

Bilkent University

# Analysis of the First Movement of Ahmet Adnan Saygun's Viola Concerto

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## **Analysis of the First Movement of Ahmet Adnan Saygun's Viola Concerto**

**Abstract:** The main purpose of this essay is to give some information before a viola player starts to practice Saygun's viola concerto. It contains briefly his life, brief information about his concerto, formal analysis of the first movement of the Saygun viola concerto and mainly based on practical analysis of the first movement.

**Keywords:** Saygun viola concerto, analysis of Saygun viola concerto, life of Saygun.

### **Elaborated Outline**

1. Introduction: aim of the essay and the order of content ( Saygun's life, Information about concerto, formal and performance analysis)
2. Brief Information about Ahmet Adnan Saygun's life: Consist of when and where he born and died, where and which teachers he studied and the gained awards.
3. Brief Information about Saygun Viola Concerto: Introducing the movements of concerto and the reason why Saygun started to write the concerto and the information about the premiere concert.
4. Analysis of the First Movement of Viola Concerto
  - 4.1 Formal Analysis: Showing with the bar numbers, where is the exposition, development, recapitulation and coda.
  - 4.2 Practical Analysis: how the passages should be played technically and musically including the bowing techniques and the nuances.
5. Conclusion: Summing up the whole essay.

### **Bibliography**

## **1. Introduction**

The aim of this essay is to help the viola players who will work on Saygun viola concerto. This essay can be beneficial for the players who read this before working. Firstly, I will briefly mention about Saygun's life, then brief information about his viola concerto and lastly, formal and practical analysis of the first movement of Saygun viola concerto. Performance analysis includes both technical ideas like bowing and right hand techniques and musical ideas which show phrases and how to play them and the essay is mainly based on performance analysis. The musical ideas are changeable but as I writing the performance analysis part, I look at Ruşen Güneş's interpretation and take some help from my viola teachers and mixed all the ideas together including mine.

## **2. Brief Information about Ahmet Adnan Saygun's life**

Ahmet Adnan Saygun was one of the very significant and contemporary Turkish composer among the Turkish fives who was born in Izmir 7th of September 1907 and died in Istanbul, 6th of January 1991. He took his first music lesson from Ismail Zuhtu, when he was thirteen; he started piano lessons with Rosati. After 1922, his piano teacher was Macar Tevfik, also he self studied counterpoint and harmony. He was a music teacher in Izmir, 1924. He passed a state exam that provided him to study in Paris, 1928. He studied harmony, counterpoint, fugue and organ music with Madame Eugène Borrel, Vincent d'Indy, Paul La Flem, Monsieur Borrel and Edouard Souberbielle. When he come back to Ankara and started teaching counterpoint in Ankara Muallim Musiki School in 1931 then went to Istanbul city conservatory as a teacher in 1936. In the same year he went to Osmaniye, Adana with Bela Bartok to analyze traditional village music and imitating and also taking notation. At the same time he took musical notation of 'Karadeniz Oyun Havalari' from Istanbul Municipality Conservatory archives. In 1939 Saygun occupied as folk house inspector and Republic of People's Party musical consultant. During this period he travelled among the country, visiting several regions, he compiled regional folk music rhythms and melodies. Saygun established an association, which was named 'Ses ve Tel Birliği', involves choir concerts of historical music periods and Turkish compositions. He became a founder member of 'Research of Folkloric Music Institution in year 1955. Saygun lectured about composition from 1946 to 1972 at the Ankara State Conservatory. At the same institution he gave model music classes and occupied as department chief.

Between the years of 1960 and 1965 he became a member of Training and Education Committee of National Education Ministry, also years that were covering 1972 to 1978 he became a member of TRT Management Committee. Until his death he lectured about ethnomusicology and composition.

First incident that enabled Saygun to announce his name was; vocalization of Yunus Emre oratorio by Lamoureux orchestra in 1947, which was in Paris Pleyel saloon. At the same year he became a director member of International Folk Music Council. In 1949 French National Education Ministry gave Saygun Palmes Academique badge, in 1955 Federal Germany gave him the medal of Frederick Schiller, in 1958 Italy's Stelle Della Solidiereta gave him the winning prize badge and at the same year British Harriet Cohen International Music Awards gave him the composition badge of Jean Sibelius medal. Saygun's excessive work with Hungarian composer Bela Bartok rewarded by Hungarian government in 1981. He also took Bartok's Commemoration Committee's Pro Cultura Hungarica reward.

Also he earned lots of rewards in Turkey. It starts with Inonu gift in 1948, Republic of Turkey's State Artistry reward in 1971, University of Ege and Anatolian University gave honorary doctorate in 1978, Ataturk art gift in 1981, Culture ministry grand award in 1984, he took "Osman Hamdi Certificate of Honor" in the centenary of the founding of the University of Mimar Sinan, Sevda Cenap And foundation honor medal in 1990.

Saygun, have made many investigations in the field of ethnomusicology; his researches on modal music have shed light on polyphonic music studies in our country until now. Modal music and traditional Turkish music has been investigated and compared with the Iranian authorities and Greek music. All the work of the composer is modal structure. Anatolian folk music, folk songs, such as the Urals; Pentatonic structures seen in the Hungarian and Finnish folk music has been examined.

Saygun tried to achieve Ataturk's musical goal that is a national Turkish music which can compete with global contemporary classical music. Ataturk believed that art should develop without leaving the traditional roots.

In 1934 he wrote a one-act operas titled *Özsoy* and *Tasbebek* which were the first examples of the Turkish polyphonic operas. The subject of Saygun's operas and oratorios are consist of suffering of the truth-seeking people. Saygun's compositions based on folk tales, legends and islamic chants. The modal approach harmonization influenced the composers of the next generation. The right to broadcast of Saygun's compositions is belong to SACEM, Southern Music Publishing Co., New York and the Peer Musikverlag (Hamburg). Many of his manuscripts are protected at Bilkent University.

### **3. Brief Information about Saygun Viola Concerto**

This concerto consist of three movement which are Moderato, Scherzando, Lento. It takes approximately 30 minutes. Saygun started to write the viola concerto in 1976 and the important thing to push him to writing a viola concerto was the wish of his student Rusen Gunes and Saygun finished his concerto in 10 February 1977. *Ten Sketches on Aksak Rhythm* (1976), *Four Melodies* (1977) and *Mediations on Men I* (1977) were the compositions that were written closest times to his viola concerto. The premiere concert was given in 28 April 1978 with Presidential Symphony Orchestra. The conductor was Gurer Aykal who was a student of Saygun and the violist was Rusen Gunes. However Saygun's viola concerto was first recorded in 1989 with the London Philharmonic orchestra and again the soloist was Rusen Gunes. Today the original manuscript is located in Museum of Adnan Saygun in Bilkent University Music and Performing Arts Faculty, Ankara.

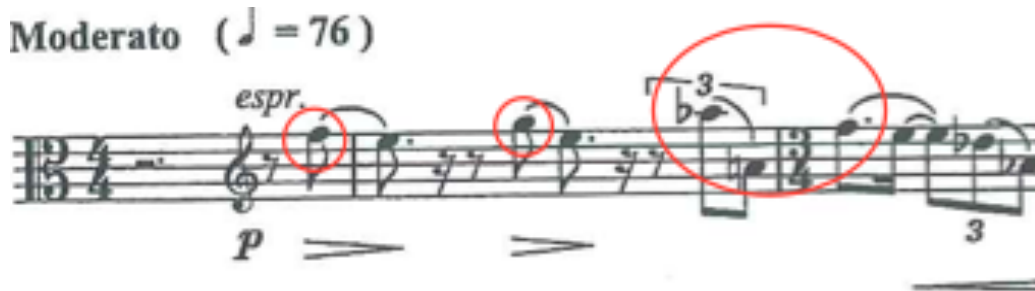
### **4. Analysis of the First Movement of Saygun Viola Concerto**

#### **4.1 Formal Analysis**

The first movement is in A-B-A structure with coda at the end. In this movement Saygun uses lots of Folkloric motives which based on huzzam makam that is a traditional Turkish scale, also motives of his first piano concerto is based on same traditional scale. Exposition starts at the beginning and ends in bar 77 , Development is between the bars 77 to 195 , Recapitulation is between the bars 195 to 275 and Coda starts from the bar 275. At the beginning of the concerto first 5 bars have the main idea of the concerto. In recapitulation section, viola plays first theme which takes role at the beginning but in one an octave higher.

#### 4.2 Performance Analysis

In my opinion the first 4 notes of the concerto are the core notes of the main theme, which can be seen at figure 1, so that they are very important. The first and third notes are behave like dissonant chord and need to resolve. The fifth and sixth notes are created from first 4 notes. In fact E is fifth note of A-flat and A so, they are most likely a chord of 1-5-8. The red-signed notes should be played very energetic with vibrato because they are going to resolve at E note which should played softly with less vibrato. In first theme E note is centered and should generally played softer when we compare to other notes. In fact, the most important thing is to playing with right bowing, as it is known playing with down bow provides natural diminuendo and up bow provides crescendo. Hence, It should be played the first 2 red-signed notes F and G with down bow and 3rd A-flat with up bow which enables a little crescendo towards F note. That provides player to easily show the phrases and helps him to make nuances at the same time.



**Figure 1**

At the first 2 bar music is going to reach the highest note A-flat which can be considered as the Out beat of the 3rd bar and resolves again into E note which should be played soft again than with the crescendo in 3rd bar E note in the 4th bar should played Forte with diminuendo and C note next to it should played piano and the last note, C-flat, of the fifth bar which should be played forte with diminuendo is the last note of the main motivic theme that can be seen at Figure 2.





**Figure 5**

In this phrase D-flat should be played with mezzo piano nuance and until the first beam of 8th bar there is a crescendo. In those nuances player should clearly show 2nd note and 5th note which are D-flat and F-flat in the bar 7th with a little accent and vibrato because they reminds the main theme's first and third notes. In 9th bar, this little phrase ends with A-flat which should be played softly vibrated. Then a third little phrase starts again in second half beat of 9th bar and it ends with D note in the bar number 12. Violist should play the E note in 10th bar forte and bright because it is the highest note until there. These three little phrases which I mention through here are actually the components of the first big idea over here. After this first big phrase composer generally developed these little motives which I mentioned before but there are some rhythmical motives which did not come before.



**Figure 6**

With figure 6 a new phrase begins, in this passage violist should play piano first note E and start to make crescendo until the highest note double flattened B which should be played forte.



**Figure 7**

After that, in figure 7 E-flat starts with accent and crescendo again to last note of 21st bar when player comes this note it should be played fortissimo.





**Figure 8**

In figure 8, music turns into an aggressive mode. Again in 23rd bar that the three-four bar is very similar with second bar of figure 5 and the D-flat and E-flat should be played with vibrato. The last three note in 24th bar should be played with little accents and detache and it is same with the last three notes of 25th bar. In 27th bar a long diminuendo starts from first note to last note and 29th bar starts pianissimo. (Figure 9)



**Figure 9**

There is a triplet idea which comes first time that long in figure 9. I believe that the reason that these two bars come here is that it is calming down the music because until the beginning of the figure 9 music was forte made by very long crescendo and played aggressively, it is like a bridge to connect two aggressive passage together because two bars later in the bar number 30th music become aggressive again.



**Figure 10**



**Figure 11**

Beginning of the bar 29 should be played pianissimo like whistling and bow should be closed to fingerboard to get that sound. First 8 notes can be played bow with air, not fully contact then

sound goes darker and heavier. It should be played more aggressive and detaché after 8 notes in the bar 29. Player should use his bow middle to lower and bow's hair should be fully contacted to the strings. The important clue is that this is a progress from the start of figure 10 to end of the figure 11. The bars between 29 and 31, there is a textural change, rhythm is naturally accelerating and at the bar 30 four note groups which is seen before in figure 10 F-E-D-C-sharp does not follow the rhythm, note groups are changing inside the sixtolets.



**Figure 12**

Figure 12 starts with forte and continues with diminuendo. This phrase is very lyrical and should play like speaking. Start of poco animato viola finishes with piano nuance and orchestra starts to play solo with a big crescendo and viola joins to music with forte in 42nd bar. (Figure 13)



**Figure 13**

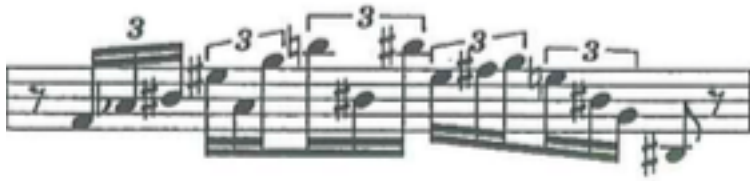
Figure 13 is very similar with figure 6.



**Figure 14**

First time there is a ricochet in figure 14 which is bar 47. At the start of figure 14 F note should be played with up bow and triplet notes begins with G note should start with down bow. The

important thing is that up bow should be played very short because violist should stay in the upper part of the bow. Later then there is a triplet idea again in 48th bar.



**Figure 15**



**Figure 16**



**Figure 17**

This idea starts with figure 15 and ends with figure 17. This phrase should be played *detache* which means fully contacted bow hairs to strings and in middle to lower part of the bow. Notes are continuously jumps over the strings to clarify, all notes are in different strings, that's why violist should use his elbow to make these jumps easier and play the notes without unwanted accentuations. This phrase is very similar to figure 11 in terms of musical phrasing. To clarify, music groups which starts in figure 15 G, B-flat, C-sharp and F-sharp does not follow the rhythmical groups. In my opinion Saygun likes these kind of rhythmical changes, he uses these changes lots of times in the first movement. The second half of the figure 16 is measure 50 is very lyrical and should be played *piano* with a little crescendo and it end up with *forte* in the first beat of the measure 53 which can be seen at figure 18.



**Figure 18**

In my opinion, from the bar 48, which can be seen at figure 15, to 53 is more like a question and the second beat of the bar 53 is an answer all to notes that start in the bar 48 reach the climax in the first beat in the bar 53 with the nuance forte and then the answer should be played with different tone which helps the audience to differentiate them.



**Figure 19**



**Figure 20**



**Figure 21**



**Figure 22**



Figure 23

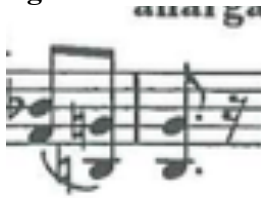


Figure 24

Figure 19 and 21 and 23 are questions and 20, 22 and 24 are the answers of them. All this passage should be played forte.

Between the bar number 52 to 57 has a little aggressive character, after 57th bar is more likely to play lyrical with molto vibrato. (Figure 25)

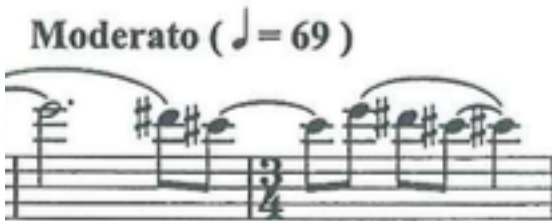


Figure 25

Measure number 57

At the beginning of the bar 65 a long diminuendo starts until the end of figure 26 which should play piano.



Figure 26



**Figure 27**

In figure 27, the motive is new and it will develop in the continues parts of the first movement. It is very aggressive motive which should be played forte with little accentuations and in the middle to lower part of the bow which is fully contacted to strings.



**Figure 28**

The music in figure 28 is very similar with lament. It feels like requiem or death. I believe that in this passage that stars from bar 98 tempo slows down and in the bar number 99 it radically slows.



**Figure 29**

In figure 29, F, E, D, C-sharp motive comes from figure 10 with an augmentation but later in figure 30 it becomes faster.



**Figure 30**

This phrase starts slowly with piano nuance and continues with very little crescendo and accelerando. The third beat of the bar 105 can be seen at figure 31, the triplet idea comes again and it's very similar with the figure 16. Music does not follow rhythm again.

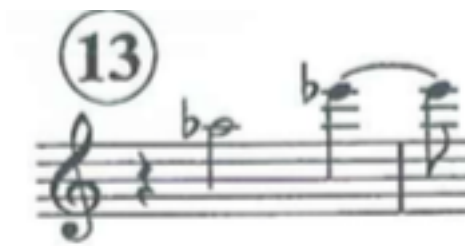


**Figure 31**

At figure 32, music starts piano with crescendo and it is growing until the beginning of the bar number 118 which can be seen at figure 33.



**Figure 32**



**Figure 33**





**Figure 34**

Figure 34 is answer of figures 32 and 33 which should be played with diminuendo. Figure 35 is written arco however, later same motive comes at the bar number 174 and it is written pizzicato. (Figure 36)



**Figure 35**



**Figure 36**

At the bar number 123 (Figure 37) a very aggressive phrase comes and continuous until the end of bar 128 (Figure 38). The usage of bow is very intense because of the aggression of the music here. Player should use his lower part of bow and all the G notes played with down bow has an accent.





**Figure 37**



**Figure 38**

There is a huge glissando in the end of 142nd bar and goes to G note in the first beat of 143rd bar. It should start from piano and end with forte. In the bar 155, there is a spiccato passage which ends in 157th bar. Between those bars there is a huge diminuendo. (Figure 39 and 40) It should be played in the part of lower to middle of the bow.



**Figure 39 - Bar number 155**



**Figure 40 - Bar number 156 and 157**



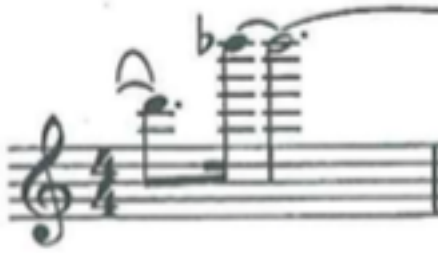
**Figure 41**

The figure 41 is again very aggressive motive with accentuations and has a very similar playing with figure 37. In the bar 172, there are three triplet ricochet and has the same playing feature with the figure 14. The bar 206 is similar with figure 28.



**Figure 42 -Bar number 206**

In the bar 225, the highest note D-flat in the first movement comes and it can played more significant. (Figure 43)



**Figure 43**

There is a new motive which starts in the bar 236. (Figure 44) It is played with con sord. Generally, it is not normal to see a concerto with con sord soloist but in this motive soloist accompanies the orchestra. In this passage, viola part is more likely to considered as effect and bow should played closed to finger board which enables to generate more effective sound.



**Figure 44**

Again a triplet motive comes which similar with figures 16 and 31 the phrase ends in first beat of 244th bar. There is a crescendo which starts first piano at 240 and ends in 244 with forte. (Figure 45 and 46)



**Figure 45 - Bar number 240 and 241**



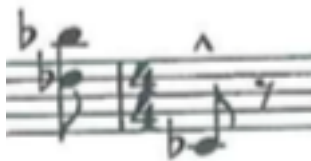
**Figure 46 - Bar number 242, 243 and 244**



**Figure 47**



**Figure 48**



**Figure 49**

Figures 47,48 and 49 are the answers of figures 45 and 46. This part is very similar with figures 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24. At the bar 259 music becomes lyrical and ends at the bar number 268. (Figures 50 and 51)



Figure 50



Figure 51

In the bar 281, violist should start the phrase piano with crescendo and he should play this phrase in ad libitum. (Figure 52)



Figure 52

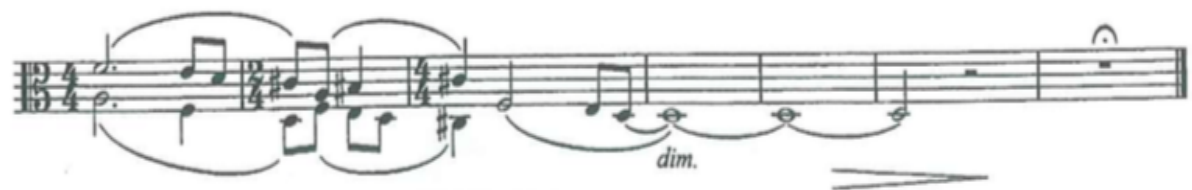


Figure 53

End of the first movement ends piano with diminuendo. Generally, first movement of concertos finish with forte nuance and artistic soloist passages. However, Saygun finishes his first movement of concerto very quite and calm which represents the first movement of Bartok viola concerto.

## 5. Conclusion

I mentioned about Saygun's life, some information about his viola concerto and analyzed it. Essay is mainly based on practical analysis that could be very supportive for viola players who thought music is so complex. This work is very important for viola repertoire and also for Turkish violists. Saygun concerto is the one of the biggest concerto among the Walton, Bartok and Schnittke and some universities of Turkey it is compulsory to play it. Showing phrases and the motives to audience is very important because of that violist, who play this concerto, should understand the phrasing and the characteristic of the motives. As a viola student, I wish that, this essay is beneficial for viola players who work on Saygun concerto.

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