

FRANZ LISZT IN OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Şirin Akbulut Demirci

Uludag University, College of Education

School of Fine Arts Education, Music Education Department, Bursa, Türkiye

E-mail: sirin@sirinakbulut.com

—Abstract —

During the transition from homophonic music to polyphonic music under the reform efforts of Ottoman Empire in the 19th century so many virtuoso musicians was invited to Ottoman Empire for giving concerts. Leopold de Meyer (1816-1883), Eugene Leon Vivier (1817-1900), Henri Vieuxtemps (1820-1881) were one of the virtuosos like Franz Liszt (1811-1886).

Franz Liszt came to Ottoman Empire in 1847 and spent five weeks there. He gave concerts at Istanbul. Alan Walker who wrote biography about Liszt said that “It looks like Liszt disappeared without a trace” because even if he spent weeks at Ottoman Empire there is not much information about this journey.

In this research, the time that Franz Liszt spent in Ottoman Empire was examined with a historical description and an effort was made to reflect this period. As such, the intercultural interaction and the contributions of this period to Music Culture in Ottoman Empire were examined.

Key Words: *Franz Liszt, virtuosos in Ottoman Empire, socio-cultural influences on music in Turkey.*

JEL Classification: Z1

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Music Cultures in Ottoman Empire

Being a reformist sultan of Ottoman Empire, Sultan II.Mahmud (Mahmud II) (1808-1839) made some westernization movements in the 1820s. With the completely changed military system, modernizations were made in architecture; military schools were opened in medicine, science and music. Sultan invited Italian musician Giuseppe Donizetti who arrived in Istanbul in 1828. Donizetti

was needed to be a bandmaster to the head of a new European style band. As a result of the instruments which were ordered from Europe, new music writing system and the education, the band could play western music. With the improving music understanding that Donizetti leads, the school which was established to educate musicians for military bands was turned into a kind of conservatory studying on opera, ballet and orchestra. The social life in Istanbul improved in time with full of theatres and operas. Gaetano's *Balisario* was performed in Istanbul before New York; operas like Bellini's *Straniera* and Meyerbeer's *II Crociato in Egitto* (1824) were put on the stage with the appreciation of the audience. Donizetti worked in theatres, especially in Naum Theatre he worked as a consultant in administrative staff (1847-1870). In addition to being a bandmaster, Donizetti, as a consultant of the Padishah on issues related to music, contributed to the music life in Ottoman.

Rich people generally merchant used to have pianos in their home. The pianos which were special ordered for Ottoman Palace have ornaments of paintings and the sultan's monogram. Pianos were used to accompanying to the hall dances.¹ Rich people used to have pianos in their home. The newspaper named "Cevide-I Havadis" advertised the piano teacher who wants to educated students in 1845.

Pianos were used to play as homophonic instrument. Turkish first tried to play alaturka music but the tampered system forced them to play polyphonic music so their skill on playing had improved.

2. LISZT in ISTANBUL

2.1. Liszt arrival to Istanbul

Liszt came to Istanbul in summer in 1847 and stayed five weeks there. Actually Liszt desired to go to Istanbul in 1838 so that He had permission to play for Sultan II Abdülhamid. Even if he planned his all trip program he couldn't come because of unknown reason. Liszt is writing about this delay to his friend Victor Schoelcher from Padua to Paris on 1st October 1838. "*People make program but god knows how to conducted business... yes my friend. I am not saying about my plan, desire or strong decision to go to Istanbul, Even If I had signed letter of credit for cities like Izmir, Istanbul and Athens and signed reference letter from*

¹Gazimihal, M. Ragıp (1961), *F. Liszt's Concerts Research Working Paper*, Ankara Türkiye

*Prince Matternich I am not going because of another major reasons..."*²
According to the letter it is obvious that he really wanted to visit Istanbul but the reason is not explained clearly.

There is so many letters about his visit to Istanbul.

- Prague, 14th April 1846, "*Probably I will use this autumn to make my Istanbul and Athens dream come true*"
- Gratz, 26th May 1846, "*I don't know what will do on July. I will be busy whit concerts until the end of June.....on September probably I will go to Transylvania and then by visiting Yas (City in Romania) and Bucharest I will go to Istanbul*"
- October 1846, "*my current Transylvania, Yas, Odesa, Istanbul trips are a kind of packet money issue and not very laborious happening, ilh, ilh, ilh...*"
- Bucharest, 3rd January 1847, "*M.de Karatsony was accompanied to me up to Istanbul....*"
- 10th February 1847, "*I will be in Odesa nearly for month and will wait for the beautiful days to go to Istanbul by ship.....*"
- Yas, May 1847, "*I think my moving will delay for eight days, I feel myself very weak (...) write me to Istanbul and at the beginning of July to Odesa*"

The Takvim-i Vakayi newspaper announced his coming to Istanbul to the public like this on January "*According some news, the famous piano master who become famous in all Europe's important central of government will come to Istanbul nowadays*"

After his concerts in Lemberg and Czernovtsy Liszt came to Istanbul on 8th June 1847 by ship coming from Galatz.³

² Charles Suttoni, 'Liszt and Madame d'Agoult- A Reappraisal', *Proceedings of the International Liszt Conference*, 20-23rd May 1993, N.Y. 1993, p.32

³ Galatz, 17th July 1847; Jean-Claudes Lattes (Ed.), *Franz Liszt Correspondance*, p.388

2.2. Liszt's Concerts in Istanbul

2.2.1. Concerts in Ciragan Palace

Liszt played for Sultan Abdülmecid when he has just arrived to Istanbul.

English Musical Word journal wrote about his coming and the concert in the palace like a laughing event. *“Liszt was welcomed with enormous honor and compliment. Big celebration was prepared. There is no doubt Sultan wanted to show his musical taste and to introduce the musicians and the singers in the palace by make them give a concert with the symphonies and music for choir. Liszt, who wants to show how much he impressed of this, shook his head until he had a stiff neck, at the same time there was bigger and honorable preparation for him. Erard brand grand piano was prepared for him. After the symphony and the chorus finished roar they asked to Liszt to play something shows his fingers power. According to this instant request Liszt sit to the piano without changing his face manner and was not afraid to present his talent in front of this Turkish music lover autocrat. We are sure he played all this three pieces, not more: Andante from the fantasy on Lucia di Lammermoor, his overture of William Tell and Norma. After the first pieces Sultan said “water pipe” with lust and at the rest of the presentation he drank water pipe in a childish way by make the noise like the Etna volcano. When Liszt understood that the majesty will make him stay under the smoke he worried and played sharp note instead of flat at the descending chromatic passage. The sultan was very pleased of this. It was seen that he winkled his one eye meaningfully and continued to smoke more exciting. Liszt who did not used to be at the smoky places like this, was very pleased to hear that the sultan was hear enough music for now and he invited him to came to the palace again. He left the palace joyfully not with impressed of the Turkish’s music knowledge but with impressed of the sultans modesty. At the second visit to the palace Majesty give him a magnificent wonderful snuffbox as a gift which was decorated with diamonds. Everybody says that this behavior is a big compliment.”* Same article was published in La Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris on 11st July 1847 but this time without same humorous. Liszt gave the concert in the Ciragan palace he chose the repertoire from the famous operatic works. Liszt wrote about this concerts and sultan on 18 July 1847 from Galatz. *“As you learnt from the newspapers, The Sultan showed his kind regards, he gave me money as a remuneration (a hundred louis), an excellent box which was decorated with the diamonds, and Nişan-I İftihar (badge of bride) decorated with*

diamonds. I'll admit that I was surprised that he knows a lot about my fame. Many time before I arrived there He ordered to Austrian envoy and to his music director Donizetti to welcome me at the ship and bring me to the Ciragan Palace immediately..."

2.2.2. Concert in Buyukdere at Franchini Mansion

There is announcement about the concert he gave at Franchini Mansion at Buyukdere. He gave the concert for his own benefit so it had a program which was published in some Turkish literatures. So that lost of details is known. The program is in French. The Concerts started at 2 p.m.as a musical matinee on 18th June. The ticked were sold at reception of Hotel de l'Europe and at the entrance of the concert for 100 kuruş (penny). Program was like this.

1. *Andante de Lucia de Lammermoor.*
2. *Fantaisie sur des motifs de la Norma.*
3. *Mazurka de Chopin.*
4. *Le roi des Aulnes, melodie de Shubert.*
5. *Hexameron, variations sur un theema the Puritains.*
6. *Melodies Hongroises.*

In the Gazimihal Article He said that these pieces were Liszt's virtuosity transcription. He gave some notes about the pieces. First piece was written on the melodies of Gaetano Donizetti's Lammermoor Lucia named 1935 dated Opera. This Opera was staged many times at Naum Theater before Liszt came to Istanbul. Also Bellini's Norma Opera (1831) was staged at Naum Theater and the Sultan liked this opera. Liszt made a transcription on melody of it. The number of the mazurka didn't mention in the program but Gazimihal wrote that according to the chronology it might be op.7 no.1 or 2. Fifth piece Hexameron is from Bellini's Scottish Puritans Opera (1835). Liszt played this piece before, for example at Kiev University Concert Hall. This Opera was also staged in Beyoglu Istanbul. The last piece must be from his rhapsodic.

2.2.3. Other Concerts

Liszt gave many other private and public concerts at special places like Fethi Pasha Mansion and for Russian Embassy at Pera. Russian Embassy organized the concert for the benefit of Association Commerciale- Artisane de Piere on 28th

June. The association sent letter to thank him, this document is at archives in Wiermar now. *“During this Concert Liszt saw the scenery of Istanbul which from the window and got really excited. He heard the enthusiasm of seeing the east and the west at same time and with this excitement he thought he saw the Olympus at far.”*⁴

2.2.4. The Other Details about his Concerts and Visit to Istanbul

2.2.4.1. The House Liszt Stayed in Istanbul

Saim Naum- Dühani gave information about the house, Liszt stay in Istanbul: *“Famous piano fabricator M. Alexander Kommendinger residing is at Nurüziya Street Number 19th Beyoglu. Franz Liszt lived there as a guest of Kommendinger family. Big Compositor had an honor to make sultan listened him at the palace. Also on 18th June 1847 He played at Buyukdere Franchini Palace.*

The room where the big and famous compositor stayed (old Polish street) now the owner of the house is staying, who is the grandchild of Kommendinger mother side, and name is B.D. Demarchi. It is very pity that there is no plaque to show that Liszt came to Istanbul, the art and music friends obviously should fill the void”

2.2.4.2. The Piano Liszt Played in Istanbul

Before Liszt had come to Istanbul, They ordered a special Erard brand piano for him from Paris, was the one of the best brand in world that time. Donizetti was commissioned for the ordering and delivering piano. *“Giuseppe Donizetti did all the officinal correspondence about piano which was ordered for Liszt. Even the letter which was written from Pierre Erard and explaining the features was published at the newspaper, Journal de Constantinople.”*⁵ In Donizetti’s ‘Giornale e Memorie Diverse di Giuseppe’ named daily, which is in Topkapi Palace Museum Archives now had all correspondences about the ordering the piano. 7th November, 18th November, 17th December 1846 and 10th February 1847 dated four letters which is in that daily had all detail information about the piano its size, number of the strings and octave-width. Also Donizetti’s son Andrea went to Erard Factory to check the piano when he was in Paris. According to last letter 10th February 1847 piano had been bought for 4000 franc.

⁴ Alan Walker, Franz Liszt, The Virtuoso Years 1811-1847, p.441

⁵ Giornale e Memorie di Guiseppe Donizetti 1846-47, TSM D.10776/6

The piano was in Giuseppe Donizetti's house first before Liszt came they moved it to Ciragan palace.

In the letter which Liszt wrote and Pierre Erard took on 5th August 1847, Liszt wrote these words, "*When I was waiting in quarantine at Garatz, I read about the preparation for me in the Ottoman Capital in the Journal de Constantinople. The piano I tried is really strong and excellent. Thank you for sending me the piano has that kind of high quality.*" According to the letters next part it is understood that Liszt played with that piano in Ciragan Palace and before he left Istanbul the piano was sold to Mr. Baltagi for 16000 kurus (Turkish money) as a gift to his fiancée. In his letter Liszt wrote these words "*C'est un sort tout a fait romantique que celui de cet instrument, et il faut avouer qu'il le merite bien par ses qualites classiques*" (*The piano deserved this romantic destiny...*)

2.2.4.3. Liszt and Giuseppe Donizetti

Not only Donizetti prepared everything for Liszt, like invitation, the piano and ect. But also during the time Liszt spent in Istanbul Giuseppe Donizetti was near him at most times. He welcomed him and took him to palace when he has just arrived to Istanbul.

Franz Liszt was hosted by Donizetti and at Liszt's request Donizetti gave him his two marches. '*Liszt was in my house. He has just left. He wanted the notes of the two marches I composed for the Sultan. He said he was going to play them as a variation.*' (A letter from Giuseppe to his son Andrea, Constantinople, 9 June 1847) Being one of the variations he played at the concerts for Sultan Abdülmecid (Abdul Mejid) the song he composed on Mecidiye March was titled as *Op. 87 Grande Paraphrase de la Marche de J. Donizetti* and it was published in Schesinger Publishing house.

In Gazimihal working paper he wrote about the piece "*After He listened the Donizetti's march, he thought he should composed something in Istanbul for the kind Turkish Sultan. He composed the mention pieces in Istanbul*".

The date of composition is 14th-15th June 1847 at Buyukdere during his concerts in Istanbul. There is two edition one easy and one difficult, and both transcriptions are in Liszt Museum in Weimar (Goethe-u. Sciller-Archiv, Nachlass Liszt: manuskripte J.54 a).

2.2.4.4. Memories from Ottoman Empire

There are two memory museum of Liszt one in Budapest and other in Weimar.

According to the letter of Dr. Marguarit Franchas, working in the first museum wrote to Gazimihal 1956 about Liszt's letter (17th July 1847), Mrs. Herzmainka gave Liszt "Turkish Dances" book during his Istanbul journey.

Both transcriptions *Op. 87 Grande Paraphrase de la Marche de J. Donizetti* are in Liszt Museum in Weimar (Goethe-u. Sciller-Archiv, Nachlass Liszt: manuskripte J.54 a).

Liszt was given two badges from the Sultan. First one is "Badge of Pride" given by Sultan Abdülmeçid. The second one is given for his composition *Op. 87 Grande Paraphrase de la Marche de J. Donizetti*.

Sultan gave him small box which was decorated with diamonds and worth 12.500 kurus (Turkish money).

They prepared a special seal, Liszt name was written in Arabic alphabet with Turkish letters. He used this seal in one of his letters, which is in Mueller archives.

There is one more rare memory which is in Yusuf Güler Aksöz special collection. It is a three part stick and there is the date of the concert he played at Franchini Mansion at Buyukdere.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion when Liszt came to Ottoman Empire he was welcomed with great kind. A special piano was ordered for him. He played two times for the Sultan, first one was when he has just arrived to Istanbul. He gave lots of public and special concerts in Istanbul. One of them is at Franchini Mansion at Buyukdere. Turkish people even if he was with so small group of the public were very pleased to listening him. Giuseppe Donizetti guest him and prepared lost thing for Liszt's coming. After this journey a piece, *Op. 87 Grande Paraphrase de la Marche de J. Donizetti*, added to piano literature.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arıcı, Emre (2006), Donizetti Pasha, YKY Publishing, ISBN 975-08-1153-4, Istanbul, Türkiye
- Çalgan, Koral (1991), Franz Liszt and the Research of M. R. Gazimihal: "Liszt's Concerts in Istanbul", Müzik Ansiklopedisi Publishing, Ankara, Türkiye
- Donizetti, Giuseppe, Giornale e Memorie di Giuseppe Donizetti 1846-47, TSM D.10776/6
- Galatz, (17th July 1847), Franz Liszt Correspondence, Jean-Claudes Lattes (Ed.)
- Gazimihal, M. Ragıp (1961), *F. Liszt's Concerts Research Working Paper*, Ankara Türkiye
- Say, Ahmet (1992), Music Encyclopedia, Müzik Ansiklopedisi Publishing, Ankara, Türkiye
- Say, Ahmet (1997), Music History, Müzik Ansiklopedisi Publishing, 3rd Edition, Ankara, Türkiye
- Suttoni, Charles (20-23rd May 1993), Liszt and Madame d'Agoult-A Reappraisal, Proceedings of the International Liszt Conference, N.Y. USA
- Pamir, Leyla (1989), Large Breaths in Music, Ada Publishing, Istanbul, Türkiye
- Harsanyi, von Zsoltan (1949), Ungarische Rhapsodie: der Lebensroman von Franz Liszt, Hamburg, Germany, pp.359
- Rebous, Poul (1940), Liszt ou les Amours Romantiques, Paris, France, pp.154
- Walker, Alan (1930), Franz Liszt, The Virtuoso Years 1811-1847, Cornell University Press, N.Y., USA