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Turquerie and Eighteenth-Century Music

EVE R. MEYER

IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, *turquerie* was in fashion. For an evening's entertainment, one might attend the theater to see the latest play or opera based on a Turkish theme or go to a masked ball wearing an elaborate Turkish costume.¹ At home, one might relax in a Turkish robe while smoking Turkish tobacco, eating Turkish candy, and reading an ever-popular Turkish tale. Authors, in their adventure novels and heroic dramas, frequently turned to Oriental subjects and substituted Eastern emperors, tsars, and sultans for the more traditional Western rulers. The treachery and fratricide of Turkey's past and the menace of the Ottoman Empire to Europe provided emotionally charged material, and the passionate tales of seraglio intrigue introduced a sensuality and luxuriousness that had been lacking in Western literature. (It was assumed that Orientals were inherently more amorous, more impulsive, and more indulgent than Europeans.)

Under the influence of contemporary fiction, the ubiquitous tales of antiquity gradually relinquished their hold on operatic librettos, while heroic Oriental romances, involving violence, unrestrained desire, and religious conflict, came into prominence. A significant figure in operatic productions was Suleiman I (1520–1566), who was undoubtedly the most illustrious of the sultans; he led his armies to imposing conquests and was greatly admired by his subjects. Even without the customary fictitious embellishments, the events of his reign were melodramatic, for they involved passion, ambition, jealousy, and murder. Suleiman's wife, Roxelane, feared that her children would be murdered by Mustafa, the heir to the throne (son of

¹ For a colorful description of a procession of masqueraders in Turkish dress, accompanied by a noisy band playing "Turkish" music, see Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf, *Autobiography*, trans. A. D. Coleridge (London, 1896; first ed. Leipzig, 1801), pp. 166–67.

Suleiman and a favorite slave), if she did not eliminate him first. Roxelane convinced the sultan that Mustafa was planning to kill him, and, as the result of her machinations, Suleiman ordered the death of his son. How could such a tale of intrigue fail to inspire dramatists?² Of the many eighteenth-century operatic settings of *Solimano*, two that attained considerable popularity were by Hasse (Dresden, 1753) and Pérez (Lisbon, 1757).

Mohammed II (1451–1481), the ambitious conqueror who is considered the real founder of the Ottoman Empire, employed stern measures to eliminate rivals, including the murder of his brother, and the events of his reign furnished material for many authors, including Bandello and Montaigne. His defeat of Constantinople in 1453 was the basis of the opera *Muhammed II* by the noted German composer Reinhard Keiser (1693). Most unusual in operatic tradition was the adaptation of a contemporary event, as in Johann W. Franck's *Cara Mustapha* (1686), which dealt with the siege of Vienna only three years earlier by Mohammed IV's grand vizier, Kara Mustafa. The dramatic defeat of Sultan Bayazid I (Bajazet) by Timur (Tamerlane), the great Tartar conqueror, in the battle of Angora (1402) was of great significance to Europe, since Timur's victory provided a temporary block to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. Of the numerous operas based on the conflict between Timur and Bayazid,³ the most outstanding is Handel's *Tamerlano* (1724).⁴ The opera concerns the sultan's captivity and the humiliations that he and his family endured, but the romantic aspect—a love triangle involving his daughter Asteria, Andronico (son of the Greek emperor), and Tamerlano—is also given prominence. The most striking role in the opera is that of Bajazet,⁵ whose grand moment is his magnificent

² Suleiman first appeared on the European stage in Prospero Bonarelli's play *Solimano*, 1619.

³ The following composers made settings during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: *Bajazet*—Andreozzi, Bernasconi, Cocchi, Duni, Gasparini, Generali, Jommelli, Leo, Marinelli, Westmoreland; *Tamerlane(o)*—Chelleri (Keller), Cocchi, Gasparini, Gini (Giai), Guglielmi, Handel, Leo, Mayr, Mysliveček, Paer, Piovene, Porpora, Porta, Reichardt, Sacchini, Sapienza, A. Scarlatti, Scolari (two settings), Tadolini, Vivaldi, Winter, Ziani; *Bajazet und Tamerlan*—Foertsch.

⁴ The libretto by Niccolò Haym is derived from an earlier *Tamerlano* by Agostino Piovene (1710) and an anonymous revision (1719) called *Il Bajazet*.

⁵ Bajazet was one of the first major tenor roles in operatic history. While the hero in later operas was usually a tenor, baroque tradition relegated tenors to only minor parts.

death scene when he commits suicide by taking poison. It has been described as “one of the most powerfully dramatic scenes in all Baroque opera.”⁶

An ideal protagonist was the hero of Albania’s struggle for independence from Turkey, Scanderbeg (1403–1468). He was originally a warrior in the Turkish army, but, after Murad II’s forces invaded Albania and murdered Scanderbeg’s family, he fought against the Ottomans and converted to Christianity. (This element particularly appealed to Western audiences.) He was the subject of one of France’s most important heroic Turkish operas, the *tragédie lyrique Scanderberg* (Scanderbeg), libretto by Houdar de La Motte and music by François Rebel and François Francœur (1735). The opera covers the years Scanderbeg was a captive of the Turks, and it resembles *Tamerlano* in that the historic events form the background for a dramatic tale of love and jealousy.⁷ *Scanderberg* was visually one of the most resplendent of the heroic Turkish operas, with elaborate scenic designs for the mosque and seraglio court and gardens; in addition, almost every imaginable exotic character was on display. The characters in most exotic operas of the time—despite their Oriental names—tended to speak and act exactly like European courtiers, and, although the librettos alluded to actual historic happenings, they usually ignored ethnic references and precise details of the Eastern locale. More realistic interpretations of Oriental characters and customs were not in evidence until the second half of the century.

While plots based on historic themes appealed to operatic audiences, Oriental fiction was preferred by the reading public, particularly the translations of the *Arabian Nights* by Galland and the *Turkish Tales* and *Persian Tales* by Pétis de la Croix. The tales were so popular that scores of imitations followed, some of which pretended to be translations of Oriental manuscripts, and almost every important writer of the eighteenth century contributed to or was in some way influenced by these tales. The world of magic, fantasy, and splendor, and the marvelous adventures described in the narratives provided natural material for the popular stage and satisfied the public’s demand for novel and spectacular stage effects. One tale that at-

⁶ J. Merrill Knapp, “Handel’s *Tamerlano*: The Creation of an Opera,” *Musical Quarterly*, 56 (July 1970), 406.

⁷ For further details, see Frédéric Robert, “Scanderberg, le héros national albanais, dans un opéra de Rebel et Francœur,” *Recherches sur la musique française classique* (Paris, 1963), III, 171–78.

tracted much attention was "Beauty and the Beast,"⁸ the most outstanding interpretation being Marmontel's *Zémir et Azor*, with music by the noted French composer André-Modeste Grétry (1771).⁹ The work soon became an international success, with repeated performances throughout Europe and even America,¹⁰ and the fable was so appealing to audiences that additional musical settings were composed by Neefe, Spohr, Baumgarten, Umlauff, and Linley.¹¹ In the late eighteenth century, the German-language musical theaters in the suburbs of Vienna specialized in producing exotic fairy tales and farces, but the spoken dialogue (which was sometimes rather crude) often overshadowed the music to the extent that the works should be considered plays with music rather than operas. In other countries, too, Oriental tales tended to be treated as musical plays, and the quality of the dialogue and the musical numbers varied considerably.¹²

In fiction, drama, ballet, and opera—in comedy as well as tragedy—the aspect of Oriental life that particularly dazzled the imagination of the eighteenth-century European was the mystery of the seraglio. During the second half of the century, operas on heroic Turkish themes were completely overshadowed by comedies and romances on this most fascinating and strange Oriental institution. Audiences were tantalized not only by the stories and their implications but by the extravagant costumes and the magnificent staging. Several standard seraglio plots were relied upon. The libretto of *Soliman II ou Les trois sultanes* (1761) by Charles-Simon Favart is the best example of the type which centers around the rivalry among the harem slaves or Kadins (highest ranking females) for the love of the sultan. Favart is particularly noted for raising the level of a previously crude genre to one of comedic art, and, as director, producer, and librettist, he is

⁸ The familiar tale is about Azor, a prince who is transformed into a monster because of his vanity and selfishness, and Zémir, a beautiful young woman who restores him to a human being through her unselfish love.

⁹ It is based on the comedy by P. C. Nivelle de la Chaussée called *Amour par amour* (1742).

¹⁰ This romantic comedy was successfully revived in recent years at the Bath Festival in England in 1955 and at the Court Theater in Drottningholm, Sweden, in 1968.

¹¹ See T. Blake Clark, *Oriental England: A Study of Oriental Influences in Eighteenth Century England as Reflected in the Drama* (Shanghai, 1939), p. 99, for a description of the magical stage effects used in *Selima and Azor* (1776). The libretto is by Sir George Collier (from Marmontel), with some of the original music by Grétry and new numbers by Thomas Linley.

¹² The operas, ballets, and symphonic works of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries continued to make extensive use of Oriental fables and fairy tales.

considered the first master of *opéra comique*. Favart based his delightful rococo entertainment on a humorous social satire of the same name in Marmontel's *Contes moraux*. The musical numbers, written by Paul Gilbert, and the dances are of lesser importance.¹³ It is the lively pace, the bubbling good humor, the clever characterizations, and the well-written verse that contribute to the work's success. Very briefly, the story concerns three European concubines who are rivals for Sultan Soliman's love: the Spanish Elmire, the Circassian Delia, and the French Roxelane. (Roxelane, the name of the infamous Kadin and wife of Sultan Suleiman, is the name most frequently used for the heroine in tales of harem intrigue.) In the end, the witty Roxelane, who resists and even insults the sultan, triumphs and becomes sultana. The role of the exuberant, bold Roxelane gave Mme Favart, who was an accomplished singer, dancer, writer, and actress, an opportunity to display her talents as a comedienne. She created quite a stir by wearing an authentic, voluptuous Turkish costume, which she ordered from Constantinople.¹⁴ The Favarts, probably under the influence of David Garrick, attempted to improve the stage costumes in France by making them more realistic.¹⁵ At the time, female performers normally appeared on stage dressed in the latest fashion; local color was merely suggested by various ornaments or by some detail of foreign attire. Male "Turkish" dress tended to be more authentic than the female; it included a turban, sash, and long caftan, with a binding in rich material.¹⁶

Soliman II became a favorite on the musical stage and prospered so well that it was also done at the Comédie-Française throughout the remainder of the century as a verse play without music.¹⁷ In translation, it was performed in various European centers, and several composers wrote their own musical versions: Beck, Blasius, F. A. Hiller, Kraus, and Süssmayr.¹⁸ The play was performed in Vienna in

¹³ Auguste Font, *Favart: L'Opéra-comique et la comédie-vaudeville aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris, 1894; rpt. Geneva, 1970), p. 279.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

¹⁵ Favart wrote: "Rien n'est ridicule que de voir des sérails meublés à la française, des sultans en perruque. . . . Ces sortes de superfluités ajoutent moins à la pompe du spectacle qu'elles ne nuisent à la vraisemblance et à l'illusion théâtrale" (*Correspondance de Favart*, I, 12, cited in Font, p. 226).

¹⁶ Theodore Komisarjevsky, *The Costume of the Theatre* (New York, 1968), pp. 98–99.

¹⁷ Patrick J. Smith, *The Tenth Muse* (New York, 1970), p. 129.

¹⁸ In 1799 Beethoven wrote a set of eight variations for piano on a theme from Süssmayr's opera *Soliman der Zweite oder Die drei Sultanninen*.

1770 and at Esterháza palace in 1777, where Haydn is believed to have composed the incidental music and to have incorporated this music into his Symphony No. 63, which is subtitled "La Roxelane." (It is the second movement, a set of variations on an old French melody, that supposedly presents a musical portrait of Roxelane.)¹⁹ The story attained popularity on the English stage in Isaac Bickerstaffe's work with the suggestive title of *The Sultan, or, A Peep into the Seraglio* (1775). The success of *Soliman II* and its derivatives resulted in a surfeit of theatrical works on similar themes. (An independent girl so impresses the sultan that he either liberates her or goes to such extremes as giving up his harem, converting to Christianity, and disavowing the Moslem ban on drinking wine in order to marry her.)

One of the best romantic Turkish operas of the latter part of the century was Grétry's *La Caravane du Caire* (1783). (Egypt, as part of the Empire, was considered in the Turkish genre.) This work was acclaimed throughout Europe and received five hundred performances in Paris alone between 1783 and 1829. Two additional factors give this opera special distinction; first, Louis XVI is believed to have participated in writing the libretto; and second, it is one of the few works which pairs a European hero with an Oriental heroine. Another harem comedy, *La Rencontre imprévue* (The Unforeseen Meeting), libretto by L. H. Dancourt, based on a vaudeville, *Les Pèlerins de la Mecque*, by Lesage and D'Orneval,²⁰ was set by a number of composers, including two of the major composers of the century. It was the last and best of Gluck's French comic operas (first performed in Vienna in 1764 and revived in this century), and it was set in Italian by Haydn in 1775 as *L'Incontro improvviso*.

A seraglio plot that was particularly favored for its pairing of exoticism with suspense was the rescue of a girl from the harem.²¹ A typical scenario might introduce a lovely young woman, abducted

¹⁹ H. R. Robbins Landon, *The Symphonies of Joseph Haydn* (London, 1955), p. 359.

²⁰ Prince Ali discovers that his betrothed, Princess Rézia, is being held captive in the harem of the Sultan of Egypt. When she learns that he is in Cairo, she sends several harem girls to test his love by tempting him; he resists and all ends happily.

²¹ Up to the seventeenth century, harem women in Turkey were foreigners; many were European prisoners of war, others were purchased as slaves or were presented to the sultans as gifts. Circassian girls were preferred because of their great physical beauty, and the original Roxelane is believed to have come from that region of Russia.

either recently or as a child, who is being held captive by the sultan;²² she still maintains but is in imminent danger of losing her virtue. A rescue attempt is made by a lover or close relative, but, in many instances, the escape is unsuccessful, and all are caught. By the end of the opera, however, after the various complications have been unraveled, the sultan is either outwitted or demonstrates his magnanimity by releasing his captives. Seraglio-rescue librettos were prevalent in theatrical works on all levels of entertainment, from the crude improvised productions of the marketplace and the fair to the sumptuous spectacles of the opera house. One of the popular vaudevilles of the *théâtre de la foire* was *Achmet et Almanzine*, written by Lesage and others for the Foire Saint-Laurent of 1728, featuring Almanzine, a favorite of Sultan Soliman, and her lover, Achmet, who rescues her by disguising himself as a girl in order to penetrate the seraglio.²³

The most artistic work on the harem-rescue theme—in fact, the chef-d'œuvre of all Turkish operas—is Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (The Abduction from the Seraglio), 1782.²⁴ The libretto, which is not equal in quality to the magnificent music, is based upon the standard rescue scheme outlined above, with a pasha in place of a sultan. The character of Pasha Selim is especially interesting, for he encompasses most of the eighteenth-century clichés about Turkish rulers. He is viewed first as the amorous Turk, genuinely in love with his captive, Constanza. When she refuses his advances, Pasha Selim exhibits the characteristics of the cruel Turk, a tyrant whose orders must be obeyed under penalty of torture or death, and later in the opera, when he discovers that Constanza's rescuer, who has been caught, is the son of his archenemy, Selim relishes the pleasure of his intended revenge. By the end of the opera, he again appears as a sympathetic character rather than a villain—that role (with comic overtones) is assumed by his assistant, Osmin.²⁵ Selim frees the captives and sends the message to his enemy that "it gave me far greater pleasure to reward an injustice with justice than to keep on repaying

²² Occasionally two women might be seized, as in Martinelli's *La Schiava liberata*, which was set operatically by Jommelli (1768) and Schuster (1777).

²³ Font, *Favart*, p. 80.

²⁴ For a study of the harem theme, see Walter Preibisch, "Quellenstudien zu Mozarts *Entführung aus dem Serail*," *Sammelbände der International Musikgesellschaft*, 10 (1909), 430–76.

²⁵ There are few Turkish works without the inevitable Osman, Osmin, or other derivative.

evil with evil." Eastern morality triumphs over Western ethics, à la Voltaire, and the opera ends with a hymn of praise to the pasha.

This opera is a fine example of the tendency of eighteenth-century writers to relegate the role of the villainous Turk to an underling and to champion the noble and generous sultan or pasha.²⁶ One reason for this friendlier attitude was that the Ottoman Empire was no longer a threat to Western Europe, particularly after Turkey failed in her attempt to besiege Vienna in 1683 and was driven out of Hungary and Transylvania. During the earlier centuries, authors customarily referred to the Ottomans as barbarians, and the image of the sultan was of an infidel dedicated to conquering Christian civilization—a man to be feared, to be mocked, or to be admired for his sexual prowess. Prior to the eighteenth century, the generous sultan made only a few stage appearances; a significant example is Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes* (1656), in which Solyman the Magnificent is featured as the noble Turk. (This work is considered to be the first English opera.)

The main function of most Turkish musical productions was to give sensuous pleasure. In France, during the reigns of Louis XIV and his successors, the appetite for Oriental exoticisms developed to such an extent that there was hardly an entertainment without at least one. Turkish interludes were often inserted in ballets and in a new dramatic form called opera-ballet, which was initiated with Campra's *L'Europe galante* (1696)—a series of tales involving love and jealousy in France, Spain, Italy and Turkey. Rameau's famous opera-ballet *Les Indes galantes* (1735) coupled love with exoticism in four

²⁶ The character of Orosmane, an enlightened monarch with Christian virtues and the tragic hero of Voltaire's play *Zaïre*, was one of the most influential grand Turks in literature. (*Zaïre* was adapted operatically in an unsuccessful production by Bellini in 1829 as *Zaira*, libretto by Romani.) Voltaire utilized Orosmane as the instrument through which he could contrast "the customs of the French with the Turks, the Christians with the infidels, and, by implication, the past with the present" (Jack Rochford Vrooman, "Voltaire's Theatre: The Cycle from *Ceïpe* to *Méropé*," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, No. 75, ed. Theodore Besterman [Geneva, 1970], p. 86). *Zaïre*, as well as subsequent "message" plays and tales, such as his witty *Zadig*, showed the universality of moral values and condemned the religious intolerance that Voltaire perceived as an undermining force in European civilization (Trusten Wheeler Russell, *Voltaire, Dryden and Heroic Tragedy* [New York, 1946], p. 91). Pseudo-Oriental tales were conventional vehicles for giving moral advice and for criticizing Western society, politics, and religion, but this sermonizing propensity was greatly reduced when they were translated into operas, for the musical stage does not lend itself as well as fiction or drama to philosophical ideas or to biting satire.

remote regions: Turkey,²⁷ Peru, Persia, and a forest in North America. (The work attracted so much attention that Favart made a parody of it in 1743). As per custom, no Turkish or other ethnic dances were used, and the only hint of exoticism was the *tambourin*, a lively dance accompanied by a drum and tambourine.²⁸ It did not appear at all strange to eighteenth-century audiences that the non-Western characters in this, as well as other ballets, should perform the minuet, the gavotte, and similar stylish court dances.

Turquerie attained such popularity that Turkish scenes were often inserted in operas, ballets, and plays that had nothing whatever to do with the Orient. The scene that set the model for so many to follow was the Turkish ceremony in Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1670)—a comedy-ballet with music by Lully—in which the bourgeois Jourdain was made a “Mamamouchi” (IV.iii). A mission from the sultan of Turkey had visited the French court the year before, and the foreign manners so fascinated Louis XIV that he asked Molière to include a Turkish episode in his play. Although the ritual, which was filled with buffoonery, was intended as a hoax, there were some efforts at achieving authenticity. The French envoy to the Sublime Porte, d'Arvieux, did the costuming, and Molière included a few genuine Turkish phrases taken from the ceremony for the reception of novices into the order of the Merlevi Dervishes, plus the usual gibberish and lingua franca.²⁹ In addition, Lully added a sprinkling of pseudoexotic music.³⁰ The “Mamamouchi” scene was so successful that it was repeated in other comedies and greatly influenced later works.

Europeans in Oriental disguise delighted audiences, and their exploitation in farcical scenes continued throughout the eighteenth century. One highly successful example is in Goldoni's comedy *Lo*

²⁷ In the first scene, called “Le Turc généreux,” Pasha Osman is in love with his French captive, Emilie, who, of course, resists his advances. He proves to be a generous Turk, for he finally frees her and returns her to her lover, Valère, who has been shipwrecked on the pasha's shores during a fierce storm. In the preface to his libretto, Fuzelier wrote that the character of Pasha Osman was based on the generous grand vizier Topal Osman, whose story appeared in the *Mercur de France*, January 1734.

²⁸ Cuthbert Girdlestone, *Jean-Philippe Rameau: His Life and Work* (London, 1957), p. 325.

²⁹ *Récit turquesque* and the burlesque of other languages were customary ingredients in scenes of this nature and contributed to the general hilarity.

³⁰ For a discussion of the musical devices, see Miriam K. Whaples, “Exoticism in Dramatic Music, 1600–1800,” Diss. Indiana University 1958, pp. 95–124.

Speziale (The Apothecary), set by Pallavicini (first act) and Fischetti (second and third acts) in 1729 and by Haydn in 1768. The plot concerns the intrigues of thwarted young lovers and climaxes with an amusing marriage ceremony in the third act in which the entire cast enters dressed *à la turque* to celebrate the wedding of the two leading ladies to two disguised "Turks" (who in reality are their lovers). Countless "Turkish" ceremonial scenes, marches, dances, choruses, and occasionally songs provided colorful and exotic interludes in comic operas and ballets. Even in serious operas, similar scenes were sometimes inserted, such as the Scythian chorus and ballet in Gluck's tragic masterpiece *Iphigénie en Tauride*. This interpolation illustrates the common function of "Turkish music" to symbolize any heathen horde.

If a "Turkish" scene or opera were to be composed by a twentieth-century musician, he would probably utilize genuine Turkish melodies or at least absorb characteristic rhythmic and melodic features into his own creative endeavors. Transcriptions of Turkish music and descriptions of performance practices were available in the various travel books; however, eighteenth-century composers were not yet concerned with ethnomusicology.³¹ Even a familiarity with Turkish music would not have led them to adopt it without considerable modification, for, as Mozart said, the composer should not offend the ear of the listener. Visiting Europeans differed greatly in their opinions on the acceptability of Turkish music. Among the more favorable were the remarks by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in her letter from Adrianople, 18 April 1717:

I suppose you may have read that the Turks have no Music but what is shocking to the Ears; but this account is from those who never heard any but what is play'd in the streets, and is just as reasonable as if a Foreigner should take his Ideas of English Music from the bladder and string, and marrow bones and cleavers. I can assure you that the Music is extremely pathetic. . . . Tis certain they have very fine Natural voices; these were very agreeable.³²

³¹ A notable exception was the organist and pianist Abt Vogler (1749–1814). He had a romantic longing for strange countries and traveled extensively through North Africa and the Middle East. He was known for his improvisatory, descriptive keyboard performances in which he incorporated native melodies to enhance the tonal impressions of his journeys. A few titles are: "The Mohammedan Confession of Faith," "Hottentot Melody in Three Notes," and "African Terrace Song."

³² *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. Robert Halsband (Oxford, 1965), I, 351.

Western composers and their audiences were not yet ready to give up their prejudices against a style of music they considered primitive and unappealing. They could much more readily accept the visual arts and the literature of the East than the music, with its characteristic Oriental use of indeterminate and wavering pitches, microtones, arabesques, different scale systems, and non-Western rhythmic organizational principles. In place of duple and triple meters, which regulate the rhythmic flow of eighteenth-century European music, Turkish music utilizes distinct rhythmic formulas to create complex rhythmic schemes quite unlike the simple pseudo-Turkish compositions. Turkish music also consists of a single, unharmonized line, which Europeans considered inferior to their harmonic and polyphonic styles; Western composers sometimes attempted to simulate Janissary choirs by writing for men's voices in unison.³³ A few hints of musical exoticism were considered humorous. In his letter to his father (26 September 1781) concerning *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, Mozart wrote, "Osmin's rage is rendered comical by the use of the Turkish music," and in the next paragraph he described his Janissary chorus as "short, lively and written to please the Viennese."³⁴

The major Turkish influence on the music of eighteenth-century Europe stemmed from the military music of the Janissary band (the *mehter*). In their battles, the Turks were accompanied by bands that helped the soldiers keep their marching beat. One observer wrote, "No other genre of music requires so firm, decided and overpoweringly predominant a beat. The first beat of each bar is so strongly marked with a new and manly accent that it is virtually impossible to get out of step."³⁵ The Janissary bands were also part of military

³³ The Janissary corps, established in the fourteenth century, was the main Turkish military force. It originally consisted of foreigners, both captives and levies of Christian children (until 1676), but gradually native Turks were admitted. The corps had once been a most remarkable military body known for its vigor and discipline; however, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Janissaries declined in efficiency—the men became corrupt, frequently revolted, and gained such great power that they were almost impossible to control. Sultan Mahmud II's abolishment of the corps in 1826 resulted in the final Janissary rebellion. The forces loyal to the Sultan were victorious and massacred between 6,000 and 10,000 Janissaries.

³⁴ Emily Anderson, *The Letters of Mozart and His Family*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1966), II, 769.

³⁵ L. Schubart, ed., *C. F. D. Schubart's "Ideen zu einer Aesthetik der Tonkunst"* (Vienna, 1806), pp. 330–31.

tactics. Paul Rycaut gave a vivid description of the music's function at the Siege of Vienna in July 1683. "On the 26th, the *Turks* designing to make a furious Assault, caused all their warlike Musick, such as Flutes, Cymbals, and brass Trumpets, which gave a shrill Sound, to play with their highest Notes, to encourage their Soldiers to make the Onset."³⁶ The significance of the band in the midst of battle was also stressed by Jean-Antoine Guer. "This military band, which follows all the movements of the army, is stationed during combat at the side of the Visir, and does not stop playing as long as the battle lasts, so as to sustain the spirit of the troops. If the Janissaries should no longer hear it, they would augur ill for the success of the battle and possibly take flight."³⁷

At the time of the crusades, European armies adopted certain Eastern instruments, but the major interest in the *mehter* came in the eighteenth century. The first ruler to receive a full military band from the sultan was Augustus II (1697–1704) of Poland. Next, Empress Anna of Russia acquired a band, which played in the ceremony celebrating the signing of the Russo-Turkish Treaty of Belgrade (1739). Austria, France, and other countries soon followed suit, and by 1770 most armies had bands featuring Turkish instruments and costumes.³⁸ Frederick the Great went so far as to introduce them into all his regimental bands. Many of the original musicians were Turkish, but when replacements were needed, black musicians, dressed in splendid tunics with colorful sashes and high feathered turbans, were employed. (Black "Turkish" musicians continued in England until the reign of Queen Victoria.)³⁹ They contorted their bodies vigorously when playing; however, all that remains today of those fantastic gestures is the stick twirling.⁴⁰

Europeans were fascinated with the new, "barbarous" sound of the noisy percussion instruments, for in the eighteenth century only kettledrums were commonly used in orchestral music. The Turkish

³⁶ *The History of the Turks, Beginning with the Year 1679*, Vol. III of Richard Knolles' *The Turkish History*, 6th ed. (London, 1700), p. 107.

³⁷ *Mœurs et usages des turcs* (Paris, 1746–1747), II, 258.

³⁸ Henry George Farmer, "Oriental Influences on Occidental Military Music," *Islamic Culture*, 15 (April 1941), 239–40.

³⁹ Henry George Farmer, *The Rise and Development of Military Music* (London, 1912), pp. 72–77.

⁴⁰ James Blades, *Percussion Instruments and Their History* (New York, 1970), p. 266.

percussion group included bass drums,⁴¹ kettledrums, cymbals,⁴² triangles,⁴³ large tambourines, and the Turkish crescent (*chaghana*) or, as the English called it, Jingling Johnnie—a pole ornamented with horse-tail plumes in different colors, with several crescents from which small bells were suspended. Shawms (oboe-type instruments) were the main melody instruments. Fifes and brasses were also used, but the trumpeters did not play the usual bugle calls of Western military music. According to European observers, they occasionally squealed out a few notes.

The European “Turkish” bands were not interested in performing genuine Turkish music, in adopting the Turkish manner of playing, or in adhering to the original Turkish instrumentation. Sulzer advised his readers that the difference between genuine Janissary music and the “new pieces from German pens [which] appear daily” is great. He found the German-Turkish instrumentation, with its “piccolo, two horns, a few bassoons, and some oboes, and the moderate noise of the stately roll on the ordinary drum with sparing blows on the bass drum, and the clashing of the cymbals” to be euphonious, while he complained of the *mehter* music, with its “noisy caterwauling of twenty great Turkish drums, as many shawms, and nine or ten out-of-tune trumpets.” Sulzer admitted that the group he heard may have had inadequate performers.⁴⁴ Guer was favorably impressed by the large ensemble he heard; in fact, he said they played so well that “two or three hundred produce but a single sound.”⁴⁵ An interesting aftermath is that in 1826, when the sultan disbanded the Janissaries, he hired European bandmasters, who instituted the Western pseudo-Turkish military style.

Although authentic Turkish music was ignored by most eighteenth-century musicians, it did not take them long to incorporate the new instruments into the nonmilitary music of the day. Classical composers introduced the *batterie turque*—especially the bass drum, cymbals, and triangle—to enhance the color of their orchestration.

⁴¹ Double-headed drums played in the Oriental manner, with a stick on one side and a switch of twigs on the other.

⁴² Smaller than those used in modern symphony orchestras.

⁴³ Triangles were not authentic Turkish instruments, but they became associated with European “Turkish” music. Until the early nineteenth century, they usually had jingling metal rings on the horizontal section.

⁴⁴ Franz Joseph Sulzer, *Geschichte des transalpinischen Daciens das ist: der Walachey, Moldau, und Bessarabiens* (Vienna, 1781–1782), II, 431–32.

⁴⁵ Guer, *Mœurs et usages des turcs*, II, 257–58.

Sometimes the piccolo, which imitated the high, shrill Turkish fife, was added. The most famous musical examples which feature "Turkish" instruments are Haydn's Symphony No. 100, the "Military," and three works by Beethoven: the "alla marcia" in the Finale of his Symphony No. 9, his "Wellington's Victory" Symphony, and the Turkish March and Chorus of Dervishes from his incidental music to *The Ruins of Athens*. For the latter work, Beethoven's instructions were that every available noisy instrument be used. "Turkish" instruments were also employed in Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio* and in many of the Turkish scenes in other operas and ballets, especially those written during the second half of the century. By the end of the eighteenth century, the *batterie turque* was so fashionable that attachments were added to keyboard instruments to simulate the thumping sound of the bass drum (a mallet with a padded head hitting the back of the sounding board), the clanging of the cymbals (strips of brass striking the lower strings), and the jingling of the triangle and bells (little metal balls hammered by small rods). Even in works without percussion instruments, such as Mozart's "Rondo alla turca" from his Piano Sonata, K. 331, and part of the Finale of his Violin Concerto, K. 219, certain *alla turca* "tricks" were applied to mimic the percussive effects.

Oriental music was described by most travelers as monotonous, with persistent repetitions of single notes and short motives. To simulate this, composers used static harmonies and recurring melodic intervals, especially repeated leaping thirds. This cliché immediately caricatured the music as "Turkish." Constantly reiterated rhythmic patterns were modeled after the hypnotic dance style of the whirling dervishes. The running figures in Mozart's "Rondo alla turca" show a marked similarity to "Turkish wedding dances and the sharp accents of the military *mehter*."⁴⁶ Other techniques common to Oriental music were also used, such as melodic ornaments (grace notes). In place of Turkish scales, Western composers achieved a semiexotic effect by the use of minor keys or rapid contrasts between major and minor, plus certain chromatic intervals. Hungarian and gypsy dance tunes (Hungary was part of the Ottoman Empire until the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699) were incorporated into a number of Viennese "Turkish" compositions, since they utilized many of the "exotic" de-

⁴⁶ Alexander L. Ringer, "On the Question of 'Exoticism' in 19th Century Music," *Studia Musicologica*, 7 (1965), 120.

vices;⁴⁷ however, genuine Turkish melodies appear to have been avoided. Miriam Whaples, who examined approximately one hundred scores of exotic dramatic works written between 1600 and 1800, found no direct evidence of quotations from published transcriptions of Turkish or other non-European music.⁴⁸ In lieu of Turkish melodies, eighteenth-century composers created a stylized synthesis of Oriental mannerisms, thereby enriching the musical vocabulary of the century and paving the way for the more serious application of exoticism to the music of the romantic era. The addition of the *batterie turque* for picturesque and humorous effects anticipated the incorporation of these instruments as permanent members of symphony orchestras of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In conclusion, one should recognize that the introduction of Turkish exoticism into eighteenth-century music was not an isolated phenomenon but was part of the preromantic vogue of Orientalism and the cult of *chinoiserie* that permeated the art, the literature, and the philosophy of the age.

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⁴⁷ Bence Szabolcsi, "Exoticisms in Mozart," *Music and Letters*, 37 (October 1956), 329–30.

⁴⁸ "Exoticism in Dramatic Music," p. 263.