

ANTHEMS

Maria Andersson

I don't know if it begins when I put my feet on Istiklal Caddesi a Saturday night in September 2010 or if it all started when Selim Sırrı Tarcan went from Turkey to Sweden in 1909. Or even before. I draw a circle in ink as I try to frame a history without beginning or end. Isadora Duncan whispers 'When I dance, I dance with the whole world'.

Istanbul, 2010

- The beginning? -

Down the stairs

out of the building

The street

Istiklal Caddesi

It is Saturday night

Usually the street
is crowded

but tonight empty

I have an uncanny
feeling

of a coming catastrophe

That everyone
is aware of

Except me

Dystopian images

flash

before my eyes

I turn right

A bit further away
I can see

a small crowd
gathered

Everyone
staring

at a facade

As I come closer
I notice

a big screen
on the wall

It is the screen
that catches

the attention
of the crowd

And I realise
it is

the last trembling
minutes

Basketball

2010 FIBA
World Championship

Hosted by Turkey

Serbia - Turkey

77 - 78

1:18 minutes left

I continue

Taksim Square

with a bigger crowd
and a bigger screen

The last seconds

The commentators shout

The crowd shouts

‘A miracle has happened
in Turkey tonight’

Serbia - Turkey

82 - 83

A chorus
of excitement

and accelerating engines

National flags
through car windows

and in dancing hands

Shoulders
to shoulders

arms
around shoulders

Spinning heads

waving the air

Jumping up

and down

In the middle
of the square

On and around

the Republican Monument

A chanting

human pyramid

Dressed

in red and white

The National Anthem

and

The Youth Anthem

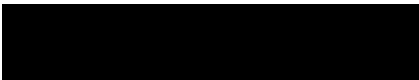
Gençlik Marşı

*Dağ başını duman almış,
Gümüş dere durmaz akar.
Güneş ufuktan şimdi doğar,
Yürüyelim arkadaşlar.*

*Sesimizi yer, gök, su dinlesin;
Sert adımlarla her yer inlesin.*

Istanbul, 2010

- A notation -



Silence

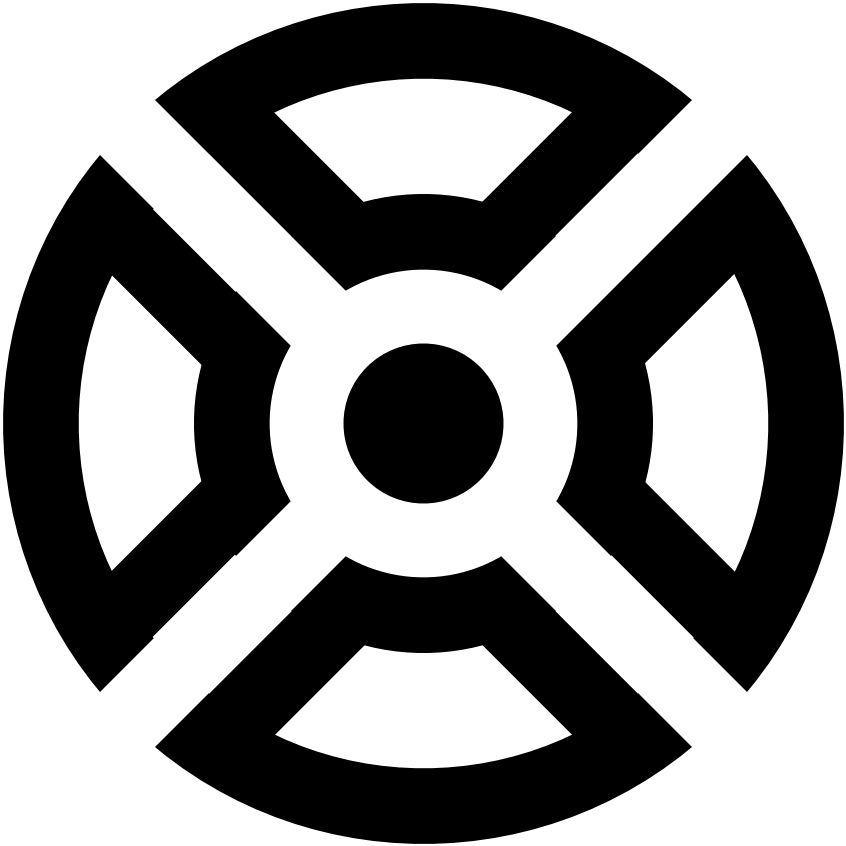
An unusual emptiness



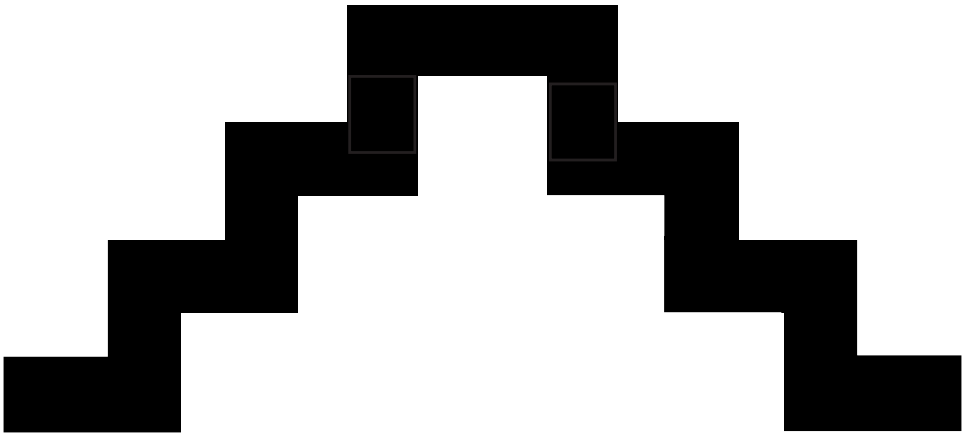
The last trembling minutes



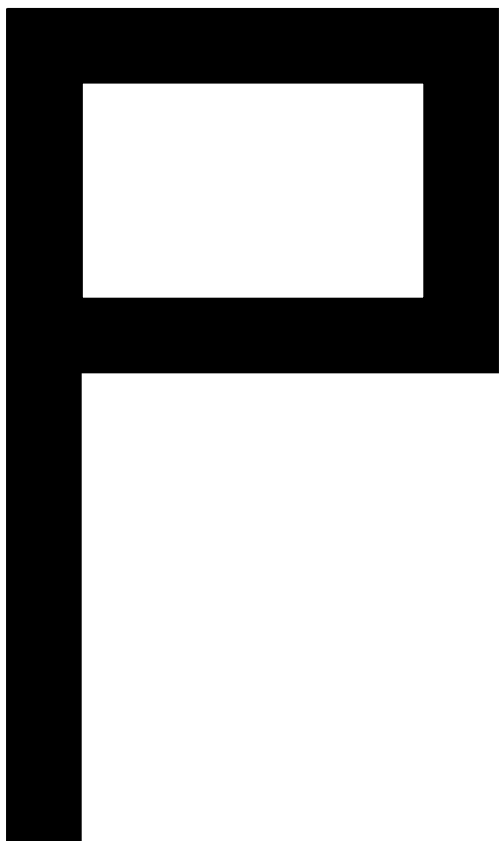
Crescendo



Formation



Keynote



Stockholm, 1909

- Bent knees and popular tunes -

A soldier and an athlete. A devoted reformer and a moderniser. A politician. A writer and a lecturer. A mass educator and a radio personality. An instructor for and an inspector of physical education. Turkey's first representative on the International Olympic Committee. A folk hero.

A father of two daughters.

Selim Sırrı Tarcan is asked to leave the country for another country. Because of his political involvement.

He chooses his destination. And leaves Turkey for one year.

Influenced by his reading on Swedish gymnastics
he stations himself at the Gymnastics Central Institute
in Stockholm.

He is 35 years old. It is June 1909.

From empirical studies to scientific studies. He now
observes the body.

Synchronized
strict

movements

Straight
postures

straight lines

Extended arms

bent

knees

Neutral
facial expressions

Strengthening each
part of the body

one by
one

He observes
sees

and listens

He travels through Scandinavia and writes about his impressions.

He hears Gustaf Fröding's *Tre trallande jäntor*, with music by Felix Körling.

Does he get the lyrics translated?

Or is he just intrigued by the melody?

Selim Sırrı Tarcan returns to Istanbul. With the song
and a set of Swedish gymnastic movements.

He introduces the movements in schools. And becomes the inspector of the exercises he has just introduced.

Gymnastics

for everyone
for the first time

for girls

Harmony in the body
in the family

in society

1913 and the Ottoman Empire loses the First Balkan War. As they fail to learn how to move large bodies of troops.

Bulgaria, the most powerful of the four states, knows how to move. Their large army is well equipped. Trained by gymnastics teachers.

Selim Sırrı's aim to implement gymnastics for everyone,
gets support from the highest authorities.

And the song is given new lyrics. By Ali Ulvi Elöve.

Tre trallande jäntor becomes Gençlik Marşı.

A tune with new words. From one nation to another.

A Swedish familiar song becomes a Turkish familiar song.

Gençlik Marşı

The Youth Anthem

*Dağ başını duman almış,
Gümüş dere durmaz akar.
Güneş ufuktan şimdi doğar,
Yürüyelim arkadaşlar.*

*Sesimizi yer, gök, su dinlesin;
Sert adımlarla her yer inlesin.*

*The mountain-tops are swathed
in smoky mist,
the sparkling stream flows and
doesn't stop,
the sun is raising its head above
the horizon.
Let's march; friends,*

*Let earth sky and water hear our
voice.
Let the ground groan under our
firm steps.*

Sweden, 1894

- The spirit of the time -

Gustaf Fröding writes

New poems

*Där gingo tre jäntor i solen
på vägen vid Lindane Le,
de svängde, de svepte med kjolen,
de trallade, alla de tre.*

*Och gingo i takt som soldater
och sedan så valsade de,
och "Udden är så later"
de trallade, alla de tre.*

After intense industrialisation, rapid urbanisation and many severed roots. An opposition emerges.

Idealisation of the old rustic society. Nostalgia. But also a determination. The past should not be lost.

Folk themes in arts and literature.

The establishment of museums and societies for local history, handcraft and folk dance.

The culture of the people takes the stage.

This is

the Zeitgeist

Selim Sırrı Tarcan

enters

*In sunshine, three lasses were walking
the road out at Lindana Lee,
skirts swinging, and happily talking,
they sang out loud, all of the three.*

*They marched in quick time like the army,
while waltzing with great fun and glee,
and verses like "Ginger, you're barmy!"
they sang out loud, all of the three.*

Stockholm, 1813

- To discipline bodies -

I read about a gymnastics institute. Established for discipline. In a time of crises and the rise of a Swedish nation state.

Physical education is to be centralized. For quality and for the right training in schools.

Europe is changing and Sweden has just lost the Finnish war against Russia with major defeats. A third of the land has become the Grand Duchy of Finland, ruled by the Russian Emperor. The coup of 1809 has led to a new Swedish constitution based on separation of powers.

The first position is the fundamental position.

Feet touching
each other

with heels
forming
a right angle

I read about Pehr Henrik Ling. He is the founder of the institute and of the gymnastics system that bears his name.

P H Ling is a fencing-master who learned from French emigrants in Copenhagen. He is a poet, and will become a member of the Swedish Academy.

His system includes thousands of positions and movements.
Structured partly according to an ancient Greek model.

Pedagogic gymnastics
as

unity between
body parts

Medical gymnastics
as

re-creation
of lost unity

Military gymnastics

as

unity between

the body and the weapon

Aesthetic gymnastics
as

unity between
the body and its spirit

The system has influences from Danish gymnastics and the established German Turner movement. But lacks its focus on competitive self-will and power.

Ling is for everyone and every persons' particular capabilities. With the belief that a healthy body is the best condition for a healthy mind. And with the aim to create harmony.

The symmetrical body

a temple
for the soul

Ling is a rigid program to be performed collectively, correctly. On straight lines.

By strict and

free

standing bodies

Each movement

a cog

in a machine

A modern system that activates and builds all muscles into capable strong bodies. Moving on a leader's command. With serious and neutral faces.

A doctrine. Scientifically motivated with a confident attitude. Exposing a 19th-century bourgeois view of the body.

Industrialization and urbanization have led to overcrowding and a lack of living space. Among those that left their roots for the city.

I read about the wish to lift the working class to the level of the middle and upper classes, as they are said to suffer. From moral and bodily decay.

The disciplined body expresses that it is possible to discipline oneself. A straight posture is a sign of high morals.

And makes it possible to honestly and sincerely look
each other in the eye.

I read about Ling gymnastics as a critique of an emerging consumer society.

And how the same arguments are applied to the rising phenomenon of competitive sports.

Instead of
symmetry and harmony

there will be irregularity
and imbalance

Instead of
versatility

specialisation

Instead of
daily exercises

competitions

Instead of
health

records and prizes

Instead of
the masses

individualistic elitism

Instead of
nation building

international aspirations

Istanbul, 2012

- Nancy, Azade and the golden scarab -

Nancy and I are wandering through Istanbul. We have been walking for hours. Last time we saw each other was in Stockholm. I live there. She lives here.

While we walk I tell her about my curiosity about Selim Sırrı Tarcan and his interest in Swedish culture. How Swedish nationalistic expressions were exported to Istanbul and how they became nationalistic expressions in Turkey.

I tell her about Selma. From what I know, the only daughter of Selim Sirri.

A golden scarab

comes

flying

It lands

on Nancy's shoulder

‘I know of them’

She says

‘Selma had a sister’

‘I took gymnastics classes from Azade’

Nancy says

‘In the seventies’

She finds a VHS copy

recorded in the eighties

Azade as an elderly
woman

sitting on the floor
in her Nişantaşı studio

Vital and limber
she talks

into the camera

‘The most important thing
is the perspective’

She says in Turkish

Nancy translates

‘Make sure your posture is
straight’

‘Start with softening the muscles’

She shows

‘Shake, rub the skin’

‘Always towards the heart’

‘Always towards the heart’

Nancy starts to draw

Azade's life

Pencil lines on paper

handwritten
captions

Turkey in the beginning
of the 20th Century

a time of reforms

And the time of

Selim Sirri's daughters'
births

He names his second

daughter Freedom

Azade

Nancy draws
the ever present father

the inspiration
His ideals

His travels to Sweden

The return to Turkey

The politics
the gymnastics
and its implementation
in Turkish schools

She is drawing Azade
and her sister

privileged
young women

Urban elite
becoming modern
in the new Turkey

Two daughters
following the father's steps

and making new ones

Studying gymnastics
in Berlin

learning the
latest techniques

Practising
not only gymnastics

but dance
and choreography

Half a century later

Azade is teaching
Nancy gymnastics

The gymnastics
Nancy is drawing

almost a century later

Istanbul, 2013

- The relative in Nişantaşı -

Nancy and I are invited
to Ahmet's place

He lives in the same area as Nancy. Not far from where Selim Sırrı Tarcan used to live and where Selim Sırrı's daughter Azade had her gymnastics studio.

The door opens

with a warm smile

Welcoming leather sofa
in a room
filled with piano music

Rare paintings
on the walls

Walnuts and salted almonds
in white ceramic bowls

‘So Maria’

He says

‘Please tell me’

‘Why did you become interested
in Selim Sırrı Bey?’

I tell Ahmet how I walked down the stairs, exited the building and entered Istiklal Cadessi. It was Saturday night, but even so the street was completely empty. I wondered what had happen. Something that everyone must have been aware of, except me.

I tell Ahmet how I looked at the street in surprise and noticed a small crowd gathered a bit further away. Everyone was looking up at the building. I walked closer and noticed a big screen on the facade. It showed a game of basketball.

I tell Ahmed that Turkey was playing against Serbia in the semi-final in the world championship that took place in Istanbul, and that it turned out to be the last trembling minutes. I continued to walk towards Taksim Square and that it was there people had gathered.

I tell Ahmed that after Turkey had won the game the crowd started celebrating. People cheered and danced. Those in cars honked their horns and waved with national flags. A group of men stood chanting in a formation around the Ataturk monument.

I tell Ahmet how I found out that one of the songs they were singing, *Gençlik Marşı*, originally was a poem by the Swedish poet Gustav Fröding. And that a Turkish man named Selim Sırrı Tarcan brought the song back to Turkey after visiting Sweden.

I tell Ahmet how I became fascinated by Selim Sırrı Tarcan's daughter Selma, who had continued to practise in his spirit. Mainly through modern dance, which she was one of the first people to introduce in Turkey.

I tell Ahmed that I later found out that he had a second daughter, Azade, from whom Nancy had taken gymnastics classes in the seventies.

Ahmet smiles

Selma and Azade
his mother's cousins

He tells us

what he knows

And fetches
old photographs

of Selim Sırrı Tarcan
and of other relatives

Some faded
some yellow

all treasured

Selim Sırrı, undated

A young Ottoman officer with
a strict face, thin mustache and
precious medals in different
sizes and shapes.

Selim Sirri, undated

A student with other students.
Wearing suits and fezzes in
the schoolyard of the Lycée de
Galatasaray.

Selim Sirri, 1900

An Ottoman officer with fez.
Double breasted jacket with
shiny buttons, embroidered
collar and braided ropes. A
growing mustache above thin
lips.

Selim Sirri, undated

In dark fencing clothes with
high collar, cuffs and belt.
A sword peeping through
crossed arms. Wavy hair and
bushy mustache curl up on
the sides. His piercing eyes
look straight into the camera.

Selim Sirri, 1905

31 years old he crosses his arms over a well-trained bare torso and well-defined muscles. He has short messy hair and a distinct mustache that points upwards on the sides. He looks sideways.

Selim Sirri, 1908

On a bench with the philosopher,
poet and politician Rıza Tevfik.
Both wear fezzes and high black
boots. A stick that might be a
horsewhip. It is the year of the
Young Turk Revolution.

Selim Sirri, undated

Skiing in a snowy Swedish
landscape on wooden skies.
Wearing warm clothes with
long gloves, knitted hat and
a well-knotted white scarf.

Selim Sirri, 1910

On a floral patterned sofa in front of a window with thin lace curtains. Reading a pamphlet with a touch of a smile. Dedication and thanks to his wife on their fifth anniversary.

Selim Sirri, 1915

Posing in an armchair with his right hand on a carved wooden armrest. He wears a black jacket, white shirt and pinstriped trousers.

Selim Sirri, 1918

In fez, grey suit and shiny
black shoes as the gymnastics
instructor. Young girls stand
one after the other. All wear
black dresses. The first girl in
each row holds a ball above
her head.

Selim Sırrı, undated

Standing in the middle at an official gathering with men in both eastern and western hats. There is a large banner behind them with a half moon and a star that is partly covered by Selim Sırrı's body.

Selim Sirri, 1924

As the teacher in a suit at Galatasaray. In line with his students behind a tennis net. The students hold rackets in their hands and wear dark trousers and white shirts with the top buttons casually open.

Selim Sirri, 1924

In an open landscape. Probably
in western Anatolia. With
Zeybeks in traditional clothes.
Himself in a dark suit, resting
his hand on a walking stick.

Selim Sirri, undated

The educator portraited in a studio with a suit and waistcoat, patterned tie and swept-back hair. A light handkerchief peeks out of a breast pocket.

Selim Sirri, 1929

Giving a speech from a podium
of stone at a reconstruction site.
In front of him a crowd and a
musical ensemble, holding
down their instruments.

Selim Sirri, 1930

In a dark suit at Taksim Square.
With thin hair and clean-
shaven face. Flanked by Inga
and Ragnar Skarfors, Swedish
gymnastics teachers, both
dressed in white.

Selim Sirri, 1938

At an Olympic Congress in
Brussels. Mirrors on the walls
and chandeliers hanging from
the ceiling. Long tables with
white table clothes. Men in
dark suits and uniforms. A
few women in dresses.

Selim Sırrı, undated

With white hair and a light suit.
Azade's handwriting. 'Mein Vater'

One photograph

of Selma and Azade

6 and 4 years old

perhaps

Selma

with short hair
short trousers
polo neck top and
belt with robust buckle

Holding
an arm
around her

younger sister

Azade

with long curled hair
a dress
with embroidery
on the collar

The same sandals

One photograph

of Selma and Azade
and their cousin

Ahmet's mother
the youngest

and shortest
in the middle

On the steps to
the summer house

on the Prince's Islands

All three in
white

blouses and skirts

Same hair
cut straight at jaw level

white bows
on top of their heads

Two photographs

of Selma and Azade

Later in Berlin
in the 1920's

at the Anna Hermann Schule
with other students

Bodies in gymnastics clothes
geometrical formations

sunshine
and happy faces

Ahmet has piles
and files of

photographs
in his apartment

In his apartment
also

Selim Sırrı's furniture

A dining-room group
a desk

what else

Istanbul, 1926

- Dance for a new society -

Selma Selim Sırrı

is 20 years old

And publishes her first
and only

book

*Selma Selim Sırrı Hanım'ın
Bedii Rakısları*

The Aesthetic Dances
Of Miss Selma Selim Sirri

Modern Dance
for Ottoman Women

in a time of transition

A daughter
and her father

mark the shift

To a more western
style

A new approach
in the early republic

Selma believes in the emancipation and education of women.

In the spirit of the father and the Young Turk ideology.

The human body is an expression of health and strength.

An instrument in the formation of a strong nation.

But unlike the father Selma's approach is expressly non-nationalistic.

(Except for the national opera *Özsoy*.)

Selma listens to the father when he says: 'To Isadora, movement, in its essence, express a meaning of its own.'

Dances
of various types

performed by
a well-trained body

Have a meaning
even

without the music

Harmony is discovered

not invented

The unity of
shape and movement

as the ultimate aim

For Isadora

Dance performed at the beach

is related to the waves

Dance performed in the forest

is related to the trees

Dance performed in the desert

is related to the endless horizons

Selma embraces the historical references to ancient Greece.

As she writes dance is not a simple harmony between sound and movement.

But harmony as
purpose

to express

The poetry reflected
in the soul

With our hands
feet and

with all the movements

We can make
with our bodies

Not to be consumed
by the viewer

as entertainment

But movements as
the path

to healthy life

I hear
Azade's voice

as I read
Selma's words

Everybody can

do gymnastics
and benefit from it

Train the body everyday

strengthen muscles
lungs and heart

Everybody can

‘But to be a dancer’

Selma says

‘Takes special talent’

A disciplined body

Aestheticised

Her father also publishes the same year.

*Halk Danslari
ve Tarcan Zeybegi*

*Folk Dances
and the Tarcan Zeybek*

He writes about the cultivation of folk dances in Sweden.

Committed to refining regional dances and to inventing a new national dance.

To turning the zeybek genre to Tarcan Zeybek.

Selma listens

She brings
women

to the public
dance space

As she writes dance

is a stage production

As she writes
dance

is an artistic performance

As she writes

dance is a sublime act

For a new society

Isadora Duncan, early 20th Century

- The Inspiration -

I come across a film clip with Isadora Duncan from the early 20th century, where she is dancing. The modern dance pioneer, who was born in San Francisco in 1877, was a great inspiration for Selma Selim Sırrı and her father.

This is perhaps the only existing film footage of Isadora Duncan dancing. It is only a few seconds long, and I watch it again and again.

I lower the speed, and watch it one more time.

A group of men in dark suits and white collars stand waiting. Behind them deciduous trees. All of the men have short hair. Two of the men are wearing hats with a brim. Their faces look emotionless, but the distance to the camera and the bad copy of the footage make their expressions difficult to read. The man on the far left is difficult to discern. The man on the far right is turned towards the centre. The others have their heads and gazes directed towards the right edge of the image.

Isadora Duncan dances into the frame with her back first. Her arms are wide-open and she spins in front of the watching men. She wears a dark dress with a light shawl on top, crossed over the chest. Her feet are bare. It looks like she is smiling. One of the men takes his hat off.

She changes direction. She dances towards the centre of the frame and turns towards the camera with out-spread arms. Her head is tilted back. The forehead is lifted towards the sky. She moves to the right, and then she is out of frame again.

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