

Ottoman violin VS classical violin

Classical music and middle-Eastern music were always considered as completely two different genres. For the first instance, they look indeed different by all means, but we know that they were in touch and even inspired by each other. For example, the Troubadours who developed in South Europe during the High Middle Ages were in the beginning inspired by the Arab poets who lived in Spain, Andalucia, a part of the Islamic empire that time, and those inherited the craft of poetry that flourished in the East by their ancestors, some researchers even claim that the word itself (troubadours) comes from the Arabic word Tarab (طرب), which describes a certain emotional state of musical practice still exists today in Syria and Egypt.

We know that Vivaldi and later Mozart were inspired by Turkish music (alla turka), but their music don't really sound Turkish, but how did it sound then?

We know that Bach was an improviser, he had the capacity to improvise even a four voices fugue as the stories tell, but how did he improvise on smaller scale? Ornaments for example? Does it make sense that classical violinists who study Bach's music in the conservatories follow a very limited pedagogical approach about improvising and ornamenting?

We know that European music had ever microtones (Irish music for example), but those were washed away after the well-tempered clavier. But how did it sound before the well-tempered clavier? In the Middle Ages for example? And is our contemporary interpretation of this music far from that?

On the other hand, Turkish music is full of Hora's that come apparently from Eastern Europe, but yet they feature genuine Ottoman elements.

Melting two traditions together?

Coming from a country with a rich music tradition highly influenced by Turkish music (Syria was a part of the Ottoman empire for 400 years), and then studying classical violin in the conservatory of Damascus, I was daily in touch with both, but daily experiencing and realizing how different they are of each other, I realize that I even play violin differently if I have to switch between the two "genres", not mentioning that classical music is strictly bound with scores, and Arabic music is mostly oral.

But that made me think, what if classical music had the chance to develop on levels of improvisation, microtones and ornaments like Turkish music did? Western music did develop in an evolutionary way in domains of harmony, counterpoint and orchestration, but how would Vivaldi's music sound if we dare to get free from the scores and apply ornaments inspired by Turkish ornaments? How would European old music sound like if we dare to stray from the well-tempered clavier and apply microtones inspired by Turkish maqams?

Master study plan

Shalan Alhamwy

This is the vision (and mission) behind my orchestra Picea Orientalis, were we try to explore new horizons in bringing those two disciplines together.

Approach

Early Ottoman music is a good example of the crossover between different music traditions, by studying that music I have the ambition to understand and anticipate how this music sounded then, and applying the same approach on old and classical music.

Discovering mutual points between modes and maqams, and approaching which solutions were found by the musicians to harmonise for example music with microtones (Back to those hora's, harmony is essential in Romanian and Bulgarian music, but how was it approached when the Ottoman featured (microtones) colored that music with a new flavor?

Why Codarts?

Leading such a research requires an open-minded and divers academic environment where specialists of different disciplines meet and have warm contact without tensions and without the tendency to deny each other. My ambition to do it in Codarts comes not only from the fact that Codarts is a place where artistic and academic tolerance open the doors for pilotic researches, but also because Mr. Koloumis's guidance will be crucial, due to his wide knowledge of both Greek and Ottoman music, and his mastery of all the theoretical and technical aspects that will be the main points of this research.