentheses, I transcribe the basic form of the named *usul* by marking lower pitched beats (*düm*) with stems down and higher pitched beats (*tek*) with stems up.

Additional transcriptions of the pieces offered in this book can be accessed online, either through the national archives for Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) at <http://www.trtnotaarsivi.com/> or at <http://www.neyzen.com>. I have chosen to focus most of my musical examples on well-known pieces, and encourage readers to do internet wandering on various music sites to find alternative versions and live performances of the works I write about. I additionally supply a suggested discography at the end of the book to help readers shape their ears to the sounds of Turkish classical music by some of its greatest artisans.

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Writing this book has been a long process that incurred many debts to consultants, teachers, guides, and institutions. I completed a draft while in residence at the Center for the Humanities at my home institution, Washington University in St. Louis. Internal and external readers were brought to campus to read my manuscript and offer constructive criticism to me as the Center for the Humanities' First Book Fellow. The workshop that was held at the Center for the Humanities in December 2015 was one of the most profound and humbling moments in my scholarly career; thoughtful changes were suggested by my readers, Center for the Humanities director Jean Allman, external readers Judith Becker and John Morgan O'Connell, and internal readers Nancy Reynolds and Patrick Burke. I am particularly grateful to John Morgan O'Connell for unreservedly sharing his extensive knowledge with me, and whose monumental works on *alaturka* and on loss have deeply informed this project. The faculty in my home Department of Music has supported this project in all of its parts, and I am especially thankful for the careful attention to my work given by Pat Burke, Dolores Pesce, Alexander Stefaniak, Todd Decker, Paul Steinbeck, Ben Duane, Craig Monson, and our former chair Peter Schmelz.

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Melancholic Modalities

