

Musicology Today

Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest

Issue 3 (39) July-September 2019

Title: The 19th-Century South-Eastern Europe Salons: Laboratories of the Musical “Europeanisation” (1)

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Source: Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest / Volume 10 / Issue 3 (39) / July-September 2019, pp 145-146

Link to this article: musicologytoday.ro/39/MT39editorialPopa.pdf

How to cite this article: Florinela Popa, “The 19th-Century South-Eastern Europe Salons: Laboratories of the Musical ‘Europeanisation’ (1)”, *Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest*, 10/3 (39) (2019), 145-146.

Published by: Editura Universității Naționale de Muzică București

Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest is indexed by EBSCO, RILM, and ERIH PLUS

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The 19th-Century South-Eastern Europe Salons: Laboratories of the Musical “Europeanisation” (1)

In the social-political and ideological context of the second half of the 19th century, the South-Eastern European countries have started to take into consideration more and more the Occident. The mixture of the multicultural and multi-ethnic influences that characterises this geographical area has determined the process of Europeanisation, initiated by the local elite, to be a complex process and not a simple and flat one. Regarding the musical field, the salons held and frequented by the elite represented, beyond doubt, an excellent background for learning and practicing the Western European models. A research project, entitled *Elites and Their Musics: Music and Music-Making in the 19th-Century South-Eastern Europe Salons* coordinated by Nicolae Gheorghită and carried out by the International Musicological Conference that took place between the 21st and the 23rd of November 2019 at the New Europe College and the National University of Music in Bucharest,¹ pointed out the multiple aspects of the salons music that the journal *Musicology Today* intends to bring about in its issues 3 and 4/2019.

The opening of the issue 3/2019 is symbolically dedicated to a remarkable approach that highlights the multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-linguistic aspect that mainly characterises the European South-East. The musical journey initiated by Philip V. Bohlman through the Jewish music from this part of Europe exemplarily emphasises the diversity of the sonorous landscapes, the mutual influences and the sonorous confluences. Passing not only the geographical but also the temporal borders – for example, by identifying specific clefs of decoding and rebuilding the past – may reveal to the author “a world of music on the move in South-Eastern Europe”.

¹ The conference was supported by the Doctoral School of the National University of Music Bucharest (*Fondul de Dezvoltare Instituțională*: CNFIS-FDI-2019-0171).

Bohlman has approached such a world from the researcher's as well as from the performer's perspective, naming as the artistic director of the cabaret ensemble of the New Budapest Orpheum Society, succeeding in describing it, suggestively and personally, through the concept of *cabaretesque*.

In his turn, John Plemmenos refers to the Oriental salons of the end of the 18th century starting from the Greek romance collection *Effects of Love*, published in 1792. Although the three stories found in the contents of this collection are fictions, the realistic elements which the collection is based on outline a general view over the Oriental tradition of the salons. Plemmenos identifies a series of common features of the salons music in Istanbul and in the Russian town Poltava – the places where the narratives develop their plots – as illustrative for the Oriental culture in a wider sense: “it is an all-male event (women being reduced to listeners), the music is vocal and monodic (in one or two rounds), and the guests are the performers themselves”.

Only a few decades later, Istanbul was about to become a place wide open to Western European music. In his study, Feza Tansuğ gives an insight into the process of westernizing the elite's music in the Ottoman Empire. Started in 1826 with Sultan Mahmud's II decision “to set up a military band in the European style”, the very process continued to assimilate numerous Italian, French and German influences and culminated with the employment of two generations of Turkish composers (and even female composers!) who composed in European style. The decline of the Western music in the Empire proved to be Sultan Abdulaziz's matter of taste, after he was crowned in 1861.

Referring to Romanian territory, Constantin Ardeleanu's study evokes the local music from the perspective of a British journalist, William Beatty-Kingston, a witness to Romania's process of emancipation between 1860s and 1880s as well as a fine expert in the most recent tendencies of the European music. Highly marked by the Gypsy fiddlers' music and appreciating the elite's efforts to save it from the risk of being lost, Beatty-Kingston found himself unimpressible to that period Romanian composers' works (“wishy-washy compositions and musical platitudes”), that, in fact, reflected a pioneer's stage of the Romanian “cultured” music.

The conference held by Philip V. Bohlman within the project *Elites and Their Musics* gave the National University of Music in Bucharest the opportunity to confer on the famous ethnomusicologist the title of *doctor honoris causa*. The *laudatio* presented by Costin Moisil with this occasion closes the present issue of *Musicology Today*.

English version by Carmen Dominte