

Music, Literature, Dance and Fashion | Dance and entertainment | Traditional entertainment

Every nation has a traditional entertainment culture, a blend of local cultures and histories that brings the public together, strengthens social cohesion, and secures the continuation of traditions and beliefs.

The traditional entertainment culture of the Arab and Ottoman world emerged from a combination of religious rules and local customs and traditions. Seen as an inseparable part of social life, entertainment accompanied most important events (i.e. weddings or the circumcision of a sultan's son, hunting ceremonies and celebrations held at the hammam, perhaps after a woman had given birth) and usually comprised musicians and çengi (female belly dancers) and rakkases and köçeks (male dancers), shadow puppeteers, acrobats and wrestlers and ortaoyunu (folk theatre) performances. A similar entertainment culture existed in European countries, too, around social rituals and ceremonies: those held at Christmas and Easter and other religious festivals; at weddings or to celebrate the harvest or a victory; during courtly and public entertainments, sporting events such as jousts for instance; and at travelling fairs and circus shows, folk music and dance performances. While court entertainment was often on a nightly basis, as different performances were combined with feasts, jousts and banquets, the general population enjoyed regular entertainment as well, from strolling players and dancers (mummers), animal trainers and jugglers and performances of mystery plays.



Working Number: TR2 193

Name: A Scene from the Turkish Harem

Holding Museum: Pera Museum

Date: Second half of the 17th century

Materials: Oil on canvas

Curator Justification: The women of the harem invite a female guest to their quarters and amuse her and themselves with dance, music, comedy and similar forms of entertainment.



Working Number: TR2 187

Name: An Entertainment Scene (Evening entertainment in the Golden Horn) from Surname-i Vehbi

Holding Museum: Topkapı Palace Museum

Date: 18th century

Materials: Miniature; illustrated

Curator Justification: During the classical period of the Ottoman Empire, the sultan organised public entertainment and ceremonies to mark important dates and events.



Working Number: TR2 188

Name: An Entertainment Scene (The third day of entertainment) from Surname-i Vehbi

Holding Museum: Topkapı Palace Museum

Date: 18th century

Materials: Miniature; illustrated

Curator Justification:

Ceremonies and entertainment events at court demonstrated political prowess; public entertainments organised by the sultan helped to reduce social tension.



Working Number: TR2 189

Name: An Entertainment Scene (The third day of entertainment) from Surname-i Vehbi

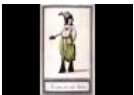
Holding Museum:

Date: Topkap# Palace Museum

Materials: 18th century

Curator Miniature; illustrated

Justification: The guilds made efforts to show off their more powerful and most surprising innovative technical discoveries according to their own professions.



Working Number: UK 017

Name: Turkish woman at the hammam or baths

Holding Museum: The British Museum

Date: c. 1790

Materials: -

Curator Women used the hammam to socialise and chat and impromptu and

Justification: organised entertainments were also provided.



Working Number: SP 110

Name: Lute

Holding Museum: Museum of Costume, Ethnographical Heritage Research Centre

Date: 19th century

Materials: Wood, bone, metal, nacre, gut, silver; lutherie, marquetry

Curator The 'ud or lute was a popular instrument that was played at court and

Justification: during public events.



Working Number: TR2 038

Name: Two Musician Girls

Holding Museum: Pera Museum

Date: Second half of the 19th century

Materials: Oil on canvas

Curator In the Ottoman palace the women studied music and learned to play

Justification: an instrument so that they could play a part in the entertainments held in the harem.



Working Number: MO 072

Name: Photograph of an Andalusian musical performance

Holding Museum: General Library and Archives

Date: 1912

Materials: -

Curator Justification: Public music and dance events were an integral part of social life in the Arab and Ottoman world.



Working Number: MO 071

Name: Photograph of Jewish musicians

Holding Museum: General Library and Archives

Date: 1912

Materials: -

Curator Justification: Musicians in costume frequently performed traditional music on the street.



Working Number: UA 034

Name: The Coffee Shop of Cairo

Holding Museum: Sharjah Art Museum / Sharjah Museums Department

Date: Published in 1849

Materials: Lithograph

Curator Justification: The coffee house was an important social hub in the Arab and Ottoman world that was largely populated by men. Here, patrons exchanged news, enjoyed various entertainments and smoked tobacco from pipes known as nargile.



Working Number: UA 035

Name: The Coffee Shop

Holding Museum: Sharjah Art Museum / Sharjah Museums Department

Date: Late 19th / early 20th century

Materials: Watercolour

Curator Justification: The coffee shop in the Near and Middle East was the traditional meeting place for men, somewhere to while away the hours playing dominoes, smoking tobacco and discussing politics.



Working Number: SP 010

Name: Photograph: Music School, Syria

Holding Museum: National Museum of Anthropology

Date: 1898–1906

Materials: Silver gelatin print, grey cardboard

Curator Justification: Music played an important role as a transmitter of knowledge and tradition in the Arab and Ottoman world and formed the central element of social gatherings and cultural events.



Working Number: TR2 030

Name: A Coffee House in Tophane

Holding Museum: Pera Museum

Date: Late 19th century

Materials: Oil on canvas

Curator Justification: The coffee house was mainly the domain of men, a place where they gathered to listen to music, smoke tobacco from pipes known as nargile or meerschaum and watch performances by meddah (storytellers).



Working Number: TR2 202

Name: Karagöz and Hacivat Shadow Play

Holding Museum: Bursa Karagöz Museum

Date: -

Materials: Leather

Curator Justification: One of the most popular entertainments of Ottoman society was the shadow play, which were frequently performed at coffee houses during Eid celebrations and at other public festivals.
