

Turkey: Aysenur Kolivar

About the Artist

Aysenur Kolivar is a musician with deep roots in the Black Sea region of Turkey. Her distinctive vocal style and the traditional instruments that accompany her reflect a sound that is unique to the isolated mountain towns along the Black Sea coast of northern Turkey. Her musical career began when she joined a folk club at Bogazici University. There she developed an interest in ethnomusicology, which is the study of the music of different cultures. Her own songs are true to the style of Black Sea folk music, which she spent decades studying and recording. She has a particular interest in recordings that document the lives of women from the Black Sea region.

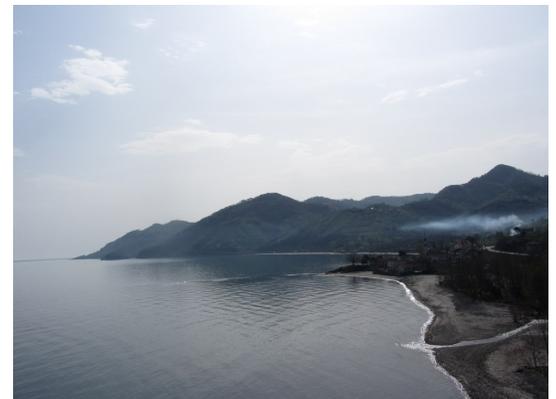


Aysenur Kolivar is from the Black Sea region of northern Turkey. Photo by Ali Akçelik.

The Black Sea Region

The Black Sea borders the entire northern coast of Turkey. Along this coast on the eastern side, rugged mountains and dense forests act as a barrier, keeping the region relatively isolated with distinct cultural traditions. For example, the Laz people are a native ethnic minority in the area whose traditions and styles of music, dance, and dress are unique to the Black Sea region.

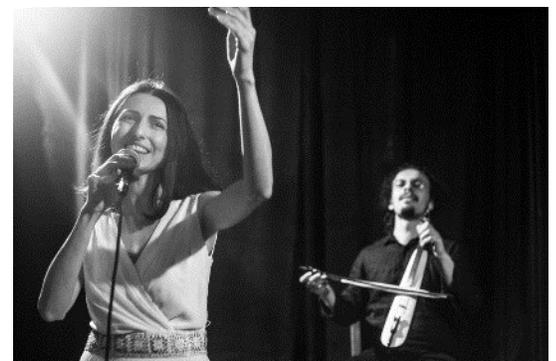
Aysenur Kolivar’s ancestral home is the small, northeastern coastal town of Cayeli. The root word of the town’s name, *cay*, is the Turkish word for “tea,” and Cayeli is known for growing tea. Although she moved away from Cayeli when she was young, Aysenur remained connected to the town by spending summers there and maintaining close relationships with the community. Through these relationships, she learned the musical traditions of the Black Sea region directly from the villagers who live there.



The Black Sea coast of Turkey. Photo by David Bacon ([CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)).

Vocal Style

Aysenur Kolivar’s voice is a powerful instrument, one that she has cultivated through decades of study and practice. One technique that she employs involves rapid switching between her higher and lower vocal registers—or her “head voice” and “chest voice,” as they are sometimes called. By making this switch between a high and low voice, there is an abrupt break in the pitch of her singing. This is essentially the same technique as yodeling. Although yodeling is often associated with the Alps, it exists throughout the world—particularly in mountainous areas like the Black Sea region, where sound needs to travel long distances for people to communicate.



Aysenur Kolivar sings in a unique vocal style accompanied by the Turkish *kemenche*. Photo by Erhan Arıkcı.

Resources

World Music Network: Guide to Turkey
www.worldmusic.net/guide/music-of-turkey/

National Geographic: Music of Turkey
<http://bit.ly/12FRM1W>

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Tulumcu photo by Özhan Öztürk
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Tulum

Pronounced too-LOOM. The *tulum* is a wind instrument of the Laz people of Turkey. It is a bagpipe whose history pre-dates the Scottish or Irish bagpipes, which are more widely known. All bagpipes consist of a melody pipe, called a “chanter,” and a reservoir that holds the melody pipe and air, called a “bag.” To produce sound, the performer fills the bag with air by blowing into a pipe and then squeezes the bag to push the air out. The *tulum* is different from other bagpipes because it does not have any drones, or pipes within the bag that make a long, constant sound along with the melody.

Why is the bagpipe played in the Black Sea region, but not the rest of Turkish music?

How did you start playing these instruments?

Ask the musicians!

Do your songs tell stories?
Who are the characters in your songs?

Can you yodel?



Street Singer photo by Gulsen Ozcan
(CC BY-SA 2.0)

Kemenche

Pronounced keh-MEN-chay. The *kemenche* is a bowed string instrument with a long, box-shaped body. It has ancient origins in the Middle East and is still played in the Black Sea region of Turkey. It has three strings and is played with a bow that was traditionally made of horsehair but is now more commonly made of metal.



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