

mehmet okonşar

pianist
composer
musicologist



Mehmet Okonsar was born in Istanbul (Turkey) and lived in Paris during his first schooling. He started studying piano at the National Conservatory of Ankara, with Nimet Karatekin and Necil Kazim Akses. Thanks to the rich resources the Ankara Conservatory then possessed and the Médiatheque of the Centre Culturel Français d'Ankara, he grew up studying and listening the music of Pierre Boulez, Edgar Varèse, Olivier Messiaen and Pierre Schaeffer, composers which will have a strong influence on him.

After about a year and half studying at the Ankara Conservatory, the family moved to Belgium where he took the class of Jean-Claude Vanden Eynden at the Brussels Royal Conservatory of Music. Vanden Eynden, who will entirely reshape the keyboard technique of Okonsar, is a dedicated follower of the style of Eduardo del Pueyo.

The keyboard technique bases of Eduardo del Pueyo and Jean-Claude Vanden Eynden, his pupil, are based on the work of Marie Jaell, a pupil of Franz Liszt.

His first important recital took place in 1979. The program included Préludes by Messiaen and the Pictures of an Exhibition by Mussorgsky.

Just before the military coup of 1980 the Okonsar family is back in Belgium. He resumes studying with Jean-Claude Vanden Eynden. In 1980 Okonsar is rewarded Premier Prix avec Distinction. His program included Dante Sonata by Liszt. His studies continued after the sudden death of his father with a special scholarship and he got the de Piano Avec la plus Grande Distinction, Premier Nommé in 1986 by performing the Concerto for piano op.42 by Arnold Schoenberg.

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At the end of his piano studies, Okonsar will get the privilege of working with one of the greatest composers of Belgium: Madame Jacqueline Fontyn. At the same time he will meet and study with a pupil of Messiaen: Claude Ballif. In 1989 he gets his degrees in Composition-Orchestration from the Royal Conservatory of Music of Brussels.

Alexis Weissenberg after having heard a recording by Okonsar invites him (on a scholarship) to study in Switzerland.

He endorses the Belgian citizenship in 1992 but at the same time the President Suleyman Demirel of Turkey rewards him with the title "State Artist of the Turkish Republic". Therefore Okonsar will settle in Turkey with his wife Lale Okonsar, painter.

Okonsar works now from Turkey on a busy schedule concertizing, composing, writing and teaching. He owns and manages a CD label exclusive to his own recordings, LMO-Records, and a publishing company "inventor-musicæ."



His international career begins with the first prize at the International Young Virtuoses Competition of Antwerp in 1982. His orchestral début is with the Third Concerto by Rachmaninoff performed at the deSingel Concert Hall in Antwerp. His other prizes are: Paris, 1989, "J. S. Bach" at the Salle Gaveau: second prize; 1990, Rome, Association Chopin "Premio Etruria": first prize; and 1991, United States, Utah, the sixth prize at the "Gina Bachauer International Piano Competition".

The "Académie des Arts Contemporains" of Enghien, Belgium rewards him in 1991, for his acoustic and electronic compositions the Gold and Bronze medals respectively.

Mehmet Okonsar performed with the following orchestras: Utah Symphony, Antwerp, Poznan Philharmonic and Lublin Philharmonic. Some of the conductors he played with: Joseph Silverstein, Charles Dutoit, Sylvain Cambreling, Ingo Metzmacher, Christof Escher.

In recital he appeared at London (Royal Opera House), Paris (Salle Gaveau), New York, San Francisco, Tokyo, Kyoto, Bruxelles, Anvers, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Rome, Athens, Calgary, Salt Lake City, Ljubljana.

His noted concerts included the premiere in Turkey of the Concerto for piano by Schoenberg and his performances of the Concerto for piano by Lutoslawski in Poland.

He has been a guest judge at the National Piano Competition of Japan under the auspices of the P.T.N.A. ("Piano Teachers National Association"). His researches on music and technology were presented in a lecture at the Yamaha headquarters in Hamamatsu, Japan. Okonsar wrote and presented a documentary series on the National Television Broadcast of Turkey, the T.R.T.

Okonsar is a published writer in several music related periodicals in Turkey. His articles published in Andante the most important Turkish periodical on classical music, were featuring imaginary interviews with "Mephisto" on the subject of the global decadence of the quality of classical music, in Turkey and in the world, a subject often worked on by Okonsar. His other published subjects are mainly about musical composition, analysis, music history. Okonsar publishes also in English and French.

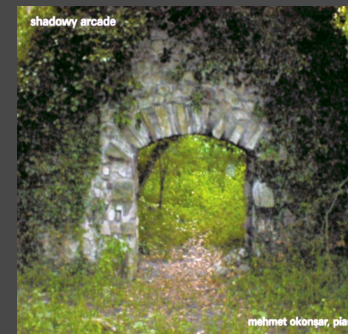
His repertoire encompasses a range from the early 17th. century ("The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book") including among others Orlando Gibbons and Giles Farnaby and extends to late 20th. century with the works by Karlheinz Stockhausen and Witold Lutoslawski.

Notable works in this repertoire are: J.S. Bach "The Art of Fugue" performed on organ (or piano) and harpsichord; the Goldberg Variations, the integrale of Well-tempered Keyboard.

Okonsar has performed recitals featuring the complete piano works by Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg and Anton Webern.

Despite he refuses all sort of "musical specialization", his repertoire is heavily on the "modern" side with Igor Stravinsky "Three Movements of Petrouchka" the "Sequenza" for the piano by Luciano Berio and the Klavierstücke by Karlheinz Stockhausen.

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DISCOGRAPHY

Solo on his own label LMO-Records:

J.S.BACH: *Goldberg Variations* (piano)

J.S.BACH: *The Well-Tempered Keyboard* (piano)
(integrale, 48 preludes and fugues in 3 CD)

J.S.BACH: *The Art of Fugue* (on organ and harpsichord)

J.S.BACH: *The Musical Offering* (on electronic instruments)

Shadowy Arcade free improvisations on solo piano

On other labels:

Live at Salt Lake City Recital, recorded live (1991)

TANGO, Best tangos by A. Piazzolla: personal arrangements for piano solo

Mehmet Okonsar Plays Gershwin Complete works for the solo piano by Georges
Gershwin and a personal transcription of the Rhapsody in Blue

With other artists:

T.R.T. Youth Choirs 20. Anniversary: Commissioned work by the T.R.T. (Turkish National Radio and Television) for a capella choir;

T.R.T. Chamber Orchestra: J.S. Bach, concertos for keyboard in F min. and G min.

Adept of Free Music philosophy, Okonsar publishes all his recordings and writings as well as his compositions on the Internet under the GNU GPL or Creative Commons licenses



The sound possibilities of the classical orchestra started to be conceptualized by the composers in terms of "sound envelopes", "sound filters and formants. Okonsar followed a similar path in his orchestrations, in the nineties.

The music by Okonsar is extremely structuralist and calls for an analytical approach. Today the composer uses the computer to formulate symbolic and algorithmic music composition principles. Okonsar uses LISP and Common Music to create a strong structural base for his compositions and advocates this approach as the condition sine qua non for a strong and coherent work.

This structuralism is presented in the finished score in a very detailed, complex and refined musical écriture.

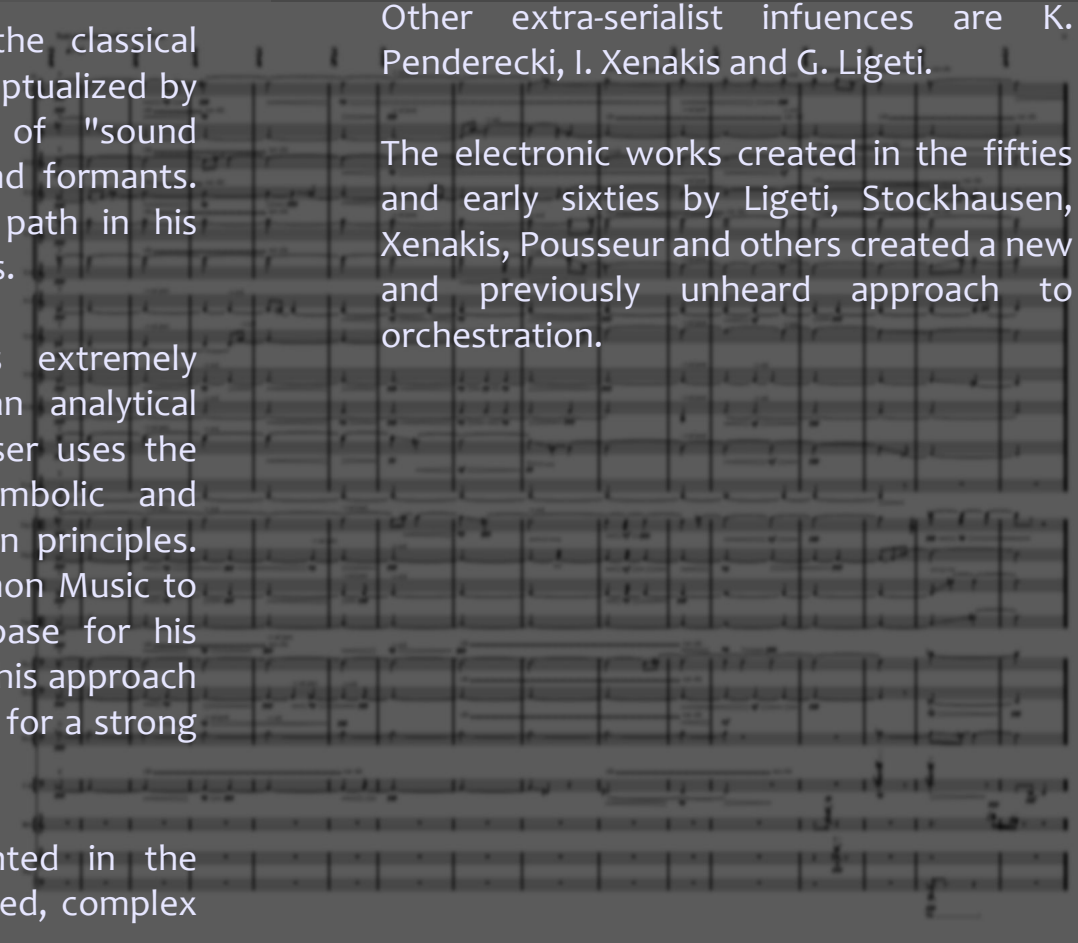
Mehmet Okonsar started composing at the age of 11. His role-models were Arnold Schoenberg et Pierre Boulez.

The compositions by Okonsar were from the beginning exploring unusual ensembles in an avant-garde line.

During the eighties atonal (free) Jazz specially by Cecil Taylor and the intricate voicings by Bill Evans had strong impact on the total serialism Okonsar always used. Other extra-serialist influences are K. Penderecki, I. Xenakis and G. Ligeti.

The electronic works created in the fifties and early sixties by Ligeti, Stockhausen, Xenakis, Pousseur and others created a new and previously unheard approach to orchestration.

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COMPOSITIONS

Shir Ha Shirim שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים For soprano and grand orchestra (2010).

Tehillim תהלים For solo vocal (male or female) and small orchestra (2010).

Kaleidoscopes (2006-2009)

N1. for Piano Première by the composer in Ankara

N2. for Strings Chamber Orchestra, Marimba and Piano. Première conducted by Hakan Sensoy in Istanbul

N3. for Viola and Piano. Première by Çetin Aydar (viola) and the composer in Ankara

Percussion X (2005) For three percussionists. Première in Ankara by he Trio SaNeNa.

Temples of Kyoto (2004-2010) Three pieces for the piano,

N1. Kinkaku-ji 金閣寺 , *The Temple of the Golden Pavillon*, Première by the composer in Tokyo (dedicated to the memory of Mrs. Yasuko Fukuda)

N2. Tetsugaku no Michi, Philosopher's Walk 哲学の道 (dedicated to Reiko and Masatsugu Sasaki)

N3. Ginkaku-ji 銀閣寺 , *The Temple of the Silver Pavillon*

Two Seascapes (2000) for mixte choir *a-capella*. Première conducted by Prof. Mustafa Apaydin, Ankara.

Rhythm Studies for Piano Solo, Series 2 (2000)

Rhythm Studies for Piano Solo, Series 1 (1999), inspired by the Schillinger System of Musical Composition

Oannés & Mr. Dunne (1990) Two sketches for improvisation for one or several piano(s). Première by the composer in Brussels.

Unknown (1989) for Bass Clarinet and Percussion. Première in Brussels.

Mandel Fractal Studies (1997) Five pieces for the Piano based on fractals.

Emulation (1989) Five Pieces for the Piano. Première by the composer in Istanbul.

Chameleon (1987) Three Pieces for the Piano. Première by the composer in Brussels.



Temples of Kyoto N.2,
for the piano

Kaléidoscopes N.2, for chamber
orchestra, marimba and piano

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Percussion X,
for 3 percussionists

LECTURES

Free Software – Free Society (relevance: computer technology students, music composition students, general attendance). General presentation on the software technology, methodology and philosophy known as “Free Software”. Detailing on its concepts, methods and recent achievements. Its implications on the information technology and society. General concepts behind specific applications selected among those who can be most relevant to the attendance, i.e. Music applications in music schools, document preparation systems in more general, or LISP and artificial intelligence applications for music composing.

LISP and Algorithmic Music Composition Techniques (relevance: computer technology students, music composition students). Specific presentation on the “Common Music” composition software environment, its methodology and benefits to the contemporary composer. Detailing on its concepts, methods and presenting practical results i.e. Score and music generation based on procedural algorithms.

Structuralism in Music (relevance: music students, musicology scholars). General presentation on the XXth. Century music language, its methodology and philosophy, more specifically on the musical composition school known as the “Darmstadt School” i.e. P. Boulez, K. Stockhausen etc. Detailing on its concepts, methods and manifestos. Its implications on the music of our time and society. General concepts behind specific works selected among the most significant ones of the period (roughly 1950-1970) presented with introductions and sample music played after recordings or live if a piano is available.

Jewish Music (relevance: music students, musicologists and general attendance). Extensive presentation of the various “Jewish Musics” ranging from musicological archeology gathered from Biblical texts, Dead Sea scrolls and recent researches up to contemporary creations. Detailing on the dialectical influences to and from the Ottoman Court, Salomone Rossi and the Baroque, the European “classical” music, Wagner and the “Jewishness in Music”, Jewish music from non-Jewish composers (Shostakovitch and Prokofieff), Ernst Bloch and the modern. Lecture presented with sample musics played after recordings.
Here is an overview of the visuals

György Ligeti and Micro-Polyphony (relevance: music composition students, music students, musicologists and general attendance). Analysis with audio samples of the work Atmosphere by G. Ligeti. The revolutionary orchestral writing will be analyzed. The origins of those orchestral music writing innovations will be traced back to the beginnings of the electro-acoustic music in the 1950's. A new theory of orchestration will be outlined.

WRITINGS

Ligeti and Micropolyphony
Debussy "Etude Pour les Quartes"
Stockhausen Klavierstück N.9
Structure and Spectra
Jewish Music, A Concise Study
Conlon Nancarrow
Masonic Signs in Music

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