# Conclusion

## THEORIZING AFFECT IN MUSICS AND BEYOND

In our focus on music practices and our investment in ethnographic methodologies, ethnomusicologists are uniquely situated to analyze how socialization emerges as processes of learning how to feel and express that feeling in sound. The question "who am I?" already alludes to a belief that specific collections of feelings should be had and that some affective modalities are understood, articulated, and lived as the correct way to inhabit the world. Studying feelings that are meant to be had is a central theme of this book, where melancholy emerges as reparative, healing, pleasurable, community making, and spiritually rewarding for present-day Turkish classical musicians. In this conclusion, I share thoughts about what ethnomusicologists in particular can contribute to transdisciplinary debates about affect, and lay out a number of concerns that emerged in my own endeavor to engage ethnographic ways of knowing to speak with and against theories of affect and emotion.

While we are beyond the so-called "affective turn" in the humanities that emerged in the early 1980s, the literature today we canonize in the linguistic utterance "affect theory" continues to offer much to music and sound studies. In engaging reworkings, destabilizations, and co-assemblings based on the work of Spinoza (see Ruddick 2010, Gregg and Seigworth 2010), Tomkins (1962), Sedgwick (2003 and 2007), Thrift (2000, 2004, 2008), Massumi (1996 and 2002), Bergson (see Saji 2004 and Watson 2003), and Deleuze and Guattari (1987 [1980]), we are presented with theories that describe a realm of experiencing that is preverbal and preconscious. *Intensification* is a key word in affect theory, as bodies and objects circulate in space and induce felt sensations that escape immediate perception. Affect theory trades explanatory tools for description—and thus may be why ethnomusicologists are so inspired to

grapple with affective entanglements: affect theorists study objects that are reportedly preverbal, making it seem an immediately useful applicable theory to account for sound, musics, and musical practices.

Affect theory is, in part, about destabilizing the discursive domains that divide disciplines, an aspect that proves challenging when we delve beyond terminology and investigate the *assumptions* that underlie different theories. Affect theory is one—but only one—important path for studying messy fields of feeling that are simultaneously central to sense experience yet inaudible in many methodologies. Other theories, from psychology, anthropology, neuroscience, and cognitive studies to philosophy, gender studies, cultural studies, sociology, political science, and music studies, offer distinct approaches to the study of affect and emotion. In my own experiences mapping out these different theoretical trajectories, I have struggled with the taxonomies and literatures that tend to treat affects, moods (especially Heidegger's concept of *Stimmung*), sentiments, feelings, and emotions as interchangeable and overlapping. Every scholar—and I include myself in this critique—seems to need to reinvent the wheel because of this messiness, a response that is productive for creating new ways of asking questions but not always as useful for engaging beneficial methodological tools that already exist.

Let us examine relevant works by historians and literary scholars as an example of this working and reworking—considering Stearns and Stearns's work on "emotionology" (1985), studied by Harré as "emotives" (1986), renamed as "emotional regimes" by Reddy (2001), and most recently revised by Flatley as "affective mapping" (2008). These taxonomies all indicate that particular feelings are constructs experienced by specific communities in different linguistic regions or historic eras in response to particular political and social contexts.

Social constructionist scholars from anthropology and gender studies have considered situated "feeling rules" (Hochschild 1983) and "affective discourses" (Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990, Lupton 1998) that shape what kinds of affects and emotions are representative of what Rosenwein names "emotional communities" (2006) or what Walkerdine brands "affective communities" (2009 and 2010). Utilizing a wide array of methodologies, these scholars argue that emotions *are themselves* that which binds a collective together (exemplary works here are Abu-Lughod 1986 and 2005, Berlant 2008 and 2011, Lutz 1998, and Rosaldo 1984). These perspectives have solidified a foundational frame that early articulations of affect theory cannot fully account for—namely, how affect is *primarily about othering* and boundary making. In identifying how dominant hegemonic social forms and norms work through repetition, we come to understand that is through coercion and domestication that worlds materialize and boundaries are produced. Affect, in other words, connects us to conditions of subordination.

The perspectives outlined thus far—affect theory and social constructivist and historical perspectives—do coalesce, with some shared roots in Marxist theory, in assuming affect as an object and the body as object, and focusing on the circulation and often the stickiness of objects in collision with other objects. Music making of course includes objects—instruments, bodies, texts, recordings, and other sonic commodities—that "involve the transformation of others into objects of feeling" (S. Ahmed 2004: 11). Yet throughout this book I have argued against a perspective that would psychologize or individualize emotions as something "we have" or that moves from "outside in." Rather, emotions differentiate the boundary between the "I" and other objects in our social worlds. I have utilized the brilliant work of Sara Ahmed and her model of the "sociality of emotions"; Ahmed suggests that emotions are crucial to the very constitution of the psychic and the social as objects, a process that suggests that the "objectivity" of the psychic and social is an effect rather than a cause (S. Ahmed 2004: 10). Yet Ahmed's model—rooted in the importance of the bodily boundary and border—is not necessarily applicable to ethnography, because of her focus on emotion as a disembodied force that circulates in texts, not located in the practices of specific social actors, and not necessarily rooted in diverse bodily experiences in performance. Furthermore, my work has resisted tendencies in scholarship—of affect/emotion and of Islamic communities—that reify notions of individuality and assume autonomy.

Beyond the issues of authors defining "affect" and "emotion" in diverse genealogical ways, these few perspectives I have thus far underscored also issue the fundamental problem for music and sound studies scholars who may be tempted to adopt multiple approaches. Even as these theories share a focus on becoming and object-ness, they do not share the same assumptions about the importance of power or difference. Please note that I believe that combining theories that have different assumptions about affect/emotion/feeling, the body, the idea of individual and collective (self-)fashionings, object-ness, and interaction is *interestingly syncretistic, not necessarily contradictory.* But we need to take care. We need to know that we are dancing through different terrains not just in terms of topic, method, and approach, but in terms of basic assumptions and research goals. Let me briefly outline five of the concerns I have focused on in shaping my own research on affective practice in a unique community of highly nostalgic, intensely idiosyncratic, and diverse musicians in Turkey. In parsing out and combining various approaches to affect and emotion, I take care to avoid the following "wrong turns" (Wetherell 2012) that I believe may be inherent in the very utterance of "affect" and "emotion" itself in scholarship on music and sound.

First, the faulty division between the biological and the cultural or the psychological and the social is a bifurcation that ethnomusicologist Judith Becker's work on trance and trancing in diverse cultural and historical

contexts has complicated and challenged (2004). On the empiric end, scholars engaging Darwin's physiological accounts and the James-Lange theory (which outlines emotions as resulting from physiological reactions to events) frame emotional objects and affective processes in terms of the basic emotions that dictate that bodily responses give rise to affective states. On the cultural or social end, scholars may tend to neglect critical bodily responses that are generative to the experience, expression, and voicing of emotion.

We may all agree that we must reintroduce the energetic, the sensual, and the physical in humanities and social sciences research, a task that brings me to my second concern: in an attempt to account for the transmission (Brennan 2004) or contagion (Reicher 2001) of affect in group settings, the physical and diverse instantiations of difference in bodies and what those differences might index are absent. Assumptions about human universality may be uncritically presented. Diversities in gender, able-bodiedness, age, race, ethnicity, and class are erased. Of course, embodiment is central in structuring and validating musicians' and audiences' affective attachments. Individuals' bodies become customized through inculcated cultural processes in a kind of growing or "pruning" process (Rose 2004). Yet as ethnographers of musicians and listeners and dancers, I argue we should not uphold the sameness in the utterance of "body" used by theorists of affect and emotion. While the study of autonomic and central nervous systems provide us with significant normative insight into general neurological human responses of arousal, we are also deeply observant of difference in diverse individuals' sense experiences. We can challenge scholarship that ignores neurodiversity and the experiences of differently-abled individuals, that prioritizes and normalizes able-bodiedness, or that validates specific ethnocentric perspectives of embodiment. Here, ethnomusicologists can intervene by resisting the collapsing of difference in bodies and in listening through ethnography.

A third wrong turn in flattening diverse theories of affect and emotion is the elision between approaching affect *as an object* and affect *as a process*. Meshing social constructivist and philosophical works on affect, which consider affect as a becoming, potential, and virtual (Massumi 1996, Clough 2009, Thrift 2008), is a significant challenge. It is easy to lose track of *how* these affective objects and processes function—or what these processes sound like—in terms of power, institutions, and the struggles of real agents in specific contexts. Ethnomusicologists intimately know that ontological concerns are not outside of violence, domestication, resistance, negotiation, and coercion.

Furthermore, we cannot collapse theories that situate affect-as-object with affect-as-process without detailed consideration of phenomenology. Here I turn to Harry Berger's excellent work, which lays out a method to approach emotion as practice and understand how individuals can take a "stance" in expressive culture (2009), and Tony Perman's important work with Peircean semiotics that can pinpoint how emotion can go wrong in performance (2010).

We should also venture issues of reception, potentially alongside the work of scholars in music cognition such as David Huron (2006, 2010, 2011). Yet as ethnomusicologists, we know that musicians can *appeal* to emotions through their performances *without necessarily producing them* in individual listeners. In this book, I strongly advocate a practice-oriented approach to the study of affect, wherein we explicitly interrogate how particular people claim that they actively recruit and deploy distinct sounds or musical patterns to make themselves, and potentially their listeners, "feel." It is possible to oscillate, on the one hand, between considering how musicians speak about music as a thing "to act" on us (*afficere,* whence affect) or "to move" us (*emovere*, whence emotion) and, on the other hand, to devoting sustained attention to affect as a practice—as something musicians "do" (see my oscillations between sonic melancholy as object and as practice in chapters 4 and 5). Yet instead of prioritizing the question "what is affect?" we must first ask "what is affect *for*?" Ethnomusicologists are poised to productively argue against sonicist perspectives that ascribe agency to music and portray sound or aesthetics as sentient beings in anthropomorphic terms. Hence the need for future work to shift focus to the original agent, the persons and peoples who sense, enact, transmit, perform, and repetitively practice affect.

A potential fourth area of caution for the study of affect and emotion in music is our tendency to assume the individual and autonomous selfhood. In chapter 3, I focus on the specific decades in Ottoman Turkey when the term *virtüöz* was adopted from the French *virtuosité*, an appropriation that coincided with the birth of the idea of the autonomous individual, or (Tr.) *birey*. Before this point in the mid-twentieth century, Turks had not fully conceptualized selfhood in terms of autonomy per se. If a music scholar investigating affect for Turkish musicians in and around these historical areas is to make a significant contribution, she must check her assumptions about individual selfhood and seek other epistemological terrains. In the case of contemporary Turkish classical musicians, autonomous individuality falls away with an understanding of the importance of the dyadic master-apprentice relationship and one's place in the musicians' music lineage. Rhizomatic genealogies and communal selfhood surface as the primary means of identification over individual autonomy. What understandings about selfhood and subjectivity might the study of affective practice in other musical communities yield?

That question brings me to my fifth concern about broadly studying affect and emotion in the humanities: I believe we as ethnomusicologists can significantly intervene in theoretical slippages by utilizing our ethnographic tools in the realm of language, naming, and translation. Consider this: as affect theorists seek to describe the preverbal and preconscious somatic realm of experiencing, they choose musical metaphors to describe the workings of affect. Not so different from biomedical textbooks and publications that talk about body systems needing to be "in harmony," affect theory abounds with terminology

such as "attunement," "enactment," "sympathetic," "consonance," and "vibration." While it is easy to cut and paste these approaches in a study of music and musicians simply because affect theorists use sonic metaphors, we must resist this impulse and first question the frameworks generating the metaphor. So often scholars gravitate toward such metaphors in explaining terminology because they assume sonic metaphors—like "music"—exist in an immaterial, ethereal, or alternate space of aesthetics. Ethnomusicologists would not necessarily agree that musics or sounds themselves convey a preconscious, intermediary space, and we should loudly amplify this critique in the humanities.

Yet my intervention here about language and naming in English-language academic debates is more far-reaching. I encourage all of us to take care with our valuation of theories of affect, emotion, and feeling in English, German, and French at the expense of local epistemological and ontological structures and discourses. Ethnomusicologists already have extensive methods for studying musical meaning. We take care when translating texts and contexts, and when we modify cosmological ontologies for normative secular academic discourses. We specialize in calling assumptions about feelings and emotions into question in and through listening.

And we have excellent ethnomusicological works to draw on for inspiration. In her exceptional book *Fado Resounding: Affective Politics and Urban Life* (2013), Lila Ellen Gray analyzes the way *fado amador*, a Portuguese music genre and amateur music practice, circulates and transforms affect to render history and "soulfulness" public. Through an "ethnography of the sonorous" and with careful attention to the dialectic between listing and voicing, Gray traces the counters of genre and feeling, place-making, and memory. Ethnomusicologists interested in emotion and affect must also look to one of the foundational texts of our field, Steven Feld's *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression* (first published in 1982). Feld explores the relationship between the cultural system of the Kaluli community in Papua New Guinea as inextricably linked to and informed by the meaningful sounds that surround them (poetics, song, weeping, birds). Feld offers us an exemplary model of how "expressive modalities are culturally constituted by performance codes that both actively communicate deeply felt sentiments and reconfirm mythic principles" (1990 [1982]: 14).

In my own work, my insistence on evaluating the melancholies purposefully cultivated by Turkish classical musicians as affective practice and as a modality (in the quintessential definition of modality as a path and process) is not drawn from western scholarship on affect/emotion/feeling but rather from music ethnography itself. Despite my wide reading across many fields, prioritizing people and experience-centered ethnography required a necessary decentering the assumptions generated by western epistemological frameworks. Of course, I engage these well-known theoretical understandings of affect/emotion/feeling to help me translate musicians' melancholic musicking

in the normative linguistic frameworks available to me as a native English-speaking academic. Nor do I suggest that contemporary Sufi-influenced ontological frameworks sedimented in urban centers of Turkey offer an alternative to the epistemologies generated in "western" frameworks and debates. That would be the wrong turn of essentialism and orientalism. However, I do suggest that our commonly-used theoretical structures and ontological assumptions are themselves not expansive enough to provide the critical explanatory or descriptive power we currently need to understand diverse affective practices. By provincializing normative theoretical frameworks on affect and emotion and by prioritizing our ethnographic evidence, ethnomusicologists can insightfully attend to multi-sensorial experiences that have yet to meet with a theoretical becoming, and attune to vibrations not yet sensed in the diverse scholastic terrains within which we wander.

## BRINGING THE RHIZOMES OF TURKISH CLASSICAL MUSICIANS TO BEAR BEYOND THE ACADEMY

Let us return to the farewell greeting some Turkish classical musicians say in parting that opened this book: *Allah derdini arttırsın*, "May God increase your pain/suffering." In the interviews that formed the content of this book on melancholic modalities, a few Turkish classical musicians ended our discussions with a famous line from the Qur'an, "He increases in His creatures that which He wills" (35:1). In referencing God as the ultimate cause of melancholy—and in voicing the Qur'an as the conclusory archival source in an interview postlude—these Turkish classical musicians rhizomatically root their affective practice in spiritual discourse. Why are the tenets and practices of Islam such present rhizomes in musicians' melancholic modalities?

The Arabic word for divinity (*ilah*)—the root of *Allah* (lit., "the divine")—may itself come from the Arabic root w-l-h, which connotes sadness, melancholy, and sighing. Multiple *hadith*-s of the Prophet Muhammed and verses of the Qur'an instruct believers that God created humans in order to be known by them. Since the thirteenth century, Islamic philosophers like Ibn al-'Arabi have written about "a God whose secret is sadness, melancholy, and nostalgia that arises from God's aspiration to know himself in the beings who manifest God's being" (Corbin 1969: 94; see also Almond 2003). If God's secret is melancholy that results from God's desire to be known, the secret that manifests among Turkish classical musicians is that their melancholic musicking is itself an endeavor to know God.

This book tells a story of artists—in a particular national context and situated period of time—who engage local Sunni and Sufi Islamic discourses and leverage experiences of pain and suffering into creative power, deploy loss as a kind of musical meaning itself, and render melancholic musicking as catharsis and as pleasurable. I pull apart the constitutive elements of present-day

Turkish classical musicians' melancholic affective practice: loss narratives that highlight musicians' celebration and fabrication of an idyllic Ottoman past and the mourning of an impossibility of return (chapter 1), spiritual ideologies of melancholy as a necessary effect of separation from the divine (chapter 2), individual self and collective understandings gained in the emotional and musical transmission practices of master to apprentice in specific musical lineages (chapter 3), embodied performances, tearful experiences, and gendered practices that Turkish classical musicians articulate as specific to their genre (chapter 4), and musicians' present-day reparative practices that draw on Ottoman musico-medicinal beliefs that melancholic sounds ultimately heal (chapter 5). This book is about coming to grips with Turkish classical musicians' philosophy of how one should experience suffering with sound.

These stories about melancholic affective practices from a unique musical community in Turkey may invite some readers to consider expanding the affective modalities that our own diverse social lives engender. As I complete this book, deeply aware and critical of my multiple intersecting racial, linguistic, employment, citizenship, and class privileges, it is hard not to link the stories I tell with what scholars observe as a problematic, sustained investment in "happiness" in neoliberalism (Berlant 2011, S. Ahmed 2010, Ehrenreich 2010). Meditating on these different approaches to value—which I feel press on me intimately as an ethnographer of Turkish musics who has an eagle on her passport—I think critically about my own national community's invested insistence on feeling good and searching for happiness. Perhaps rather than "how can I be happy?" we might gain insight from Turkish classical musicians' valuing of melancholy and consider asking, instead, "what kinds of suffering am I willing to invite in and sustain for what I value and give importance to in life?"

For even if we maintain that happiness is our ultimate goal, any search for happiness is not without hardship, struggle, and pain. Turkish classical musicians are incredibly articulate about the mobile oscillation between happiness and sadness, pleasure and pain. My field notes are covered with statements from musicians pointing to this dialectic, such as, "for us, even entertainment has melancholy and grief [*bizde eğlencede bile bir hüzün ve keder vardır*]."

Melancholy is possible only in the presence of love, which confers meaning to loss, pain, and suffering. Turkish classical musicians do not "feel melancholy" all of the time. Yet they have the multiple names and terms for "melancholy." Melancholies are richly, diversely, numerously named in Turkish and in Ottoman because of their uniqueness inside the full spectrum of emotional life. Thus in the larger emotional fabric of musicians' experiences, melancholy surfaces as an affective practice that is sustained in forms of joy and happiness.

As a whole, this book centers on what Turkish classical musicians claim melancholy does for them, focusing on how they enact iterations of melancholy in musicking and listening, and how their melancholic affective practices shape and reflect their understandings of themselves in contemporary

political life. Music making produces sound in acoustic space, supported by social quieting. Musics frame a shared social space in which musicians communally make melancholy an external object to deal with in and through sound. Making melancholy musically is safe—you feel sad and, through musical turns, tensions, releases, and conclusions, you find in musical melancholy not just a metaphor but also a tool to cope with the world. Sounding melancholy, for musicians, happens a temporally unique and liminal space that allows for a moving forward and working through in *makam* modulations and momentum. Melancholic modalities not only teach musicians how to deal with suffering in life, but also render that life spiritually rich.

Modality denotes an approach, a way of grappling with difficult things. My focus on melancholic modalities offers music scholars the theoretical modalities of rhizomatic analysis and bi-aurality. I have discovered that the only meaningful way to understand affect in the lives of Turkish classical musicians is by accepting the rhizomatic nature of affective practices themselves. In this book, I seized on one prominent offshoot of musical meaning for musicians—that of melancholy—and attempted to lead readers through a nest of settled worldviews and life paths that allow me to explain why and how melancholy comes into meaning in sound and in life. It is critical that you know that there are other shoots I could have grabbed for.

Yet is also imperative to view the book itself as a rhizome: it conceals as much of the rhizomatic nature of melancholic modalities as it uncovers. The book is also a commodity: like the rhizomatic reeds that are cut, transported, crafted into *ney*-s, and sold, the text in your hands (and its author) have been rendered objects of circulation and commodification. As the author of this rhizomatic book, I acknowledge the inherent danger in my focus on melancholic modalities: ethnomusicologists and musicians alike may be surprised or offended by my insistent focus on melancholy and believe that I problematically compact the rich affective geographies of all Turkish classical musicians into a singular category. That would be an unfortunate reading of this book. I instead hope readers find that this book maintains a focused approach on melancholic modalities to ultimately unweave and follow the deeply embedded assumptions about sound, separation, piety, ethics, and humanity that inform musicians' practices.

I also acknowledge that some readers may hear in this book a prescription for acknowledging and working with suffering in our own lives. While I myself have found some of the selected stories I share to be reparative and generative, I do not view myself as a comfortable or confident advocate of melancholic modalities as a path, if it could be interpreted in that way. Perhaps this is because I am highly attuned to my commitment to equity and to the weight of genuinely representing others' voices, listening habits, and beliefs. I believe that readers acknowledge my primary appreciation of melancholic modalities as themselves a practice of beauty and as a particularly artistic life path. I

acknowledge that I made particular decisions in the writing of this book that you, as readers, will take and make yours in a myriad of positive, negative, and neutral ways. Recognizing this two-way street offers me a chance to celebrate vulnerability: the exposed openness of the musicians with whom I work as well as my own.

For indeed, selves can be rhizomatic, too. Parts of selfhood may be exposed beyond the surface of the water, while the rich weaving of breadth, movement, and growth continues in unforeseen directions beyond immediate view. That is certainly the case with *arundo donax,* the scientific term for the giant cane *kamış* (reed) that, after being cut, bent, burned, and shaped by a master's hands, will become the *ney* reed flute (see chapter 2).

I once traveled to the Antep region of southern Turkey specifically to watch the process of gathering *arundo donax*. I waded deep in muck through freshwater marshes where my companion and guide selected and cut reeds to sell to *ney* makers in Istanbul. Watching the process of the *ney*'s first separation from the reed bed, I realized I had traveled two days on a bus with the belief that I would myself gather some deep insight when my skin hit the bottom of the reed bed. I expected a transformational experience, and instead just experienced. The reeds we gathered to be made into *ney*-s did not alter my appreciation of the rhizomatic as much as the immensity of the reeds that were left behind did. Every *ney* I heard after my experience in the wetlands brought the sense memory of standing within rhizomes and knowing that anything that is cut can bear witness only to a part of what it once was.

While this book may be a material object representing a kind of melancholy in and of itself, I have publicly performed melancholic modalities in other ways. I acknowledge especially my relationship with my teachers and their families and lineages: in interviews with other musicians I was aware of how my knowledge was tested and how my questions were evaluated as representative of larger—and often opposing—musical worldviews. There is much in the realm of affective practices that I was subjected to that I could not take in and make my own. This reaction is understandable, of course: almost all ethnographers, and almost all students, may find particular observations or lessons contrary to their own instincts. These moments allow us to both question the lesson and interrogate the disjuncture of opposing assumptions clashing: we see in discord the boundaries of diverse ontological domains.

Let us remember Mevlana's poignant metaphor that "the wound is the place where light enters you." This is not a book about music per se; it is a book that prioritizes musicians' lives, beliefs, narratives, music making, and experiences. The regarded composer and musician Mesud Cemil (1902–1963) described his father, master *tanbur* (long-necked lute) musician and composer

Tanburi Cemil Bey (1873–1916) in terms that privileged his humanity and character over his virtuosic musicking. Mesud Cemil said, "My father's moral code was superior to his music [*babamın ahlakı musikisinden üstündü*]." During my fieldwork, I observed the esteemed *neyzen* (reed-flute master) Niyazi Sayın (b. 1927) refer to his renowned teacher Halil Dikmen (1906–1964) in the same terms ("*hocamın ahlakı musikisinden üstündü*").

Throughout this book, I have considered the question "what is melancholy *for*?" in terms of a model of the sociality of emotion, neoliberal political life in present-day Turkey, spiritual labor, genealogies of history, bi-aurality, processes of embodiment, and in the reparative practice and maintenance of psychological health. However, many musicians' investment in *ahlak*—moral code and ethics—over musical endeavors points to another critical interpretation of the social work of melancholies in music. Musicians' melancholic affective practice is an integral part of their moral character from which they produce and make sense of sound.

In melancholy—and in loss, suffering, pain, separation, joy, and ecstasy—our bodily boundaries are made porous and opened to others (again, "the wound is the place where light enters you"). Melancholy softens us, exposes us, and allows us the opportunity to be together with, respond to, and witness others' vulnerabilities. In musicking melancholy and cultivating melancholic modalities as artists, musicians offer a sonic experience wherein they and their listeners safely and openly respond with empathy and with sympathy to others through the sound worlds of music and musicking. As pain, suffering, and loss require labors that Turkish classical musicians believe they must sustain throughout life, melancholy surfaces as a condition for dialogue between musicians making music. A *neyzen* once chuckled and told me, "One thing I know in this life is that the best musicians are also the best human beings. We already have holes in our hearts and are full of empathy. It's a gift to make suffering into something beautiful in sound."

A gift it is, indeed.