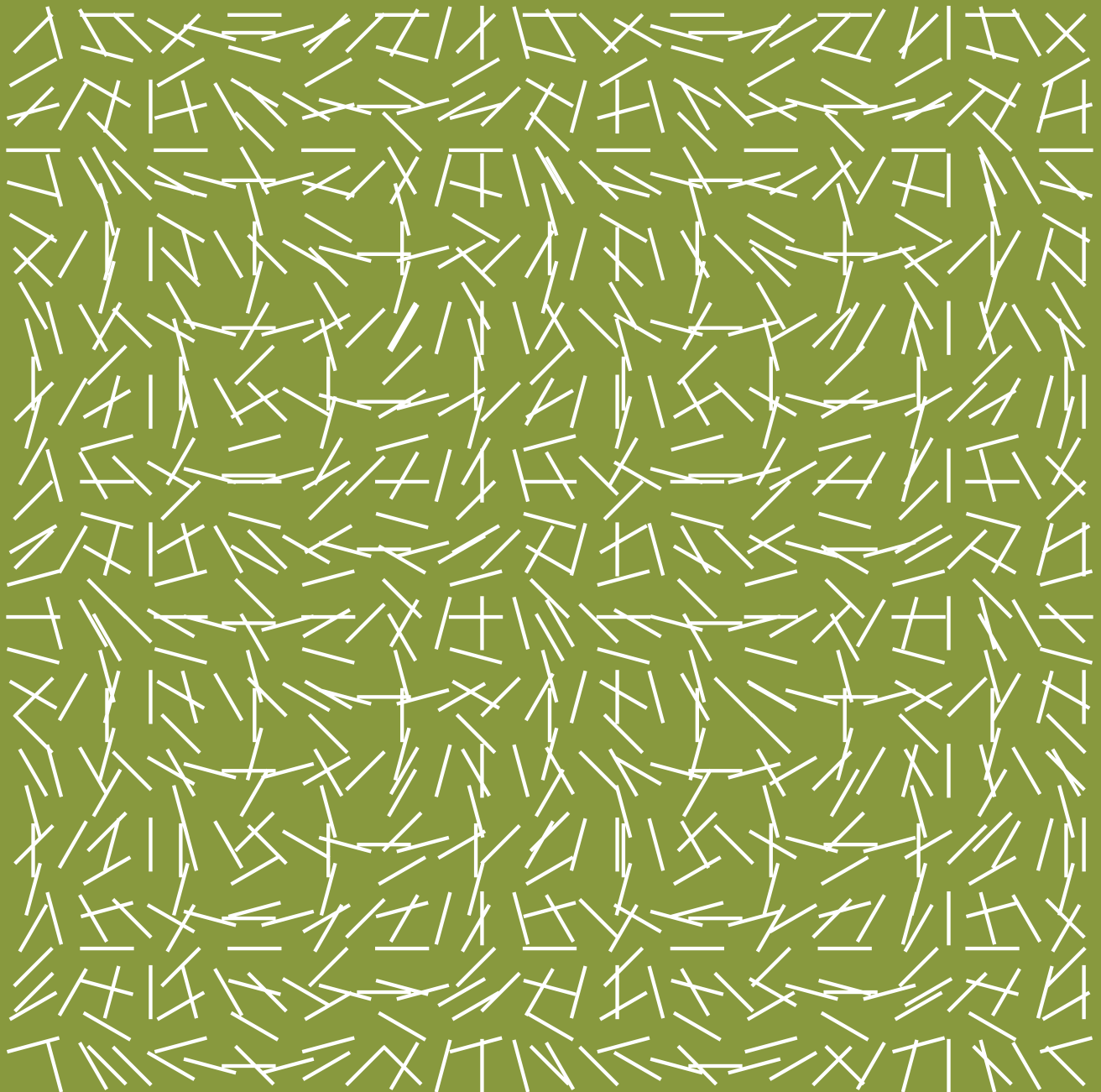


# Theater in Turkey

Version 2019  
Written by Ayşe Draz



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Version 2019

In 2011, SICA (the predecessor of DutchCulture) produced a comprehensive mapping of the Turkish cultural field. This mapping was written by local experts and edited by Teike Asselbergs and Chantal Hamelinck. The mapping was produced as a means to promote cultural exchange between the Netherlands and Turkey and as a starting point of the year 2012, which marked 400 years of Dutch – Turkish diplomatic relations. The mapping was supported and produced in close co-operation with the Dutch public funds.

An update of these mappings was commissioned in 2018 by DutchCulture while working with the same editors. The existing mappings were revised and several new mappings were added. The updated mappings are focusing more on giving Dutch cultural practitioners an insight into the Turkish cultural field and its infrastructure, and helping them get in contact with colleagues.

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# I Summary

Although the history of traditional Turkish theatre dates back to the 14th century, the history of theatre in Turkey is relatively new. The reason for this is that traditional forms of theatrical activities in Turkey have been overlooked during the transition phase, when around the Tanzimat (Reformation) period, theatre in Turkey began to be institutionalised and professionalised according to Western norms.

In particular, Western norms regarding form have been taken as an example, while content-wise theatre has always aimed at holding up a mirror to its own culture and society. However, some forms – such as storytelling, whose roots can be traced back to more traditional theatrical forms – keep reappearing as younger generations struggle to find a unique voice and means of expression on the stage.

While there are a lot of texts in translation and companies adapting them to the stage, there is an increasing number of Turkish playwrights who tackle issues particular to the Turkish society. In recent years, there has been a rekindled interest in adapting literary texts other than dramatic ones to the stage and in more traditional forms such as storytelling.

Besides funding by the state for State and Municipal Theatres, there is not much financial support for independent and private theatre companies or venues. They either have to find solutions for the financial costs of their productions by seeking private sponsorship or by selling their tickets at higher prices. Also, in many cases, members of such companies keep their daytime jobs or seek jobs in the television/film sector to finance their theatre activities.

A text-based approach dominates the theatre scene, and this might pose a challenge in terms of international collaborations. However, independent companies that encourage artistic experimentation are open for international exchange. Many independent companies would benefit from experiences that focus on audience development, as well as working in contexts in which they could take more risks and experiment with unconventional forms.

Unless an independent theatre company has its own venue, finding a space for rehearsals and performances might also be a challenge since there are not enough venues. Additionally, many venues that function as theatres are not necessarily built

for that purpose. Taking theatre into the public space is very challenging due to both the bureaucratic problems one might encounter and the current political environment.

Touring in Turkey might also be tricky, and without someone experienced in decoding different audience expectations and perceptions, it might be very challenging since audiences vary a lot nationwide.

Because independent theatre in particular is regarded as a less popular form of entertainment, there is no direct or systematic censorship imposed on theatre. However, there is some auto-censorship being done by theatre-makers. In recent years, there have been a number of productions that have dealt with topics of sexuality, gender and LGBT issues without any problems, but theatre-makers feel they have to be more cautious if there is any reference in their productions to the Gezi protests or any direct criticism of the government's more conservative policies.

When it comes to international collaborations, theatre-makers are also cautious about their partners' "orientalising" them. Although there are elements and topics that are unique to Turkish culture, there are also many similarities since we live in a highly globalised world and theatre-makers want to express how they deal with these common problems rather than just focus on their own specific problems.

State/municipal theatres have a regular audience, but the independent theatre audience is more open to artistic experimentation both in form and content.

# | Introduction

In spite of the financial and political challenges one encounters while doing theatre in Turkey, there has been a lot of dynamism since the late 2000s in the independent theatre scene. More and more theatre-makers are collaborating with one another to collectively find solutions to the problems they encounter. The fact that there has never been a lot of support from the state for independent theatre has encouraged theatre-makers to come up with more creative solutions to their problems such as transforming unconventional spaces into theatre venues or structuring and financing their own festivals to facilitate dialogue with one another.

# | Short history

## **Traditional Turkish theatre**

“Traditional Turkish theatre” as a term usually refers to the types of performances that were staged during the Ottoman Empire, even though these performances had their origins in the ancient pagan rituals of Anatolia. Most of these performances were not based on written texts but were improvised. They would usually take place as part of traditional ceremonies or social gatherings such as weddings or during Ramadan, rather than performed regularly. These performances, some of which include Karagöz and Hacivat (shadow puppetry) and Meddah (storytelling), relied mostly on established conventions and the virtuosity of their performers. Unlike the Western illusionist theatre of the 19th century, they were epic in nature.

## **Development based on Western norms**

From the 1840s, following the Tanzimat (Reformation) period when many reforms aimed at modernisation took place within the Turkish society, theatre based on Western traditions began to serve as the model for the development of Turkish theatre. During this period, many texts by Western dramatists were translated into Turkish or adapted for a Turkish audience. Alongside this, the emergence of Turkish playwrights in the theatre scene laid the groundwork for the development of Turkish playwriting. Şair Evlenmesi (The Marriage of a Poet) by Namık Kemal is accepted as the first original Turkish play. This was soon followed by works by others playwrights such as Musa-hipzade Celal and Ahmet Vefik Paşa.

## **Institutionalisation of the new Turkish theatre**

As theatre became modelled more and more on Western theatrical norms, a new tradition in Turkish theatre was born that did not only affect how, but when, where, by whom and for whom theatre was made. During this period, many new theatre venues were built with proscenium stages in accordance with Western theatre norms. Various theatre companies started to perform their plays on a regular basis in these new buildings. Some non-Muslim minorities within the Ottoman Empire, such as the Armenians, made considerable contributions to the further development of theatre during this period. Especially the founding of Darülbedayi (today's Municipal Theatres) in 1914, with the help of André Antoine from Paris, was a turning point in the development of Turkish theatre.

### **The Turkish Republic**

Great innovations in terms of both playwriting and the institutionalisation of theatre took place with the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. During this period, Turkish society was restructured and remodelled based on secular Western norms. Another milestone of this period was the arrival of German theatre and opera producer and administrator Carl Ebert in Turkey, who made great contributions to the foundation of the Ankara State Conservatory. With the efforts of the first graduates of the Ankara State Conservatory, Tatbikat Stage was founded in 1941 in Ankara. Following this, the Ankara State Theatre was officially established in 1949. The Ankara State Theatre staged many plays in different cities, and soon new theatres were established in other cities such as Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa, Trabzon, Diyarbakır, Sivas and Van. This helped to encourage and establish the activity of theatre-going throughout the country. While the Municipal Theatres in general engaged in establishing and developing standards, they also sustained a connection with traditional Turkish theatre and Turkish tradition. The State Theatres, on the other hand, assumed a rather more educative approach staging large-scale productions, thanks to their exploration of Western dramaturgy and directing.

### **The 1960-1980s**

In the 1960s, a new wave of prominent Turkish playwrights began to appear and started to reshape the Turkish theatre scene. Some examples of these famous playwrights include Aziz Nesin, Haldun Taner, Güngör Dilmen, Orhan Asena, Turan Oflazoğlu, Necati Cumalı and Sermen Çağan. Dostlar Theatre (Istanbul), Kenter Theatre (Istanbul) and Ankara Art Theatre were among the major theatres that staged plays by these dramatists. This period was a very productive one not only in terms of playwriting, but also many new, small- and large-scale theatre companies were founded that contributed to the development of Turkish theatre. The main trends in the 1960s and 1970s were the politicisation of theatre (however, by means of non-funded, independent theatres) and the exploration of whether the traditional theatre's open form could be employed in ways comparable to epic theatre. This resulted in narrative experimentations in texts rather than in productions. However, this dynamic and productive period, particularly in terms of playwriting, was interrupted by the coup d'état in 1980.

### **The globalisation of the Turkish economy**

The 1990s period was a transitional time when the globalisation of the Turkish economy also had an impact on culture in general. Research into different staging languages and modes of production were not only a main trend for the independent theatre scene, but were also supported by state funding. The Theatre Research Laboratory was established in 1988 within the Municipal Theatre and the Unit Theatre was founded in 1994 within the State Theatre, both exploring new theatrical languages and different modes of productions. Also, the first International Theatre Festival, organised by IKSIV (Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts), took place in Istanbul in 1991. Since the 1990s, the theatre scene resumed its productivity as many new theatre companies, including independent ones, were founded. These new companies experimented with modern staging techniques, and new playwrights emerged on the scene. Since then, there have been many productions of both experimental and popular plays.



# | Main trends and topics

## **Young playwrights in Turkey inspired by new influences**

From the 1990s, many young playwrights and their diverse original texts began to appear in the Turkish theatre scene. Since 2000, with the opening of new private and independent theatre venues and the foundation of new independent theatre companies, many original and contemporary productions have been produced. Whereas the main focus of the 1990s was experimentation in theatre with a focus on directing and dramaturgy, in the 2000s there have been a significant number of translations of texts by Western playwrights from various traditions. The majority of these translations include texts originally written in English focusing on issues of sex and violence in contemporary society. The translation of these texts, which may be seen as examples of “in-yer-face” drama (a type of theatre originating in the UK in the 1990s) attracted the attention of young theatre companies and found reverberations in Turkish audiences of the 2010s. Dot Theatre (<https://go-dot.org/about-dot/>), an independent theatre company founded in 2005, was a pioneer in translating plays by British playwrights such as Mark Ravenhill, Simon Stephens and Philip Ridley and staging these plays. The popularity of translations of “in-yer-face” drama and various playwriting workshops held in collaboration with Dot Theatre and British Council Istanbul also paved the way for the appearance of a new generation of young Turkish playwrights. These playwrights also tackled issues of sex and violence in modern Turkish society. In the 2010s, theatre companies, both independent and funded, also took an interest in the translation of contemporary German plays into Turkish and staging them.

## **International contemporary playwrights translated into Turkish**

In 2006, GalataPerform (<http://eng.galataperform.com>) started directing the New Text New Theatre Programme as a series of workshops, readings and panels focused on playwriting. Since 2012, the New Text New Theatre Festival (<http://eng.galataperform.com/new-text-new-theatre/>) has staged plays or given readings of plays both originally written in Turkish and translated from other languages. Within the scope of this programme, texts by different contemporary playwrights from throughout the world, from Iran to Sweden, have been translated into Turkish. This has stimulated a new generation of young Turkish playwrights writing original texts in Turkish without the influence of other forms or norms.

### **Plays concentrating on today's problems**

Theatre companies such as Talimhane Theatre (<http://www.talimhanetiyatrosu.com>), affiliated with Arcola Theatre in London, and Izmit Municipal Theatre have supported young playwrights to write plays concentrating on today's problems such as women's and LGBT rights or minority issues, focusing on social realism. Particularly since 2010, there has been an increase in the number of independent theatre companies writing and staging their own plays. Various theatrical forms, new dramaturgical approaches and novel narrative techniques have dominated the theatre scene. These range from musicals, "in-yer-face" drama, feminist and queer theatre, performance art, storytelling, monodrama, stand-up and new adaptations to traditional forms. In fact, there has been a change not only in narrative and theatrical forms, but the voice of oppressed "others" has also become more audible in the plays. For example, there have been productions dealing with the Kurdish issue or the Armenian diaspora. Staging adaptations of novels both by Turkish and foreign authors, mostly in the form of monodrama with a renewed focus on storytelling, has been a very popular trend in the Turkish theatre scene since the second half of the 2010s.

To give a few examples, these playwrights include names such as Ebru Nihan Celkan, Murat Mahmutyazıcıoğlu, Berkun Oya, Firuze Engin, Ahmet Sami Özbudak and Sami Berat Marçalı.

### **Increase in the number of small independent theatre venues**

Since 2005, and particularly after 2010, there has been an increase in the number of small independent theatre venues appearing mainly in the Beyoğlu (European Side) and Kadıköy (Asian Side) districts of Istanbul. This has been due to the efforts of independent theatre companies coming up with creative solutions to the problem of finding space both for their rehearsals and staging their own productions. The appearance of alternative theatre venues/spaces, some transformed into a stage from an apartment building or a studio space/shop, has brought great dynamism and productivity to the alternative theatre scene. These venues both produce and stage their own productions, and also host productions by other independent theatre companies without a space of their own.

### **Increased collaboration and solidarity**

The dynamism in theatre that gained momentum in the 2000s and the proliferation of alternative theatre spaces face many problems due to the urban transformation process that Istanbul has been going through particularly since 2013. Most independent/alternative theatre companies or venues receive no or little funding from the government. Still, they find a way to sustain their activities since there is great collaboration and solidarity among them. For example, there are more than 150 productions being staged on a single night with more than 150 new productions premiering each season in Istanbul, and approximately 450 theatre companies nationwide in 2018. Kadıköy Tiyatroları Platformu (Platform of Theatres in Kadıköy) (<http://www.kadikoytiyatrolari.com>) founded in 2016 is an exemplary platform of solidarity through which independent theatre companies and venues based in the district of Kadıköy on the Anatolian side of Istanbul gather together to collectively find solutions to the problems they encounter. The foundations for the establishment of another such platform, Tiyatro Kooperatifi Girişimi (Theatre Cooperative Initiative <http://www.tiyatrokooperatifi.org>), were also laid at the end of 2018.

Theatre is mostly regarded as an outmoded form of entertainment particularly by those who have a very preconceived perception about what theatre is or can be. This is due to the fact that these people are not regular audience members or that they have been exposed to rather old-school conventional productions in the State or Municipal Theatres. On the other hand, the general public is usually interested in theatre productions that feature well-known actors they know from television and film since television is the most dominant form of entertainment in Turkey. The general public goes to the theatre not for the production itself or its artistic merits, but to see the person they know from television.

# | Audiences

The profile of audiences in Turkey is very diverse. The type of audience that comes to see a play depends largely on the genre of the play being performed. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a large audience especially for the theatres in Beyoğlu, Istanbul. But after the coup d'état in 1980 many theatres were affected, and so were their audiences. In the 1990s and after 2000, the arrival of the internet and the growth of TV channels also rapidly affected theatres and audience numbers. The majority of audiences today prefer to go to the State and Municipal theatres because of their affordable ticket prices or to mainstream productions because of their popularity. However, due to the fact that they may feature famous actors from television or film, there has been an increase in audiences, mostly young people taking an interest in independent productions as well. Still, this remains limited in comparison to the audiences of State/Municipal or mainstream theatres. The State Theatre presents its repertoire in more than 12 cities nationwide and had about two million audience members in 2018. On the other hand, in 2018, there were about 10,500 audience members a night attending performances in the Kadıköy district of Istanbul, where about 70 theatre companies and 30 theatre venues are based.

## **Regarding socio-economic classes**

The audiences of the National Theatres are mostly civil servants and people from the middle class. This is especially true of audiences in Ankara. The Municipal Theatres supported by the Istanbul Municipality, however, also appeal to the lower socio-economic classes. This is largely due to the fact that they have stages in different districts of Istanbul such as Gaziosmanpaşa and Ümraniye, where mostly migrants from Anatolia live.

There are also efforts by some municipalities such as that of Kadıköy in Istanbul to make theatre accessible to a wider audience from all socio-economic backgrounds. The Kadıköy Municipality, which organises a free theatre festival for adults and children in the summertime featuring popular and independent productions from the season, staged 15 plays in the summer of 2017, reaching an audience of 17,000 people. Private theatres, which mostly produce musical plays, vaudeville and popular comedies, mainly appeal to higher socio-economic classes. This is comparable to private theatres in London and Paris. Businesspeople/white collar workers and those of the higher socio-economic classes regard these theatres as a form of entertainment. Independent theatres, in spite of their higher ticket prices in comparison to subsidised theatres, attract a young audience of mostly university students who are from the lower and middle socio-economic classes.

### **Regarding touring and type of locations**

Touring in Turkey requires flexibility and an experienced Turkish partner: Nothing is standardised; permissions are sometimes hard to get and sometimes not necessary at all. Touring requires awareness about where something can be done and when. A sense of timing, holidays, Ramadan, people's attitudes towards theatre, a balance between auto-censorship and freedom all play a role in managing to perform somewhere in Turkey. Universities are important because university cities are more open to independent theatre projects and universities can also serve as potential partners for projects.

Buses are the most common (national) form of transport and since they are affordable, buses also lower the threshold for the majority of people interested in art to engage with an art project. There are also a few long distance train trajectories (with sleeping cabins) in Turkey that go all over the country.

### **Regarding different parts of the country**

The values and specific preferences of local audiences and municipalities are the most important elements to consider when planning a project. If the general public or local municipality has doubts about a project beforehand, it is usually not very smart to carry on with it. However, the reactions of audiences outside Istanbul to plays are less prejudiced; they tend to see things in a sincerer and open way.

### **The south and west coasts of Turkey**

West Turkey is more tourism-oriented and municipalities are used to cultural events, especially popular culture. According to Mahir Günsiray, an actor and teacher of theatre, arguments such as doing something "nice" for tourists or bringing tourists, national and international, together with locals will resonate with municipalities. Additionally people see theatre as live TV series and a very successful tactic is to include Turkish television actors.

The municipality of Bergama, a district of Izmir since the foundation of Bergama Theatre Festival in 2018 might become an interesting option for cultural collaborations in the upcoming years.

### **The Southeast**

In the Southeast of Turkey not all municipalities are open to cultural collaboration. The southeastern audiences are more interested in political issues so they like adaptations of playwrights such as Kafka and Genet. Audiences there like to talk after performances, resulting in interesting discussions and enabling a direct observation of reactions. The state theatre of Van is open for collaborations since their new venue opened in 2016 and they invest a lot in artistic development.

### **The Black Sea**

The Black Sea audiences are more nationalistic, Islamic and/or conservative. Trabzon especially is very nationalistic; however, they have a state theatre that has more progressive ideas. Amateur theatre groups in Ordu, Bartın and Samsun are semi-professional.

Sinop is a socialist city at the most northern point of Turkey that is open to cultural collaborations. They also have a biennial, Sinopale (<http://sinopale.org>), that includes performance activities in its programme.

# Sub-disciplines

## **Mainstream theatre**

Theatre in Turkey is mostly dominated by State and Municipality Theatres, which are centrally organised and funded by the government. They usually expose their audience to well-known examples of Western theatre such as Ancient Greek tragedies, Shakespeare, Chekhov, Ibsen and Heiner Müller, as well as to Turkish plays. However, the plays produced by these subsidised theatres are mostly dependent on government policies that, particularly after 2013, focus on staging Turkish plays with a more nationalistic and conservative agenda. Plays produced by private theatres depend on box office sales because there is minimal or no support from the state. This also creates a mainstream theatre atmosphere dominated by productions and adaptations of classical texts and of established theatre pieces by predominant playwrights of both Turkish and world theatre history. While the State and Municipal Theatres attract the attention of audiences by a guarantee of governmental prestige and affordable tickets prices, private theatres mostly use famous actors and actresses from TV to attract audiences.

## **Traditional Turkish theatre**

Traditional Turkish theatre, a term referring to shows that were performed during the Ottoman Empire, includes examples of Köy Seyirlik Oyunları (Theatrical Village Plays) and Halk Tiyatrosu (People's Theatre Plays). Köy Seyirlik Oyunları are based on the ceremonies of the civilisations in Asia Minor, as well as on shamanic ceremonies inherited from Turkish ancestors. Halk Tiyatrosu flourished in urban areas and comprises Karagöz (shadow puppet theatre), Kukla (puppet theatre), Meddah (storytelling) and Ortaoyunu (street theatre with live players, comparable to Comedia dell'Arte). The most important aspect of these types of theatre is they are based on improvisation, and not on a written text. The main element of traditional Turkish theatre is comedy. These performances were not organised to be performed regularly, but were usually seen as part of traditional ceremonies or social gatherings. This type of theatre is mainly a tradition of the past with just a few examples of independent theatre companies that try to incorporate some conventions from them into their productions such as Tiyatro Tem. However, since the mid-2010s, there has been a rekindled interest in the form of storytelling as theatre groups began experimenting with using both the dramatic form and storytelling, at times even interacting with the audience. In 2014, Seiba International Storytelling Centre (<http://seibaanlatimerkezi.com/home-agency-creative/>) was established in Istanbul holding workshops not only in Istanbul but

all over the country for those interested in storytelling.

### **Commercial theatre**

Commercial theatre companies mostly produce plays performed by well-known television actors and actresses. These companies aim at reaching audiences of high numbers. Due to this, commercial companies produce their plays with lower artistic but higher financial concerns. Comedy, slapstick and cabaret styles of theatre prevail in this category and make them distinct from the mainstream theatre, but sometimes these two intersect since both use famous performers in their productions.

### **Contemporary theatre**

Alternative or independent theatre groups, some founded by an older generation and some as an extension of university theatre companies, question the norms of society and of mainstream theatre, experimenting with new ways of expression in contemporary theatre (as opposed to classical works). Although some critics classify these independent theatre companies as “alternative” theatre groups, they make clear that they do not intend to be an alternative to the state-sponsored theatres or to mainstream theatres. Their aim is rather to challenge the relationships between the stage and the auditorium, between the actor and the audience, the actor and the character, the story and its representation on the stage. These so-called “alternative” groups create works that pay particular attention to the unique temporality, the “here and now-ness” of theatre, regarding theatre as an encounter with the audience. Some of these theatre groups have had the opportunity to stage their plays at national and international festivals, especially in Europe. Examples of such prominent theatre companies, of an older and younger generation, are the Studio Players (<http://www.studiooyunculari.com/EN/>), GalataPerform, (<https://galataperform.com/home/>) and Kumbaracı50 (<https://kumbaraci50.com>). By participating in these festivals, they have the opportunity to become known both in Turkey and abroad.

### **Puppet theatre**

When people mention puppet theatre in Turkey, they usually refer to the traditional Karagöz and Hacivat shadow puppet theatre. Karagöz and Hacivat are the lead characters of a traditional Turkish shadow play, originating from the Ottoman period. The character Karagöz is illiterate but straightforward, who can also be deceitful and violent. The character Hacivat belongs to the educated class and speaks a poetical and literary language. The play, with a cast of colourful supporting characters, revolves around the interaction between Karagöz and Hacivat. Karagöz’s wit always gets the better of Hacivat’s learning, but he always fails to make money with his schemes. Before the development of radio and film, this was the most popular form of entertainment in Turkey. Throughout history, the Karagöz and Hacivat puppet theatre has been modernised by theatre companies. Karagöz and Hacivat plays are associated with Ramadan, the time of year when the plays are performed most frequently. Karagöz and Hacivat plays are performed at religious festivals, social gatherings and theatre venues. Apart from the shadow theatre of Karagöz and Hacivat, there is no other tradition of puppet theatre except a few minor exceptions where mostly independent companies have taken an interest in making and using modern puppets in their productions.



### **Children's and youth theatre**

Children's theatre is mostly but not only limited to both the State and the Municipal Theatres where plays are chosen according to the norms of the day. However, the Istanbul Municipality Theatres have directed some significant workshops in order to create a new path for children's theatre in the Children Theatre Department, part of the theatre department of the municipality of Istanbul. There are also many independent theatre productions for children in Istanbul since this is regarded as a commercially/financially promising enterprise, but they do not always have the necessary pedagogical experience or infrastructure.

Assistej Turkey, the Turkish branch of the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (<http://www.assitej-international.org/en/tag/turkey/>), commits in principle and in practice to collaboration and cooperation among other international artistic associations on matters of mutual interest. They also take an active part in organising various theatre festivals for children and youth around the country. In 2016, the first edition of Atta Festival, an International Arts Festival for Children and Young People, was held in Istanbul. A prominent physical theatre company that stages productions for children and young adults is tiyatro BeReZe (<http://tiyatrobereze.com>).

### **Street theatre**

One of the main reasons why street theatre in Turkey has not developed much is that any performance in the street or public space is subject to censorship. Most of the time, such performances are considered as political protest and regarded with suspicion by the government and the police. It is especially hard to get permits to do performances on the streets or in public spaces in the main cities. Ironically, the traditional performing arts of the Ottoman Empire such as Orta Oyunu (which translates literally as "play in the middle") were always performed on the street in public spaces. One exception, however, is in Karaburun/Mordoğan, Izmir, where there is an annual street theatre festival.

### **Stand-up comedy**

Stand-up comedy is mostly performed in bars and comedy clubs in Turkey and has a relatively recent history. There is a handful of stand-up comedy collectives and women comedians appearing on the stage. Stand-up comedians perform live, which relates it to another storytelling tradition in the history of Turkey – Meddah, the storytellers' tradition.

### **Political Theatre**

In line with the history of Turkey, which saw coups d'état and military memorandums in the last century, there has been another category of theatre that relies on expressing one's political views through theatre: political theatre. Political theatre in Turkey is mostly inspired by Bertolt Brecht from Germany or Augusto Boal from Brazil. These key figures have served as an inspiration for theatre directors, educators and playwrights in Turkey. The dilemma of doing political theatre, with the idea that theatre could serve an aim such as causing a revolution, changing the world or at least proposing an amelioration of the current problems, still exists today in the theatre scene but is subject to heavy censorship. The political climate, particularly after the Gezi Park protests in 2013, has resulted in a lot of auto-censorship as well as censorship by the state, therefore one could claim that the act of still doing theatre is already political enough in its own right.

### **Kurdish theatre**

Kurdish theatre is a very recent term in the history of theatre in Turkey. With the development of alternative theatre companies and contemporary plays in Turkey, theatre has gained a different face and within this contemporary frame, Kurdish theatre has also gained ground since the mid-2000s. In fact, this has been partially due to the "Solution Process", also known as the Kurdish-Turkish peace process, initiated by the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) and which was also abruptly terminated by them in 2015. During this period, Kurdish theatre companies such as Şermola (<https://www.sermolaperformans.com>) started to write and produce their own plays, becoming legitimised through recognition by government funds, taking part in media and performing on main stages in Turkey. The plays were predominantly produced in Kurdish, dealing with identity and minority politics. However, particularly after the termination of the peace process in 2015, as the political tensions between the government and the Kurdish minority increased, the development of Kurdish theatre also came to a halt. Furthermore, some Kurdish theatre-makers felt they had to seek asylum abroad and left the country.

### **Circus**

The circus/acrobatics scene in Turkey seems underdeveloped at the end of the 2010s. In Ottoman times there used to be a tradition of Turkish tightrope walkers. However, this tradition is largely unknown in Turkish society today. The international concept of "contemporary circus" is little known. In 2016, the Sirkhane Social Circus School (<http://www.circostrada.org/en/cshubble/element/sirkhane-social-circus-school>) was founded in Mardin by a civil initiative. The initiative recognises that circus might be a good way to teach other skills (such as discipline and self-confidence) to children, especially within the context of a deteriorating political environment since the 2010s in the Southeast of Turkey. It is a social circus and art school by the Syrian border, bringing together Turkish and refugee children using social circus as a pedagogical tool. Also, Çadır Studio, founded in Kadıköy, Istanbul, holds training workshops in circus arts. There has also been a growing interest in recent years in physical theatre and clowning, resulting in the foundation in 2014 of the Physical Theatre School in Istanbul by performers who trained in various physical theatre schools abroad – mainly France, Belgium and Denmark. The school has not continued its programme in 2019, but various individuals who have done their training have started their own courses.

# | Professional groups and organisations

There have been a few attempts in the past mainly by independent theatre companies or venues to come together to set common goals and find collective solutions to the problems they encounter. Alternatif Sahneler Birliği (Alternative Stages Union) was formed by the initiative of theatre venues that had transformed “alternative” spaces into stages/spaces; however, the union was deactivated after the Gezi Protests in 2013. Bağımsız Tiyatrolar Birliği (Independent Theatres Union) followed, but it also ceased its activities in 2017 since it was unable to become a legal entity. Kadıköy Tiyatroları Platformu (Platform of Theatres in Kadıköy), founded in 2016 by independent theatre companies and venues based in the district of Kadıköy on the Anatolian side of Istanbul, is still active. In 2018, 13 private theatres came together to start the Tiyatrolar Kooperatifi Girişimi (Theatre Cooperative Initiative), which, following its planned launch in 2019, aims to facilitate legislative and commercial change regarding the activities of theatres. It also wants to set the standards enabling self-imposed quality control.

# Educational institutions

Theatre education in Turkey used to be given mainly in state conservatories. However, with an increased number of private universities offering degrees in theatre, there are now more than 35 theatre departments all over the country. Most of these schools have acting departments, while some offer other areas of specialisation such as directing or playwriting. There are also some state universities, though not many, that offer education in more theoretical aspects such as dramaturgy and theatre criticism. Istanbul University (<http://www.istanbul.edu.tr/en>), for example, has both a conservatory and a theatre criticism and dramaturgy department, while the theatre department of Ankara University is among the most established ones offering theoretical education and it also has a conservatory. However, in 2017, almost all academics at Ankara University's theatre department were dismissed or forced to resign from their jobs on the grounds that they had signed the declaration of "Academics for Peace".

Since the 2000s, there has been an increasing number of private universities with acting departments, some offering graduate degrees in acting/directing. There has been an increase in the number of private universities in general in Turkey since private universities are regarded more and more as a money-making business alongside the medical/hospital sector. There has already been too much demand and too little supply for many years in terms of state universities. Low-income parents who cannot afford private universities but can send their children to state ones are usually pushy with their children and expect them to immediately start their careers after graduation. However, only a few fields can guarantee a job after graduation (and even this is under threat with the Turkish economy in crisis) and there is no social safety net. The expectation of parents, or at times the students themselves, is to seek a position at a subsidised theatre or find a job in television after graduating from an acting department. Additionally, the university student selection and placement system in Turkey is very competitive. The quality of theatre education in state universities has deteriorated in the past few years because to gain entry into theoretical theatre departments, students do not need to score high in the university student selection exam. Therefore, students who end up in these departments are usually not actually interested in studying theatre but are there because of their low scores. On the other hand, conservatories still have their special entrance exams. Another reason for the deterioration in the quality of theatre education in state universities is that they cannot afford qualified guest lecturers since payments for visiting lecturers are too low, or their leading academics have been forced to retire, as has been the case with the "Acade-

mics for Peace". For students from lower income families, state conservatories are still preferred since they offer free education and some still have a good reputation such as Dokuz Eylül University in Izmir (<http://www.deu.edu.tr/en/>) or Mimar Sinan Conservatory in Istanbul.

Private universities mostly cater to the needs and whims of high-income families whose children did not score well in the university student selection exams or they promote their departments by promising acting careers in television rather than theatre. However, some private universities invest in training professionals for the field by trying to offer as many scholarships as possible to promising candidates. Examples include Kadir Has University (<http://www.khas.edu.tr/en/340/about-the-department>) and Okan University (<https://www.okan.edu.tr/en/>) in Istanbul, and Bilkent University (<http://w3.bilkent.edu.tr/bilkent/>) in Ankara. If these private universities have a master's or an MFA programme, they usually try to raise the academic/artistic level of their student profiles by offering graduate scholarships, even if limited, to successful candidates.

Apart from state or private universities, there are also many private courses that offer short-term or two-to-three-year-long programmes for people of different ages and backgrounds interested in becoming theatre professionals.

# | Non-professional

There is a well-established tradition of university theatre clubs with student members majoring in fields other than theatre or the arts, in many state and private universities across Turkey. Some of these clubs have transformed into professional theatre companies or their members have become prominent figures in the theatre scene. It is particularly difficult in Turkey to differentiate between professionals and non-professionals in the field since many independent theatre companies have members who have no formal education in theatre and who still keep their day jobs in order to finance their activities in theatre. In terms of earning a living by making theatre, these people would be classified as non-professionals since not only do they not make a living from their craft but they also spend their earnings on their theatre work. However, some of the most interesting work is created by independent theatre companies made up of such people. An example of a company that stages professional productions as well as running its own venue (Kumbaracı50) is Altıdan Sonra Tiyatro (Theatre After 6 pm) (<http://www.altidansonra.com/english.html>)

In general, there is a lack of integrating artistic activities into the education of youth in Turkey. Young people are usually preoccupied with exam preparation for middle school, high-school or university selection and placement exams, which is quite a challenging process in Turkey. When young people are not exposed to theatre either as participants or audience members, it becomes harder to attract their interest as they grow older. Young people are not sufficiently exposed to theatre and there is not enough audience development targeted at young audiences since there are not many quality productions directly addressing them. The subsidised theatres, the Municipal or State, do not have any long-term policy targeted at young audiences except in rare cases. And the private theatres usually schedule easy entertainment since they worry about ticket sales. However, as mentioned under sub-disciplines, there is Assitej Turkey, the Turkish branch of the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People, (<http://www.assitej-international.org/en/tag/turkey/>), which commits in principle and in practice to collaboration and cooperation among other international artistic associations on issues of mutual interest. They also take active part in organising various theatre festivals for children and youth around the country. Additionally, in 2016, the first edition of Atta Festival, an International Arts Festival for Children and Young People, was held in Istanbul.

The use and integration of creative drama tools in youth education is also popular yet not widespread around the country.

# Venues

## National/State Theatre

In 1949, the “Foundation Law for State Theatre and Opera” was passed, and resulted in the establishment of the State Theatre and Opera on June 16, 1949. Its previous name was the Turkish State Theatre and was a continuation of the Practice Stage. As part of the foundation law, the aim of the State Theatre and Opera was defined as follows: “To improve language and culture and to advance general knowledge of Turkish society with national and international plays; to develop and explore Turkish Theatre in the country; and to introduce Turkish Theatre abroad.” The State Theatre and Opera took this principle of spreading the notion and mission of theatre in Turkey to heart. Besides staging masterpieces of Western theatre, it pioneered the formation of a national theatre by gradually adding Turkish plays to the repertoire. Today, the State Theatre is close to celebrating its 60th birthday, and has 43 stages in 13 cities. With the travelling theatre companies, this means that every night at least one theatre opens its curtains. With a carefully selected and rich repertoire, the State Theatre performs plays not only all over Turkey, but also around 500 plays per year internationally. The Turkish State Theatre has been a member of the ETC-European Theatre Convention since June 2007. However, since the 2010s, the future shape of the Turkish State Theatres has been in question due to contradictory news about changes in its institution. There has also been demand from the government that the State Theatres stage only national texts written by Turkish playwrights.

## Municipal Theatres

The Municipal Theatres are theatre institutions supported by city municipalities. The plays staged in Municipal Theatres are selected to appeal to the audiences of the corresponding city. The most important Municipal Theatres are the Istanbul Municipal Theatre and Bakırköy Municipal Theatre (<http://www.bbt.bel.tr>), also in Istanbul, which host international guest directors. Both these venues, particularly the Bakırköy Municipal Theatre since it has less bureaucracy due to its smaller size, offer great potential for collaboration. They are experienced in working with international guest artist and in international artistic collaborations. There are also theatres outside of Istanbul that are deemed important, such as the Eskişehir Municipal Theatre or the Kocaeli Municipal Theatre.

### The Istanbul Municipal Theatre

(<https://sehirtyatrolari.ibb.istanbul/>) has been affiliated with the Istanbul Municipality since 1931. Its original name was Darübedayi and was established in 1914, but in 1934 it was renamed Istanbul Municipal Theatre (IMT). For many Turkish playwrights, their work was first staged at the Istanbul Municipal Theatre. At the same time, the theatre introduced many new playwrights to Turkish audiences. The first children’s theatre at IMT was established in 1935 and resulted in a period wherein children’s plays were regularly staged. Today the Istanbul Municipal Theatre has six stages in five theatre buildings, and accommodates about 2,000 audience members each day.

### Independent theatre

Since 2005 and particularly after 2010, there have been many small

independent theatre venues in Istanbul that are spaces transformed from an office space, flat, shop or an old cinema. Some of these venues are shared by a few theatre companies, while many are run by one major company although they still rent the space to outside productions. These “alternative” venues are mostly small-sized with an audience capacity of less than a hundred (although some are bigger) and some function as a black-box stage with changeable auditorium/stage set-up. Kumbaracı50 (<https://kumbaraci50.com>), İkinci Kat (<https://www.ikincikat.org>), Toy Istanbul (<http://www.toyistanbul.com>), Baba Sahne (<https://www.babasahne.com>) Kadıköy Emek (<https://kadi-koyemektiyatrosu.com>) Kadıköy Boa Sahne (<https://www.kadikoy-boasahne.com>) and Sahne Beşiktaş (<https://www.sahnebesiktas.com>) are such venues offering a diverse programme to their audiences. Toy also opened a venue/branch in Izmir, Toy Izmir Ege Perla, in 2018. There are also medium-sized independent/private venues that produce their own productions as well such as hosting others such as Moda Sahnesi (<https://modasahnesi.com>) and Dasdas (<http://dasdas.com.tr/index>) in Istanbul. In addition, the number of independent stages popping up in shopping malls is a phenomenon all across Turkey. There are many private, small, medium and large-sized stages within shopping malls. Almost all of the large-sized independent stages in Istanbul are within shopping malls such as the Zorlu Performing Arts Centre (<http://www.zorulpsm.com/en>) and Uniq Hall (<http://www.uniqistanbul.com/uniq-istanbul/uniqhall/>) managed by the private sector for profit rather than artistic merit. Finally, there is

also a recently opened, very interesting performing arts complex called Beykoz Kundura with multiple and multifunctional spaces. Currently it already functions as a cinema, and in addition a main stage is planned to be opened in 2019 (<https://www.beykozkundura.com/en>). This may also be interesting for site-specific performances since it is a former shoe factory transformed into a cultural centre.

For technical details and size of independent as well as State/Municipal theatres, see <https://tiyatrolar.com.tr/sahneler>, which has an extensive list of theatres.



# Festivals and events

## **International Istanbul Theatre Festival**

The International Istanbul Theatre Festival, which was first held in 1989, presents the finest examples of Turkish theatre, as well as internationally acclaimed theatre companies and dance groups such as Berliner Ensemble, Tanztheater Wuppertal and the Royal National Theatre. The festival also presents plays by world-renowned directors such as Robert Wilson, Theodoros Terzopoulos and Tadashi Suzuki. Carefully selected companies and artists who participate in the festival inspire the theatre scene with their impressive and sometimes radical productions. Whether modern or postmodern, various impressive forms of contemporary theatre come within the scope of the International Istanbul Theatre Festival. The festival has been held every year since 2000, biannually between 2000 and 2016 and then every year since 2016.

<http://tiyatros.iksv.org/en>

## **International Ankara Theatre Festival**

The festival, which has been organised by Taksav (Social Researches for Art and Culture Foundation) since 1996, presents many professional and amateur plays of Turkish theatre, as well as international theatre groups.

<http://www.taksav.org>

## **Little Ladies Little Men Festival**

This festival is organised by the Turkish State Theatre for children, and its first day is always on April 23, International Children's Day. The festival takes place over a week, during which it stages many different plays by State Theatres from Turkey and by international theatre groups from

other countries such as France, Italy and Switzerland. [www.devtiyatro.gov.tr/23nisan/english.html](http://www.devtiyatro.gov.tr/23nisan/english.html)

## **International Eskişehir Festival**

The International Eskişehir Festival, which has been organised by the Zeytinoğlu Foundation since 1995, presents different music, dance and theatre performances for both children and adults. In its first six years, the festival presented many Turkish plays, as well as international theatre groups, with the support of the Zeytinoğlu Foundation. Since 2001, the festival has been organised as a collaboration between the Zeytinoğlu Foundation and the Eskişehir Urban Development Foundation.

<http://www.eskisehirkulturenvanteri.gov.tr/detay.aspx?ID=20>

## **International Adana Theatre Festival**

Since 1998, the International Adana Theatre Festival has been organised every year with the support of the National Theatre, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Sabancı Foundation. The International Adana Theatre Festival presents the finest examples of Turkish theatre, as well as internationally renowned theatre groups. Initially, the plays performed at the festival were only staged in Adana, but since 2005 they have also been staged at the Sabancı University Show Centre in Istanbul.

<http://www.sabancivakfi.org/en>

## **International Antalya Theatre Festival**

The International Antalya Theatre Festival was held for the first time in 2009 by the National Theatre of Turkey.

<http://www.antalyadt.gov.tr>

## **State Theatre International Black Sea Theatre Festival**

The International Trabzon Theatre Festival has been organised by the National Theatre of Turkey since 1990. The festival presents significant examples of Turkish theatre, as well as internationally renowned theatre groups from Ukraine, Russia, Romania, Moldova, Georgia.

<http://www.trabzondt.gov.tr>

## **International Istanbul Puppet Theatre Festival**

The International Istanbul Puppet Theatre Festival has taken place since 1997 and in 2010 the festival was held with the support of the European Capital of Culture. The festival presents the finest examples of puppet theatre from Turkey and international puppet theatre companies from all around the world.

<http://www.istanbulkuklafestivali.com/en/>

## **A Corner in the World Festival**

A Corner in the World Festival is an independent festival for performing arts, bringing together artists from Turkey and its surrounding regions with a focus on corners of the world with geographical proximity but few opportunities for mobility and collaboration. Since its first edition in 2015, it has also served as a platform for artists and audiences to meet, and in 2017 until 2019, the festival was the resident curator at Bomontiada Alt in Istanbul.

<http://www.acornerintheworld.com>

### **Atta Festival**

Atta Festival organised its first edition in 2016 and is Istanbul's only international arts festival for children and young people. It represents all art and performance forms, as well as technological and interactive content. Atta Festival takes place each year around universal children's day in November.

<http://www.attafestival.com/en/>

### **Bergama Theatre Festival**

The Bergama Theatre Festival is an international performing arts festival in the municipality of Bergama, Izmir, and was organised for the first time in 2018.

<http://en.bergamatiyatofestivali.com/index.html>

### **BDS Bodrum Theatre Festival**

In 2018, Bodrum Deneme Sahnesi, a theatre space/company based in Bodrum, launched the first edition of its theatre festival, mainly featuring productions from Turkey, in particular Istanbul.

<http://www.bodrumdenemesahnesi.com>

### **Kuşadası Theatre Festival**

In 2017, Kuşadası Municipality launched the first edition of its theatre festival, featuring productions from all over Turkey, as well as offering a variety of workshops in performing arts.

<http://www.kusadasi.bel.tr/kusadasi-belediyesi-2-tiyatro-festivali>

### **Seferihisar Theatre Meeting**

In Seferihisar, Izmir, the municipality organises a theatre meeting during the summer period in which various symposiums, workshops and performances take place, mainly targeting a young audience.

<http://seferihisar.bel.tr/tiyatro-bulus->

[masi-seferihisarda/](http://masi-seferihisarda/)

### **Karaburun/Mordoğan Street Theatre Festival**

A street theatre festival held annually.

<http://www.visitizmir.org/en/district/karaburun/what-to-do/-964543>

### **Datça Theatre Festival**

In 2018, Datça Theatre Festival held its first edition in Datça, Muğla, featuring productions mainly from Istanbul.

<http://datcatiyatofestivali.com>

### **Van Theatre Festival**

Üvercinka Culture and Arts Centre held its first edition of the Van Theatre Festival in 2018, featuring national and international productions.

<https://www.facebook.com/vanuvercinka/>

### **Diyarbakır City Theatre Festival**

Diyarbakır Municipality held its first edition of the Diyarbakır City Theatre Festival in 2018, featuring productions from various cities in Turkey.

<http://www.diyarbakir.bel.tr/tr/haberler/8015-kulturdaresi.html>

### **Nilüfer Theatre Festival**

Nilüfer Municipality of Bursa held the first edition of its theatre festival in 2008, featuring productions from all over the country. The festival had its sixth edition in 2018.

[http://www.nilufer.bel.tr/niluferbelediyesi-102-tiyatro-festivali#PopupGoster\[popup\]/0/](http://www.nilufer.bel.tr/niluferbelediyesi-102-tiyatro-festivali#PopupGoster[popup]/0/) <http://www.nilufertiyatro.com/#>

### **Eskişehir International Children's and Youth Theatre Festival**

Eskişehir Municipality holds annually an International Children's and Youth Theatre Festival, featuring national and international productions.

<http://tiyatro.eskisehir.bel.tr/oyund-etay.php?oyunumuz=103>

### **Bursa International Children's and Youth Theatre Festival**

Bursa Culture, Art and Tourism Foundations holds an annual International Children's and Youth Theatre Festival, featuring national and international productions.

<http://www.bkstv.org.tr/en/tiyatro-festivali>

### **MonoFest**

Organised by Tiyatro Medresesi International Research, the Creation and Performance Centre was founded in 2010 in Şirince, Izmir, MonoFest (<http://www.tiyatromedresesi.org/en/>) hosts solo/monodrama performances from across the world at its venue.

### **Istanbul Fringe Festival**

This is a new theatre and dance festival, expected to have its first edition in September 2019.

<https://www.fringeistanbul.com/eng/home>

# | Prizes and grants

The most prestigious and well-known Turkish theatre awards are the Afife Jale Theatre Awards (<https://www.afife.org>), named after the first Turkish Muslim stage actress and financed by Yapı Kredi Bank, a private Turkish bank. The Afife Jale Theatre Awards are granted annually in many categories for productions in Istanbul. There is no financial grant accompanying the awards, although they provide major visibility for the winners, as well as the nominees. There are also some other awards, though of lesser visibility, named after important theatre figures or organised by organisations such as the Lions Club, although none is nationwide. The only award that grants financial support (100,000 Turkish lira) is the Gülriz Sururi-Engin Cezzar Theatre Incentive Award initiated by the private efforts of two prominent theatre figures, Gülriz Sururi and Engin Cezzar, in 2018 in collaboration with IKSÜ (International Foundation for Culture and Arts).

# | Financial situation

On an individual level, there are no fixed standards for actors' fees. Actors in subsidised institutions such as the State or Municipal Theatres received around 3,000 to 4,000 (Turkish) lira monthly in 2016, if they had a long-term contract. If an actor is working on an independent production, it is possible that they are not paid for rehearsals and are paid only for each performance around 200 to 500 lira. Or if they are part of the ensemble producing the play, they might agree on a percentage of the ticket sales. However, if one is to be paid for the rehearsals, it is not calculated on the number of days but on a total sum agreed for a certain period. For semi-professionals or those with less experience, this amount might be around 1,000 lira a month and if they are professionals with more experience or famous, they might get around 4,000 lira a month. Unfortunately, the precarious conditions and lack of regulations and standardisation in theatre make it very hard for actors/performers to make a living in theatre unless they also work as television actors. In many cases, they act for a very small fee just to be visible so that they can secure their next job. However, if a project has a sponsor or a co-producer, or if they are in an international co-production, performers rightfully demand to get paid according to the standards set for such contexts.

On an institutional level, usually the artistic fees for costume, set and light designers of a small to middle-scale production would be between 2,000 and 5,000 lira in 2018. Unless the production is staged in the company's own venue, usually the venues either demand a fixed rental fee per day of performance/rehearsal, or a percentage of the income from ticket sales, ranging between 40 and 60 percent. The average ticket prices for independent venues ranged between 40 and 80 lira in 2018.

Unfortunately, it is very hard to confirm or guess the amount of money that circulates through independent/private theatre and performing arts on an annual basis, since there is nowhere such information and data has been gathered and stored.

### **Financial support for theatres**

Of the financial support for theatres in Turkey, the largest part goes to the centrally governed State Theatres. The amount these State Theatres received in 2017 was about 220 million lira (33 million euros). State Theatres have a large team of directors, actors and actresses, dramaturgs, and costume, stage and lighting designers. The next significantly funded theatres are the Municipality Theatres in Istanbul. They also have a large team of directors and designers, and more than 200 actors and actresses. The Municipality Theatre has eight stages in different parts of Istanbul.

All the funds that are given to theatres in Turkey are shared between the State and Municipality theatres. Independent theatres also receive funding, but this is from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. In 2017-2018, about 5 million lira (around 800,000 euros) was given to independent theatres. This amount is not enough for them to survive; it is barely enough for the production costs. Therefore, independent theatres have to sell tickets at high prices. While the funded theatres sell tickets for around 10-20 lira, independent theatres have to charge 40-70 lira. There are also some theatres funded by banks and private institutions. Sponsorship is often production-based and usually banks and private institutions prefer visual arts since it provides them more visibility. An example of a bank that sponsors its own theatre productions is Akbank (<http://www.akbanksanat.com>).

# | Critics and researchers

Most Turkish theatre critics are members of Türkiye Tiyatro Eleştirmenleri Birliği (Association of Turkish Theatre Critics), which was founded in 1990. Its members write for several newspapers, theatre magazines and theatre websites. The association also publishes its own quarterly publication, TEB – Oyun (Play), featuring reviews of national, as well as international productions, articles and translations.

Mimesis magazine is a prominent Turkish online platform where critics and researchers publish their theatre reviews, articles or translations. (<http://www.mimesis-dergi.org/2016/10/tiyatros-elestirisi-ve-elestirmenlik/>) Tiyatro Dergisi (Theatre Magazine) (<http://www.tiyatrodergisi.com.tr>) is also another significant one.

Since 2010, there has also been an increase in the number of independent bloggers who write criticism on theatre and the performing arts. However, very few of them write regularly and have little impact on the theatre scene. Their writing is either too personal or too academic. One prominent blog that does have an impact on the theatre scene is <https://danzon2008.blogspot.com>. Its blogger writes not only about the performances he has seen in Turkey but also about the ones he has seen all around the world, thus exposing readers to an international theatre scene.

The lack of qualified theatre criticism is a subject of debate. Although there are theatre criticism departments in Turkey, very few students pursue a career in theatre criticism after their graduation. It is impossible to make a living from the freelance rate, which is as low as 100 lira for an article. There are few magazines specialising in theatre and in most cases they do not even make enough profit to pay their staff, as is the case with TEB – Oyun, which is sponsored by the voluntary work of members of the Association of Turkish Theatre Critics. There are some online platforms, such as Art Unlimited, that feature arts criticism and reviews, also giving space to performing arts. (<https://www.unlimitedrag.com>)

Unfortunately, very rarely do Turkish critics or researchers write in English since there is no theatre department in English. In general, language also poses a problem for the development of theatre criticism, since in many cases the critics do not have a sufficient command of a foreign language to follow the world literature on theatre either in English or any other language. Some of the researchers who do speak and write in English, and whose subject of interest includes Turkish theatre, are Esen Çamurdan

(<http://www.esencamurdan.com/book>), Beliz Güçbilmez (<https://independent.academia.edu/BelizGüçbilmez>) Özlem Hemiş (<http://www.khas.edu.tr/en/cv/2106>) and Eylem Ejder (<https://ankara.academia.edu/EylemEjder>).

Tiyatro Medresesi International Research, Creation and Performance, which was founded in 2010 in Şirince, Izmir (<http://www.tiyatromedresesi.org/en/>), is an important institution that functions as a research centre running many workshops in the summer by national and international theatre professionals.

# | (Social) media and theatre

Tiyatrolar.com.tr (<https://tiyatrolar.com.tr>), a digital platform founded in 2015 where you can also buy tickets for some productions, is the most reliable online source featuring updated information on productions, venues, theatre companies and all theatre personnel involved. It also features an archive.

There are no Instagram accounts, trendsetters, bloggers, vloggers or people tweeting in English. Most of such social media accounts that are in Turkish remain within their small circles and don't have much of an impact on the wider theatre scene.



# Resources

Perdesiz Sahneler (Stages with no Curtain) is a documentary film made in 2016 about the past and present of the alternative/independent theatre scene in Istanbul.

(<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6725300/>) The documentary is in Turkish.

There is limited access to the fairly short and recent history of performing arts in Turkey. There are no substantial archives or records even in the case of state-funded public institutions. In most cases in which former theatre companies or venues no longer exist today, their experiences have disappeared with them. There is also no systematic documentation of the current activities of present theatres, either. This plays a role in how Turkish theatre develops artistically. In return, a lack of systematic documentation results in the inability to foster a collective memory.

However, at the end of 2018, Türk Tiyatro Vakfı (Turkish Theatre Foundation) (<https://turkiyetiyatrovakfi.org/turkiye-tiyatro-muzesi>) was founded with the aim of establishing the Turkey Theatre Museum. Esen Çamurdan, one of the founders of TTV, said that instead of opening a museum with an already-existent collection, their challenge is to open the museum to create that collection.

# Facilities

There are no designated places to rent or buy technical equipment particularly for theatre, but there are some places that are preferred by theatre-makers for their affordable prices and variety. Perşembe Pazarı, the area of Karaköy in Istanbul that lies immediately west of Galata Bridge, is full of hardware shops. There are many lighting shops in the Şişhane district of Beyoğlu, Istanbul, and the Perpa (<https://www.perpa.com/en>) complex also offers many textile shops. Two popular places to get light filters and rent projectors or lighting equipment in Istanbul are Dinakord (<http://www.atlantik.com.tr>) and Sonmar (<http://sonmar.com.tr>).

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