

**CULTURAL LABOR MARKET IN ISTANBUL: AN ANALYSIS ON  
THE LIGHTING DESIGN SUBFIELD**

by  
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Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences  
in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Sabancı University  
July 2022

**CULTURAL LABOR MARKET IN ISTANBUL: AN ANALYSIS ON  
THE LIGHTING DESIGN SUBFIELD**

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Date of Approval: July 26, 2022

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## ABSTRACT

### CULTURAL LABOR MARKET IN ISTANBUL: AN ANALYSIS ON THE LIGHTING DESIGN SUBFIELD

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CULTURAL STUDIES M.A. THESIS, JULY 2022

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Keywords: Lighting design, theater, cultural labor, autoethnography, ethnography  
of work

This thesis aims to analyze lighting designers and technicians working with alternative theaters in Istanbul from the perspective of cultural labor. The field of theater in Turkey is divided into two categories: subsidized/institutional theaters and non-subsidized/independent theaters. Within the unpaid/independent theaters, alternative theaters have gained a significant position in the Istanbul theater field since the mid-2000s with their artistic productions. Distinct from conventional forms of theater production, alternative theaters engage in contemporary artistic explorations of the theater space, and the performance considering the design elements of a theater play. Among these design elements, lighting design holds particular importance in terms of its contribution to a play. In this thesis, I will examine the lighting designers working with alternative theaters in Istanbul in the context of labor relations with an ethnographic method. I will focus on my own profession, in which I have been working with alternative theaters as a lighting technician since 2014 and as a lighting designer since 2022, from an autoethnographic perspective. In Turkey, there is no academic study conducted with particular attention to theater professions and the experiences of those who work in this field. Therefore, with this study, on the one hand, I aim to contribute to the academic literature in this sense, and on the other hand, I will describe the field of theater, where labor relations are mostly neglected, through the words and working experiences of its individuals whose profession is to make visible rather than to be visible.

## ÖZET

### İSTANBUL KÜLTÜREL EMEK PİYASASI: IŞIK TASARIMCILIĞI ALANI ÜZERİNE BİR ANALİZ

SAMET ACAR

KÜLTÜREL ÇALIŞMALAR YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ, TEMMUZ 2022

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. CENK ÖZBAY

Anahtar Kelimeler: Işık tasarımı, tiyatro, kültürel emek, otoetnografi, iş etnografisi

Bu tez, İstanbul'daki alternatif tiyatrolarla çalışan ışık tasarımcıları ve teknisyenlerini kültürel emek perspektifinden analiz etmektedir. Türkiye'de tiyatro alanı genel hatlarıyla ödenekli/kurumsal tiyatrolar ile ödeneksiz/bağımsız tiyatrolar olmak üzere ikiye ayrılmaktadır. Ödeneksiz/bağımsız tiyatrolar içerisindeki alternatif tiyatrolar sanatsal üretimleriyle 2000'li yılların ortalarından itibaren kendilerine İstanbul tiyatro alanı içerisinde önemli bir yer edinmişlerdir. Alternatif tiyatrolar, konvansiyonel tiyatro yapma biçimlerinden farklı olarak tiyatro mekanı, bir metnin ele alınışı ve sergilenişini dolayısıyla bir tiyatro oyununun tasarım unsurları üzerine çağdaş sanatsal arayışlarda bulunmaktadır. Bu tasarım unsurları içerisinde de ışık tasarımı bir oyuna etkisi bağlamında oldukça önemli bir yer tutar. Bu tez kapsamında, İstanbul'daki alternatif tiyatrolarla çalışan ışık tasarımcılarını etnografik bir yöntemle emek ilişkileri bağlamında ele alacağım. 2014'ten beri ışık teknisyeni 2022 yılı itibarıyla de ışık tasarımcısı olarak alternatif tiyatrolarla çalıştığım kendi mesleğimi "otoetnografik" perspektiften ele alacağım. Türkiye'de tiyatro mesleklerine ve doğrudan bu alandaki özenlerin deneyimlerine odaklanarak yapılmış bir akademik çalışma bulunmamakta. Bu çalışma ile, bir vechesiyle akademik literatüre bu anlamda bir katkıyı yapmayı amaçlarken öte yandan emek ilişkilerinin çoğunlukla göz ardı edilmekle temayüz ettiği tiyatro alanını mesleği göz önüne çıkmak değil de gözler önüne sermek olan öznelerinin kendi sözleriyle, çalışma deneyimleriyle tarif etmeyi amaçlıyorum.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis advisor Cenk Özbay for his continuous support throughout this project. His insightful guidance and encouragement helped me through every step of my research. I would like to thank my jury members Aslı İkizoğlu Erensü and Cem Özatalay. Their valuable feedback and comments enriched my critical perspective and enhanced my intellectual curiosity about my thesis.

This thesis is the fruit of my curiosity and desire to question everything that happens in a community, starting from the field of art. This research on my own profession and community made me ask the following questions: "How do I perceive a profession?" "Why do people have professions?" and "Do I want to have a career where everyone can realize at first glance what my profession actually is?" I am afraid that I will continue to ask these questions. Being surrounded by the people I could ask these questions with and seeing them support me made me feel invaluable in this process. I am grateful to my community and colleagues for their help, this project could not be made possible without them.

I'm also deeply indebted to Selcen for being critical about my work without lacking being very compassionate and staying interested about it through the whole process.

For their solidarity, I thank my Cultural Studies cohort at Sabancı University: Berfin Çiçek, Eray Erkoca, Enis Demirer, Beste İrem Köse and Cansu Ceylan.

Last but not least, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my family for their patience and emotional support.

*to laborers of arts  
and also of crafts*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the theater field in Turkey and specifically the subfield of lighting design from the perspective of those who practice this profession. Throughout this study, I examine both my work experiences in this subfield and the various conditions related to the professional careers of lighting designers and technicians.

I started my theatrical career as a trainee actor. This background resonates with many of the theater designers, technicians, directors, and actors I encountered during my career in the field. I started my theater training in 2012 in Bursa. Then I was accepted by the Sociology Department of Galatasaray University and moved to Istanbul in 2014. This allowed me to develop my artistic career with more opportunities. During my undergraduate years, I worked with my university's theater society and alternative theater companies in Istanbul as an actor, assistant director, dramaturge, lighting designer, technician, and operator. By 2020, the last year of my undergraduate study, I was a theater professional with relatively decent work experience. I worked in theater for six years but lacked job security and a defined job description. This was reflected not only in my professional experience but also in the experience of many theater artists working with independent theater companies. Furtherly, I had not encountered any academic study of the conditions of my profession. The idea of approaching my own community from an ethnographic perspective became the starting point for this thesis.

This thesis focuses on the professional conditions and work experiences of lighting designers and technicians working in the field of alternative theater in Istanbul. Lighting designers and technicians do not have a professional code or insurance record under Turkish law. Moreover, no academic research is dedicated to studying theater workers in the theater field. My attempt to research lighting technicians and designers through their careers is based on the idea of exploring their professional aspirations and experiences. I conducted ten ethnographic interviews with five lighting designers and five lighting technicians for that purpose. One of the

study's main focuses is on my work experience and the question of how I found a job in this field by exploring the field in the background. Thus, I will examine my own fieldwork experience in two stages: on the one hand, from December 2014 to November 2021, the period that formed my professional career in the field. On the other hand, my autoethnographic experience consists of work experience from November 2021 to July 2022.

## 1.1 Methodology

In the Istanbul alternative theater field, through my ongoing conversations with friends and colleagues with whom I had similar experiences, I continued to hear stories similar to my own experiences of vulnerability and precarity. However, we don't have an organization or unity. We were able to gain awareness of our situation through the social capital we formed with each other. During the last year of my undergraduate education, where I was taught about ethnographic methods, the idea of researching my own community began to develop in my mind. When I investigated literature with the idea of exploring theater, I did not find any work that shared the same problems that I experienced. Literary studies interested in arts talked about theater in Turkey; however, instead of reviewing all singular articles in that direction, I prefer to cite a special issue of a peer-reviewed journal prepared to explore theater in Turkey to give a general tendency in the literature. "Theatre Research International" journal has a special dossier entitled "Contemporary Theatre and Performance in Turkey" (in volume 44, issue 3, 2019). The articles suggest a general atmosphere for the theater in Turkey with an interior look. Ilter argues about the dossier as follows:

"This collection of articles considers contemporary theater and performance in Turkey, reflecting on some of the complex issues that practitioners, academics and institutions have faced in the current political environment."(Ilter 2019, 291).

Still, they are positioned far more away from drawing a schema of understanding through the lived experience of theater practitioners. Furtherly, the dossier was constructed in a twofold manner. First, the articles list historical developments on their consequences on the contemporary theater/ performing arts field (Hemiş 2019; Olacak 2019 ; Verstraete 2019a), and secondly, those explore it in a purely

dramaturgical way (Metin 2019; Draz 2019; Yüceil 2019 ; Verstraete 2019b).

Thus, the literature within performance studies does not help navigate my research. Regarding the social sciences literature, there was no other academic work than *Alternative Theaters (Alternatif Tiyatrolar)* of Cansu Karagül (2015). This book is a version of a master's thesis in sociology that was defended at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University in 2014. The author analyzes the reasons for the expansion of alternative theater groups and theaters (stages) with a welcoming artistic atmosphere in Istanbul in the 2010s. Karagül examines the alternative theaters within the framework of Bourdieu's theoretical approach and discusses the possibility of applying Bourdieusian sociology of art to the Istanbul alternative theater scene. Still, in this work, there is not an unificatrice outlook into the field because of the author's preference of conducting interviews only with the owners of these theaters. For the theater economy, I could cite two articles (Akdede and King 2006 ; Akdede 2021) that provide macroeconomic analysis mainly in the context of cultural policy. All these works cited here make significant contributions in their way of understanding theater in Turkey. Consequently, Bourdieu's extensive research methods in the field of art seemed to me to be the more effective approach compared with the genre of literary criticism. However, these methods also do not allow me to develop my analyses as a singular approach to use in my quest to explore the theater field. In his significant oeuvre, *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1979) aimed to understand the judgment and the taste vis-a-vis cultural elements of society as a whole. He was keen to analyze how the appropriation of a cultural component finally has the purpose of differentiating oneself from others. He distinguishes a clear division of the cultural objects into two categories: the "pure taste" and the "barbaric taste" (Bourdieu 1979, 31) including that the definition of the legitimate culture is reserved for the dominant classes. Thus, legitimate culture corresponds to what the upper classes adopt to differentiate themselves from the popular classes. From the first glance at Bourdieu's work in the cultural production field, it maintains that agents in the field compete for legitimate and thus symbolic capital and prestige. For him, agents in the artistic production field take positions that are hierarchized and compelling by an agent's habitus and capitals. The position in the social space is conveyed by how the cultural capital is assimilated. It generates various strategies that individuals unfold according to their "habitus" the whole of the unconscious dispositions acquired during socialization, and which condition the choices, particularly regarding culture (Bourdieu 1979, 169-171). Habitus has had some utility concerning the role of bodily and spatial practices in social action. Yet, it does not provide "an account of embodied social action or a solution to the problem of disembodied social theory" (Farnell 2000, 399). Bourdieu's consideration of the artistic field is restricted only to

struggle for prestige as he considers the practitioners “as occupiers of artistic positions” (van Maanen 2009, 58). By insisting on “objective relations” in the formation of structural organizations of a field, he missed the daily and ongoing uncertainties of art practitioners. Most strikingly, as Bourdieu focuses on “the symbolic value of an artistic production”, he doesn’t allow room for both symbolic and economic uncertainties caused by labor processes that disperse the whole life of art practitioners. When we attend a play, the technician and the actor must be present simultaneously, but both are disposable. There, in my opinion, precariousness of the field is not associated only to the relations of domination between the practitioners. In this respect, I did not prefer to look at the field from a "hierarchy of positions" because it was risky to accept existing hierarchies. At some point, it would have undermined the precarization of the field. Therefore, I also aim to contribute to the Bourdieusian approach by conducting a more focused analysis of agents in the lighting design field and their experiences in the context of “actually existing neoliberalism.” (Peck and Tickell 2002).

Turning my eye to the international literature on theatrical analysis has allowed me to refine how I conduct my research. The literature in French pays critical attention to ethnographic research on theater and performing arts. One reason for this is the legal status of performing arts workers, namely, *intermittent du spectacle* (intermittent workers of show business). To cite some of them, the special issue of *Ethnologie Française* (vol 38, number 2008/1) entitled “L’art au Travail” (Art at Work) would be an example. There, I must start with Sizorn’s article based on an ethnography of trapezists. The author parallels technical, bodily expression, and artistic receptions in this auto-ethnographic work. It contributes an outlook of thinking together “the work of the body, by the body, and for its performance” (Sizorn 2008, 81). Buscatto’s work (2008) on the ethnography of artistic creation suggests a long-term ethnographic analysis to perceive the artistic creation process. I am convinced that these perspectives, authors carry together in this issue, made me interested in designing my research in that direction from the very beginning. Later, I realized that the distinction between work and time in the workplace, began to disappear in my life, and I began to make a living as a lighting technician; the auto-ethnographic method became the part that was appealing to me. While I was thinking the concept of autoethnography, Reed-Danahay’s work made me think that it corresponds to my needs and methodological inquiry, where the explanation of autoethnography as the following:

"It synthesizes both a postmodern ethnography, in which the realist conventions and objective observer position of standard ethnography have

been called into question, and a post-modern autobiography, in which the notion of the coherent, individual self has been similarly called into question. The term has a double sense – referring either to the ethnography of one’s own group or to autobiographical writing that has ethnographic interest."(Reed-Danahay 1997, 2).

The dualistic meaning of this term is suitable and viable for my research. I aim to identify and reinforce my position in the field and approach actor-centered theatrical narrative as someone who started their theater career with acting but then preferred a career path in lighting design as a profession. The professional life of a lighting technician demands both bodily efforts and artistic perception. It is an experience in a multi-layered way that cannot be compressed into the skilled/unskilled job dichotomy. I felt that including the subjective side in my analysis would ensure the coherence of my point of view and carry transformative potential in the narrative struggle I was undertaking about theater.

### **1.1.1 Research on one’s own community**

I believe that explaining how I see my job, evaluate the work, perform, and build my study on that experience can provide me the most comprehensive, detailed data analysis possible with the autoethnographic method. Concerning the concept’s dual meanings, I felt the need to support my own narrative to define this field with this first academic work on my profession. I conducted ethnographic interviews to examine the work experiences of agents and to define a cultural labor market accordingly. Each interview lasted about two hours, during which I asked more than twenty questions. However, most of them turned into an ongoing discussion about the conditions in the field and the aspirations of the interviewees to form a more pleasant working environment. Over time, the interviews exceeded two hours, and my interlocutors’ phrases strained my mind. As a practitioner technician, I found that my questions took shape as I encountered new experiences that had never happened to me at work or by receiving "you tell me, you know it too" responses from my interlocutors. I interviewed five lighting designers and five lighting technicians, limiting my scope to interviewing only people who work with alternative theaters. I prioritized conducting interviews with the agents with whom I had experience working together. I did this with five technicians. After interviewing three designers I had worked with before (Ayten, Atiye, Ufuk), during 2021/2022 theater season, I had the opportunity to work with another designer (İhsan), and I had interviewed another designer (Ateş) who I have contacted with their suggestions. In total, I

worked with four designers I interviewed.

I did an interview with a designer, Ateş, who is considered as one of the founders of freelance lighting design in Istanbul and had previously been involved in efforts to establish a professional association for the lighting design subfield. I worked with more than five technicians, and by recruiting my sampling around them, I aimed to explore different sides of this job. To describe what I meant, I stress the practical executions of these two jobs. Lighting technicians can work within the affiliation of one theater company or a theater company with their own material stages, and technicians may have social insurance and get regular monthly revenue. Or a technician may work as a freelancer with daily remuneration and without being registered or social rights. I interviewed one technician, Mahmut, who works with only a private company by getting a daily wage, one technician from State Theaters, Umut, who works as a freelancer also with independent companies, one another, Suat, who works as a freelancer with more than two companies in a season, one, Ulus, who is affiliated to a one theater company with monthly revenue, including off-season, summer months, and another one, Erman, who works as a technical director of a theater stage. Regarding the lighting designers, the categorization is easier than it is with technicians. Some designers work only with one theater company, mainly the one with the stage, for example İhsan, or work as freelance designers. Although these agents' financial circumstances and working conditions are diverse, I believe that my sampling is adequate and suitable to my primary concern of analyzing the working regimes and daily practices of agents working with unsubsidized theaters. To quote Luker to emphasize how my endeavors coincide with the literature as the following:

"So our task is to find a case or set of cases that is (or are, when we have multiple cases) reasonably representative of the larger phenomenon that we are investigating. Listen carefully: not representative of the larger population, but of the larger phenomenon."(Luker 2008, 103).

To investigate the working conditions within the lighting design subfield, the questions I have addressed during the interviews focus on specific issues such as the job descriptions, the labor market, job security, and livelihoods. My questions during the interviews concentrated on three broad themes. First, I questioned the conditions that make this artistic practice possible for them. Secondly, I asked about their work life beginning with their time and tasks in the working days to understand the occupation in theory and its execution in the Istanbul theater field, namely its historical and actual conditions. Lastly, I insisted on the prestige, recognition of



their job, and other professional expectations. Throughout almost all interviews, my professional and researcher identities intermingled. In most cases, my interlocutors intended to include my experiences in the narrative construction. Researching my own cultural milieu brought this nature of interventions and instantly transformed my view into an auto-ethnographic one.

### **1.1.2 Artistic production in neoliberal circumstances**

On a professional level, the lighting design subfield is overseen by internal codes and operating procedures. A unified work structure in the field is, in fact, a combination of uncertainty about the risks that one may be subject to both economically and symbolically. Concerning this, these circumstances led me to analyze the field through the precarious experiences of the agents.

Precariousness characterizes an employment area driven by individuals firmly excluded from the standard employment regime but not necessarily motivated to restore it (Peuter 2014). The precariousness of this subfield is understood concerning the labor process. “Labor, in this new capitalism, far from extinct, far from being the same, has as a key feature, the investment of life” (Salomão and Solange 2016, 114). In this sense, my study is significant to the extent that it shows the expansion of the labor process not only in a workspace but also in life itself. For six months, I worked as a lighting designer and a technician in various independent companies. Most of the time, I was also the lighting operator of the plays. I worked as a technician. My fieldwork includes seeing a theater venue to observe its conditions, buying the lighting filters, or seeing a doctor for taking a medical certificate for an insurance entry, or communicating with the venue’s or theater ensembles’ technicians and sending them a lighting plot. My fieldwork experiences, which are also my working experiences, began in early November 2021. I first worked as a lighting technician with two independent theater companies I had worked with before the pandemic. These were two plays for two companies that took place in November and December 2021, respectively. In January, I accepted a job offer from an international theater festival in Istanbul. I worked there as a lighting technician and, in most cases, a lighting operator for the companies that attended the festival. To further analyze this argument, we should also bear in mind that the labor in the framework of artistic creation is immaterial. Thus, the commensurability of labor processes is hard to determine. In immateriality, “the value of a product is not associated with its production costs and logistics of circulation, but with the communication processes” (Salomão and Solange 2016, 115). In this respect, “the disjunction between work

and employment” is remarkable for the cultural labor market (Lazzarato 2011, 52). Similarly, “the concepts of work and employment have been replaced by the idea of employability” puts the problem within the realm of responsibility of everyone (Salomão and Solange 2016, 121). Throughout my work experience, I experimented with the state of employability, flexibility, and resilience imposed by neoliberalism (Freeman 2014 ; Özbay et al. 2016 ). It included 46 days of work in 8 months on stage in addition to the festival. In most of these, I worked as a technician and lighting operator. This period corresponded to my first professional lighting design experiences in the field. To analyze these circumstances, starting from the years of experiencing firsthand the dominant views in the field of theater, I focused first on how my perspective evolved and then historically on the establishment of theater in the Western sense in Turkey. Next, I decided to describe the field of lighting design in the alternative theater field and analyze the data brought by my field research considering it.

## 1.2 Thesis Outline

The theater is based on the long-lasting story-telling practices of human beings. In the light of antiquity, it is observed that people gather around a circle to tell stories and their experiences. Theatrical performance became a profession when it was moved to the stage and staged with a written text. This type of theatrical production originated in ancient Greek cities. Here the job of actor, playwright, and director were defined. The light was the sunlight. The light became controllable on the stage as an essential part of the scenic elements as the theater moved to enclosed spaces during the Renaissance period. At the end of the nineteenth century, with the invention of electricity, the light in theater practice became an artistic activity. The twentieth century marks a period in which the lighting design professions were formed in the theater field, and the creative dimension of light became an indispensable element of the play. In this thesis, I wanted to start with the concept of light to apprehend the professions of light in this historical context. In the first chapter, I explore the idea of light in philosophy and its use in art. Then, I describe the processes that started with a scenographic turn and allow the professionalization of the lighting design professions. After examining the notion of light, in the second chapter, I will look at the history of theater in the western sense to understand the evolution of the theater field in Turkey. I will discuss the institutionalization processes of theater professions in Turkey in the context of western-style theater. The third chapter is based on my analysis of the “actually existing” conditions of

being a freelance lighting designer and technician in the Istanbul alternative theater field. Throughout this chapter, I also investigate the conditions of the cultural labor market that enable me to become a lighting technician and designer in the field. In this context, I explore the following questions: Who are the practitioners of this profession, why do they pursue it, and how do they conduct it?

## 2. LIGHTING DESIGN: FROM THE SUN TO THE STAGE

Soon after we can see, we are aware that we can also be seen.  
The eye of the other combines with our own eye to make it fully  
credible that we are part of the visible world.

---

John Berger

The attempt of humans to understand themselves and the nature surrounding them has been the basis of all thinking activities as a whole. This primordial activity of thought, called philosophy, was later complemented by art and science. Technical developments contributed to the pursuit of human understanding on the one hand and self-expression on the other. If the nature of art, based on Aristotle's thesis, is characterized by imitation, this phenomenon of imitation appeared because of the representation of nature in art: first in the form of storytelling, then in the form of specialized artistic disciplines. In relation with these two forms, the relationship with light merits a particular framework of understanding in the human-nature relationship(s).

As particular theories emphasize the unique position of the light in our perception of nature, as early as the pre-Aristotelian period, Aristotle's theory of color developed within a view of the senses through the understanding of darkness and shadows, driving us to locate light (Sorabji 1972). Although the influence of light, and thus color, on the human senses and perception acquired a unique position primarily in the art of painting and the idea of perspective in Renaissance thought, the sacredness attributed to light is also crucial and holds an important place in our understanding.

Discussions of the concept of light as a philosophical and artistic phenomenon in the historical process of theater and lighting design are one of the main themes of this chapter. After briefly reviewing thoughts on the light in historical, philosophical, and artistic contexts, in this chapter, I will focus on the use of light in the theater. I trace the use of light in indoor theatrical spaces and stages in the context of technological development. Through this line of thought, I will examine the emergence of lighting

design in theater and briefly explain its professional institutionalization.

## 2.1 Light as the basis of aesthetic theories

Light appears as a capacity to apprehend nature in general. Therefore, lighting defines the path of the gaze. The moment the eye turns towards an object or a thing, it will lead to a state of recognition of the item itself. However, if the light does not fall on a thing, it cannot realize its state of visibility. The eye can only see through the light. As light hits an object, whether sunlight, moonlight, or artificial lighting, that object's reflected light is what we see. If no light is reflected from a thing, it seems black. The idea of sacredness has been promoted since ancient times by man's contact with light through looking at the sun and the moon. In the fire-worship of the Zoroastrians and the worship of the sun god of Yazidis, the light was seen as a sacred source that illuminates objects and makes them visible. The ancient Egyptians considered light the act of their god Ra (the Sun): "When Ra's eye was open, it was day, and when it was closed, night fell." (Zubairy 2016, 3). Moreover, it is possible to encounter light as a subject of philosophy as early as the first Greek philosophers. In the pursuit of an understanding of light and vision, Aristotle stated that light moves in the sky like waves in the sea, that light is not a substance but something that makes things visible and colors them (Sambursky 1958). Although light does not define the movement, it encompasses the relationship between the act of seeing and what is seen. (Sorabji 2004). Plato uses the symbolic register of the shadow and the light to illustrate the philosopher's itinerary, who frees himself from the darkness to climb towards the light and finally contemplate the Sun. In Platonic thought, this light of the good is intimately associated with the beautiful.

The existence of light as a source thus became an important issue in philosophy and later in art. Plotinus was one of the first philosophers to question the "concept of light", and aesthetics in medieval times was based on this understanding (Doyon 2013). Plotinus perceived light as a form, an incorporeal thing, a reason (Gerson 2017, 95), and beauty mainly affects the sense of seeing. In this respect, the idea of aesthetics emerged as an experience whose object is beautiful (Stern-Gillet 2000). In this perception, importantly, light is about something that gives form to things, rather than being a reflection and something that allows us to see (Raizman-Kedar 2006). Therefore, it is an essential philosophical foundation in the process that we will address with scenography and lighting design. The controllable properties of light are the material in the framework of contemporary lighting design, the

controllable properties of light are the material, including all the factors that make things exist: show, shade, dimension, and conceal, we come to what we call “design”. Further, the history we call visual culture is shaped this way by the relationship between painting and light, creating what we call the cinematic image in cinema.

Following contemporary lighting design approaches, lighting in the performing arts is used in the same manner as the camera for the cinematic image. I argue that lighting design in the performing arts creates the image and makes the stage visible by illuminating or obscuring the dimensions of the actors’ bodies or some part of the stage in an artistic manner. We can also argue that the very material of an artwork is certainly the “light” itself: as a contour for a sculptor or an impression for a painter (Baker 2018, 156-158). Therefore, we can refer to the concept of perspective to clarify the relationship of light to art.

Leon Battista Alberti, the famous Quattrocento humanist, gave the founding principles of perspective of which the “Finestra” is the essence. This modality became indispensable for the analysis of a work of art and the central idea of a painting is based on the principle of making an identical object represented in the creation of art. Here, the Platonic principles appear to us, again, as a poetic ideal to which the visual art is defined at the edge of the dramatic art. Relying on the grammatical framing of Alberti’s theory, we must agree on the relation that characterizes the notion of the audience’s place and the space represented. The distance created between the spectator and the represented object takes its theoretical origin. In this respect, when changing the distance and position of the central point, the object itself will be modified (Alberti 2012, 147). This illusory distance, whose perspective plays a considerably dominant role in the reception of a painting in the eyes of its viewers.

In this context, as Foucault (2004) underlined, since the Quattrocento, the painting fixed a particularly ideal place where one could and should see the painting. He analyzes the transformation of the spectator’s stance in front of the artwork through the works of Edouard Manet. According to him, Manet invented the notion of the painting as an object. The painting is conceived as materiality, as a colored thing illuminated by external light and in front of which or around which the spectator turns. In a broader context, the era of Impressionism anticipates a revolution in the history of art that characterizes not only the relationship between the viewer and the painting but also the notion of the represented object and, dare we say it, the painting itself. Furtherly, if we are to continue analyzing the subject from the spectator’s gaze and interpret this discussion to lighting design, we can further argue that the light and the paint are opposites. A painter generally starts with a

blank white canvas, while a lighting designer's canvas will be rather black, namely the stage.

Regarding the relation between light and color, based on Newton's optics work, colors were seen as a physical and objective phenomenon, their vision coming from a sensation of light transmission. The relationship between light and color as a philosophical phenomenon has been discussed, from Aristotle to Goethe to Descartes. In the view of Aristotle, colors are causal powers or have causal powers so that colors can be seen (Code 2008, 238) . This line of thinking about the notion of light as a divine conception is followed by the distinction between lux and lumen that emerged in St. Augustine can be taken as the process of human beings reaching the ability to judge nature. However, with Cartesian thought which stands to substitute the "Aristotelian notion of sensible species", "with a mechanistic account of the action of light and color" (Hatfield 2019, 112-113), Descartes' theorization requires an interpretation into light in theater.

Cartesian philosophy, which opened a way to think about nature around the concept of the infinite, gave birth to new definitions developed through the method developed by Descartes (Copleston 1998, 16-18). In his line of thought, we can argue that light evolved from God's creation to a realm that is perceived by human beings. Descartes argues that "the nature of the matter in his imaginary universe was to be completely intelligible; it could not be supposed to have any qualities or to assume any forms that were unclear to the intellect" (Sorell 2001, 33). As a scientific concept, nature is subsequently in the spotlight. Like this argument, Goethe associated the ability to perceive nature with "sight" (Kremer-Marietti 2009). In Goethe's mind, the human eye was at the center of the visual sense. His incredible attention to the field of vision punctuated his intellectual development in which the systematic vision scrutinizes all things, observing them with an analytical eye (Kremer-Marietti 2009). Goethe discovered the law of contrast and the harmony of colors through visual perception.

Keeping aforementioned theories on light, color and gaze in mind, we can argue that the concept of "visibility" is thought through certain subjects in and around light. However, although art cannot be limited to acts of searching for certainty or truth nor sharpening the vision to make things clearer; creating an impression has become the central issue in theater art. At this point, in order to understand and interpret these theories around and on light into theater, Merleau-Ponty's studies of impressionist painters can be examined (Maurice 1966, 15-45). Because of its emphasis on senses in perceiving light rather than a Cartesian understanding, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception and perception of light that bridges the perceptible world and art.

In order to discuss the notion of light in the context of theater and lighting design, it is suitable to contextualize it in an analysis of the relationship between how the experience is made visible and how light contributes to the visibility of that particular experience. In Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, something in the process of appearing has not yet formed, which means that the "thing" is not structured (Merleau-Ponty 1945, 14-17). Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology rejects the very idea of a predefined structure; on the contrary, the observer must focus on the instant itself, that is, the "instantaneity". Therefore, the temporal unit of this analysis is the very moment, the present time, because the reality is not a structure that exceeds the individual, which is beyond somewhere, but at the exact moment, within a single reality: the lived moment. So, the term experience becomes an important concept to understand the nature of this immediacy; in speaking of something that has not yet fully appeared but is in the process of appearing, scientific knowledge and instrumental rationality are not enough, it requires senses to be included in the analysis.

This immediate present that requires this phenomenological perspective of sensory experience, as much in what is "felt" as in what is "expressed", is a question of understanding the corporal inclusion of life in society. As Merleau-Ponty (1964, 32) indicates, the whole body perceives the journey that begins with the gaze. The gaze questions the likes of our body and our senses. In his major work "Visible et l'Invisible" Merleau-Ponty (1979) devoted a wide variety of thought schema on corporal sensation and the capacity of living things. The sensual and bodily experience of space can be perceived through light, and the artistic production realized with the visual dimension of light is based on this experience. Interpreting this to theatrical experience where we have to merge bodily experience and its visibility to the perception of the audience, relating to the concepts of seeing and vision, intervention of light places itself to be the focal point. In this thesis, I have chosen to focus on the history of scenography and lighting design to provide a more precise idea of the use of light in scenic and artistic development in theater.

## **2.2 A brief history of Lighting and Stage Design**

Originally, theater performances in ancient Greece were held outdoors in large amphitheatres, where the only light source was the sun. When the theater evolved and moved indoors, new mechanisms had to be found to light the adopted performances. Regardless of the source, it has always been necessary to be able to control the light.



Thus, mechanical systems were first developed to control candlelight. Additionally, more complex systems were designed for gas lighting, and the electrical dimming of the light has also had many different variations. Through this technology, other gasses were used to produce colored flames, and a combination of complex valves allowed some intensity control. Following the discovery of the electric light bulb, stage lighting became more and more refined. Indeed, the system employed to illuminate the stage was no longer the sole purpose, and lighting could add dramatic value to the performance and strengthen the public's experience. The role of light in scenography coincides with the renaissance period. This period is also a milestone for creative lighting design (Palmer 2013, 2). Set designers are the architects of the period, creating a performance space by considering many design elements together. The perception of light developed with the Renaissance perspective is thought to be intimately related to the art of painting. Sebastiano Serlio, who lived in the fifteenth century, was one of the first architects and artists to work on general stage lighting, pioneered general lighting by footlights placed in front of the stage, and thus began the 400-year accumulation of what light can do in an interior space (Palmer 2013, 2-4).

The first idea that different levels of lighting would create various artistic sensations also originated in Italy, with the perception of the stage in perspective under the influence of the Renaissance. Another contribution of Serlio was developing the idea that theatrical light can be achieved by lighting from above in an enclosed interior space. At the same time, for example, a design concept called the Elizabethan Theater emerged in England, and factors such as stage height, auditorium, and distance from the stage were shaped around light (Ichikawa 2012, 26). In the 17th century, the period of standardization of lighting techniques began. Italian architect and stage designer Nicolo Sabattini made an essential contribution to this with his book "*Manual for Constructing Theatrical Scenes and Machines*". The techniques of creating shadows and lighting on the stage are vital in this work.

### **2.2.1 History of Stage Lighting Techniques**

The matter of how reality is portrayed in the theater, primarily through mimesis or artistic representation, has been the subject of lively discussion. The scenery and innovation in the staging techniques have evolved through this understanding (Brejzek 2017, 33). In the period when sunlight was used, it was the only source of light in the theaters. In tragedy plays, especially in the period when masks were used, it was vital for the actors to contribute their whole bodies to the play.

Specifically, to better use the sun, actors performed their plays with masks over their faces on a stage away from the audience. This design decision is necessary for the play's structure and the audience's experience watching it. The controllable properties of light gained importance, especially after the invention of the light bulb. In Shakespeare's time, two types of theaters were distinguished: the open-air, or "public" theater, with daylight plays, and the indoor, or "private" theater, where candle lights were used to supply additional light from the auditorium windows (Ichikawa 2012, 1-2). Nevertheless, the sun is no longer the only source of light, as it is now possible to light interiors with candles. In one of the oldest stage lighting techniques, called "candle lighting", a candle in a metal box was placed in front of the stage to light it. After these candle instruments, the lighting elements were placed in front of the stage, and the lighting elements attached to the scene were candle holders that worked with candles and were called chandeliers. The stage lighting thus became a fundamental and permanent element of the stage. In the 17th century, the incorporation of light into scenography drew attention. Sabbatini, one of the pioneers of scenography, invented a mechanism of gradation and dimming and extinguishing without completely shutting off the candles (Palmer 2013, 14-15). Thus, stage light appeared as an element that would follow the changes in the play. Before the advent of electricity, it was essential to demonstrate the relationship between light and color and use it as a design element. We know that the different colors were reflected on the stage by glass bottles containing colored liquids called *bozze*, the innovation of Serlio, placed in front of the candles (Essig 2007, 2-3).

At that time, when people were needed to handle lighting elements, there were technicians called "snuffer men" or "candle snuffer" who were responsible for cutting the wicks of candles to reflect a brighter light (Palmer 2013, 225). These technicians, who owed their name to the snuffer, a type of scissors they used, had the task of obtaining a more brilliant light without extinguishing the candle during the performance. We should bear in mind that at that time, candle chandeliers were used to illuminate the costumes and faces of the actors, the concept of design had not yet emerged. The discovery of electricity led to the development of today's systems, allowing light to be part of the play more safely and stably. In the early days, the use of electricity on stage was only for general lighting purposes. With the artistic development of lighting design, it is still possible to provide general lighting, and the risk of odor and fire in this area has largely disappeared. The era of lighting operators illuminating the actors began to emerge. With the under-stage electrical system, operators standing outside the audience's field of vision could provide stage lighting. The inclusion of lighting design in stage lighting is also attributed to the emergence of electricity. With electricity, light projectors now reach a longer dis-

tance, and we get the conventional lights used today. Later, dimmer systems were introduced, and now we have reached the point where only digital lights are used on some stages. This process begins with the strand piano lighting board which is defined as: “Revolutionary lighting control, based on a Compton organ console, giving the operator a view of the stage for the first time.”<sup>1</sup> . From a place far from the stage, which we call the light room, it has now turned into a place where the light operator makes his profession. We have even achieved a system where the lights can be controlled directly by a designer using digital lighting programs without going to the stage from his home (Essig 2007, 17).

However, I aim not to explain technical development in detail; I prefer to talk about this point in the context of my experience as a technician in the stages. The discussion I want to carry out is to provide historical background. Frankly, I wanted to reveal the period before today’s stage, which is the period I am more curious about. At this point, I think it is more important to discuss a dramaturgy of light, when light is now controllable, in a more theoretical discussion rather than how stage lighting is technically provided with these light instruments we have at our disposal. In this way, we will be able to make more to-the-point determinations about the place of lighting design in a play in the context of “dramaturgy of light”. To speak about the dramaturgy of light and the design concept I should address the scenographic turn which developed at the beginning of the twentieth century.

### 2.3 Scenographic Turn

The Renaissance perspective was the beginning of a continuous process leading to the scenic realism of the late 19th century (Baugh 2017, 363). This apprehension of scenic realism is perceived as a way to transform the stage into a mirror of life. The use of candles or oil lamps allowed for general lighting or "special effects such as stars or hellfire" (Essig 2007, 4). Towards the end of the 19th century, Wagner entered the stage of history. His conception of the stage was also very influential. Romanticism and naturalism became the “leitmotif” of the period. However, something else was happening as the century ended.

At the turn of the twentieth century, lighting design emerged as electric light replaced gas. This technological improvement increased intensity, brightness, and excellent control (Aronson 2017c, 3). In thinking about theater from the perspective of light-

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.theatre crafts.com/bhc/equipment/strand-light-console>

ing design and investigating the conditions of the emergence of this profession, “the subsequent and abstract scenography of Adolphe Appia and Edward Gordon Craig” (Aronson 2005, 29) was one of the turning points. Appia (1862–1928) and Craig (1872–1966) have thought about many ways of using light on stage. They have played a significant role in the evolution of the theory of “the scenographic potential of light” (Aronson 2017*b*, 48). These two pioneer artists completely changed the manner of apprehending stage design by implementing a theory of vision based on using light in performing arts (Brown 2016, 173).

The Swiss stage designer Adolphe Appia, an admirer of Wagner, nevertheless criticized the stage productions of the turn of the century. In the 1890s, Appia’s designs for Wagner’s productions became highly influential in twentieth-century theater. However, Wagner would instead have achieved reality on the stage so that he would have disapproved of these designs (Goldman and Sprinchorn 1988, 29-30).

Opposed to the naturalism and psychologism of the 19th century, Adolphe Appia considered that the stage is an “abstracted space for acting” (Brejzek 2017, 34). According to this outlook, modern stage design cannot be based on anything other than light, so it is necessary to break with the mimicry and historicism of the previous century. He emphasized "the materiality of light," its perception of the stage, and the actor’s body within it (Appia 2010, 87). Thus, he contributed to the emergence of a new dramaturgy in which light is central. Appia describes three types of lighting: “diffused light” which is employed to provide visibility without specificity; “active light” intended to have a definite visual impression by forming shadows; and “projected light” designed by specialized equipment for use in particular visual representations reflecting the natural world, including the possibility of more indirect, punctuated, and dynamic lighting effects (Aronson 2017*b*, 49). For Appia, the place of the stage light is as follows:

"Light contains all degrees of brightness and movement, like a palette, it contains all possibilities for color. It can create shadows, and it can spread the harmony of its vibrations out in space exactly as music would. With it, we control all the expressive power that is in space." (Appia 2010, 86).

Recognizing the ability and significance of light "as a unifying and expressive force", Appia contributed to this first scenographic turning point by introducing the principles of modern stage lighting (Brejzek 2017, 34-36). Appia was a pioneer in this field with his reflections on lighting and scenography. He revolutionized the theory of scenography with significant contributions, yet his work resonates more as a

theory than practice (Essig 2007, 11).

On the other hand, his contemporary Edward Craig paved the way for the evolution of theatrical design with his practical works. He favors light and shadow and rejects the conventional dramatic thought that “the text is the driving force of the performance” (Abulafia 2015, 25). Craig perceived the significance of light in transforming the stage space. His use of "vibrant color combinations" generated explicit breaks that contrasted sharply with contemporary stage practices (Palmer 2013, 94-95). His scenographic practice revolves around the ability of light to evoke different atmospheres. He developed the concept of “patented screens” in which the stage becomes an autonomous space that does not depend on realistic scenic details (Brezek 2017, 34). Craig used the screens in a small model box to transform the stage by moving the light. The most famous of these screens were used in Stanislavski’s production of Hamlet at the Moscow Art Theatre in 1912 (Palmer 2013, 101). This example is significant because it shows the international reception and acceptance of Craig’s technique. As others followed this production, the abstract character of the scene gained importance throughout the twentieth century. Over this period, stage lighting becomes primordial with its artistic component. Thus, “practitioners from Max Reinhardt to Antonin Artaud to Robert Wilson” have explored the various scenographic forms of light, “not primarily as a lighting technique, but rather as a central, integral and active element of their productions” (Aronson 2017*b*, 49).

## 2.4 Autonomization of Lighting design

The artistic use of stage light gained importance after the scenographic turn. Implementing scenic design through light is a crucial result of this period. In addition, stage and lighting design has become an integral part of educational programs. For example, The Central School of Arts and Crafts, founded in 1890 and is now affiliated with the London University of the Arts, opened a set design department in 1937 (Burnett 2017, 484). However, it was not until the 1940s that lighting design acquired its characteristics, and the profession of the lighting designer was recognized. Lighting design became a compelling art form in the mid-twentieth century (Essig 2007, 13). In the 1930s, conditions were not yet ideal for the practice of lighting design. Essig’s quote from Theodore Fuchs’ *Stage Lighting* (1929), a lighting designer who worked on Broadway for many years, demonstrates this.

"The lighting is left until the dress rehearsal for the stage electrician (who

has seen the production for the first time) to work out as best he can. Under this deplorable system, which is the result of economic conditions, good lighting is usually accidental, and in many productions is just as one would expect it to be – utterly inadequate, meaningless, and ugly." (Essig 2007, 11).

At this point, it is essential to look at the adventure of lighting design in the U. S. to reflect the theatrical atmosphere of the time. The institutionalization of lighting design in America coincides with the early 20th century. It was here that lighting design came to the forefront through the influence of European set designers. This influence would lead to a new era of both professional and artistic means. Joseph Urban and Robert Edmond Jones introduced the idea of set design as an integral part of the artwork on American stages. Urban's invitation to the Chicago Opera House in 1912 gave birth to the design profession in America. The idea that "design contributes to the emotional and intellectual response of the audience" (Aronson 2017a, 527) becomes an important consideration. For his part, Robert Edmond Jones incorporated Appia's ideas into the American theater as the basis for a new artistic trend: the New Stagecraft (Aronson 2017a, 528-530). This trend was inspired by Appia's idea of implementing "flexible settings" and creating an "atmosphere through light" (Bisaha 2017a, 420).

Especially the New Stagecraft opened the way to the institutionalization of the lighting designer profession. Based on this approach, Donald Oenslager established an educational design program in 1925 at Yale School of Drama. Most notably, United Scenic Artists Local 829 was founded as the first union for designers and defined "work processes and legal frameworks for the new profession", including "protected designs as intellectual property, assured members fair contract wages" (Bisaha 2017a, 424). From the 1940s onwards, the lighting designer was recognized as an artist with technical knowledge, the ability to read texts, and a strong artistic side. After Appia and Craig revolutionized stage design, a kind of author-director era emerged in the middle of the 20th century. Bertolt Brecht's epic theater or Antonin Artaud's theater of savagery completely changed the idea of the stage (Bisaha 2017b, 93-94). For example, in the 1960s, Ming Cho Lee distanced himself from the poetic approach of New Stagecraft and led the American scenography toward the Brecht-influenced idea of industrial design (Aronson 2017a, 532-533).

After these institutionalization years, light has become an integral part of the stage. The lighting designer has also become a person who follows the evolution of technological and artistic development. However, as (Palmer 2013, 186) and (Abulafia

2015, 101) point out, theoretical arguments about stage design after Appia and Craig have not achieved a revolutionary transformation.

## 2.5 Lighting Design and The Dramaturgy of Light

At the beginning of the twentieth century, light acquired an essential and autonomous place in scenography, characterized as a turning point in stage lighting. Both Craig's and Appia's ideas echoed throughout the lighting design profession. For example, the legacy of Craig provided a career for Michael Northern, who became "the first officially accredited British lighting designer in 1950" (Palmer 2013, 102). The idea of a designer emerged with their technical knowledge and artistic capacity. To further demonstrate the designer's role, I would introduce the concept of dramaturgy of light. The concept of dramaturgy, which means "making drama", appears as a phase in which the dramatic structure of a text is revealed until it comes to the stage. The work on stage is considered together with all design elements. It must be combined with all other design elements when we examine it within the lighting design framework. Proceeding consistently with the dramaturgical structure, which exists concurrently with stage design, decor, and costumes, is the first stage where light dramaturgy is formed. Lighting design thus offers an aesthetic perspective that serves the dramaturgical framework and creates its artistic dimension. It is accepted as the primary point to establish the design logic together with dramaturgy rather than distinguishing it as lighting technique and design.

"Thus, dramaturgy of light pertains to the organization of central ideas of the lighting designer and the creative team, using forms of light (aesthetics) to embody these ideas by a sequence of light-images. The dramaturgy of light reflects a suggestive interpretation of the piece by the lighting designer, includes the constantly changing relations between the experience and signification of the light and the other media." (Abulafia 2015, 119).

For this reason, as a design department working with the director and actors in a theater play, the lighting design department should take part in a project from the very beginning, as it will be included in a common dramaturgical framework. The lighting design begins not with the original text but with the staging text and is in line with the entire dramaturgical design concept of the play. Thus, the dramaturgy of lighting cannot be separated from the play's dramaturgy.

## 2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discuss the notion of light from the Ancient Greek philosophical thoughts to Renaissance perspective to the theater stages. Thoughts on the light also change by the spirit of the period. For example, while in ancient Greece, light metaphysics emerged; in the Renaissance, it took on a Cartesian understanding grasped by reason. This understanding influenced the idea of perspective in the Renaissance and took place, especially in painting. It also changed the viewer's position in front of a work of art, a painting. In this context, as impressionists entered the field of painting, the idea of perspective lost its hegemony of perspective. It became essential that the painting is no longer seen following the object of the painting but the emotions it evokes in the person. However, the use of light and color in a painting has been adopted as the primary way to create this emotional effect. Giving particular attention to the role of the gaze in our perception of the world, Merleau-Ponty also approaches the perceivable world as "visible" and "invisible" and discusses the Impressionists through his phenomenology based on the perception.

This artistic evolution can also be traced through theater and lighting design. In the post-Renaissance period, as the theater moved to closed spaces, the techniques developed for the idea of light. Stage lighting started with candlelights and turned into an artistic design with the invention of electricity as the light became more controllable. In the early 20th century, with the scenographic turn, the artistic aspect of lighting design came to the fore. Then, in the early 1920s, the fundamentals of lighting design were established by its training at university levels. After that, a standardized curriculum is followed, and the professional conditions of lighting designers are determined and protected by trade unions. Through this standardized education system, the professional practices of lighting designers are also structured. Lighting design contributes a coherent artistic dimension to a play. A lighting designer realizes moving images on stage, but lighting design is not to create beautiful scenes but must offer a suggestion for the whole design concept. In a phrase inspired by Plotinus, the idea of design is about finding the multiplicity in unity in a sophisticated way.



### 3. IN QUEST OF LIVELIHOOD: THEATER IN TURKEY

The etymology of theater comes from "theatron" in ancient Greek, which means "viewing-place" and defines the place to sit the audience in the architecture of an antique theater. A stage is a place where the gaze of the audience is oriented. This meaning also drives us to consider it a dual interpretation of this gaze. First as for those on the stage to be looked at and from the spectators' point of view as the subjects who exercise the act of looking as the second. In line with this dual interpretation, theater emerges from ongoing interaction with those on the stage and the audience. Furtherly, this interaction should not be considered and indicated only to the moment represented by a play. Actors are also members of the society within which they produce. This means that being a theater actor is not only limited to the specific instants of the play. However, an actor's experience on the stage is not the same as the one in life (Moore 1984, 153); an actor is still an actor whether they are on the stage or not. Concomitantly, the interaction proves an unfolding into the social life, where it takes roots. As Aristotle (1996, 11) put it: "Tragedy is not an imitation of persons, but actions and of life."

I remember one of my theater professors said that he could not forget his "emotions" at the time of his father's funeral. In his consideration, the famous concept of Stanislavski's "emotional memory," one of the imminent and very crucial layers of acting, and according to my experience there, the dominant state of mind in drama comes to mind. Stanislavski's "Method acting" is situated at the heart of the conventional understanding of theater by centralizing the actor as the source of play. Actors are the creators of a character, and the artist is performing that character on the stage. They should be conscious of their emotions and "effervescence" shaped by them in every possible moment of an actor's life, pointing to Aristotle's main argument about the art of poetry through mimesis. As Euron, Paolo (2019, 1) suggests, "when Greeks spoke of imitation (mimesis), they referred first of all to acting on the stage with music and words."

After these brief introductory remarks on some of the foundational aspects of theater

as an art form, it would be more appropriate to reflect on my thoughts towards analyzing the notion of theater through its agents, the main subject study of this thesis. To do this, in this chapter I focus on the evolution of western-style theater in Turkey, starting from the Tanzimat period (1839) to the emergence of alternative theaters in Istanbul. Based on these historical processes I explore different phases of the modern theater with a particular focus on professional conditions of theater related professions.

### **3.1 Initiation to the Stage: with a particular focus on “being on the stage”**

First and foremost, I should note that my considerations of the theater had evolved as I gained experiences in that field from my high school years of apprenticeship to today. I have gained eight years of experience as a lighting technician and designer between 2014 and 2022. This experience would open the door for me to be a "Başışıkçı", the term literally means "chief lightman" but defines the profession of the "Head of lighting", at State Theaters (*Devlet Tiyatroları*) if I would work there instead of alternative/independent theater companies. Additionally, I have done some occasional work for a freelance play(project)-based theater play as an assistant director and dramaturge within the alternative theater field in Istanbul. Before passing through these years and analyzing the emergence of alternative theaters which shaped the artistic life of Istanbul (Fişek 2018 ; Uğur 2020). I will turn here into my first experiences on the stage.

In my first steps on the stage, for me, the theater was a notion with a valuable reputation in artistic aspects rather than a career path allowing a livelihood. I considered it a way of creative expression before thinking about a life devoted to it professionally. It was similar to the very first reactions of my family and close surroundings that I remember from my high school years as a 16-year-old apprentice at the State Theater in Bursa. My theater professors in the State Theater, one of the most established art institutions in Turkey, see and promote the artistic value of theater before proposing a career to a teenager taking theater courses after being accepted to take classes there, passing an entry audition. On the one hand, I am convinced that these insights are insufficient for being used as data for a detailed analysis of the perception of theater for individuals in their high school years. On the other hand, these were crucial to the extent that they shaped how I perceive the theater. To clarify my journey in theater, it gained more importance in 2012,

the year I was accepted to Bursa State Theater. I had a chance to take theater courses from theater artists with a group of 23 “apprentices” (*çırak*) a word they use to call us. These were mainly practical courses rather than theoretical. One of the most striking moments I remember was the value they attributed to the stage and the act of being and acting at this specific stage of the Bursa State Theater. During one theatrical season, in every course I attended, this idea was reinforced and reproduced from one moment to another with the main argument, which is the legacy of prominent artists left behind on the stage. Referring to one of the very famous tirades of Tomas Fasulyeciyan (Taner 2015, 95), the stage is considered a "place of a pleasant sound" in the play *Sersem Kocanın Kurnaz Karısı*, written by Haldun Taner in 1969.

Interestingly, the play tells the story of the Theater Company of Fasulyeciyan, one of the influential Ottoman theater artists of the late 19th century, during their rehearsals in Bursa and Istanbul. During my years at the Bursa State Theatre, the renowned principle of being an actor, being present and rehearsing on this specific stage filled with heritage, was an integral part of my training. Consequently, these experiences taught me that the symbolic violence I have experienced as a lighting technician in the field is related to the misrecognition of my professional job based on structural problems rather than some actors' bad and random attitudes. At that time, I was also a wannabe actor, and my training has not allowed room for apprehending theater more than the actor's perspective. Thus, the way how theater is seen was purely actor centered. Indeed, we were there to take courses on acting and were there to become actors. The dominant feeling was that if the stage was reserved only for actors without naming any "other" agents with whom a play is produced collectively, including the stage and lighting designers, lighting technicians, and even theater directors. As my first initiation, the theater was an art form in which actors are located at the core rather than a collaborative work of members of an art world as Becker (1984, 1) conceptualized.

I will continue this chapter with the roots of modern westernized theater in Turkey by tracing the historical development of the theater scene.

### **3.2 Istanbul learns where to look: Emergence of the Western-style Theater**

Surveying the emergence of theater in the Ottoman era by analyzing it from the point of view of professionals for the epochs preceding the Tanzimat period seems

to me to be an exceptional yet highly demanding path because of the difficulty of determining what theater was and who were its practitioners. During the Tanzimat era, the scripted theater texts began to be performed in front of the public in Istanbul for the first time. The modern theater emerged in the Ottoman Empire, constituting one of the aspects of the multidimensional modernization adventure experienced in the 19th century (Uslu 2015, 528). Before theater was included in life as a Western element, *orta oyunu* (Turkish Commedia Dell'arte), *meddah*, and similar entertainments were part of the world of entertainment that today we call traditional. Ottoman festivals, which occupy an important place in theater history, can be considered great spectacles rather than theater. Therefore, it should be treated in the context of the relationship between the palace and the theater. The palace organizes these festivities for several reasons (birth, circumcision, marriage, military success, and welcoming of a foreign guest), gathering all people for theatrical plays. It is known that during these festivities, almost the entire city was arranged like a complex of theater stages, and many performances were staged simultaneously (Karacabey 1995).

Unlike traditional theater, these performances were improvised without a pre-written script wherever it was deemed appropriate by actors who had grown up in a master-apprentice relationship. Western-style theater requires a written script (Buttanri 2010, 55) and theater buildings. Before the theater buildings were built, plays were exhibited in gardens and private houses; these plays became part of the entertainment of Ramadan or added value to special occasions, such as circumcision (*sünnet*) ceremonies of the son of sultans. For the first time in the Empire, Istanbul welcomed the Western-style theater at the beginning of the 18th century. In line with the modernization period, the Consulates opened in Istanbul, and their gardens had turned into a place of western cultural life, thus the theater. Consequently, these were not open to an audience nor performed by professional theater artists (Sevengil 1990, 163). In the same manner, the western-style theater that shaped the Tanzimat era goes hand in hand with the modernization process of the Ottoman Empire. The significance of this age is the existence of written documents that facilitate tracing the notion of theater and the entertainment life of that era. The Tanzimat period described a reorganization of life (Shaw 1977, 55). In a more general sense, theater emerges as a part of entertainment life. At the beginning of the 19th century, the non-Muslim elites of the Empire were the initiators of the western style theater (Sevengil 1934, 12-13). Families' special occasions have emerged as the place of theater, yet these representations were neither open to the audience except for special invitations nor performed by people whose main preoccupation is theater (Baş 2020). The construction of theater buildings describes one of the turning points in

cultural life around the mid-19th century. Although it gave places mostly for operas and concerts, Naum Theater (currently Çiçek Pasajı) was the pioneer venue that changed the nature of the entertainment life in Ottoman society by implementing a vaster audience attendance in representations. Constructed in 1840 and burned down in 1870 during the big fire of Pera, the so-called "Italian Opera House of Constantinople" became the place that welcomes most famous operas in its repertoire, from Italian operas to Wagner's, and opera adaptations of Shakespeare (Aracı 2011). The new theater had a modern look, with two floors of boxes and a gallery, accompanied by a 42-candle London chandelier and a bright white interior (Aracı 2020). As Sevengil (1934, 14) notes, Sultan Abdülmecid was a passionate theater visitor and had a special Imperial box. Frequented mainly by spectators from the upper-class strata, Naum Theater introduced Ottoman society to the modern cultural life of the 19th century.

During the 19th century, Beyoğlu had a vital cultural life thanks to the tours organized by Western show groups. Like other shows, theater or operas were staged in Beyoğlu during the mid-19th century; performances mainly were not in Ottoman Turkish. Thus, it causes understanding of the text for a limited Italian-speaking community. Some newspapers of the era had published Turkish summaries of the operas to access a broader audience (Sevengil 1934, 13). In 1851, after having been given the privilege of being the only legitimate venue to perform operas in the Empire, a troupe of 117 people was invited from Italy to Istanbul as permanent members of the orchestra of Naum Theater (Özcengiz 2006, 29-31). Throughout its history, and until the great fire of Pera, operas were performed there promptly following their world premiere, thus proving that the Empire embraced Western music and strove to be considered a true world-class artistic hub, as compatible as other European capitals (Karadağlı 2020).

### **3.2.1 Late 19th century: The Era of Theater Companies**

The privilege that Sultan Abdülmecid granted to the Naum Theater of being the city's only theater expired in 1862. With the abolition of that monopoly, a new theater building, the Şark Theater (later the Alcazar Theater), was built. The first performance in Şark Theater took place in 1861. Among the artists were Davit Tiryans, Mardiros Mmakyan, Serape Benglyan, Ohanes Acemiyan, Bedros Magakyan, Tomas Fasulyaciyan, and Agop Vartovyan, who later became famous (Sevengil 1934, 19). An extensive range of works was presented in the repertoires of the theaters. During the reign of the Ottoman Opera Company, the Ottoman

Theater Company, and from the Tanzimat onwards, a period in which literature in the Western sense was brought to the fore, plays written by Ottoman writers were also fashioned. The relationship between the palace and Western-style theater and performing arts is developed on a dual axis: protection and pressure. While the palace theaters, built in the gardens of Dolmabahçe Palace and later Yıldız Palace, hosted foreign ambassadors and guests, showcasing the cultural and artistic production within the country, some theater plays were banned, and several theater buildings were destroyed.

The permissions and privileges of the palace also opened an exciting avenue for the joint consideration of politics and theater. These situations and the rights granted when creating or practicing a profession were, in some ways, also influenced by the interpersonal relationships of practitioners with political elites. It can be argued that recognition comes from notoriety and reputation in the field; thus, we could not encounter any artistic critic yet. It has also been observed that in the years when Vartovyan's company had the right to be the only one legally performing in Turkish, there were groups performing plays in cities like Izmir and Bursa to challenge this privilege. On the other hand, in the performing arts in general, to overcome the legally protected structure of Vartovyan's company, companies were created to perform genres outside the scope of that privilege, such as musical operettas and operas.

The dissolution of the Vartarian company was due to the abolition of its privilege. Nevertheless, the place the theater occupies or the opinions about it in the newspapers of the time did not appear to be with economic sides. The pioneering attempts to create a theatrical field were mainly intended to ensure the proper acceptance of the western style theater. This significant change also celebrates theater companies' proliferation and working areas. Agop Vartaryan appeared as one of the founding figures in Western-style Ottoman theater. Under his influence, Gedikpaşa Theater arose and began to perform its plays in Fatih, where the Muslim population vastly lived. The first attempt for the establishment of an Ottoman imperial theater took place in 1868. After this attempt, which could not succeed, Vartaryan obtained the theater monopoly for ten more years, and a mandate, *Ferman-i Ali*, made it legal for the Muslim population to go to the theater (Karadağlı 2020).

The repertoire of Ottoman Theater under the leadership of Agop Vartaryan consisted of texts and it was very attractive to the audience by composing the adaptation of Shakespeare and Moliere classics to Ottoman playwrights. Muslim and non-Muslim actors were present in that group, and their revenue was regulated by a contract for the first time in the imperial period. According to this contract,

actors could benefit from a monthly wage only for the months they worked; if a comedian got sick, he was not entitled to medical leave, and, if a season lasted seven months, the workers could not be reimbursed for the rest of the year (And 1983, 59). In addition to this contract, the Ottoman Theater innovated management with a theatrical committee. The literary committee of the Ottoman theater was founded by Rasit Pasa (the governor of Syria), Kemal Bey (Namik Kemal), Halet Bey, and Vartovyan in 1873. The committee was authorized to establish the unity of language and pronunciation between Muslim and non-Muslim actors and the selection of theater plays (And 1983, 61). They also translated the terms of theater and the professional terminology into Turkish. The topics discussed at that time also included the functions of theater. Intelligentsia of the era generally accepted Namik Kemal's idea of the theater having the mission and the duty of entertainment and education in this period (And 1983, 55). The committee could only continue its work for a short period, and the events that followed the performance of Namik Kemal's *Vatan Yahud Silistre*, in 1873, led to the exile of Namik Kemal and other members of the delegation; thus, right after its establishment, it de facto disappeared (Uslu 2015, 533).

Western performing arts were widespread in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century in Istanbul and other significant cities such as Izmir, Bursa, and Adana (Karadağlı 2020). I interpret this era as a period of theatrical professionals' training, performance, and state recognition. These can be interpreted as a period of adaptation to performing arts and theater, which were part of the daily life of the post-Tanzimat period. This was a significant change for the performing arts in Istanbul. From that time forth, the interaction between artistic productions and their audience has never been interrupted.

On the other hand, the relationship between the state and the arts went through both a system of patronage and censorship practices that resulted in the deprivation of theater professions. There are many similarities between that period and the current atmosphere of the theater. On the political side, It can be observed that plays could only be performed in Turkish and that theater groups were disbanded due to the political pressure on social life. In the economic aspect, theater groups ended their artistic production due to a lack of resources. Finally, in a symbolic manner, the most prestigious profession in the theater is acting. However, the artists in the palace could not escape the organization of the "Hademe-i Hassa-i Şahane", the only subsidized art institution in the empire, and they were kept under the direction of a pasha who had almost no connection with art (Sevengil 1990, 176).

### **3.2.2 The Second Constitutional Era (1908-1920)**

The second Constitutional era was a period of familiarization with theater. Actors were still not able to find a school and hatched from apprenticeships. Muslim actresses could not be on the stage, and didactic literary works found more space on the stage in the sake of nationalist works. However, the opening of a school providing regular conservatory-type education coincided with the beginning of the Republican period; the cultural atmosphere that followed the second constitutional monarchy saw essential developments both in the opening of “Dar’ül Bedayi” and a widespread audience.

Previously, attending the theater was a priority for society’s upper and middle classes; nevertheless, with the revolutions, “the simple people, factory workers, soldiers, and many former peasants wore the clothes of soldiers” who never had the opportunity to attend the theater (Seçkin 2007, 13). The mayor of Istanbul Cemil (Topuzlu) Pasha wanted to create an academy. When the municipal assembly members approved this idea, the famous theater director André Antoine was invited to Istanbul in 1914 to make this academy (Suner 1995). This attempt could not grow into a regular school but continued to be a private theater company. The Dar’ül Bedayi period, which later became the Istanbul Municipality Theaters, is vital because it indicates an understanding of the importance of the emergence of artists who were educated and produced plays as a result of that education. Having a school for a profession is remarkable for gaining legitimacy and ensuring the field’s continuation.

### **3.2.3 In between the Political Tool and the High Art: Theater in Early Republican Era**

Similar to the westernization period of the Ottoman Empire, the theater was conceived as a symbol to acquire and apprehend principles of a decent life in the Early Republican period (Sevengil 1934, 11-13). Modernization in the minds of the governing elite of the Turkish Republic included cultural and social aspects. The theater had a principal value for a generation whose main idol was Namık Kemal. Nevertheless, the only subsidized theater of the early Republican era was the Dar’ül Bedayi, and its situation gave us a general theater atmosphere at that time. As Ardalı Büyükarman (2015) argues:

"The financial difficulties inherited from the Second Constitutional Era, the problem of female actors appearing on the stage, the disagreements



between the artists, and the lack of a qualified theater audience put Dar'ül Bedayi in danger of being dissolved and closed down."

However, the fate of the Dar'ül Bedayi took a turn in 1930 following the new law on municipalities adopted by the Grand National Assembly. Dar'ül Bedayi has been directly attached to the municipality and became institutionalized, and from 1934, it was officially called the Istanbul City Theaters.

Besides Dar'ül Bedayi , to understand the theatrical life and the view of the time's political elite, we should contextualize it into the socio-political life of and in Ankara. Consistent with the value they attributed to art within a modernist vision, the political elite of the early Republican era attempted to establish art institutions in Ankara. *Musiki Muallim Mektebi* (Music Teacher Training School) was launched in 1924. The opening of this school is significant as a political decision that prioritizes the transformative power of art and the institutionalization and continuity of education in the field of art. Despite the willingness of the decision-makers to create artistic institutions at that time, there were financial difficulties. As we learn from an original document telegraphed between the school's management and their piano supplier, in 1935, there were only three pianos at the school, and two were out of order. The process of repairing the pianos took two years. During those two years, students were only required to use only one of them <sup>1</sup>. As for theater, at the beginning of the 1930s, no theater groups were based in Ankara, thus, to integrate theater into the cultural life of the city's inhabitants, theater groups from Istanbul were promoted to perform around the country and "were given a special welcome in Ankara" (Yüksel 1991, 308-309).

The establishment of the People's Houses (*Halk Evleri*) is also significant in reflecting the general understanding of the period. The People's Houses, which were first opened in 1932, housed a performance branch that organized performances under the name of public education. Public education (*halk terbiyesi*) aimed to adopt the principles of the revolution and "teach them to citizens" promoting national identity and citizenship, commenting that they are part of the Turkish nation and citizens of the Turkish Republic (Adadağ 2020) This was part of the general agenda of the

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<sup>1</sup>January 22, 1935

Ankara To Erard et Cie Company,  
Mail Street Number: 13, Paris

Dear Gentlemen, Last year we ordered three pianos from you. One of these pianos (number 122560) needs repair as it was broken during shipping, which is your responsibility. We have never heard of this piano since the insurance company took it over. The insurance company we are talking about tells us; replied that they only undertake the shipping process of the piano from Ankara to Paris and that we need to get information from you about the piano's fate afterward. Since we need this piano in our Music Teachers' School, we ask you to deliver the piano to us as soon as possible. Director of the Ankara Music Teachers School (VEKAM archives.)

revolution, which was to “teach citizens” how to behave and influence “appropriate manners” on them. Indeed, in this context, it appeared that the theater was practically the only effective means of mass communication to spread the nationalist and modernist ideals of the party to an illiterate and rural population (Ari 2004). At the same time, there were certain attempts to create a solid "academic theater", which was one of the most valuable efforts for the ruling elites. In 1937, the Ankara State Conservatoire was established to achieve this goal. The school, which was constituted of the departments of opera and drama, gave its first graduates in 1941 and provided training for the artistic staff of the State Theaters. In 1937, in the 18th issue of *La Turquie Kemaliste* a publication containing articles in English, French and German to explain the Kemalist revolution to the world, in writing on the Ankara State Conservatoire, the main objective of this institution is described as follows:

"The Ankara Conservatoire, a dynamic home, will be a kind of center of our dramatic art. Creating organizational centers will provide our country with playwrights, directors, and actors who will further develop this art." (*Le Conservatoire d'Ankara* 1937, 24).

Founded in 1949 under the general direction of Muhsin Ertuğrul, the State Theaters will have a staff composed of graduates of this school (Haşar 2008, 36). Thus, for the first time, the direction of the theater moved to Ankara, and the State Theaters, whose organization was based in Ankara, became the first institution where the art of theater would be recognized by the state. Over the years, it prioritized the vision of bringing art to the masses. A clear example of these arguments would be an announcement I remember from my years of theatrical education that reinforces this mission. The announcement was prepared exclusively for the 60th anniversary of the State Theaters and was repeated before each performance, with the voice of Rüştü Asyalı, the chief dramaturg at the time:

"We, the cultural and artistic ambassadors who have been scattered all over our country for more than 60 years, are happy to meet you in a new play, and we display humans in every play. We wish you, our valued audience, a good play."

### 3.2.4 Theater in Republican Istanbul

Having mentioned that Dar'ül Bedayi was institutionalized as Istanbul City Theaters, it was established under the leadership of Muhsin Ertuğrul. In order to attract masses, the City Theaters turned towards staging musical plays. Constituting these events, actors were trained within the institution and became famous actors of the period and were called the “Republican generation” (Candan 2010, 51). After these years, when the City Theaters led the city’s theatrical life, Muhsin Ertuğrul’s appointment to the State Theaters would lead to a transformation. The theater’s popularity decreased over time. The years in which theater would resurface in Istanbul would be the 1960s. During these years, companies such as Kenter Theater, Dormen Theater, and Dostlar Theater opened their curtains, presented experimental productions, and had the chance to reach a broader audience in the rapidly politicizing atmosphere of the time. For example, in 1965, the first one-person play performed in Turkey (*Bir Delinin Hatıra Defteri*, “the Diary of a Madman” by Dostlar Theater) or the first Turkish epic-style play, *Keşanlı Ali Destanı* (The Ballad of Ali of Keshan) coincide with this period.

From the 1960s onwards, private theaters were introduced to an audience who had become accustomed to attending theaters. For example, Yıldız and Müsfik Kenter resigned from their positions at the State Theaters (Ardalı Büyükarman 2015) and established their private theater, the Kenter Theater. Although we do not have a source of information, this example indicates the existence of theater artists who leave a subsidized theater and try to survive on ticket income and payment of the theater’s rent. From then on, the theater entered a period where a vast repertoire of plays was created, and plays ranging from vaudeville to boulevard comedies, from epic plays to Shakespearean dramas, were staged. Ardalı Büyükarman (2015) states that the history of Istanbul’s State Theaters, in fact, is the history of one building. The building in question is the AKM, completed in 1970, and the building was assigned to State Theaters.

### 3.2.5 Alternative Theaters

The young theater companies caused a rupture in the conception of theater that reigned in the preceding periods firstly in the 1990s. Two noteworthy trends emerged from the theaters of this period. The first is the troupes that work with great production possibilities and technical equipment in commercial centers that started to expand with the popular culture of the '80s, not aiming at a particular artistic

direction. Secondly, alternative theaters pursue stylistically new staging techniques, innovative texts, and more experimental plays in alternative spaces, attempting to break away from mainstream patterns and get closer to the contemporary way of theater. Indeed, they reveal contrasts such as the ancient and the new, as well as the artistic and the commercial, the high production, and the modest budget. It deserves to be noted that most venues opened since the 1990s do not exceed a capacity of 200 seats and are made up of spaces such as unused garages and deserted buildings that enable interdisciplinary staging, as well as being structurally based on accommodating alternative productions (Bayduz 2015, 93-94). In the early 2000s, a particular plan of these emerging agents of İstanbul's theatrical field created autonomous spaces which focused on artistic expression, research, and pedagogy. Therefore, we see the constraining nature of alternative theaters that have emerged in the field with lower economic capital, but with a high degree of autonomy, in sharp contrast to subsidized theaters and large production theaters with higher economic capital and a decreased level of autonomy (Karagül 2014, 163).

The establishment of Kumbaracı50, now the oldest independent theater in Beyoğlu, dates to 2009. Indeed, the determination to produce theater in a field characterized by the lack of recognition among existing public and private theaters prompted agents to "create their own space to be able to do theater the way they wanted to" (Uğur 2020, N.A). New formations such as Kumbaracı50, like GalataPerform, Moda Sahnesi, İkinciKat, MekanArtı, and Şermola Performans (among many others) are competing for the visibility in the eyes of the audience. Therefore, the alternative theater at large is not a mesmerizing set; still a pattern that features the creativity arising from the field focuses on "the politics of collective and individual memory" (Fişek 2018, 349). However, I would like to point out that this is the first glimpse that the institutions of the alternative theater field are on an entirely distinct path from the dominant groups in the field of art when attempting to parallel the perceptions of art based on the dramatic approaches or the intentions of their audiences. Alternative theaters differed from State Theaters, City Theaters, municipality theaters, mall theaters with 300-500 seats, and mostly vaudeville or boulevard comedy-style theaters (Karagül 2014, 167). Indeed, the alternative is a term used in the 2000s to distinguish artists who take different positions than the hegemonic understanding of theater in İstanbul; thus, it is a divergent path from those of bourgeois and commercial theaters situated at the opposite end (Karagül 2014, 172). Formally, theater, within the movement defined by these alternative theaters, is an essential part of the artist's identity. In these alternative theaters, the theater came to strengthen not only the dual dynamics of the actor and the audience but also carried with it the performative experience and a different way

of relating to the theater. The audience attends a theater space at these venues with lighting and stage designs they had not previously encountered. It should be noted that the positions defined here are not permanent but still immutable; they are relationships that are likely to evolve according to the time and place mentioned; in short, they are relevant to the given period.

Throughout the 2000s, the external delimitations of the relatively autonomous artistic production field were established by interacting with the current economic struggles and the media sphere. Albeit visibility in the media (such as the production of plays and advertising on television), obtaining a special recognition signifies an increase in the number of spectators for these theaters, an increase in the price of tickets, and a change in the profile of the audience and the work produced. Therefore, in the alternative stance of the theaters, in terms of their autonomous and independent structure, as well as the trends that endanger their status in the separate part of the field (Karagül 2014, 228).

### 3.3 Conclusion

Given the nature of theater, there is a constant interaction between the audience and the stage. A play is the result of the collaboration of a group of people who all have made a unique contribution. When we talk about different and separate contributions, specific characterization of every and each effort must be acknowledged. Regarding the contemporary understanding of theater, these valuable contributions are provided by its art world and, namely, by playwrights, theater directors, assistant directors, associated directors, director assistants, actors, costume and set designers, lighting designers, lighting directors, lighting technicians, lighting operators among many other agents. Two of them must be present during a performance: actors and lighting operators. Former on the stage; the latter on the lighting board. At the first sight, actors have considerable visibility while the theater is the matter. Inevitably, to trace the professionalization of theater-related jobs in Turkey, starting with the actors, thus both logical and valid. The modern history of theater in Turkey dates to the Tanzimat era. Westernization of the Empire initiates the performing arts in society as a cultural element of new western social life. Theater buildings are needed for a western-style theater, as it was accepted in the mid-19th century in Istanbul. Nevertheless, following the literature on the field, we have seen that it focuses on writing "for those on the stage" rather than the art world that creates a play. This also calls us to reconsider different institutionalization processes of theater-related

jobs. In the literature, I have not encountered a study that examines the institutionalization of the theatrical field neither from the perspective of those who practice a theater-related job nor their ways of life in a historical context, with particular emphasis on the notion of the constitution of theatrical professions.

The works of 1983 and Sevengil (1934 ; 1990), which can be called the primary reference sources of theater history, give the general atmosphere of the period and focus on the theater companies. These works, recording the events historically in the theater field, focus on the people who practice the acting profession with love for the art. At the same time, they describe the theater in the Western sense of the notion, as the Ottomans experienced modernization. In a certain way, the theater appeared as one of the most important essential elements of this process, as the new doors opened to art are the work of a western-like social life. On the other hand, the difficulties faced by the theater actors in creating a theatrical production could find a place only within the context of political and economic analysis. I argue that the central focus of these works is to understand theater through its surroundings. It is traceable that the narrative on the theater-related events mostly appears to us under the reflection of a political decision. For instance, we can learn a play thanks to a verdict that interdicts it or a sultan's appreciation of a play. Still, the professional conditions of theater actors had no place in the literature. It is noted, for example, that some groups disintegrate due to economic difficulties. Yet, we cannot learn what an actor's financial income or socio-economic position was. Furtherly, these are mostly a volume of works that commentate on the history of theater in Ottoman society from a Turkish nationalistic perspective (Baş 2020 ; Güllü 2007 ). Additionally, in the early republican era, the theater was perceived as a political tool for conveying the ruling class ideological agenda. Interestingly, this phenomenon appears to us from a double perspective. As the theater was used for mass communication and as a showcase of the country's artistic vision and wisdom, in the same manner, the narrative on the theater is instrumentalized as the notion of theater.

#### 4. ANALYZING THE LABOR OF AN ARTISTIC ENDEAVOR: ISTANBUL LIGHTING DESIGN SUBFIELD

“I arrive on stage around 11:45 for the show at 8 p.m. It’s been over an hour, and I’m going over my lighting plots. I’m still alone on the stage. I turn on all the spotlights on the scene from the lighting console and see if there are any other lights with broken bulbs. Some of the spotlights I turned on are not lit. Anyway, I’m alone on the stage, and while making an adaptation plan, I go up to the lighting console. Then I go back to the stage, climb the ladder, and adjust the light focus settings. This takes half an hour. While climbing the ladder and adjusting one profile spot, someone enters the stage and says, "good luck." I say welcome, here you go. Someone comes on stage at 13.00, which means this person is a technician. I tell him what I do. He says, "Let me do it. We’ll do it together." I welcome him. He introduces himself.” (Fieldnotes, 02.04.2022, Yer Contemporary Arts Center, Ankara).

I took these fieldnotes while working on stage as a lighting technician and operator for the Ankara tour of an independent Istanbul-based contemporary dance company. The passage I quoted here is crucial because it reveals how a technician spends their first hours on stage. Although this profession has no standard work regime and the working conditions vary from one stage to another, it has certain norms. Anything said to briefly explain these standards will show the general practices of a profession. Actually, it is a profession with no professional association, no defined insurance code, and no accurate job recognition. In order to examine this profession, I think it is suitable to look at a whole workday of its practitioners and focus on the experiences of working in different venues.

Considering these, there is an ambiguity in the scope of the field. To clarify, I will first try to locate the people working in the field. From its emergence in the 2000s to today, the lighting design sub-field has been an intensively informal sector. There-

fore it has no precise recorded sectoral data. During a meeting <sup>1</sup>, I attended as a participant observer, a member of the Initiative of Let Our Theater Live (*Tiyatro-muz Yaşasın İnisyatifi*) said that they estimate that there are 2000 theatre workers in the independent theatre sector in Istanbul. He added that this estimate was based on the number of people who applied to the solidarity campaign for theatre workers launched by the initiative. In May 2020, the "100 Poems of Solidarity" (*Dayanışmanın 100'ü Şiir*) <sup>2</sup> campaign was launched in cooperation with the Players' Union and the Theatre Cooperative. The aim was to collect donations to be allocated to the theatre employees who lost their jobs due to the pandemic. A total of one hundred actors performed one hundred different poems during this campaign, and these videos were shared on social media. As a result, hundred theatre employees were paid 250 Turkish liras for three months, and I benefited from this. To benefit from this campaign, the criteria were to be a theatre worker and to have worked in independent theatres in Istanbul within the last five years. Initiative defined eligible people as such: "Theatre laborers (actors, dancers, musicians, technicians, designers, choreographers, box office staff, writers, etc.)."<sup>3</sup>

Although it is difficult to determine how many lighting technicians and designers there are within this broad definition, it provides essential data about the people working in independent theatres. I asked my interviewees how many people work in this field to frame the lighting design sub-field in such a context. My interviewees (Atiye, Ayten, Ufuk, İhsan, Ateş, Ulus) stated that in the summer of 2020, lighting designers and technicians working in independent theatres came together and held a meeting about their professions. Still, when the theatre season opened, they could not meet again after the second meeting. They estimated that about 30 lighting designers and about 100 lighting technicians were attending these meetings. I, for example, was aware of these meetings but could not participate in them. Nevertheless, I think these numbers still provide insight into the field. In short, I can say that the Istanbul independent theatre field comprises around 2000 theatre workers, including 30 lighting designers and 100 lighting technicians. However, it is worth adding that career discontinuities are frequently observed in theatre professions that do not directly require a bachelor's degree or diploma but require a creative labor process. However, I still think this data is essential in giving an idea about the field.

After giving this general overview, in this chapter, I will focus on the professional

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<sup>1</sup>(Participant observation, TÜYAD: Tiyatro Yasası İçin Ne Yapmalı, Nasıl Yapmalı?, 5.10.2020.)

<sup>2</sup><https://dayanismanin100usiir.org/index.php>

<sup>3</sup>Tiyatro emekçileri (Oyuncu, dansçı, müzisyen, teknisyen, tasarımcı, koreograf, gişe görevlisi, yazar gibi...)", retrieved from: <https://dayanismanin100usiir.org/basvur.php>



experiences of technicians and designers working in the field of lighting design. I will begin by tracing a field of lighting design in its historical development to provide a context for the conditions under which the current profession is practiced today. I will explain the historical development of lighting design in Turkey. Following this, I will focus on the period of alternative theaters to understand the idea of lighting design that stands out through its artistic presence. I will distinguish the alternative theater period into two distinct sections: from the early years of this trend, which correspond to the late 1990s and early 2000s to 2014, when I began working in the field, and the period after 2014.

In the first of these sections, I will describe this process through the narratives of the lighting designers I interviewed. In this section, the concepts I will specifically explore will be the conditions and modalities related to the emergence of the profession. In addition, I will further investigate how the figure of independent designers emerged and evolved. In the second part, the post-2014 period, I will focus on how I found a job in the existing labor market and how I fulfilled the professional conventions for lighting design. For this part, I will use the narratives of the technicians and designers I interviewed and my work experience in the field. Having described the conditions of the profession in these sections, I will then move on to a discussion of the field through the relationship between work and cultural labor. I will include the field notes I took between November 2021 and July 2022 as a freelance lighting technician and designer in Istanbul and the interviews I have made for this research. This chapter will focus on examining the creative labor practices of the Istanbul lighting design field under the perspective of immaterial labor and recording them as an ethnography of work, "by experiencing first-hand the economics of culture and the culture of economics"(Özbay 2018, 129).

#### **4.1 Lighting design in Turkey**

In the second chapter, I discussed and described the formation of theatrical professions. I described the years of the establishment of Western-style theater in Turkey. In researching the theater that began to develop in Istanbul in the post-Tanzimat period, the literature I encountered did not directly correspond to my purpose. Nevertheless, I have tried to show the limitations of this literature throughout the second chapter. Regarding this issue, it can be said that theater, in the Western sense of the term, in Turkey completed its institutionalization processes from the 1950s onwards. For analyzing the professionalization of theater-related jobs, the implementation of

educational programs and institutionalization of subsidized theaters should not be neglected. I should also add that the narrative about the professionalization process includes only the actors. In fact, in the middle of the 20th-century theater is perceived as the following:

“In the 1950s, the painful task of making contemporary theater was revealed in critical writings. At that time, the theater phenomenon presented itself to us more constructively and healthily than before. The theater was now accepted as a universal art form, and all aspects (acting, directing, music, lighting...) began to be discussed.”<sup>4</sup> (Türkiye Tiyatro Eleştirmenleri Birliği 1994, xvı).

Nevertheless, lighting design could not take its place with its artistic or design-related aspect and mostly seemed like a job of shedding the light on actors and the stage. For an overview of the perspectives on this topic, it is helpful to follow the work I cited above. This book consists of the Association of Theater Critics' (*Tiyatro Eleştirmenleri Birliği*) collections of theater reviews from 1923 to 1990. In the first volume of this collection, which covers 1923-1960, light is mentioned in seven out of eighty-eight reviews. Bearing that the authors wrote these texts about the plays they saw, this is a very insignificant number. In examining the contents of these seven articles, it is impossible to see a criticism of light, and the thoughts on light are expressed in a few lines. Thus, light appears either as a technical error (Es'ad 1994, 20; Adil 1994, 176 ; Benk 1994, 200) or as a well-implemented lighting scheme (Kayacan 1994, 84; Fenik 1994, 176 ; Toker 1994, 179; And 1994, 276).

Indeed, the second volume covers the period 1960-1990 and is a continuation of the first that was about the term between 1923 and 1960. In the second volume, six articles out of ninety-nine include the concept of light as an element of the play. In this context, in three texts, it is mentioned that the presence of light gives richness to the play (Taner 1994, 141; Oral 1994, 150 ; Suveren 1994, 222), while in three other texts (Ardıç 1994, 138; Ayvaz 1994, 198 ; Çamurdan 1994, 210) it is said that light should be better provided to ensure the integrity of the play. Throughout these two volumes, only one article mentions the name of a lighting designer. Still, he is not referred to as a designer but as "Ayhan Güldağlar who made the lighting scheme" (Suveren 1994, 222).

The statement "theater was now accepted as a universal art form, and all aspects

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<sup>4</sup>1950'lerde çağdaş bir tiyatro kurma sancısı eleştirilerde kendini fazlasıyla göstermektedir. Bu dönemde, tiyatro olgusunun eskisine göre daha yapıcı, daha sağlıklı bir biçimde ele alındığını görürüz. Tiyatro artık evrensel bir sanat dalı olarak tüm boyutlarıyla (oyunculuk, yönetmenlik, müzik, ışık) tartışılmaya başlanmıştır."

(acting, directing, music, lighting...) began to be discussed",in the passage from the introduction to the same book that I quoted above, is not entirely appropriate when examining the reviews in the collection. We must remember that the lighting design subfield was formed with the emergence of alternative theaters. In the lack of academic literature on the lighting design subfield and its development in the field of alternative theater and the execution of the theater professions, I am proposing to use the data I have collected by conducting interviews and my own working experiences to base my further analysis.

#### **4.1.1 1990s to 2014: Emergence of “Freelance Lighting Designer”**

In Chapter 2, I mentioned that theater in the western sense requires a pre-written text and a theater space. Similarly, lighting design requires a theater company. Most importantly, the idea that lighting design should be designed by the person who works in this field. In the interviews, I also examined the early years of this profession. In this section, I focus on the circumstances of the establishment of the field of lighting design and the designers' career trajectories.

During the interviews I conducted within the scope of this thesis, I asked my interviewees about their careers and the formation process of the field of lighting design in Turkey. Being in this field longer than technicians, lighting designers could answer my questions about the field's history by drawing on their own experiences. Ateş was one of my interviewees whom I asked about the history of lighting design in Turkey. He has been working as a lighting designer for last 22 years, and before that, he worked in a company that was a supplier of lighting equipment. Ateş answered this question:

"As I am of age, I remember the Istanbul of the early 80s and have been going to the theatre since then. But the only person I knew as a lighting designer at the time was Ayhan Güldağları, the permanent lighting designer of the State Theatres of the time. I don't remember anyone else. For a lighting design profession, the idea of such design must exist in the theatre. Nevertheless, it developed gradually only in the 2000s."

Ayten was one of my interviewees who experienced theatre life in Istanbul before the 2000s. She attended the opera department of the City Theatres Conservatory's half-time education program in the early 1990s. When I asked her about the value attributed to lighting design there, she told me that at City Theaters, lighting design

was not seen as either a creative or artistic job. And continued:

"At that time (the early 1990s), those responsible for lighting in the theatre were seen as electricians. When I told my friends that I had decided to go to London to study lighting design, everyone was surprised: "Oh, there is an education program for this job?". I realized that even my classmates from the conservatory were influenced by this view."

Looking at these narratives of Ateş and Ayten, the general situation before the 2000s supports our arguments about the professions of lighting design. At this point, the acceptance of the idea of lighting design as a creative art profession by theatre companies is a turn that could be taken as a milestone. The first attempts of building this field as a creative art profession by its agents, as a creative art profession, dates back to 20- 25 years. Based on this, it can also be said that new forms of artistic production in contemporary theatre and the emergence and evolution of the field of lighting design in Turkey have coexisted.

In Turkey, lighting design came into existence in the theater field with its distinctive aspects and professionals around the end of the 1990s and early 2000s. This period corresponds to the years of the rise of the movement defined as alternative theater in Istanbul. In Chapter 2, I defined alternative theaters as an entirely different movement from institutional theaters, City Theaters and State Theaters, and bourgeois theaters. I stated that this is not just about turning the traditional theater stage into a black box but about reconsidering all the play elements that constitute the alternative. Starting in the mid-2000s, we witnessed the emergence of the alternative theater field in Istanbul. The existing theater venues, where conventional plays are performed, have declined their capacity to attract audiences. The public is more interested in the theater venues transformed from flats, movie theaters, former garages, and old bakeries. Compared to the red-curtained stages, these venues are described as "black boxes" and become dominant with their significant influence in the name of the audience's interest. Alternative stages and theaters defined themselves by releasing an open letter as the following:

"Dictionaries define "Alternative" as "option, different, other, alternate." These institutions themselves have never made this definition. It is usually determined by academic circles or print/visual media. We have never produced for this title; what we produce and do has given birth to this title! . . . We are happy to keep our spaces alive in a period when venues were closed by the state or sacrificed to "multi-purpose centers"!. These were opened in the neighborhoods with the contributions of individual

supporters and transformed from "holes". The starting point of making theater in these holes was to create/explore alternative stage/spaces and forms of spectacle rather than producing alternative works.”<sup>5</sup> (Evrensel 2014).

The more the audience interested in alternative groups, the more they had a chance to pursue their artistic creations. Thus their artistic creations included lighting design and paved the way for the emergence of freelance lighting designers.

Talking about the story of how he started in lighting design, Ateş said the following: "I became fascinated by the magic of light in a play I saw at the Şan Theater before it was burned down, and from that day on, I have always focused on light in every play I have seen." He also mentioned that lighting design should be appreciated first. "I mean, to do the design, you need a company to tell you to do the design.", he continued. According to him, this process is strongly related to the proliferation of theater groups in the early 2000s. The importance given to it in the late 1990s, the early 2000s was also mentioned regularly in İhsan's accounts. He also stated his entry into the profession in the early 2000s and late 90s. "Of course, at that time, there was no education for this profession, yet there is still none today. I studied photography, and from there, I established a connection with theater." At this point, I think it is essential to investigate how people got into the profession to track career paths.

Ateş received his bachelor's degree in the Stage and Costume Design department at the Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University in 1988; while İhsan graduated from the photography department of the same university in 1998. Their entry into the profession corresponds to the early 2000s, and like most people in the profession, both do not have a degree in lighting design. Another designer I interviewed, Ayten also started her career in the early 2000s, but her story is different than the others I have referred to. After graduating from the Electrical Engineering Department at the Istanbul Technical University, Ayten did her master's degree in the same program studying on Adolphe Appia's stage design. She later studied lighting design in London. Ayten returned to Istanbul in 2001 and described those years as follows: "When I started my career, even though I was doing lighting designs for some companies, there were no freelance designers who could afford to survive on design alone because there was

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<sup>5</sup>“Alternatif” kelimesini sözlükler “seçenek, farklı, diğer, öteki” gibi kelimelerle ifade etmektedir. Bu tanımlama hiçbir zaman bu kurumların kendisi tarafından konulmamış, genellikle akademik çevreler veya yazılı/görsel medya tarafından tanımlanmıştır. Bizler hiçbir zaman bu sıfat için üretim yapmadık. Ürettiklerimiz ve yaptıklarımız bu sıfatı doğurmuştur! . . . Mahalle aralarımıza genelde bireysel destekçilerin katkılarıyla açtığımız ve “deliklerden” dönüştürdüğümüz mekanlarımızı, salonların devlet tarafından kapatıldığı veya “çok amaçlı salonlara” kurban edildiği bir dönemde yaşatabildiğimiz için mutluyuz! Bu deliklerde tiyatro yapmamızın çıkış noktası, alternatif işler üretmekten ziyade alternatif sahne/mekan ve seyir biçimleri yaratmak/araştırmak oldu.

no such environment. I also worked as an engineer for many years, until 2012." As a designer, she stated that she could only start freelancing because of the increasing number of offers and demand from theater companies.

Atiye and Ufuk, the two other designers I interviewed with, also started their careers in the early 2010s. Their career in theater began outside of Istanbul, in the theater companies of their respective universities, and continued when they moved to Istanbul. Atiye noted that she started working as an assistant to a lighting designer in 2010 and then as a designer in the following years. Ufuk's design journey started in 2008 as a stage technician. Over time, he began to get design jobs when companies demanded him to do their lighting design. In this respect, Ufuk's career is like my professional story. Atiye and Ufuk, stated that they were able to make a living with this work despite not being affiliated with a stage, namely being freelancer. Here, affiliation with a stage means working with a regular monthly income. Compared to the early 2000s, making a living as a freelance lighting designer became possible and a much more viable profession within a decade.

Based on the designers' accounts, I analyze the conditions of entry into the profession. Relying on the narratives, I can conclude that the work of lighting designers for independent theaters has emerged since the beginning of the 2000s. This section exposes the designers' evolution in the field's constitution. Moreover, there are also technicians in this same field. In examining the specific circumstances of technicians, a professional discontinuity is evident. Although designers have been practicing their profession since the late 1990s, the professional experience of technicians in this field is much lower. For example, I began this work before or nearly in the same years as the technicians I interviewed. To give an account on the lighting technicians I will continue this chapter with my own conditions of becoming a technician and then move on to the stories of technicians I interviewed.

## **4.2 Lighting Technician: "A job, so to speak"**

In my theater career, my strong interest in stories and the dramatic expression of the human condition holds an important place. My debut in Istanbul was one of the critical steps in my theatrical training. In 2014, my artistic journey in the university theater company became one of the first places that led me to the field of lighting design. There, I worked as an actor, workshop leader, lighting technician, and designer for six years. I became involved with lighting design when I attended a theater play where a friend from the university theater group was working as a

lighting designer. This 60-person alternative stage was on the second floor of an old Beyoğlu apartment building. The theater company used to perform its plays on this stage on Fridays and Saturdays. After the play, the company's founder told me they were looking for a technician and he could teach me the lighting spots and board they used on the scene, and I would receive a daily wage (*yevmiye*) for the days I worked. The job description was to set up the decor and lights before the play, be a lighting operator during the play, and take down the decor and lights at the end of the play. They were looking for someone reliable and interested in theater. These are the requirements for my profession, which I still practice today.

My story of starting as a lighting technician shares a typical pattern with other technicians, I interviewed regarding entry conditions into the field. Being interested in theater and being reliable. Mahmut has been in this field since 2012 and told his story as follows:

"I preferred to study in Istanbul to engaging in theater and become an actor. Later, with the suggestion of a friend from the university theater troupe, I joined a 50-seat theater in Harbiye as a stage assistant. I started to receive a daily wage of 20 liras there. Then I moved to another stage (Katkak Theater) and learned to do the lighting there."

Mahmut also explained that how he learned lighting and stage technician at Katkak Theater, "I actually learned lighting technician working with the designers who worked there, how to use the lighting console and adjust the lighting spots." Mahmut, who now works freelance instead of being attached to one stage, describes his years as a stage technician: "These years made me a known technician and gave me, so to speak, a profession."

Suat, who started this job as a stage technician, stated that he wanted to be an actor and that he wanted to work in a theater for this. He said he left the stage where he regularly worked after working for two years and continued to work as a freelancer while emphasizing that he was preparing for the acting department's entry auditions.

Besides the technicians who desired to be an actor, I also came across technicians who wanted to be lighting designers. Ulu graduated from the department of pantomime and has been working with a theater company, which he calls ensemble theater, since 2014. He says he is one of the lucky few technicians in independent theater companies insured and paid a regular monthly wage. While working as a technician for his ensemble, he states that his primary career objective is to be a

lighting designer. He says that lighting design is an entirely distinct profession and requires technical skills and intellectual capacity for the dramaturgy of light. Then he added that he is also trying to develop himself in this field. In this sense, he shared that the "Theater Technique and Lighting Design Workshop", a long-term training program with a curriculum that opened for the first time in Turkey in 2020, in which Ulus and I were two of the seven participants, helped him a lot. In the case of Umut, currently an employee at State Theaters, he states that his career as a lighting designer will be determined by the organization where he works. Having worked as a lighting technician at there since 2016, Umut states that there are 19 technicians at Istanbul State Theater and that all technicians are reminded that they are "lighting designer candidates."

For this to happen, there must be a recruitment process within State Theaters. He said that there has to be a qualification audition first, and all technicians are waiting for that. This is a different procedure compared to alternative theaters. In State Theaters, the eligibility to be a designer is determined by specific regulations. The relevant article of the body of current law is as follows:

“The General Directorate organizes the exams. Candidates for the exam are Chief Lighting Specialists with at least four years of experience at the General Directorate of State Theaters and Stage Lighting Specialists with at least 15 years of experience and at least four years of higher education. Those who are successful in the examinations conducted by the commission formed by the Art and Management Council are appointed by the General Manager.”<sup>6</sup>

This is intra-organizational career advancement. Then I asked Umut about the difference between stage lighting technicians and Başışıkçı (Head of Lighting), and he said, "I don't know either; everyone is called a technician here (*Istanbul State Theater*)." This is another example showing that technicians are not people who define their own professional identity. The essential thing for me here is that it is re-emphasized that technicians are in between being a technician and waiting for their desired jobs.

Technicians are practicing their profession while aspiring to another profession, yet the investment they make in themselves is focused on their “dream job”. In her study

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<sup>6</sup>“Devlet Tiyatroları Genel Müdürlüğünde en az 4 yıl süreyle çalışan Başışık Uzmanları ile Devlet Tiyatroları Genel Müdürlüğünde en az 15 yıl çalışmış olan en az dört yıllık yükseköğrenim mezunu Sahne Işıkcıları arasından Genel Müdürlükçe açılacak sınavlarda Sanat ve Yönetim Kurulunca oluşturulan sınav kurulunca başarılı sayılanlar Genel Müdür tarafından göreve alınırlar.” retrived from: <https://teftis.ktb.gov.tr/TR-264219/devlet-tiyatrolari-gorev-ve-calisma-yonergesi.html>



on refugees waiting in Kayseri, for resettlement to a third country, Aslı İkizoğlu Erensü (2019, 159-181) describes a form of waiting that expands into years. She (2019, 179) describes her conversation with a woman refugee whom she learned would be resettled in Canada. This woman told her about the rugs she would buy and take with her for the house she would build in her new country. This refugee woman could have bought these rugs for her home in Kayseri, but she bought them for her dream home. Like the refugee's investment in of a new life in Canada, technicians who want to pursue another profession are not investing in developing themselves as technicians, but as designers or actors, investing in their dream jobs. However, even if they are not going to continue as technicians, they will still pursue one of the theater professions, and their knowledge in the field of technicians can help them. On the other hand, they do not see themselves as winners of neoliberalism in pursuing their career as technicians; according to the famous principle of neoliberalism, to increase and invest in yourself will make you a winner at the end of the day. Instead, they are facing uncertainty in their career. While that investment is made for another profession's sake, being a lighting technician becomes a transitional profession. In this context, acquiring the habitus of the job turns into waiting.

Ufuk told the story of his move into becoming a designer:

"It's actually about acquiring a designer's vision. It requires a designer to have technical knowledge, strengthen one's artistic side and convince the groups."

Similarly, I did my first lighting design in this manner. I was asked by the theater company where I had previously worked as a technician to do their lighting design. The lack of proper education has resulted in lighting technicians becoming a profession learned through apprenticeship. Three designers in Turkey have studied lighting design at universities abroad. On the other hand, nobody was taught at any formal institution as a lighting technician.

I have now outlined the constitution of the lighting design field and the entry conditions for technicians and designers working in non-subsidized theaters. In terms of cultural labor, what is the actual state of practice in the field? To explore this question, I will start by describing the working conditions of lighting technicians, the part I am more familiar with.

### 4.3 An Institutional Overview of Lighting Design Subfield

In an apartment with a capacity of 60 people, I started this profession as a student who was interested in the theater, taking only a daily remuneration on weekends. I continued this profession throughout the years I lived in Istanbul thanks to the offers from other companies who said they liked my work and wanted me to work with them. My first daily wage was 50 Lira, which was 1/18th of the minimum wage of the day, but it was not a standard wage for a technician. My average day was composed of 7 hours on stage. After a year, my fee doubled and caught up with the standard pay in the field. I could earn extra income with this job, which was not my primary source of livelihood at that time. However, my colleagues I met on the scene whose primary occupation was lighting technicians began to express that they were struggling without an additional income. That was in 2016. That year, the international companies that were coming to Istanbul canceled their plays, pleading the security issues of the country. This situation made the public anxious and led them not to risk the trips to see the plays and enter the crowded places. As a result, the plays were canceled. The more I worked with different ensembles and stages, the more I got daily work.

Nevertheless, I started working on performance days with the anxiety of whether the plays would be canceled. This anxiety is still with me today: I go on stage, but I worry if there will be a play, and I climb on the ladder, but I fear if something happens to me; I do my job, but I worry about whether I will get my money. Because even though the company I worked with, the stage we were playing on, the organization of the roof changed; I never had insurance, there was no improvement in my job security, and no legal or symbolic sanction for the company if something happened to me or if I couldn't get my money. Indeed, in Istanbul's "cultural labor" market, the alternative theater field has spread and gained an autonomous place in the performing arts scene. Sometimes glorified or severely criticized, alternative theaters have established themselves as a reality. Still, concrete steps have never been taken regarding the condition of workers in the cultural labor market, which has existed as a precarious experience from the beginning. The process of my work in this artistic labor market has created similar anxieties independently of the play. It was the same story in the most important international theater festival in Turkey, in which I worked in 2016. The troupes I worked with performed both in significant festivals in Istanbul, in halls with a capacity of 400 people or more to the 100-seated black box stages. For example, I still remember the trembling of my knees when I climbed a one-sided ladder on a stage that was turned into a black box theater

stage after renovating an old cinema building with a 4-meter ceiling. We could put the ladder quite steep because it only touched the bars of the border ceiling in that way to get there, and I was adjusting the light for hours.

Although we had been on tour with some improvements about stages and accommodation, nothing changed in my work conditions. During an international festival in Izmir, we were staying in one of the most expensive hotels in the city. The next day on the stage, I noticed that I was setting the lights for over an hour on the stage vents at eight meters. As I walked toward the ladder to get down to the ground after finishing the setup, I realized that one of my feet was dangling in the air. I am at the height of eight meters, and one foot was afloat; the ground I am walking on is entirely made of polystyrene foam. The festival theme was “Hope” that year, and I was about to fall. Finding no hope for myself, I bailed out of there and somehow ended up safely on the stage. The stage assistants who witnessed this said: "Are you okay? You scared us." To this day, this was one of the most shocking and dangerous instances I have witnessed in my job.

As I have thought about this issue, I would say that neither the actors nor the theater company I worked with had any direct responsibility because we were on tour and on an unfamiliar stage. Here there is a more systematic problem. The festival committee decided that this stage was suitable for our play, even considering the lighting plot I sent at the beginning. They were aware of our play’s technical requirements and should not have made such a decision. This happened in 2016. I knew there was a systematic problem, but I didn’t know exactly what it was and how it could be solved.

I found the answer to this question unexpectedly during one of my interviews for this thesis. There is no professional association for lighting designers and technicians. Ihsan, whom I asked about the importance of such a professional association, said the following:

“There should be a professional association. It should issue certificates, just like the system under which an electrician cannot work without an apprenticeship certificate. Technicians in the field should be recognized and certified. Many people have lost their lives at different stages while doing this job. Everyone must not be allowed to work in the field. Each theater stage should have a certain standard. They should have a license. This association should declare that theater cannot be held here, and new venues should be designed accordingly. Many theaters in Turkey do not have light safety locks. There are places where even the audience should not enter, let alone the stage staff.”

Well, that was precisely the point. It was the fact that the stage, which is the place where a lighting technician works, is not designed appropriately for them. I think this situation is as critical as the insurance of the people practicing the profession and the establishment of working standards. Regarding the architecture of the existing theater buildings, İhsan said the following:

"Architecture students came here (*Hola Stage Theater*), they had a young professor, a friend of ours, and he wanted to start such an initial encounter. The students had never been to the theater before. They were going to design a theater project, they looked at this place, and there was an older professor, the head of the department, who said, "Forget this place, make a classical stage. He is also someone who doesn't even go to the theater and is guiding the students through something he doesn't watch and doesn't have a disposition for. It's like a person who has never been on vacation, who has never stayed in a hotel, designing a hotel."

This eventually led to the question of which dimensions of state-recognition should be discussed. In a conversation with Ateş, one of the well-known names in the field, I asked this question. Ateş said:

"We have experienced that the state doesn't take us seriously. They say how many people you are and how much tax you pay. Then what kind of rights do you claim for this work? These kinds of theses and research are the only grounds we explain our ideas. I realized this in these 25 years."

This is remarkable evidence of the state's perception concerning the profession of lighting designers. However, this attitude is not unique to designers without a professional association. It also reflects the general stance of the cultural bureaucracy. Theater organizations with professional associations have also experienced this attitude during the negotiation process with the state.

I attended a panel on the pandemic and theater as a participant observer. During the discussion<sup>7</sup>, a representative of the Initiative of Let Our Theater Live (*Tiyatromuz Yaşasın İnisiyatifi*) gave information about their meetings with the state. He said that while discussing the need for economic subsidies to sustain independent theater companies, a bureaucrat from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism responded, "How much tax do you pay to the state in a regular season, in the pre-pandemic period?"

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<sup>7</sup>(Participant observation, TÜYAD: Tiyatro Yasası İçin Ne Yapmalı, Nasıl Yapmalı?, 5.10.2020.)

Almost nothing. So why do you expect economic support from the state now?"

In contrast to Bourdieu's theory of "existing hierarchical positions," there is no hierarchy of positions between actors, technicians, or designers but a neoliberal stance of state. Through the neoliberalization process "a way of reconfiguring the state in market-like ways" (Davies 2018, 276) became prominent. Thus, there is a conflict stemming from the state's point of view. State perspective determines the field of culture and arts based on their profitability relations. On the other hand, looking at modern art in Istanbul from the point of view of profitability, in this field artists are provided with patronage relations by private capital (Özatalay and Örnek 2017). However, there is no such patronage system for theater. This reveals that theater is not considered profitable by both private capital and the state. Hence, neoliberalism promotes market-like behavior and culture and transforms the state around market-oriented principles (Davies 2018, 274). Thus, that is a brief overview of the relationships in the field and the outlook at the state level. So why do designers pursue their careers in this field? This question has been one of the questions I have focused on the most. I will explore this question through the interviewees' narratives in the next section.

#### **4.4 The Actually Existing Conditions of a Creative Work: Lighting Designer**

I analyzed lighting designers' conditions of entry into the field and their professional circumstances. Now, I want to examine why lighting designers continue practicing the profession in this field. First, I will explain the working conditions of a lighting designer before moving on to this. How does a lighting designer work? I got a common answer from everyone that it depends on the project. The changing concept of work means that a lighting designer works on a project basis. Concerts, theater, dance or shadow theater, mapping and opening, and closing light shows, for example, the Antalya Expo, were among the different projects for the designers I interviewed. This is important to show the broad scope of a designer's work. For this thesis, I will focus on dance and theater, as these performances take place on stage. This depends on the working conditions of the designer with the theater company. For example, İhsan is a permanent designer at Hola Stage Theater. He also manages the stage, and his job other than design processes is to work on the stage as a technical manager. Let's continue with his identity as a designer. İhsan says he is someone who considers himself lucky. He explains the involvement in the play as follows:

“There is a rehearsal process for a month and a half. The play takes shape in the last 15 days and is completed in the last week. The director describes the concept of the play’s world. In some plays, the director designs a separate world; the lighting and set design are another. As creative staff, we want them all to be more together. I want to know the world the director has created, and I would like to follow that world. The reading rehearsal gives us an idea, but we don’t do much there. If the play is not precise, we determine it in the next rehearsals; it is essential to see the subtext on stage, and if it is a dance project, see the positions.”

The process is entirely consistent with the dramaturgy of light that I described in the first chapter. Working on a text with the director and the design team and then incorporating light with the other elements of the play as part of the dramaturgy of the co-created play. As İhsan is part of a theater company with a stage, this process is becoming possible. However, most alternative theaters do not have a stage; therefore, the same process is not the case for designers working with these companies as freelancers. In this respect, Ayten’s narrative defines the field.

Ayten first explained the standardization during her training years. She says that directors and designers should start working together at least two months in advance of the play. Nevertheless, under the current conditions of the Istanbul theater field, she claims that lighting becomes something that is done last.

"If it is a company that have worked with before, you can be involved in the project from the beginning. It happens less often in a season. However, often you get to know about it in the last two weeks, and in the last two or three days, you go on stage and do it."

She adds, “the designers’ work is being done on the stages at that moment. This leads to intense working hours.”

According to her, the lack of such standardization in the profession makes it difficult for designers to find a job.

“You are referred to by directors, actors, and designers you know and operated with for work. In the U.K., for example, lighting designers have agents, and the offers come to these agents. So, the designer doesn’t bother with receiving offers and trying to find a job. Instead, the designer focuses on their work, the design work. In Istanbul, designers only get paid once for a play, so they must work on 15 to 20 projects in a season

for a living. There is no contract or anything like that. It's a verbal contract, a relationship of trust."

In line with these remarks, I would like to summarize the parts of this narrative that outline the field. Every freelance designer has to find a job for their design. They receive a single fee from a project, and they are not entitled of the copyrights of their production. They are entering the stage in the last days, and there is no regulated working regime such as how much they will work and working hours. There is no insurance or professional association. This is also the case for Ufuk, Atiye Ateş, and many other freelance designers. In these circumstances, which motivates designers to pursue their professions? Ufuk says, "love". Then he continues:

"It is charming to work with different groups, to be part of artistic production. You can also work with companies from abroad. For example, I did a design for the Royal Swedish Theater upon an offer from the director of the theater. There I saw that everyone has a job description, working hours are pre-determined, there is no such thing as flexible working."

While rethinking on his approach to this job he laughs and continues:

"Okay, we don't have such conditions here. Still, a designer can have an international reputation. For example, I didn't previously know the director that invited me. However, she followed my work. To see this is one of the things that keeps us going in this profession, for example, as you asked."

Love, "doing a desired job", and pursuing a creative endeavor were common narratives I encountered in my interviews with other designers. İhsan, also one of the founders of Hola Stage Theater, said: "We didn't have a house and a car when we founded the stage. In fact, we got even more in debt, but we had to do this to do what we love."

In a similar vein, Atiye consider her job with an attention to valorise the field. She says:

"I work with companies I feel comfortable with. I haven't had an experience that made me feel bad in the last ten years. There have been incidents where a technician was mistreated in a work environment, and

I tried to resolve it. I told them they couldn't mistreat the technician and that I won't work with them again if they continued to do that. Trying to improve the conditions of the profession in everyday relationships is also something I am committed to do."

The notion of struggling in this field is most evident in Ayten. She is one of the lighting designers who graduated from the lighting design department abroad. Her goal is to establish a lighting design department at the university: "I am doing a Ph.D. in dramaturgy, and I am doing it to open a lighting design department at a university."

There is the belief that the recognition from the state would be through an academic institution. Following the example of artistic recognition of trapezists in France (Sizorn 2008) this step is necessary for ensuring the profession's reputation. On the other hand, examining the actors, it does not mean a significant difference in labor relations. In Turkey, considering the opening of the Ankara Conservatoire as a milestone, the acting profession has been an academic field since 1940. Apart from the state-recognized City Theaters and State Theaters, actors have no defined working regime. In their negotiations with the state, actors also have been subjected to a view of profitability. Even though it is not enough on its own, as a technician who wants to make lighting design a profession, I find the opening of a department of lighting design essential.

What kind of working practices are there in the field regarding labor relations? At this point, there is the extension of both practicing a creative profession and being key figures in this field. First, I would like to elaborate on being a creative professional.

#### **4.5 Labor in the mixture of immateriality and creativity**

Nowadays, it is often argued that labor process has become immaterial. Thus, value-creating activities are "cognitive, relational, linguistic, and emotional" (Salomão and Solange 2016, 115). Immaterial labor describes a worker characterized by "the ability to choose between alternatives and thus a degree of responsibility for decision-making" (Lazzarato 1996, 134). In this sense, work is reduced to a state of employability. Employability defines the work as the personal responsibility of each individual (Schimid 2014, 102). In the context of a labor market driven by a framework of "mobility, flexibility, and competition" labor is structured via obligations



based on “performance agreements” (Isabell and Derieg 2017, 205). In order to examine cultural labor, I would argue that artistic labor has been the focus of neoliberalism (Ross 2008). Being an artist is defined as an inherently creative and autonomous figure. Indeed, neoliberal principles are based on these fundamental principles. Therefore, in terms of these neoliberal principles, I propose the following explanation:

“Artists, designers, and other creatives who are becoming the new model workers—self-directed, entrepreneurial, accustomed to precarious, non-standard employment, and attuned to producing career hits.” (Ross 2009, 11).

In this context, freelance lighting designers can be seen as the “model workers” of neoliberalism. However, on the other hand, neoliberal principles constitute an intense obstacle to their careers. Neoliberalism is supposed to establish “a model of homo economicus”; however, a model that holds little relevance to the artist or “artistic creativity”. (Lazzarato 2011, 46).

They practice their profession at the intersection of the lack of profitability of the theater and this view of the state. Designers are performing artistic work and want to continue their careers, but the existing neoliberal conditions do not constitute a driving force for them. They want to be creative and self-directed in the context of artistic production itself, not because this is the model worker that neoliberalism promises. Instead, they experience the precariousness of this model worker of neoliberalism. This precarious experience creates not a “labor force” but a “capital competence”, a “competence machine” (Lazzarato 2011, 47). If one cannot maintain this state of being a ‘competence machine,’ one can no longer be a designer. This is evident, for example, in the subject of social security. Freelance lighting designer Ufuk said:

"This year, I was insured for the first time in ten years. A theater where I worked as a technical lighting consultant insured me. In social security records, I am categorized as a ‘lighting director’. A lighting director is a supervisor who works with the cinematographer in the cinema industry. I didn’t understand how a theater stage could insure me like a cinema employee, but I didn’t object too much because I knew there was no possibility of retiring from this job."

This is precisely the situation in which the experience of precariousness is relevant.

As Robert Castel calls it , being precarious is characterized by “the experience of loss of a constructive relationship with work, and the inability to envision one’s "career" and to give it coherence”(Castel 2009, 60). Indeed, on the one hand, designers and technicians are "neither employees, nor entrepreneurs, nor self-employed”, instead, “they combine their different functions without being confined to one or the other of these categories” (Lazzarato 2011, 53). Since they are part of artistic production, their work cannot be directly reduced to cost and profit analysis." The most obvious example of this is lighting technicians. For their part, technicians mentioned that in their working conditions, when they work in production theaters and more institutionalized theaters, they are paid better. Still, they cannot be part of the creative team.

Considering the actors and technicians who were together on a performance night, technicians in institutionalized theaters mentioned a distance between them and the actors. For example, Umut claims, "When we go on tour, the actors stay in separate rooms by themselves, we technicians stay in the same room, we don't have private rooms." Or Mahmut said, "In production theater, there is a boundary between you and the actors; even the meals are different; they are dropped off by taxi after the play while you return home by public transportation." Since I work with alternative theaters or dance companies, I have not seen such a distinction. For instance, the dance troupe I worked with would introduce me after the performance by saying, "Samet is our partner. He prepares the plastic and visual elements of our play." In addition, there was no distinction between the dancers and me regarding accommodation, catering, transportation, or anything else. As a result, I felt as their respected artistic collaborator. However, for the festival I worked for, my experience was not the same.

For the festival, my job description involves communicating with their lighting technicians or director to take the lighting plot and make it applicable to the theater venues where they performed. For each show, I worked three days. The first day was setting the set and making it ready for lighting installation two days before the performance. I was remunerated for each day with a daily wage regardless of my working hours. Indeed, I worked with five companies in three different venues for nine representations in a total of 11 days. One play was canceled due to the weather conditions at the end of January, and one company performed two representations in one day; I worked for one performance in the morning and the other in the evening. I was neither reimbursed for the day the play was canceled nor the day I worked for two different plays. Similarly, the jobs I performed changed. For instance, I worked as a lighting technician and lighting operator for the seven representations, but I remunerated only the same revenue. The sense of this emerging level of agreement

is “contingent, unpredictable, and unsecured - in short, precarious” (Peuter 2014, 279).

Suat says he gets on very well with his current company. In his own words: "We met a week before the play, and now we have been working together for three months, but I feel like I have known them for years." Suat’s experience of working with alternative stages parallels mine. On the other hand, Umut differentiates himself by working in an independent theater and earning a regular monthly income. He also said that being part of an independent theater creates a harmonious working environment with the actors. In these circumstances, the technician can earn a higher and regular income in institutional theater but is not seen as part of the company or artistic activity. On the other hand, when they work with alternative theaters, they feel like an equal member of a creative company but do not earn a regular income. The alternative theaters change the perception of theater performance, theater venue, and artistic expression and provide a team dynamic for technicians. Given the entirety of these phenomena, I think that the concept of "public theater" (*kamusal tiyatro*) which has been put forward for alternative theaters, is also essential in terms of its potential to change the ways of working in the field. At this point, I will elaborate on the notion of public theater.

#### 4.6 “Kamusal Tiyatro” As an Alternative Cultural Labor Model

In a request letter published by the Initiative of Let Our Theater Live (*Tiyatromuz Yaşasın İnisiyatifi*), the agents of theater are defined as the following:

"We are the laborers of the art of theater. We are writers, translators, academics, editors, producers, directors, playwrights, publishers, actors, choreographers, movement designers, set designers, costume designers, lighting designers, composers, music and sound designers, musicians, painters, poster designers, photographers, film and video designers, visual communication designers, stage manager, organizer, law and accounting specialist, program manager, press and communication manager, lighting technician, sound technician, operators, assistants, agents of the stage, hall, foyer, café, ticketing, cleaning, and expedition, producing for contemporary Turkish theater." <sup>8</sup> (Kültür Servisi 2020).

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<sup>8</sup>“Biz, tiyatro sanatının emekçileriyiz. Çağdaş Türkiye Tiyatrosu için üreten yazarlarız, çevirmen, akademisyen, yayıncı, yapımcı, yönetmen, dramaturg, editör, oyuncu, koreograf, hareket tasarımcısı, sahne tasarımcısı, kostüm tasarımcısı, ışık tasarımcısı, besteci, müzik ve ses tasarımcısı, müzisyen, ressam, afiş tasarımcısı, fotoğraf sanatçısı, film ve videoart tasarımcısı, görsel iletişim tasarımcısı, sahne amiri, hukuk ve muhasebe sorumlusu, organizatör, program, basın ve iletişim sorumlusu, ışık teknisyeni, ses teknisyeni,

Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic, alternative theaters faced "the days without any revenue" and had to pay their rent for the venues even for the days they could not perform. For the agents that defined above in the letter there was no chance to pursue their job and get a revenue. In the spring of 2020, starting the very beginning of Covid-19 pandemic, institutions in the field of alternative theaters came together to organize solution meetings regarding unsubsidized theaters. In those meetings<sup>9</sup>, the alternative theater field developed an argument suggesting that "theater is a public good" and its function for society procures a value far beyond the economic approach. This argument led them to converge their strategies around the notion of *kamusal tiyatro* (public theater). This notion is constructed on the basis that theaters provide a public service for the benefit of society. And the agents of the field argue that theaters should be defined in laws and regulations as artists and art institutions, not as merchants (traders) and businesses (Mimesis Dergi 2020).

In Turkey, alternative theaters do not have a specific status vis-a-vis the state that defines the field's professional regulations. They are seen as a "for-profit company" and cannot benefit from state subventions to sustain their artistic creations. Regarding this issue I think it is striking to indicate the statement of Kemal Aydoğan, one of the founders of Moda Sahnesi Theater and leading figures of the discussion on the public theater:

" There is an attempt to glorify the "entrepreneurial" aspect of art, to promote the perception that art is valuable because of the "economy" it will generate. If it is economically weak or inefficient, that art is labeled as invalid." (Birikim 2022).

I also find it significant in illustrating the state's perspective on theater in Turkey. Starting from this point, the public theater tries to identify itself. For non-subsidized theaters, except for commercial theaters (production theaters), the public theater is based on a non-profit system, receives a share of the public budget, is auditable and accountable, and allows for staffing (Birikim 2022). Therefore, I think "public theater" would benefit lighting designers and technicians. I have previously mentioned that for technicians working with alternative theaters, this experience is complained about not from an artistic point of view but economic uncertainties. The idea of an alternative theater benefiting from the public budget would offer working conditions in dignity for technicians. For lighting designers, it will enable them to be involved

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operatörler, asistanlar, sahne, mekan, fuaye, kafe, gişe, temizlik ve nakliye sorumlularıyız."

<sup>9</sup>To see some of them, refer to: <https://www.mimesis-dergi.org/2021/03/kamusal-tiyatro-tartismalari-yayinda-kamusal-tiyatro-mumkun-mu-paneli-27-martta/>

in the design process from the beginning, create the design concept with the whole design team, and have a design process under better conditions.

## 4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, beginning with the modern western-style theater period in Turkey, I have tried to analyze the process of the sub-field of lighting design and the conditions of the practice of the profession. I have noted that this field, which formed itself through alternative theaters, emerged in Istanbul in the early 2000s and became increasingly noticeable after the 2010s. In this context, I first explained the evolution of the lighting design profession and the emergence of freelance lighting designers. After 2014, the year I started working as a technician, I continued with an autoethnographic narrative based on the question of how I found a job in the existing cultural labor market and where my career evolved. In doing so, I realized that the experiences of the technicians I interviewed were relevant to mine. When I was writing about the working conditions of my job, I was writing an ethnography of work. I had another experience when I was trying to write my field notes. These were the notes I took after a 14-hour working day on stage, and then I would close the stage and go home and say, "I'm so tired, I can't write my field notes anymore." This is how I perceive my profession in an autoethnographic way.

I focused on the precarious experiences of artistic subjects in their working experiences in the field. My findings reveal that for lighting technicians, the field is very fluid and that they do not approach their profession as a proper job, as they experience a career discontinuity. For lighting designers, on the other hand, the profession's performance is conducted together with the everyday challenge of valorizing the field still in the phase of the constitution. I explored the fact that designers in the field of lighting design have goals for the transformation of the field, while technicians are inspired to become either designers or actors. One of the key points that emerged was that the state's view of the theater field is constructed from a place that prioritizes only a purely market-oriented economic understanding. I explained and discussed the rising demand for public theater in the field despite the economic orientation of the market conditions or the state's view.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I explore the Istanbul lighting design subfield with a particular attention to labor experiences of freelance lighting technicians and designers. My theoretical framework for examining the field is the immaterial labor and the concept of the actually existing neoliberalism. To do this, I focus on the precarious experiences of the field workers through ethnographic methods. To provide a historical background of the profession of lighting design, in the first chapter, I examined the question of how light became a part of the stage and theater. In this sense, pointing out that light is one of the leading ways of perceiving the world, I tried to determine the evolution of the concept of light in philosophical and artistic thought. Throughout the process of light's presence on the stage, I both examined the conditions of the emergence of a recognized lighting designer. Then, I tried to explain how lighting design has undergone artistic transformations.

In chapter 2, I concentrate on the evolution of western-style theater in Turkey, from the Tanzimat era to today's alternative theaters. While researching this evolution, I identified that no academic research in theater is dedicated to analyzing theater workers. I have seen that actors are the most glorified of the theater professions but being on stage and gaining the public's appreciation does not turn directly into a professional gain. In the last chapter, I analyze the actually existing conditions of the practitioners of lighting design subfield. Indeed, this profession has no professional code or insurance record according to Turkish law. In this context, I think the autoethnographic research I conducted on my profession provides an essential perspective in revealing an experience of labor and precariousness that permeates one's life. In my analysis, within the framework of the actually existing neoliberalism, I tried to describe the cultural labor market in this field. I combined my work experience in the field with the interviewees' narratives. Thus, I have illustrated that being a lighting technician is a waiting experience for people in this profession and revealed that the promises of neoliberal principles are not suitable for technicians. I discovered that for designers, struggling for the valorization of the field is

one of the essential factors that keep them in the field.

Finally, I demonstrated that, because of an economically oriented perspective by the state, the theater is only seen within a regime of profitability. Neither actors, who have a professional union, nor lighting designers and technicians, who do not, are exempt from this. I then argued that there is no hierarchy of professional positions within alternative theater companies and that the art of theater has become a shared experience of precariousness. Countering this market-oriented perspective, I see that a horizontal and inclusive public theater movement in the field is significant for alternative theatres. In this sense, I think the public theater movement will have a powerful stance as "an alternative" to the existing cultural labor market in the Istanbul theater field.

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## APPENDIX A

Figure A.1 Participant Information

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Work Experiences in the field</b>	<b>Working Regime</b>
Ateş	56	Bachelor's degree	Lighting designer	22 years	Freelance
Ayten	48	Ph.D. candidate	Lighting designer	20 years	Freelance
Atiye	38	Bachelor's degree	Lighting designer	15 years	Freelance
Ufuk	37	Bachelor's degree	Lighting designer	14 years	Freelance
İhsan	47	Bachelor's degree	Lighting designer	23 years	Salaried employee of an alternative theater stage
Mahmut	28	Bachelor's degree	Lighting technician	9 years	Freelance
Umut	32	Associate's degree	Lighting technician	5 years	Salaried employee of State Theaters
Suat	24	High School graduate	Lighting technician	4 years	Freelance
Ulus	32	Bachelor's degree	Lighting technician	10 years	Salaried employee of an alternative theater company
Erman	42	Bachelor's degree	Lighting technician	20 years	Salaried employee of Municipality Theater