

A story based on our exchange visits

Once upon a cold night, Mehmet was searching in his warehouse. All of a sudden, he found a very strange object. It was a pear-shaped musical instrument with three strings. Mehmet touched a string and the sound that was produced suddenly reminded him of his childhood and the feasts he used to do with his grandparents when they came from Greece. He, as a matter of fact, was the son of a Turkish father from Kayseri and a Greek mother from Athens. He tried to call to mind the name of the instrument that he was holding. After researching in the depths of his mind, he remembered its name: Pandoura.

The next morning, he went to the best instrument maker of the city. He showed him the old and eroded instrument and asked him to fix it. The instrument maker couldn't do much as the instrument was one of the last left and had irreversible damages. However, he told Mehmet that he could make a copy of it with some "modifications" as long as Mehmet helped him. Mehmet agreed and so they went to the instrument maker's workshop. Then, our hero and the instrument maker started making the copy of Pandoura. It took them a while as finding the right materials for such an old instrument was really difficult. When they made it, the "process of copying" started.

Two weeks later, Mehmet and the instrument maker were almost done. Mehmet had learnt the technique of instrument making so the instrument maker trusted him a lot. However, while they were placing the strings of Pandoura, the instrument maker heard a strange sound coming from the shop and had to leave. So, he let Mehmet finish the placing, but, when he came back he realized that his -sort of- apprentice had made a serious mistake. He had added an extra string in the left edge of the instrument next to another one, which was almost the same but a little thicker. Mehmet immediately tried to remove it, however, the instrument maker told him to try to play first to listen to the sound of it. And so they did and the sound that was produced was much better than the original Pandoura sound. As a result, they decided to place extra strings next to each string of the instrument. Our hero was really excited and filled with enthusiasm as he wanted badly to learn how to play the new Pandoura. Unfortunately, he did not know much about music to fulfill his expectation. Nonetheless, the instrument maker decided to give him some old books as far as playing musical instruments with chords is concerned.

Mehmet took the books with gratefulness and started reading them. He practiced all day and so, after five weeks of hard practicing, he played as a professional instrument player. Everybody who listened to him play paid him to come to feasts and wanted him to make them other Pandouras and teach them to play. Because of the increasing number of prospective students who wanted to acquire and learn how to play the Pandoura, Mehmet became a music teacher in order to help them and he created a small business where 30 of the best instrument makers in Kayseri worked. His students also started playing in weddings and feasts and composers started writing new melodies and songs with the new Pandoura as a main instrument.

After all the glory he received, Mehmet decided to give a name to his "offspring". He named the new Pandoura "bouzouki" to honor his grandfather's hometown Bouzouk. However, what he did not know was that his -by mistake- invention would become so popular all over the empire that it would have its own golden page in music history and would be the main part of the civilization of a whole nation and that many posterior musicians would become famous by their ability to play the "bouzouki".

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