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Producing (Musical) Difference: Power, Practices and Inequalities in Diversity Initiatives in Germany's Classical Music Sector

Kristina Kolbe

University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands
London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

Abstract
This article examines whether diversity debates in the Western cultural industries can contribute to the undoing of racialised representations of otherness or reproduce 'race'-making logics. Based on a year-long ethnography of diversity efforts made at an opera house in Germany, I explore how difference is negotiated in the production of two opera pieces meant to bring together Western and Turkish musical practices. I specifically examine how power relations around 'race' and ethnicity play out in processes of commissioning, composing and rehearsal. Situating these creative practices within classical music's institutional histories and wider discourses of citizenship and belonging in Germany, I examine to what extent racialised representations of difference are challenged or remade. I document how diversity initiatives in the cultural industries, even when aimed at institutional change, proceed within hierarchical parameters that can perpetuate the marginalisation of racialised others, their continued construction as otherness, and the persistence of institutional whiteness.

Keywords
cultural industries, diversity, genre, Germany, music, 'race'

Introduction

> 'How should we conceive of difference in music? The kind of difference invoked when music, that quintessentially nonrepresentational medium, is employed (paradoxically) so as to represent, through musical figures, another music, another culture, an other?' (Born and Hesmondalgh, 2000: 1)

Corresponding author:
Kristina Kolbe, Department of Sociology, University of Amsterdam, Roeterseilandcampus, Nieuwe Achtergracht 166, 1018 WV Amsterdam, the Netherlands.
Emails: k.j.kolbe@uva.nl; Kristinajuliane.kolbe@gmail.com

How are notions of difference and diversity constructed in musical practices and what do these constructions do? How are they tied in with wider inequalities of 'race' and ethnicity in and beyond the cultural industries? Following these concerns, this article examines diversity efforts made at an established opera house in Berlin, Germany, which aimed at broadening the institution's staff, audience and aesthetic profile. Part of the diversity initiative was the commissioning and performing of new pieces of work that would reflect the postmigratory and multicultural character of the city with a special focus on Berlin's population of Turkish heritage. The commissioned opera works were described as 'intercultural' and meant to bring into dialogue musical elements and techniques beyond the scope of Western art music with a particular focus on Turkish musical traditions. I take the production of these commissioned pieces as a case study to explore the relationship between the institutional workings of the Western classical music[1] sector, on-going diversity in the arts debates and the ways in which representations of racialised difference come into being in and through cultural practice. More specifically, I examine how diversity as a contingent term is negotiated in the aesthetic and organisational parameters of music production and analyse how these negotiations relate to wider discourses of 'race' and racism. Set against the institutional histories of the classical music sector and debates around 'race', migration and citizenship in Germany, I look at how inequalities around 'race' and ethnicity play out in the processes of commissioning, composing and orchestral rehearsing that shape the development of the two music pieces. To that end, rather than presenting a detailed account of the overall production of the two opera pieces, I focus on moments of institutional decision-making and creative tension that illustrate how diversity narratives become implemented in practice and that reveal the wider social effects worked through them.

Since its establishment as a nation state and particularly since its post-war period, Germany has been shaped by long-standing processes of migration. Yet, until the early 2000s, the country continued to vigorously depict itself as a 'non-immigration country' with citizenship being extended via jus sanguinis.[2] Instead of recognising Germany's multicultural and multi-ethnic society, Yasemin Karakaşoğlu (2011: 103, 104, my translation) identifies a continuing 'process of repression' in German public debate which would conceal 'the fact of immigration' itself and 'leave the hierarchised conditions in society intact'. Discourses of belonging have hence significantly been shaped by the racialised notion of Germany as an ethnically and culturally homogenous society, marking Germans of colour and Germans with migratory family biographies 'as the ever-foreigner' with a 'static "foreign" identity' (El-Tayeb, 2016: 146, my translation). This racialised ascription has been especially persistent in the case of families who migrated from Turkey or the Middle East who, according to Ferruh Yılmaz (2015: 38), 'have increasingly become the Other against which national identities are narrated'. Many activists, scholars and artists have long challenged such racist discourses and pressed for a fundamental acknowledgement of Germany's postcolonial and postmigratory configuration. However, as the rising support for the AFD,[3] widespread Islamophobic rhetoric and racist violence against people of colour[4] document, Germany continues to wrestle with the legacies of its imperial past and the Third Reich, its racialised post-war guest-worker programmes and the effects of the so-called 'refugee crisis' of 2015. The country hence finds itself in an ambiguous political moment, oscillating between the profound

recognition of its multicultural society and a re-emerging white nationalism which pushes increasingly into the political mainstream (see e.g. El-Tayeb, 2016; Foroutan, 2016; Mecheril, 2014). An analysis of current diversity in the arts debates, and of the two operas specifically, is therefore not only about racial inequalities in the classical music sector but needs to be read in the context of broader discourses of identity and belonging in contemporary Germany.

Against this wider background, my analysis documents how the two opera commissions indeed succeed in unlocking spaces for a critical creativity that challenges hegemonic notions of Western genre and unsettles Orientalist notions of difference. However, I also trace the ways in which these transgressive musical representations are ultimately contained by the overarching aesthetic, organisational and social structures enacted by the opera house and are fed back into the standardised workings of Western art music. The article thus discusses under which conditions the incorporation of diversity discourses ends up concealing, rather than addressing, structural inequalities of 'race' and ethnicity that have been institutionalised by the classical music sector. Overall, I argue that diversity initiatives, when having to operate within the standardised and hierarchical parameters of Western cultural institutions, not only risk leaving their critical potential unrealised but might even involuntarily contribute to the continuing marginalisation of racialised others, their ongoing racialisation as otherness, and to the reproduction of institutional whiteness. In this way, the study of the two opera productions expands on a growing body of work that focus on processes of 'race'-making in the cultural industries. It also offers specific insights into the complexities of diversity initiatives in the classical music sector and explores the role that music-making as aesthetic and social practice can play in the critical negotiation of difference.

Theorising Discourses of Diversity and Difference in the Classical Music Sector

The relationship between music production and a politics of representation has been a long-standing topic of investigation in musicology (e.g. Beckles Willson, 2013; El-Ghadban, 2009; Stokes, 2004), cultural studies and sociology (e.g. Bull, 2019; DeNora and Ansdell, 2017; Hall, 1992; McCormick, 2014; Sharma et al., 1996). Scholarly interest in the social role of music – and of cultural production more widely – has recently come to the fore again with new force, particularly in the context of ongoing diversity debates in the Western cultural industries. At the centre of such discussions stands the question of whether diversity and inclusion programmes can indeed prompt progressive representations of difference and tackle the cultural sector's deep-seated entanglements with classed, raced and gendered inequalities, or whether such initiatives ultimately have reproductive consequences, perpetuating precisely what they claim to undo (e.g. Ahmed, 2012; Kolbe, 2021; Nwonka, 2015; Titley, 2014). Gavan Titley (2014), for instance, detects a depoliticisation of cultural diversity policies as they become delinked from wider contestations of racial inequality. This 'post-racial valorisation of diversity' would conceal structural racism in the cultural industries and thus enable its continuance (Titley, 2014: 253). Anamik Saha (2018: 90) further argues that, in the era of neoliberalism, diversity initiatives would not so much fail in bringing about

social change but rather 'serve an ideological function of racial capitalism'. By commodifying reified notions of difference to manage market demands and widen consumer choices, diversity policies would thus contribute to the making of 'race' and racial exploitation (see also Gray, 2016; Hall, 1996; Mellinger, 2003). Instead of interrogating bounded concepts of ethnic difference, diversity would thus too often be about 'adding colour to the production' with 'damaging effects upon the practices of cultural producers wanting to tell stories from the margins' (Saha, 2018: 108). Building on Stuart Hall's (1996: 471) concept of 'segregated visibility', Saha (2018: 90) contends that '[r]ather than bringing people of colour to the core' of cultural production, diversity initiatives would act as 'a method of including minorities but simultaneously distancing them' and thus reproduce institutional whiteness in the cultural industries. As Sara Ahmed (2007: 245–246) cautions, '[t]he whiteness of organizations might be reproduced at the very moment they "embrace diversity", as if diversity is what adds spice and colour to "mainstream white culture"'. These critical theorisations of diversity underpin my research in decisive ways. First, they reveal how diversity initiatives can be entangled with whiteness as a political project and can lead to the continuing discrimination and exploitation – symbolic and material – of racialised others. Second, they highlight how diversity as discourse has to be explored at the juncture of cultural practices and wider historical, institutional and economic processes.

These concerns bear a particular weight in the Western art music sector. Not only has the institutionalisation of classical music been characterised by discourses of European elitism and imperialist expansion but its aesthetic history has equally been shaped by a profoundly troubled and ambivalent relationship to non-Western music. For this article, it is especially the relationship between Western art music and Turkish musical cultures that needs to be explored. While the Western musical gaze towards the East has taken various forms over time, these are connected by long-term continuities of Orientalist representations dating back to the peak of European colonialism (see Said, 1978 for a general discussion of Orientalism). In this context, Ela Eylem Gezen (2012: 197; emphasis in the original) highlights Western art music's representation of Turkish music as one of the first expressions of musical Orientalism: 'Contact with the Ottoman Empire influenced German and, to a broader extent, European music. For instance, *alla turca* style, which employed Turkish instruments and themes, marked compositions by Haydn, Beethoven, and Mozart.' As Jonathan Bellman (1998: 13–14) describes, *alla turca* had 'evolved from a sort of battle music played by Turkish military bands outside the walls of Vienna during the siege of that city in 1683'. However, he adds that only very few actually had heard the music, so that 'what became understood as Turkish Style was thus almost entirely the product of the European imagination' (Bellman, 1998: 31–32).

After the Ottoman army's failed siege of Vienna and the signing of the peace Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, Europeans' perception of the Ottomans changed gradually from narratives of threat and repulsion to one of desire and appropriation. As Martin Stokes (2000: 214) explains, Western Europe's music sector in the 18th and 19th centuries was gripped by a considerable 'Turkophilia . . . driven by a process of what one might describe as domestication'. This process showed in blind borrowings from 'largely imagined musics from the East' that were incorporated into the rationalising logics of Western classical music and organised according to a colonial East/West binary, which painted

the former as backwards, primitive and seductive and the latter as sophisticated, serious and heroic (Stokes, 2000: 214). The genre of opera played a particularly prominent role in this development and actively contributed to the construction and reproduction of Orientalist representations of difference with regards to composition style, storytelling and character development. Following Oak Joo Yap (2019: 179, 181; see also Locke, 1991, 2015), this is most evident in what was at the time the much sought-after genre of the Viennese abduction opera, also called seraglio or Turkish opera,[5] in which 'the hierarchical mindset between self and Other is manifest, as characters who embody the West often convey an air of dominance and a sense of superiority' while the Turkish Others were approached with a 'lingering discomfort . . . which closely paralleled the ambivalent attitude of Europeans toward Ottomans: awed and contemptuous simultaneously'.

In contrast, the representational frames that developed during the 20th century were increasingly set around discourses of mimesis and authenticity. Stokes specifies that it is especially during the postmodern period that Western music started to seek after 'the "real presence" of the Other rather than a represented abstraction' (Stokes, 2004: 48–49). This diagnosis runs in parallel with the wider cultural politics of postmodernism, which according to Hall (1992: 23), 'loves [nothing] better than a certain kind of difference: a touch of ethnicity, a taste of the exotic . . . "a bit of the other"'. Whilst this discourse certainly illustrates a change from earlier representational regimes, Laudan Nooshin (2003: 250) emphasises that it nonetheless firmly resides within an Orientalist us/them binary, now based on romanticising ideas of the pure, uncorrupted other – or, as she puts it, of 'contemporary noble savages'. These racialised notions of authenticity continued to persist in discourses around world music and musical hybridity, ideologically perpetuating 'the hierarchical and exploitative relationships that (continue to) pertain between centres and peripheries, dominant and subaltern groups' (Stokes, 2004: 50).

Yet, the relationship between Western music and its Turkish 'others' has by no means been a one-directional process but has involved multi-layered forms of transnational musical exchanges between Turkey, Western Europe and the Middle East (see e.g. Greve, 2015). Whereas in Germany, past and present migration from Turkey has led to a rich and vivid scene for Turkish, Kurdish and Middle Eastern art and folk music (see e.g. Aksoy, 2019), the Ottoman Empire's (and later the Turkish Republic's) investment in westernisation discourses in turn involved the local adoption of Western musical elements – like staff notation, equal-tempered tuning, and educational institutions such as conservatories. These influences also shaped the musical policies of the early Turkish republic which, as the composer and scholar Ruhi Ayangil (2008: 401) describes, established 'a duality, an East–West dichotomy' between tonal, polyphonic music and Middle Eastern maqam[6]-based music. While the first came to represent 'modernity, change and the new lifestyle', the latter was seen as 'archaic and conservative and of having a blind commitment to tradition and an under-developed taste' (Ayangil, 2008: 401). According to Ayhan Erol (2012: 40; see also Tekelioğlu, 2001), these Kemalist policies were aimed at creating 'a Turkish folk music' to underpin the new Turkish nation state. As such, they sought to bring together Western polyphonic styles to represent 'civilization' and Turkish folk songs to represent 'culture', while simultaneously suppressing or homogenising the musical cultures practised by religious and ethnic minorities, such as Alevi and Kurdish communities living in Anatolia. As Erol (2012: 42) states, '[o]f course, this is also a policy of constructing and

controlling the representations of ethnic identities'. In this way, the musical reform of the early Turkish republic was 'an example of the most important symbolic violence aimed at imposing a particular vision of the state' (Erol, 2012: 40).

The institutionalisation and influence of classical music in and beyond the West has hence been deeply imbricated in colonial knowledge production, which continues to shape constructions of musical value and legitimacy. At the same time, the very genre description of 'Western' art music conceals its imperial legacies and renders invisible the contributions of musicians and scholars from outside the European mainland. As Nooshin sums up:

> 'western art music' is ideologically loaded since it claims exclusive ownership of a cultural space whilst denying the existence of 'others' who have been and continue to be central to it . . . Whatever its historical legacy, clearly 'western art music' is (solely) western no longer. (Nooshin, 2003: 294; see also Nooshin, 2011)

It is with these historic and conceptual complexities in mind that the queries at the core of this article proceed. Being sensitive to the intricate ways in which music's aesthetic qualities can engender social transformations while not losing sight of the wider material and discursive structures that shape and constrain music production, my study of the two opera pieces focuses precisely on the contentious moments of creative negotiation against the backdrop of broader historical, institutional and political parameters. How do diversity discourses figure in a cultural production context so deeply implicated in inequalities of 'race' and ethnicity? To what extent can the musical negotiations of diversity challenge hegemonic notions of cultural value, or do they rather end up reinscribing 'race'-making logics?

Case Study and Methods

This article draws from a year-long qualitative study of a diversity project, implemented at a German opera house, that I carried out in 2016 and 2017. The project aimed at engendering a process of institutional diversification on all levels of the opera's workings – programme, staff and audience – with a particular focus on the country's Turkish diasporas. For the purposes of this article, I focus on one specific part of the institution's diversity initiative, namely on the two opera works that were commissioned to bring into dialogue 'Western' and 'Turkish' musical materials. Both operas were set to children's fairy tales well known in both Germany and Turkey, their libretti were co-written by Turkish and German writers from Berlin and included both German and Turkish lyrics. Two composers were commissioned to write the operas. Whereas the first opera was composed by Arda – a Kurdish composer from Turkey based in Berlin – and premiered in 2012, the second one was written by Ozlan – a Turkish, Antalya-based composer – and premiered in the autumn season of 2017, thus coinciding with my fieldwork.

During my fieldwork, I followed the opera's diversity managers in their day-to-day work, I spoke with the house's wider musical and administrative staff as well as with external partners of the diversity project and, whenever possible, I sat in on dramaturgical discussions, performances as well as in orchestral and vocal rehearsals. In those

instances, I sometimes took on the role of a participant observer, helping out with the logistics of rehearsal (for instance, setting up stage props, giving lyrics cues to the practising singers or simulating their counterparts during the rehearsal). However, most often, and in particular during orchestral rehearsals, I was merely able to sit in and observe the rehearsal process from a distance. I then sought to stay alert to the ways in which the conductor and the musicians navigated the rehearsal, when and why musical challenges seemed to arise, how these were communicated by the conductor and addressed by the different players in the orchestra. In so doing, I paid special attention to moments of tension – both aesthetical and social – which explicitly or implicitly related to discourses of diversity, difference or to the 'intercultural' frame of the opera project. As such, my research has been inspired by Georgina Born's (2010; see also Born et al., 2017) approach to 'a sociology of cultural production'. Born holds that 'central to theorizing cultural production should be a positive account of aesthetic formations, attentive to their productivity and genealogical longevity as well as to artists' role in reproducing or transforming them' which, crucially, would then need to be 'reconnected to an analysis of the interrelations between such formative systems and other social, political and economic dynamics' (Born, 2010: 188). In this way, the study of cultural institutions would enable 'an analysis not only of organizational conditions, but of the social relations of production, the nature of creative practice, and the authorial subjectivities of those involved. By analysing such institutions in the terms of hierarchy and stratification, social and cultural difference and division, much can be gleaned about the particular art worlds' (Born, 2010: 190). It is this emphasis on the practices and socialities of music production that I found especially helpful for my study of how diversity narratives figured in, and were worked through, the two opera pieces.

To situate the creative practices of music-making within the wider institutional parameters and power relations of the opera house, I moreover conducted qualitative interviews with the two composers, the opera house's diversity managers, orchestra musicians, dramaturges and conductor and with the freelance musicians additionally hired for the productions. I was particularly keen to find out how they made sense of the two works and of the ways in which 'interculture' was negotiated in the composition, rehearsal and production processes. My training in sociology and musicology helped me make sense of the institutional and creative processes of music production from numerous analytical standpoints. As a young academic of white German background, reflecting on my own positionality has been central to my research process from the data collection to the writing up process. I coded and analysed my fieldnotes and interview transcripts using the software Nvivo, changed the names of my research participants to aliases and removed all potentially identifying information. Given the specific scope and focus of this article, in the following, I will not present an in-depth ethnographic account of the overall production of the opera pieces. Rather, drawing from ethnographic insights, musicological reflections and qualitative interviews, I will foreground those moments of aesthetic and organisational decision-making which lay bare the social effects of diversity discourses as they are constructed within the wider framework of the opera institution. To that end, the subsequent discussion focuses in particular on issues of authorship in practices of commissioning, on the negotiation of diversity in practices of composing and on power relations in practices of orchestral rehearsal.

Findings

Issues of Authorship in Practices of Commissioning

> It is an early autumn evening and I'm on my way to meet Arda. The composer and bağlama virtuoso opened a private bağlama school in Berlin many years ago which he proposed as a meeting spot. When I arrive at the place, Arda is still in class. Through the window, I can hear and see him play with a bağlama ensemble consisting of five youths. I observe his calm yet passionate demeanour while playing his instrument, the subtle ways in which his body signals the rhythmical and melodical changes, guiding his students through the music. Despite not knowing the intricacies of bağlama technique myself, I can certainly tell that these students are pretty advanced. Arda spots me standing in front of the window, stops his play for a second and comes to the door to let me in. 'It will be 5 minutes, okay?' he says, rushing back into class. I take a seat at a table next to the door. After a short while, the music stops and, one by one, the students pack up their instruments and head out. They exchange a few words with Arda in Turkish, then say bye in German to the both of us. Arda makes tea, lights his cigarette and joins me. We had already met a few brief times before at the opera but never had chance to really talk. Now, he delves right into the conversation. 'These are my most advanced students. They are all from around here', he points to the street outside. 'They started to practice when they were little, and now they are all grown up', he smiles. 'I think my school was one of the first ones for bağlama in the entire city. How weird is that?! With so many Turkish people here . . .'. We talk for a while about Arda's musical education, the history behind bağlama music and how he came to Berlin. He says he feels at home in the city, which he describes as 'a Turkish German place through and through'. Yet, he says people of Turkish descent would often be excluded and discriminated against – 'there is a lot of racism here, too'. He says that this was partly why he was excited when the opera approached him to compose a new piece for them: 'It was an interesting thing for a German opera house to do, trying to bring together elements of different musical cultures that are all very much present in the city but . . .' He hesitates. 'But it is, you know, not just for us Turks', he smiles. When I ask him what he exactly means by that, Arda raises the point that the classical music sector would be struggling with new audiences and funding. 'They are out of touch, they need to change. Their offer needs to change. I think the idea of this Turkish German project was part of that. Don't get me wrong, I was very happy to be part of it!' I ask him more concretely about the collaboration process. He pauses briefly, then proudly says: 'I wanted to really make the piece my own, and I think I've done that. Of course, though, working with a big institution, a big Western institution no less, can also be challenging. They have their own ideas and way of doing things, you know, and that can be, yes, challenging'. (Fieldnotes, October 2017)

The conversation with Arda captured in this fieldnote gets precisely to the ambiguities of diversity initiatives in the Western cultural industries. On one hand, Arda points to the critical potential of a greater representation of marginalised voices, evaluating the opera's 'Turkish German' initiative as a positive counterpoint to the structural racism which people of Turkish descent would have to endure. On the other hand, he is aware that diversity initiatives might also serve as a way for cultural organisations to branch out to 'other' audiences, to increase funding and to regain social legitimacy. While Arda does not necessarily see a contradiction between these two objectives, tensions do seem to arise in the actual production process of the piece he was commissioned to compose. While Arda sought to 'really make the piece my own', he states that the wider workings

of the opera house as 'a big Western institution' also had an impact on his work through 'their own ideas and ways of doing things'.

Talking to Murat, one of the opera house's diversity managers, the ways in which the institution shaped the productions of both Arda's and Ozlan's pieces become clearer. When I asked him specifically about the commissioning process behind the two works, the following conversation ensued:

Murat: 'The opera institution commissions new projects every few years. When launching our wider diversity programme, our director said that it would be great to commission our first Turkish German, intercultural opera accordingly. Because things like diversity must be about aesthetic change also.

Me: How do you go about this in practice, changing the institution aesthetically?

Murat: First of all, it meant for us to find a Turkish composer to reflect the diversity in the authorship of the piece and to find a particular intercultural sound. This was crucial because, you know, you want to find the right composer for doing something like this, bringing Turkish music to a German opera house. This idea guided the commissioning process both times around. (Interview, September 2017)

As Murat's comments indicate, the commissioning of the two Turkish German operas aimed at reviewing the institutional workings of the opera both aesthetically and in respect to the cultural producers in charge. He specifically highlights questions of 'authorship' and 'sound' as important choices to make when seeking to put diversity into musical practice. He thereby establishes a connection between the composers' ethnic or cultural backgrounds and a particular 'intercultural' aesthetic paradigm that the opera institution envisioned for the commissioned pieces. Murat's comments tentatively hint at the idea that choosing 'the right' composer, the right musical author so to speak, might circumvent issues of cultural appropriation which have historically shaped Western art music's dealings with non-Western musical cultures. However, the meaning, role and function of authorship – or rather, 'the question of *authorial agency*' (Born and Hesmondalgh, 2000: 38, emphasis in the original) – in the context of the two operas are much more contingent and uncertain. This is clarified in an interview I conducted with Peter, one of the opera house's dramaturges.

Me: In programme descriptions, you described the two commissioned works in terms of 'Turkish German interculture'. Why did you decide to frame them in these particular ways?

Peter: Terms like interculture or Turkish German of course raise certain musical expectations – internally for us as an opera house and externally for the audience. I do see that these terms are not very sharp and group many things together . . . but it was important to communicate to the public that these operas were not supposed to just be contemporary classical music but that we were searching the dialogue with Turkish music.

Me: And internally?

Peter: Internally, you also need to justify why you commission a particular work to a particular composer. So, when we said Turkish German, we needed to find someone who would compose accordingly. In the end, however, it's the creative contents that matter, not the labels. And regarding the content, we

wanted to refrain from forcing people into a specific musical corset and we tried out best not to do that, but there is always an imbalance.

Me: What do you mean with imbalance?

Peter: Well, the mere fact of commissioning opera music for a Western art institution, the musical choices so to say are always already skewed to an extent. It's a numbers game. Both composers integrated a few Turkish instruments we hired for these productions, whereas our orchestra holds over 60 musicians – so the few need to adapt to the many in a sense. It's just how it is. (Interview, September 2017)

Peter's elaborations indicate an uneasiness about the operas' Turkish German frames which he recognises as reductive and vague generalisations. Yet, he says that such labels would have been necessary for external and internal marketing purposes and for justifying particular commission choices to the institution's in-house management. However, while it is certainly understandable that musical programming of any kind requires some sort of marketable labelling to mobilise funding, institutional support and audiences, such labels are not just innocent depictions but bear a performative function also. In the context of diversity programmes in the cultural industries, they not only shape the ways in which cultural difference is presented but can steer the institutional and aesthetic workings in ways that construct particular notions of difference in the first place. As Saha (2018: 138) specifies, the 'assemblage of processes, apparatus, rationales and logics that are embodied in each stage of production' would entrench a 'rationalizing/racializing logic of capital' into the cultural production process precisely through practices of '(self-)formatting, marketing and packaging'. The actual author of the cultural text would thus be 'just a component' (Saha, 2018: 115) of the wider authorial assemblage. When considering cultural works that are meant to signal diversity, these institutional commodification processes would therefore risk acting as a 'technology of racialised governmentalities' (Saha, 2018: 113) by mobilising and drawing value from static notions of otherness. For instance, while the explicit Turkish German framing of the commissioned pieces helped push for their realisation, such a label also draws a distinction between the house's canonised programme and these other(ed) exceptions. The opera institution thereby not only takes on a decisive marketing role but also runs the risk of reproducing reductive accounts of musical difference. Rather than highlighting the multifaceted and complex interactions between 'German' and 'Turkish' musical histories, the intercultural frame seems to insist on discrete musical groupings of which one is centred as the normal white, Western standard and the other becomes externalised. This dualism between the norm and the other tie in with exclusionary discourses of citizenship and belonging – after all, 'Turkish' is marked as the exception against a 'German' cultural self.

The reinscription of cultural binaries also manifests in expectations of sound and musical genre. Here, Peter points to certain aesthetical preconceptions that the opera institution's directorship seemed to have looked for when selecting the particular composers. Recognising the risk of aesthetic bias, he argues that it would be pivotal to provide an open-ended creative space for artists to approach their work in an independent manner. Yet, Peter states that in the case of the two operas, there would have been an a priori musical imbalance skewed towards the musical capacities and requirements of

Western symphonic music. While Peter seems to be wary of such unequal musical starting points, he packages his criticism in the practical language of technocratic unavoidability – 'It's a numbers game . . . It's just how it is.' Such a numbers game, however, is not an incidental or innocent biproduct of diversity productions but decisively shapes the power relations playing out in the music-making itself. As Stokes (2004: 61) puts it, when bringing into conversation 'different' musical languages, 'one must distinguish between a variety of different ways in which styles, genres, instruments, and sounds perceived as different are brought together: Which constitute foreground, which background? Which subordinate which other musical elements to it? Which are deformed to fit a new musical environment?' Thinking through the aesthetic precepts for the two operas, it becomes evident that musical paradigms associated with Western art music constituted the 'foreground', while musical elements that divert from symphonic music were pushed to the 'background' and had to adapt. The orchestral set-up of the opera institution seems to have established the ultimate aesthetic boundary for the ways in which diversity could take musical shape. Moreover, the framing of these imbalances as technocratic, somewhat inevitable facts fails to recognise them as an instantiation of broader racialised inequalities in and beyond the Western cultural industries. In this way, the commissioning of the two opera pieces reflects the risk of diversity programmes to become de-raced, depoliticised and delinked from an interrogation of wider structures of inequality. Even more so, as Saha (2018: 79) reminds us, 'supposedly neutral processes of bureaucratization and rationalization . . . shape the making of race in ways that reproduce neocolonial ideologies'. The commissioning processes of Arda's and Ozlan's work precisely demonstrate this point. The ways in which the two pieces were channelled through the organisational structures of the overarching institution detail how diversity initiatives can reproduce, and draw value from, static notions of difference that affirm, rather than undo, the institutional centrality of whiteness.

Negotiating Diversity in Practices of Composing

Against this backdrop, I now turn towards practices of composing and examine how the two composers have navigated their respective musical practices in relation to the opera house's commissioning parameters. Both works raise critical issues of subjectivity and authenticity and thus become pivotal sites of power where cultural hierarchies are expressed and negotiated. While I show how both composers respectively push for more transgressive genre boundaries and challenge Eurocentric constructions of aesthetic value, I also document how they each have to grapple with reductive notions of musical otherness.

Arda and Ozlan developed quite different musical subjectivities shaped and informed by their distinct social, musical and migratory trajectories. Arda, who describes himself as Kurdish Alevi, was born in Bursa, learned the bağlama as a child and only got in touch with Western classical music in high school where he started to play the violin. He moved to Berlin after his graduation due to political unrest in Turkey and went on to study composition at one of Germany's most renowned conservatories. As Arda states, 'I love contemporary Western music but I'm not just a contemporary classical musician. My composing style is fundamentally informed by all different kinds of Turkish, Kurdish

and Alevi folk and art music and bağlama remains my musical root and passion' (interview, September 2016). When the opera institution directorship approached him,

> they told me that I had a particular sound they were seeking. Most other Turkish composers in Berlin sound 'too German'. I am, though, well-versed in two different musical systems. It comes naturally to me. I don't approach composing like an exercise of fusing Turkish and Western music, but it's just how I think musically.

Arda identifies his music as inherently bringing together two different musical systems; yet, he does not understand his composition as a translation effort but rather as an innate expression of his own musical identity shaped by multiple cultural cross-roads and experiences. While he seems reluctant to describe his music in terms of fusion, his opera does indeed dialogise instruments, playing techniques and musical elements from Western, Turkish and Middle Eastern musical systems. His musical trajectory, shaped by his Kurdish Alevi background, his musical trainings in Turkey and Germany and situated in the long durée of East–West musical exchanges, seems to represent the blurring of musical boundaries and binaries beyond static notions of authenticity and challenges essentialising notions of 'Turkish' or 'Western', of 'traditional' and 'contemporary'. That is, by foregrounding musical elements and instruments stemming largely from Anatolian Alevi and Kurdish traditions, Arda subverts homogenous ideas of Turkish music and of Turkishness itself, pointing towards the inadequacy of any dualist interpretation of the opera project's Turkish German frame. On the level of the musical text, through his use of instruments such as bağlama, kaval and zurna, Arda not only builds on the material histories of the particular instruments intimately entangled with Anatolian folk music traditions, but also integrates corresponding playing techniques which show in his use of maqam-structures, micro-tones and improvisatory segments. Such references to Kurdish and Alevi folk music in particular bring a different genealogy of music into play, one which critically links to particular local geographies, expressions of ethno-religious identities in Turkey and practices of worship and political resistance (see e.g. Aksoy, 2019). Articulating long-standing histories of musical exchange, religious practices and migration processes, Arda's composition not only resists an essentialist interpretation of difference but also makes a postmigratory story audible within Germany's cultural industries, developing a musical futurity that goes beyond bounded representations of (musical) otherness. While the opera directorship seems to have been looking precisely for a composer with such a musical signature, it is however important to note how they framed their decision-making process when approaching Arda. Rather than highlighting his cultural work as a characteristic part of Berlin's local musical scenes, his music was ultimately lauded because it was identified as not 'too German'. Musical diversity is here again insinuated as something external, something other, something that only conditionally belongs. Furthermore, despite having chosen Arda precisely because of his 'different' sound, the institution also imposed restrictive parameters on Arda's work which constrained its transgressive potential. As he puts it:

> after all, they asked me to compose an opera and I had to use their in-house orchestra. These conditions were set from the start. So, I had to stick to a Western compositional format. I

> worked hard to make space for the musical range of the Turkish instruments, showcasing all of what they can do, but I couldn't overwhelm the orchestra with too much non-Western stuff. They don't know how to play that. (Interview, September 2017)

While Arda's composition seems, at least to some degree, to challenge the subordinated position of non-Western instruments, he nonetheless notes that the a priori genre specifications imposed by the opera were dominant. The composition process of Arda's work shows how diversity in the Western cultural industries can become at the same time something exoticised and desirable to seek after, while also becoming something to keep in check. On one hand, the institution's directorship was looking specifically for a composer whose music would have a recognisably different sound, defined in binary opposition to the 'German' standard. On the other hand, the aesthetic parameters imposed by the opera institutions simultaneously performed what Keith Negus (1999: 33) calls a 'regime of containment', channelling and controlling the extent to which diversity could unfold and ultimately unsettle hegemonic genre concepts. Stuart Hall's segregated visibility concept is here manifested in the musical text itself,

In contrast to Arda's musical training, Ozlan started out as a classical Clarinet player in Antalya and then moved on to composition in his youth, studying in Paris, Istanbul and Michigan. He tells me that he has been predominantly trained in Western classical music but that the opera institution motivated him to also include more traditional Turkish musical elements.

> That wasn't my plan originally, but they wanted me to include some Turkish instruments into my score, so I had to really familiarise myself with them. I had to do a lot of autodidactic research to not have too much of a Western sound only. (Interview, September 2017)

Ozlan approached the composition of his opera quite differently to his predecessor. While he eventually, like Arda, included Turkish instruments, this did not seem to be his plan from the beginning. It was actually only in negotiation with the opera house that he ultimately decided to incorporate kanoon, oud, zurna and bağlama. He did not, however, deploy any maqam-based or micro-tonal elements. The ways in which the opera institution influenced the composition of Ozlan's piece mirrors Arda's account in an upside-down manner. While the latter's work ultimately risked being 'too different' from the standardised genre definition of opera, Ozlan's original ideas run the risk of sounding 'too Western'. The demand for Ozlan to make his piece more 'Turkish', and the ways in which this was interpreted musically by the opera institution, shows the persistence of Eurocentric notions of who really owns and belongs to the space of 'Western' classical music. While Ozlan's musical trajectory actually stresses precisely the centrality of other(ed) composers in classical music histories, thus challenging rigid discourses around cultural identity, authenticity and difference, the opera pushed him to articulate diversity in a way that reproduces reductive constructions of musical otherness. That is, he had to perform a specific, orientalised notion of Turkish sound in order for his music to be seen as 'diverse' enough. Similar to the composition process of Arda's work, it was ultimately the opera institution that steered the ways in which – and to what degree – musical difference could be articulated. This shows how institutionalised diversity initiatives might

not only fail to undo Eurocentric approaches to cultural production but can actually become an active site for the reproduction of 'race'-making logics. Diversity discourses here function as a form of 'racialized governmentalities' (Saha, 2018: 7) that have a managerial effect on the work and the (self)representation of minoritised cultural producers.

The Question of Power in Practices of Rehearsal

The kinds of power relations at play in the composition of the two pieces also extend into the practices of rehearsal. In particular, issues surrounding notation, instrumentation, conducting and institutional timing have become central sites of tension where the opera institution decisively shaped the production process of both operas, putting a considerable burden onto the minoritised cultural producers.

When I asked dramaturge Peter about his reflections of the rehearsal process for Arda's opera, he remembers that the répétiteurs and orchestra musicians had some trouble with his way of notation. 'I sat in rehearsals and they would say "I think this might be wrong, this must be a mistake" while pointing at the score, but it was just Arda's rather unconventional style of notation' (conversation, September 2017). A number of orchestra musicians I spoke to equally pointed out notation issues as a pivotal problem, referring to Arda's use of staff notation as 'awkward', 'hard to get used to' or 'unconventional' (fieldnotes, September–November 2017). What is interesting about such comments is less the fact that Arda's manner to deploy staff notation was judged as not fully agreeing with a classical notation style. Rather, they illustrate how the notation problem has become a site of boundary-drawing between a Western opera genre and Arda's musical approach: often-times the critical remarks just mentioned were followed by comments about Arda's 'musical roots' or 'his first experience with classical music' which were mentioned as explanations for his supposed compositional shortfalls. While not clearly articulated as such, moments of judgement seemed to creep into the accounts of the musicians, implying a pejorative relationship between (homogenous ideas of) Western musical standards and other(ed) musical techniques.

In contrast to Arda's work, Ozlan's piece was overall clearly composed according to contemporary classical music techniques, because of which the institution's in-house musicians did not have any problems picking up the score quickly. Sitting in for some of the piece's rehearsals, I was amazed by how fast the orchestra seemed to get a hang of the work's intricacies. These were brilliant classical musicians, rehearsing an equally brilliant piece of classical contemporary music – like fishes in water. However, in contrast to the orchestra musicians, many of the hired musicians involved in Ozlan's production did find fault with his composition style. The particular burden carried by players of non-Western instruments becomes particularly clear in the following fieldnote snippet:

> I sit in the cafeteria of the opera house, wanting to grab a cup of coffee with Ali and Rifat, both of whom are Berlin-based freelance musicians who had been hired to play in Ozlan's opera. I'm already sitting at one of the tables, when I see them walk into the cafeteria, carrying their instruments in gigbags. Recognisably tired, Rifat sits down next to me. 'We just finished rehearsal' he says with a slightly fatigued voice. I ask them how it went. 'It was . . .' Rifat

> frowns. 'It was difficult!', interrupts Ali. Rifat nods in agreement. Ali, who plays kanoon, recounts that 'this opera wasn't really composed for our instruments', specifying that it was hard to play, especially for him as the kanoon player. He takes out his instrument to demonstrate for me how the score would require him to change the tuning keys of his instrument constantly. 'It's just not intuitive', he says. Rifat, who plays oud, equally says that he felt more like 'adding sonic colour' to the music than anything else. 'It's a Western opera through and through. It doesn't really showcase the great qualities of our instruments'. (Fieldnotes, September 2017)

As demonstrated by this fieldnote, Ali and Rifat criticise Ozlan's composition for under-using their instruments and for subsuming non-Western musical elements into Western art music's genre hegemony. Rifat's description of feeling like they would only add 'sonic colour' precisely corresponds to Hall's diagnosis of diversity discourses being reduced to 'a bit of the other' rather than fundamentally pushing for a decentring of Eurocentric cultural practices. In this way, the opera draws symbolic value from including non-Western instruments – after all, the piece was advertised as 'Turkish German' – while simultaneously relegating them to the musical margins. Diversity here is turned into a commodity which extracts labour from racialised others, without however challenging the unequal working conditions of the minoritised cultural producers.

Another site where hegemonic genre relations manifested was the playing according to a conductor's beat. As orchestra musician Felix remembers the rehearsal period for Arda's piece, 'we lost quite a lot of time in rehearsal because the Turkish instrumentalists weren't used to playing according to a strictly notated rhythm and had trouble to rigorously follow the conductor' (conversation, June 2016). Like the differences in notation systems, these musical difficulties arise from the significant distinctions between traditional Turkish and Western playing techniques. While the negotiation of these distinctions can be itself part and parcel of musical encounters and present interesting and intricate moments of aesthetic exploration, it seemed that the rehearsal process was very much organised around Western aesthetic parameters to which everybody had to adapt. Rigid constructions of and hierarchical relationships between a Western cultural centre and its Eastern peripheries were hence reinscribed in the musical process. These reproductive dynamics were further sharpened by the opera institution's unawareness and inflexibility regarding rehearsal planning and scheduling. Felix addresses exactly this aspect:

> I told our directors one season before the opera's premiere that we should organise a reading rehearsal with the first-chair players and the composer to find out where difficulties could arise and to work on those before even starting the normal rehearsal process. This opera was scheduled just as any other. That means that the orchestra gets the score around three to four weeks before the premiere and by that point you simply don't have the time to address arising issues in-depth. If we had had more time, I think we could have done a better job. (Conversation, June 2016)

His reflections show how the opera as a highly specialised and professionalised organisation has established a particular institutional time according to which a strict plan of rehearsal and performance is scheduled. This institutional time, I suggest, is centred around standardised genre expectations of Western opera. The opera management

therefore provides exactly as many resources in terms of rehearsal time and logistics as needed to bring a classical Western work to a perfect performance. However, as soon as the musical works deviate from a standard repertoire and demand more time to get used to, experiment with and ultimately perfect, this well-oiled machine does not provide the necessary flexibility.

This process of boundary-drawing through standardised notation and playing techniques as well as through inflexible institutional time was even more pronounced in the case of Ozlan's opera. While conductor Ingo explained to me that it 'was strictly composed according to Western standard notation which made it easy to study for the orchestra', he did point to the challenging rehearsal process he had with the four non-Western instrumentalists involved in the production:

> The musicians we first hired for the parts of oud, kanoon, zurna and bağlama were all absolutely virtuoso. However, we had a lot of trouble with two of them because they couldn't really read staff notation and couldn't quite stay in tune with my conducting. We even scheduled extra rehearsals with them long before the orchestra rehearsals started. But it just didn't work out, so we had to let them go and hire new people. (Conversation, September 2017)

Ingo's responses again starkly demonstrate the dominance of the institutionalised Western musical system of which staff notation and conducted play are pivotal parts. While the opera house seems to have approached the rehearsal process with a greater flexibility this time around than compared to the first Turkish German opera – for instance, by providing the logistics for more, earlier and more focused rehearsals – its musical flexibility was rather quickly exhausted. Being able to adapt to a Western notation system and concert format became a precondition for employment and thus the determinant factor for either inclusion or exclusion from the entire musical project. The production processes of both Arda's and Ozlan's operas thus detail the ways in which the opera institution upheld a certain genre authority that further purported aesthetic expectations associated with bounded accounts of Western art music. As Edward Said (1978: 19–20) reminds us, however, '[t]here is nothing mysterious or natural about authority . . . it establishes canons of taste and value; it is virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies as true, and from traditions, perceptions, and judgments it forms, transmits, reproduces'. In the case of the two operas, the institutionalisation of diversity ultimately sustained the organisational and aesthetic authority of a rather rigid Western musical sector, while simultaneously obtaining value from the existence, labour and conditional integration of racialised others. When furthermore considering the unequal economic relations between the permanently employed orchestra musicians and the individual freelancers, the extent to which the opera's standardised institutional workings reproduced racial inequality in the cultural industries becomes even more pronounced.

Conclusion

This study was concerned with diversity initiatives in the Western art music sector that seek to broaden the aesthetic profile of music institutions beyond classical notions of Western genre. Based on interview data, ethnographic insights and musicological reflections on two 'intercultural' opera works commissioned by a German opera house, I discussed how

institutional power relations and aesthetic expectations informed their production process and created particular musical representations of difference. Drawing out the interplay between institutional structures and creative agency, I took seriously the musical text but also situated the aesthetic discussions within a critical reflection of the broader organisational workings of the opera institution and wider (post)colonial discourses around musical value. I argued that both operas indeed subverted static classifications between Germanness and Turkishness, between Western and Eastern musical histories and genre concepts and moved beyond racialised notions of cultural authenticity and belonging. However, I also documented the ways in which the opera institution itself enforced hegemonic notions of musical genre that determined the ways in which diversity was done in musical practice. Such notions risked reproducing historical discourses of (musical) Orientalism which have shaped racialised inequalities in the cultural industries and in the Western art music sector especially. In so doing, I not only explored the role of music-making for a politics of representations but, most notably, I aimed to develop a deeper understanding of the ways in which particular musical representations come into being through diversity initiatives in the cultural industries. My analysis demonstrated how diversity initiatives in the Western cultural industries, even when genuinely seeking to bring about institutional and social change, proceed within hierarchal conditions which risk reproducing the ongoing exploitation and marginalisation of racialised others, their ongoing configuration as otherness, and might thus contribute to the perpetuation of institutional whiteness. In this way, my study of the two opera works not only offered insight into the complexities of diversity initiatives in the classical music sector but also into wider processes of 'race'-making in the Western cultural industries. For diversity work to fundamentally challenge reductive representations of difference, I suggest that it is necessary to delink it as far as possible from the standardised workings of Western cultural institutions and from prefixed expectations of genre. This conclusion carries a particular importance for cultural practitioners in contemporary Germany who strive towards a more equitable cultural sector and transgressive representations of the country's postmigratory past and present.

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ORCID iD

Kristina Kolbe https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1254-3024

Notes

1. In this article, I use the terms Western classical music, classical music and Western art music interchangeably.

2. The jus sanguinis law, translating into 'right of blood', describes a legal principle by which one's citizenship is determined or acquired via one's parents' nationality or ethnicity.
3. In the German general elections of 2017, the right-wing, nationalist party *Alternative für Deutschland* [Alternative for Germany] reached 12.6% of the votes and entered the Bundestag as the third largest party after CDU [Christian Democratic Union] and SPD [Social Democratic Party].
4. The present threat of racism and far-right extremism was again demonstrated by the gruesome terror attack that occurred on 19 February 2020 in the German city of Hanau, where a far-right terrorist fatally shot eleven people and wounded five others in an attack on two shisha bars.
5. Famous representations of this genre are, for instance, Joseph Haydn's opera *L'incontro improvviso* or Wolfgang A. Mozart's *Entführung aus dem Serail.*
6. A maqam is the central melodic concept and scale in Middle Eastern music and in parts of North Africa. Each maqam is characterised by specific melodic elements, motifs and pitches.

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Author biography

Kristina Kolbe is a postdoctoral researcher at the Sociology Department at the University of Amsterdam. She has previously been affiliated with the International Inequalities Institute at the LSE where she also completed her PhD in Sociology in November 2019. Kristina’s research interests span the fields of cultural sociology, cultural studies, the de/postcolonial, critical migration studies and urban studies. Her recent publications include ‘Playing the system: ‘Race’-making and elitism in diversity projects in Germany’s classical music sector’ (2021) in *Poetics* (in press).