Ottoman influences on European music

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Introduction

Muslims and Christians have a shared culture, which they have built together throughout history. Whether it is the wars they fought against one another, the inventions they took from one another or the translations of works from earlier civilisations they passed to one another, it is impossible to understand the progress either has made without understanding the other. For many centuries, the ‘others’ for Europeans were the Ottomans, whom they called Turks. At first, anything considered Ottoman was shunned, especially after the invasion of Constantinople. However, as Ottoman power began to decline and the Ottomans stopped being a real threat to Christian Europe with their defeat at Vienna in 1683, a period of what is called Ottomania began. This period saw a growing interest in everything Ottoman, including music.

This essay briefly covers the history and characteristics of Turkish music, the first musical encounters between the Ottomans and Europeans, and the influence of Ottoman music on European composers up to the mid-18th century. A second essay in a future volume examines well-known pieces by Gluck, Mozart, Michael and Joseph Haydn, Salieri and Beethoven that have Ottoman elements in them, and the reverse influence in the 19th and 20th centuries, when European music began to influence the Ottoman Empire and then the Turkish Republic.

A brief history and theory of Turkish music

For many centuries, Turkish music was influenced by Shamanism and the far eastern tetratonic and pentatonic scales. The first Shamanist Turkic tribes, which can be traced back to the 3rd century CE and are called the Altai Turks, inhabited the Altai Mountains in southern Siberia, Kazakhstan and Mongolia. As they moved westward and came into contact with other cultures, their music started to evolve and, with the conversion to Islam of the Kara-Khanid Khanate in the mid-10th century,
it gradually became *makam*-based (on this term, see below). The first known document about music by an author with a putative Turkish background, from the philosopher al-Fārābī (d. 950; his origins are often thought to have been Turkish, though they may have been Persian), also dates from this period.\textsuperscript{1} Turkish music completed its transformation into completely *makam*-based music in the early 11th century, in the period of the Turko-Persian Seljuk Empire. The Seljuk Empire was the first Turkish state to be successfully established within the Byzantine Empire, in eastern Anatolia in 1071. The Seljuks eventually conquered all of Anatolia, and one of their westernmost allies, the Ottomans, later rose to become the major power in the Middle East, North Africa and south-eastern Europe. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Marāghī (d. 1435) was another leading Turco-Persian musician who decisively shaped the theory of classical Turkish music.\textsuperscript{2} He wrote many treatises on music, one of which is dedicated to Sultan Murad II (r. 1421-44, 1446-51). Although it is not easy to categorise the periods of Turkish music (as is done for European music), it is possible to say that al-Marāghī’s treatises inaugurated a second historical period in Turkish musical history.

Throughout the time of the Ottoman Empire, Turkish music was influenced by the peoples and cultures that became part of the empire, including Greeks, Armenians, Bulgarians, Albanians and Jews. An obvious example of influence on new rhythmic and melodic structures is Byzantine chant, which is very similar to Turkish hymnody, with its ornamentations, portamenti, quarter-tone usage and scales resembling some *makams*.

In classical Turkish music, there are two main concepts that shape pieces and lay the foundation for the composer, *makam* and *usul*.\textsuperscript{3} They are very similar to the European terms, *talea* and *colour*. *Makam* is concerned with the scalar properties of a piece of music and *usul* with its rhythmic structures. There are 13 basic *makams*\textsuperscript{4} and 12 basic *usuls*.\textsuperscript{5} A longer discussion of the subject would also include compound and transposed *makams* and more complex *usuls*. Each *makam* is built up from

\textsuperscript{1} He is known for a work entitled simply *Kitāb al-musīk al-kabīr* (‘The great book of music’).
\textsuperscript{2} N. Özcan, art. ‘Abdülkâdir-i Merâğı’, in DİA.
\textsuperscript{4} Özkan, *Türk musikisi*, pp. 115-203.