

Dimitrie Cantemir – Magister Musicae

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Abstract: Prince Dimitrie Cantemir remains in international historiography a prominent promoter of universal culture, generating specialized research on his works. Humanist by polymath profile, Cantemir ranks in the panoply of illustrious personalities in human history, who contributed to the evolution of human culture through relevant studies in various scientific fields of his time. He becomes one of the masters of oriental musical art, writes a treatise on theory with the help of which his disciples and later those interested in this field can deepen their knowledge. To the same end, he invents a graphic system of musical writing used in the notation of his own compositions, those of some of his contemporaries and predecessors. He crowned this work with a collection of sound creations specific to the music of the cult of the time. With his treatise on music and the collection appended to it, the Moldavian prince succeeded in establishing himself in a cultural space prolific in professionals in the art of sound. This personal development projected him as a guarantor of quality. It is for this reason that works attributed to him appeared after his departure from Constantinople, a phenomenon that was also common some time after his death. For this reason, works appear after his departure from Constantinople, which are attributed to him, a phenomenon also found some time after his death. Researchers in various branches of science, such as geography, political science, musicology, history, history, philosophy and so on, continue to seek to delve deeper into the works of Cantemir, and this is still a promising field of work.

Keywords: Cantemir, Ottoman, Romanian, court music, *makam*.

1. Introduction

A relevant approach for a correct and coherent knowledge of the history of the Romanian people can be generated by the question whether there was a scholarly culture and intellectuality in the Romanian Countries before the phenomenon of westernization that occurred in the 19th century.

The research carried out in the second part of the aforementioned century and in the first part of the following century (the period of the flowering of nationalist creations) either confirms the existence of a somewhat "peasant" (Filimon, n.d., pp. 1-14) "popular" current, whose exponents were mostly members of the nobility (boyars), or that one can speak of intellectuals and scholarly culture only from the moment of the adherence to Western values

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(Poslușnicu, 1928, pp. 139-173). The works produced before the implementation of the pro-western direction are not analyzed separately from the popular ones, producing errors in the perception of the cultural phenomenon of the previous periods.

2. Background

The tendency to attribute all immaterial creations to the "peasant" (as the supreme representative of cultural specificity) arose against the background of the social movements provoked by the French revolution of 1789-1799 and the birth of the so-called national schools based on a purist ideology.

The fierce desire for emancipation from the Ottoman Empire also gave rise to political choices which had a destructive effect on the intangible values of the Eastern tradition in the Romanian lands at the beginning of the 19th century.

The sources of Romanian culture up to the Russian protectorate (1774-1856) are mainly oriental. The East has made its presence felt at the mouth of the Danube since the Dacian period through the Scythian tribes (Turkic population) (Petrescu-Dâmbovița & Vulpe, 2001, pp. 408-411), through the wars they waged with the Persian armies (Petrescu-Dâmbovița & Vulpe, 2001, pp. 451-454), through trade with the Greek colonies founded on the Black Sea (Petrescu-Dâmbovița & Vulpe, 2001, pp. 533-616), through the expansion of the Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great as far as the Danube (Petrescu-Dâmbovița & Vulpe, 2001, pp. 454-464), through the bringing of veteran legionaries of Eastern origin during the Roman Empire (Petrescu-Dâmbovița & Vulpe, 2001, pp. 688-721) and through the migrations that took place after the Aurelian retreat of 275 (Protase & Suceveanu, 2001, pp. 35-269). Later, through the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantine) and through the Ottoman Empire, the influences become significant in the tradition of the inhabitants of the two principalities through two important channels of dissemination: religion and politics.

The Eastern Christianity facilitated the emergence of a rich musical treasury, marked in time by culminating points such as monastic cultural centers (Putna, Neamț monasteries, etc.) or schools of ten near the princely courts and monasteries. The policy pursued by the rulers of the Romanian territories was directed mainly towards Constantinople, then Poland, Kiev and Hungary. Thus, the rulers of the Romanian Lands imitated (like the rulers of the West) the ceremonial of the court of the Byzantine Basilians, taking over part of their pomp and conduct. It is not surprising that many of the intellectuals of the time had been educated in Byzantium; the sons of the nobles studied in the imperial capital or studied at home with teachers brought from there.

After the fall of Constantinople to the Osman Turks, the Wallachian voivodes considered themselves as the continuators and protectors of Byzantine Christian secular and religious culture, offering financial aid and asylum to all refugees from the young Ottoman Empire. While accepting vassalage, the rulers of the two Romanian countries would preserve their autonomy and perpetuate the Byzantine pomp and splendor imbued with the new rules of protocol imposed by the High Porte. The rulers of the two provinces were given the importance of a two-headed step, their thrones becoming coveted by most of the suitors for the sultan's favors (Maxim, 2002, VI).

3. The situation in the Romanian Countries

Due to the nature of the geo-strategic context that conditioned the historical evolution of the Romanian Lands, it was not possible to create an institutionalized educational plan over a longer period of time, but there was no lack of such cultural foundations, some of them being models for others.

Even if public education was not coherently supported until the 19th century, however, education was still carried out in the voivode palaces and manor houses of the boyar with emeritus teachers brought not only from the Ottoman Empire, but also from the West (Eşanu, 2008, p. 160; Lemny, 2013, pp. 57-62).

In such a context, it may seem that the common man was isolated from these changes, building a cultural direction without major external influences, however, the documents of the time attest the existence, as in the West, of wandering musicians (Ciobanu, 1974, pp. 224-229) (troubadours and gypsy pipers) who were peddling repertoires from different parts of the world, taking them over and continuously adapting them to the tastes of the listeners. They played their part in diversifying the sound treasury in the villages and slums, playing the role of bees which help the fauna to develop by transferring pollen from one flower to another.

But in addition to these itinerant musicians, there were musicians of the time, who came either from the sacred sphere (*protopsalts, maistores*) or from the secular sphere (professionals educated in the science of music (Gheorghiuță, 2010, pp. 10-33) - *maistores, hânende, sâzende* - and nobles who studied the arts to achieve cultural refinement¹ (Poslušnicu, 1928, pp. 521-522)] The intellectuals of the Eastern period were, therefore, made up of people educated in the public and private system, in the country and abroad, from religious and secular backgrounds, many of them members of noble families

From the ranks of these intellectuals have emerged outstanding personalities not only for Romanian history and culture, but also for European

¹ Arif Aga, Neculai Burcaşu, Doge Iordachi Bucşenescu, Governor Iancu Peristeli, Doge Alecu Paşcanu, postelnicul Manolache Drăghici.

and universal. Nicolaus Olahus, Metropolitan Dosoftei, Miron Costin, Nicolae Milescu Spătarul, Dimitrie Cantemir are just a few of those whose fame went beyond the borders of their own country.

4. Dimitrie Cantemir - the apprentice

As previously mentioned, Dimitrie Cantemir is one of the aforementioned noblemen, who was noted for the depth of thought and erudition he demonstrated throughout his life. His works cover many fields of research, ranking him among the most important men of his time.

According to Franz Joseph Sulzer in *Geschichte destransalpinischen Daciens...* (Sulzer, *Istorie Daciei transalpine ...*, 1781, *apud* Alexandru, 1980, p. 236) Constantine Voda, Dimitrie's father, played well from the horseback. His first years of schooling may have taken place at the State Academy in Iași (Eșanu, 2008, p. 160), then with the erudite professor Ieremia Kakavela, a Cypriot monk brought by his father to teach both his own sons and other boyars' children.

The young Dimitrie continued his studies in Constantinople, "eager to know and to learn both common and special things" (Cantemir, 1928, p. 112). In the Ottoman capital, he studied at the Academy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Phanar with the professors Iacomi of Moreea and Anastasios Nausios for the grammar of Greek and Latin, with Meletios of Arta and Anastasios Kondoidi for literature, rhetoric and the canons of the Orthodox Church, with the peripatetic philosophers Antony and Spandonius. In parallel, he also attended courses at the Ederum Hümayün (an institution created to educate the children of wealthy foreigners of the Christian religion) where he studied Islamic sciences, Turkish, Persian, Arabic and Muslim theology with leading representatives of Eastern culture such as the mathematician-philosopher Saadi and the linguist scholar Nef-oghlu (Popescu-Judetz, 1973, p. 13).

He studied the music of the time for about 15 years (the so-called Byzantine music, in reality the psaltic music practiced in the rituals of the Eastern Orthodox Christian Church of the Greek rite, within the Patriarchal Academy) with two of the renowned masters of the time: the renegade Greek Kemani Ahmed (*kemençe* and *ney* performer) and the Greek Orthodox Angeli (*tanbur* performer), according to his own testimony (Popescu-Judetz, 1973, p. 13), becoming in his turn a recognized connoisseur of the modal language in use at the time. Byzantine music, like many other nobles, he did not study it on a professional level, as he did not intend to become the protopsalt of any church. Therefore, in the graphical musical system he invented, he did not draw inspiration from the non-ummatic system already in use in his time, but influences from the theoretical psaltic system can be identified.

Throughout this initiatory path in the deepening of the sciences of the time, he maintained and cultivated contact with his teacher Jeremiah Kakavela,

who in turn encouraged the scholar prince to write and print his own philosophical and political conceptions (Eşanu, 2008, pp. 180-183).

It follows from the above that Dmitry Cantemir was a good performer on the *kemençe*, *ney*, *caval*, *tanbur*, but in Turkish musical historiography he is mentioned as a master of the *tanbur*.

5. Dimitrie Cantemir teoreticianul

As a practitioner, he noted the lack of coherent theoretical principles that would allow novices a deeper understanding of the musical systems under study in accordance with contemporary sound realities (Popescu-Judet, 1973, pp. 36-37). This shortcoming is also noticed by some of Cantemir's apprentices, Davul Ismail Efendi - a great *haznedar* and *capuchehaie* (representative) of the Tatar innkeeper Devlet Giray II (1707-1713) - and Latif Çelebi, who will succeed in persuading their master to publish his personal observations, with the idea of facilitating the learning of music. Cantemir thus created his own method of analyzing the instrumental modal universe of the Ottoman Empire, and invented a semiographic system with which he could record his own compositions and those he had collected..

Although (secular) music was an indispensable element of the Constantinopolitan society of those times, it was not taught in public schools, but each person who wished to do so paid teachers who trained him privately (Cantemir, 1876, p. 217, note 17, *apud* Popescu-Judet, 1973, p. 36). Cantemir says that "in the vast city of Constantinople, where resides the greatest court in the world, among so many amateurs and skillful in music, you will hardly find three or four who know perfectly well the fundamentals of this art" (Cantemir, 1876, p. 217, note 17, *apud* Popescu-Judet, 1973, p. 36). It seems that the young prince was one of those who had mastered the principles of the sound systems in use in his time, managing to synthesize everything in a work that was to become famous not only in the world of Turkish musicians, but also in the world of Greeks (Χρυσανθου, 1832, p. XXXVIII, note γ) and of the cosmopolitan society of the Ottoman capital.

It should be mentioned that the music and styles created in Constantinople are specific to this city and do not represent the traditional Turkish music which has a different character and compositional style; only a few cities in the Ottoman Empire such as Izmir, Thessaloniki and those around the capital, have taken over and preserved this sonorous flavor until today. In the Romanian Principalities, however, this music found fertile ground for development through the musicians who came from the city on the Bosphorus, especially during the Phanariote reigns.

Cantemir was very well acquainted with all aspects of the mundane cultural life of the imperial capital and was a beloved and appreciated figure in the intellectual circles of the time (Eşanu, 2008, pp. 166-169), among whom he

also had apprentices in the art of music. Thus, by the time he perfected his own method of understanding the Turkish modal universe, he already had students such as the Greek nobleman Ralaki Eupragiotul, the Turks Taşci-oğlu Sinek Mehmed and Bardakci Mehmed Celebi (they had studied music with Kanbosu Mehmed Ağa, a famous master, and later perfected their skills with Dimitrie Cantemir) and the others mentioned above, Davul Ismail Efendi and Latif Çelebi (Popescu-Judet, 1973, p. 17).

The Cantemirean treatise comes against a background of crisis in the area of theory and is compiled at the behest of its own students, and it is also only available to a restricted circle of connoisseurs.

The Book of the Science of Music According to the Way of Letters (Kitab-ı İlmi'l-musiki ala Vechi'l Hurafat) (Popescu-Judet, 1973, pp. 157-265) is the first treatise on music theory of the 16th - 18th centuries in which the agreement between theory and practice is realized in a scientific, rigorous manner, without speculations and philosophical analogies.

6. Dimitrie Cantemir – *magister musicae*

"It may be said, according to the evidence, that Dimitrie Cantemir became, in the 15 years of assiduous study, a master of the lay musical language specific to Constantinople and a standard for subsequent generations both in the sphere of Ottoman musicians and in non-Muslim communities (Greeks, Romanians, etc.)" (Χρυσανθου, 1832, p. XXXVIII, note γ). In support of this assertion, works by Romanian chroniclers may be mentioned, such as that of Ion Neculce, in which the author states that the Moldavian prince "knew how to say well in the drum (*tanbûr*) that no Tsarigradian could say like him" (Neculce, 1845, in Kogălniceanu, 1872, p. 300) or the treatise on the theory of church music compiled by Chrysanthos de Madytos in the first half of the 19th century, where, among the eight books of capital importance for any aspiring master, Cantemir's tomography is mentioned (Χρυσανθου, 1832, p. XXXVIII, note γ) - written proof of the impact of this personality of Constantinopolitan culture.

According to most scholars, the theory book was written by Cantemir sometime between 1703 and 1705 (Popescu-Judet, 1973, p. 70; Wright, 2000, pp. 4-8) and is structured in two parts: the first theoretical and the second being a collection of songs (it contains 353 musical pieces).

All the expositions in Dimitrie Cantemir's treatise on music theory demonstrate the complexity of the illustrious historical figure that continues to fascinate scholars in various fields of activity and to inspire new studies aimed at a deeper understanding of his cultural creations..

The music noted by Dimitrie Cantemir belongs to the genre of elevated, courtly music, which was performed in a particular setting, the audience being educated members of Constantinopolitan society. The artistic model was the

imperial sarai (imperial court), where ambassadors and court nobles were invited by the sultan to listen to concerts given by well-known musicians of the time. This type of performance was copied by members of the Bosphorus capital's society during the artistic events they organized in their palaces.

The image described above is also found in the courts of the rulers of the Romanian Principalities and is in fact a reality from England to Tsarist Russia. The voievod reiterated the worldly activities of Constantinople (Gheorghiuță, 2010, pp. 1-83; Filimo, pp. 1-14), and the boyars imitated what they saw at the court. Some of them, unable or unwilling to pay professional musicians, had musically inclined servants learn the repertoire or something similar for their personal delectation. Cantemir's music would not remain solely within the confines of the capital or within the borders of the Empire, but on the contrary would transcend geographical and political boundaries, finding its way into later collections in the Principates or becoming a source of inspiration for musicians in the West (Pann, 1852, pp. 147-154; Breazul, 1957).

7. Conclusions

Dimitrie Cantemir left the most important treatise on music in the capital of the Ottoman Empire of the 17th-18th centuries and, at the same time, influenced later generations of performers by imposing a concise direction in line with the everyday realities of the cultural society of his time. His collection of melodies, some of which belong to him, has remained to this day as having the largest number of instrumental pieces, most of which belong to the learned court music (sarai), and through his theoretical chapters he provides modern musicologists with valuable insights into the aesthetics, style and taste of the era in which he lived and created.

An exponent of Eastern culture, the former ruler of Moldavia leaves to posterity his treatise and collection of songs, a guide to the theory and practice of the time, and a corpus of compositions rendered by his method of writing, designed to facilitate our understanding of the principles he laid down.

Cantemir's importance proves once again to be unequivocal when we speak of his works in various fields of interest to Western society of his time. His works, whatever the field, are still first-rate sources for researchers of the events of our past.

Less well known as a musician, the Moldavian prince proves that he deserved his place in the sound history of this cultural area, becoming a remarkable personality whose work cannot be overlooked.

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