

# MUSIC IN THE SALONS OF CENTRAL AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

## Preliminary Considerations for Cross-Regional Research

by Haiganuş Preda-Schimek (Vienna)

1 Habermas, Jürgen: *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*. Neuwied, Berlin: Luchterhand 1962.

2 On Diderot's *Salonberichte* and Grimm's literary correspondence, inspired by Madame d'Épinay's salon, cf. *ibid.*, p. 53.

3 Marković, Tatjana: »Music and Society – Society and Music Discourses: Aspects of Inter/con/textuality. In: Third International Symposium Music and Society, Collection of Papers. Sarajevo: Musicological Society FBiH and Music Academy 2002, p. 50.

4 Breazul, George: *Pagini din istoria muzicii româneşti*. [The History of Romanian Music]. Bucharest: Editura Muzicală 1977, pp. 256-259.

5 Marković, Tatjana: *Strategies of Networking Viennese Culture*. In: M., T./Mikic, Vesna (Eds.): *Music and Networking*. Belgrade: Fakultet muzicke umetnosti 2005, p. 52.

6 Ghica, Ion: *Scrisori către Vasile Alecsandri*. [Letters to Vasile Alecsandri]. In: *Opere*. Vol. 1. Bucharest: Minerva 1970, p. 149.

Maintained and propagated by city elites, salons were a product of bourgeois life and a means of propagating the latter in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. With its beginning during the Baroque period in France, the salon craze fanned out to Berlin, London, Vienna and Weimar, and then further east, incorporating regional differences along the way, and continuing into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Guests met in this common space to discuss and debate current events and issues; in this way, salons became a kind of »democratic« zone which mediated between the nobility and the up-and-coming middle class.

In addition to being transitional zones between social layers, salons also mediated between the public and the private spheres. Access was limited: only invited guests could participate. With this select audience, salons counted as »half-public«, quasi-appointed forums. From the modern perspective, it is natural to point out the contrasts between the public and private spheres. But looking back on the history of private appointments, one can grasp the affinities between salon »appointments« and those of public office.

At private and regular meetings of the middle class – at coffee houses in England, at salons, clubs and *Tischgesellschaften* in Germany, at salons in France – incipient forms of publicity and public opinion were developed. Private assemblies gradually formed an »audience«, whose »voice« surpassed the boundaries of privacy and, as »civil society«, mediated between the state and the citizenry.<sup>1</sup> Gradually, music production and distribution began to be controlled by free market rules. Salon music illustrates that change; proportional to the number of bourgeois dilettantes, there was an increase in the output of piano manufacturers, and at the same time, commercial salon pieces begin to fill publishing houses' catalogues.

Starting as literary centres, salons soon became organs of cultural and political opinion, competing with – and sometimes replacing – the written press. Professional art criticism emerged in France from the conversation of »initiated laymen« in salons.<sup>2</sup> About a century later, guests of Romanian and Serbian private assemblies acted as contributors to music journals; e.g. the Serbs' Miloje Milojević and Petar Konjović,<sup>3</sup> and the Romanian Nicolae Filimon.<sup>4</sup>

In private societies (e.g., Collegia musica) music was emancipated during the 19<sup>th</sup> century from being an exclusive privilege of courtly or aristocratic circles, and performances became open to the public (e.g., Philharmonic Societies). A similar course of transition from private to public performances may be observed in the founding of the first Romanian theatre by Princess Caragea, daughter of Walachia's prince Gheorghe Caragea (1812-1818). Before founding that establishment, she hosted theatrical events by French and Greek authors on her private premises. Home theatre also flourished in well-situated Serbian families, such as that of Baron Petar Duka in Buda. The baron hosted artistic meetings, and his daughters, as well as Serbian intellectuals such as Laza Kostić and Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, were the leading figures of musical and theatrical performances of patriotic content.<sup>5</sup>

If English coffee-houses blossomed between 1680 and 1730, the emergence of salon-like practices in eastern Europe was delayed for almost a century. Not until after 1820 did regular private meetings for entertaining, political or literary purposes (music performance, card playing, domestic theatre including) become common. Around that time, Princess Ralu was hosting literary-musical meetings in Bucharest. A capable piano player herself, she admired the classics and organised theatrical representations in her salon.<sup>6</sup> Jewgenja Rostopocha (1811-1895), a poetess, led a musical salon in Saint Petersburg, whose guests included Liszt, Glinka and Pauline Viardot. Sinaida Wolkonskaja (1792-1862) used to host opera performances at her sumptuous Moscow palace.

The »actors« and »audience« included young boyars, middle-class intellectuals and »enlightened« members of the high aristocracy (related to reigning families). Matters concerning both western and national interests were discussed, such as the great powers' foreign policies, occidental literary trends, the necessity of cultivating the mother tongue of encouraging national theatre and literature. As a kind of emotional salve, music enhanced the participants' spirits, serving both ideological and entertainment purposes.

7 Epoch preceding the 1848 Revolution, characterized by censorship and the strict Metternich regime.

8 Cf. Sonnleithner, Joseph: *Krasse Sinnlichkeit und frömmelnde Tendenzen*. In: Aspalter, Christian et al. (Eds.): *Paradoxien der Romantik, Gesellschaft, Kultur und Wissenschaft in Wien im frühen 19. Jahrhundert*. Vienna: Wiener Universitätsverlag 2006, p. 257.

9 Bellini, Liszt, and Chopin were among the guests; cf. Severgnini, Luigi: *La principessa Cristina Trivulzio di Belgioioso. Vita et opere*. Milan: Virgilio, 1971.

10 Ghica 1970, p. 200.

11 Heyden-Rirsch, Verena von der: *Europäische Salons*. München: Artemis und Winkler 1992.

12 Ballstaedt, Andreas/Widmaier, Tobias: *Salonmusik. Zur Geschichte und Funktion einer bürgerlichen Musikpraxis*. Wiesbaden, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 1989.

13 Music which serves external purposes and doesn't belong to »art music« in the strong sense; see Ballstaedt/Widmaier 1989, p. 3.

14 Worbs, Hans Christoph: *Musik als Ware. Die Salonmusik des 19. Jahrhunderts*. In: *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik CXXIV* (1963), pp. 48-51; Wörner, Karl: *Salon-, Kaffeehaus- und Unterhaltungsmusik*. In: Dahlhaus, Carl (Ed.): *Trivialmusik und ästhetisches Urteil: Studien zur Trivialmusik des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Regensburg: Bosse 1967.

15 Feller, Imogen: *Die Begriffe Salon und Salonmusik in der Musikanschauung des 19. Jahrhunderts*. In: Dahlhaus 1967, pp. 131-141.

16 Salmen, Walter: *Haus und Kammermusik. Privates Musizieren im gesellschaftlichen Wandel zwischen 1600 und 1900*. Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik 1969.

17 Weliver, Phyllis: *Women Musicians in Victorian England, 1860-1900. Representations of Music, Science and Gender in the Leisured Home*. Aldershot: Ashgate 2001; Fuller, Sophie/Losseff, Nicky: *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction*. Aldershot: Ashgate 2004.

A well-documented synopsis of English language literature on salon music is Yael Bitrán's *Absolute Salon: A Look at the Literature on Domestic Music-making in the Nineteenth Century*, unpublished paper.

Conversation in the Viennese salons of »Vormärz«<sup>7</sup> (hosted for instance by Caroline Pichler) avoided loaded subjects, so as to avoid conflicts among the guests, and hence oscillated between insignificant small talk and romantic literary reflection. This may explain why dissident poets and liberal thinking »rebels« stayed clear of salons and looked rather for other kinds of sociability<sup>8</sup>. Viennese salonières deliberately abstained from »Parisian« indulgences, either in loyalty to the Hapsburgs or as a precaution against the restrictive Metternich regime. Of course, politics was a central pursuit in Parisian salons, both in famous circles such as Madame de Staël's, and in national groups of emigrants, such as those who gathered at the salon of Milanese Princess Belgioioso<sup>9</sup> or that of Madame Champy, who »entertained« diplomats, Greek dissidents and Romanian boyars, all of whom engaged in lively political debates.<sup>10</sup>

### A less investigated domain of music

It is difficult to describe this wide-spread practice throughout the continent, not only because of its numerous variants, but also because of the rather meagre state of research on the subject. The European distribution of salons and the role of the middle class in the creation of cultural awareness in the 19<sup>th</sup> century have been sketched by Heyden-Rirsch,<sup>11</sup> who also indicated the ritual aspects of regular meetings (*jours fixes*) in unique environments. But her work has more the character of specialized or dramatized non-fiction than that of scientific study, and contains nothing of musicological interest.

On the other side, musicologists have in general treated salon music too critically. Disdainful evaluations in the »classical« orientated press have long inhibited scientific interest in the subject. Despite some reconsideration from the perspective of social history up to the 1980s, the few writings on salon music have been unable to secure a fixed point of departure for cross-regional research. An exception is the thoroughly documented study by Andreas Ballstaedt and Tobias Widmaier (1989).<sup>12</sup> Previous writings on what Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht called »functional music«,<sup>13</sup> such as the books of Hans Christoph Worbs (1963) and K. Wörner (1967), continued to present it in the tradition of 19<sup>th</sup> century German music criticism,<sup>14</sup> as a counter-example to »high« or »true« musical art, a notion reconstructed by Imogen Feller (1967).<sup>15</sup> In his account of *Haus und Kammermusik*,<sup>16</sup> Walter Salmen describes various domestic musical practices, but without methodically explaining their interactions with evolving society. Recent gender-oriented essays, by British and American writers, have emphasized the importance of domestic music in Victorian England.<sup>17</sup> Local circumstances and descriptions of salon music within specific urban settings form the subject of occasional articles or book chapters, but seldom offer extensive scientific analysis.<sup>18</sup> One might therefore conclude that, from a methodological point of view, Ballstaedt and Widmaier's work represents a singular example of systematic research into salon music, one that has cast new light on the genre and proposed effective sociological tools for its investigation.

In sum, the mediatory role of salons has been under-researched by both musicology and the social sciences. Hence the task of the present project will be to find innovative methods and suitable means by which to demonstrate the connective role played by salons, and particularly the music-making therein, in the east-ward transfer of culture.

### Salon music in the Balkans

Why a specific orientation towards Romanian, Serbian and Greek music in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? The reason lies in historical similarities, such as the liberation from Ottoman occupation, the gradual Europeanization of institutions and lifestyles, the crystallization of modern national states, the installation of foreign dynasties, and their common affiliations with the Eastern Orthodox Church. Behind apparently heterogeneous features and local developments, there are similarities in the process of musical westernization, proof of which, among others, is the spread of salon music. Moreover, this process had consequences for domestic music-making during the musical migrations of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Balkans.

The first generations of professional musicians came to Bucharest, Belgrade, and the Ionian Islands from abroad: from Vienna, Prague, Naples or Milan. The road of cultural migration was not accidental, but determined by political, geographic, cultural and ethnic

18 Regarding the time span (first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) and the cities (Vienna, Bucharest) sampled by the project, cf. Hanson, Alice: Die zensurierte Muse. Musikleben im Wiener Biedermeier. Vienna: Böhlau 1985, pp. 131-151; Harrandt, Andrea: Salonmusik im Biedermeier. In: H., A. (Ed): Benedict Randhartinger und seine Zeit. Tutzing: Schneider 2004, p. 195; Hilscher, Elisabeth Fritz: Höfisches Biedermeier. Der Salon der Erzherzogin Sophie. In: Boisits, Barbara/Hubmann, Klaus (Eds.): Musizierpraxis im Biedermeier. Wien: Mille Tre 2004; for Romanian cities, see Cosma, Octavian Lazăr: Muzica în saloanele epocii. [Music in Salons]. In: Hronicul muzicii româneşti [Chronicle of Romanian Music]. Vol. 3. Bucharest: Editura Muzicală 1975, pp. 160-166.

19 Cf. Tomasevic, Katarina: The Contribution of Czech Musicians to Serbian Music in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Paper presented at the 17<sup>th</sup> International Congress of the IMS. Leuven: International Music Society 2004; Psychopedis-Frangou, Olympia: Die kulturellen Beziehungen zwischen Frankreich und Griechenland in der modernen griechischen Musik. In: Musikologia 5/6. (1987/88), pp. 43-54; Romanou, Ekaterini: Italian Musicians in Greece during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Musicology Vol. 3. (2003); Vergadou-Mavroudaki, Christina: Greek Composers of the Ionian Islands in Italian Musical Life during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Musicology Vol. 3. (2003); Preda-Schimek, Haiganuş: Musical Ties of the Romanian Principalities with Austria between 1821 and 1859. In: Spaces of Identity: Central Europe and Beyond. (February 2007), <http://www.spacesofidentity.net>.

20 Constantin C. Giurescu has documented a considerably large foreign urban population living beside the Romanian majority between 1821 and 1848. Cf. Giurescu, Constantin: Consideraţiuni asupra originii şi dezvoltării burgheziei române [Considerations on the Origin and Development of Romanian Middle Class]. Bucharest 1973, pp. 90-99.

21 Importing bourgeois ideology of Western provenance, school reforms increasingly took place under the sign of national self-determination.

22 E.g., Franţuzitele [The False French Ladies] and Comedia timpului [Comedy of Time] by Costache Bălăcescu (1833); cf. Turcu, Mioara: Cultura în orânduirea feudală [Culture in Feudal Society]. In: Florian Georgescu et al. (Eds.): Istoria oraşului Bucureşti [History of the City of Bucharest]. Bucharest 1965, p. 220.

factors. A comparative look at Serbian, Romanian and Greek music reveals an entire complex of trans-European links: the western musical system was introduced into the Romanian provinces of Moldavia and Walachia largely by Austrian musicians; in Greek centres, such as Corfu and Athens, it came through Italians (especially from Naples and Milan); in Serbia, Czech composers were predominant.<sup>19</sup>

In the case of Romania during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many foreign musicians settled (temporary or permanently) in cities like Iaşi and Bucharest, where they worked as teachers in well-situated families. Their clientele came from »well-placed« aristocratic and bourgeois circles. These cosmopolitan groups were nevertheless quite heterogeneous in origin, a salient feature of the Romanian middle class in general.<sup>20</sup> The »high society« cultivated economic and cultural contacts not only with the Orient and with Russia, but also with major west European cities in Austria, France, and Italy. Both public and private instruction in music was a major force in producing the change in mentality towards the West after 1800 (simultaneous with the gradual decrease of Ottoman political influence over the Romanian principalities).<sup>21</sup> Home teachers from abroad, mostly French and German, were employed in well situated families or in boarding schools. Thus we find the young generation of the 1830s wanting to wear the same clothes, hear the same music, and read the same journals »as in Paris and Vienna«; this aspiration for western modishness became a perpetual refrain, soon lampooned in theatrical representations,<sup>22</sup> yet it was illustrative of the customers' expectations. Hence private music teachers dealt with a small but cosmopolitan and internationally active social group. The same audience that filled the musical theatres consisted of those who were politically »involved«, either for or against the 1848 Revolution.

Such famous instrumentalists as Bernhard Romberg, Franz Liszt, Sigmund Thalberg and Johann Strauss's son met with success in Southeast European salons, as did many other better or lesser known guest musicians from abroad. Their tours set in place landmarks of musical value, which had a huge impact on audiences and featured widely in newspaper articles. One might suppose that guest musicians and home teachers of foreign origin played a significant part in influencing and forming musical taste in 19<sup>th</sup> century Walachia and Moldavia (a role that became even more evident after 1860).

As Ballstaedt and Widmaier have demonstrated, salon music can be examined in terms of the economic relation between supply and demand. In contrast to the old disinterest in »trivial« and »inferior« music, it was found that, by analysing salon music in relation to customer psychology, one could gain profound insight into the cultural horizon and mentality of the »target groups«.

In domestic Balkan music, the interactions between »oriental«, »occidental« and »national« idioms are obvious to the ear. In view of Ballstedt and Widmaier's conclusions, the proposed study will take an in depth look at the relation *salon public* – *salon music*, questioning how configuration of the music itself might have been shaped by audiences of cosmopolitan taste, ethnic heterogeneity, and »western bourgeois« education. We are dealing here with three fundamental elements: with »oriental« influences, as imposed by the Ottoman oppressors, yet well-received by the public; western influences, as evidenced by the »modern«, »liberal« and »progressive« thinking adopted by the upper class; and with ethnic elements, perceptible in folkloric motifs and heroic-patriotic titles that propagated the nationalistic ideals of the time. The balance between these oriental, western and ethnic elements shall be analysed by connecting texts (memoirs, travel literature and correspondence) and musical information (salon albums) based on contemporary sources.

The project's aims are thus threefold:

- 1) to reconstruct the structure and mentality of salon audiences;
- 2) to reveal how popular music mirrors urban social life as it developed during certain decades; and
- 3) to grasp analytically the complex network of foreign influences that penetrated into Romanian culture at that time.

23 Yael Bitran indicates in her study *Periphery within the Margins: Studies of Salon Music in Spain* (unpublished paper presented at the Annual Music Graduate Exchange Conference, Royal Holloway: London 2006) a transition from aristocratic to bourgeois salons by the 1840s. It seems to describe a state of facts similar to other regional forms, confirmed by a similar repertoire: small piano pieces (paraphrases, dances, potpourris of national tunes) and fashionable salon pieces by Pleyel, Thalberg, and Herz.

### Salon repertoire between »local« and »global«

It is generally known that music was the mainstay in salons and a crucial element of western orientated, bourgeois education, especially that of young girls. Being a dilettante was fashionable; mastering an instrument – a social necessity. Sons or daughters of the hosts, along with music teachers and virtuosos, both produced and consumed a then-fashionable repertoire of music. This repertoire or body of works may be properly designated a historical form of popular music, even if it was consumed only by »elevated circles« which had the benefit of a »good«, i.e. bourgeois, education. That repertoire had remarkable similarities despite appearing in quite different places in Europe at that time.<sup>23</sup>

Common to the repertoire in German-speaking areas and in Paris were two categories of salon pieces written by composers active in southeast Europe between 1820 and 1860: highly accessible pieces and technically brilliant ones. The largest number of these belong to the former category of simplified, functional stereotypes, which nevertheless were often of poetically valuable utterance. Among them were numerous arrangements of folk songs, as in the case of Serbian and Romanian music; these count as some of the first written examples of urban folklore.

Hence folkloric quotations, so widely used in East-European salons, deserve special attention. They can be examined not only in terms of their origin and musical embeddedness, but also by their social impact, as part of regionally differentiated mentalities of the time. In cross-regional comparison, the differences become obvious: while in Paris folkloristic allusions (Irish, Scottish, French, etc.) occurred as a »piquant condiment of music« or as »occasional pleasantries«, in Vienna they served as symbolic »musical identity markers« for the many nations living under the Hapsburg monarchy. At the same time, in Greek, Serbian and Romanian milieus, they expressed more or less veiled means of national struggles against European oppressors, in addition to being a very popular form of musicality in all social layers.

The same holds true for dances, which comprise about a third of all archived salon pieces. Due to their characteristic features, dances could express national feelings, be tokens of fashion, merely »exotic« dashes of flavour, and/or function as political signs. The waltz evoked Vienna, the polka – Bohemia, the czardas (»verbunkos«) – Hungary, the mazurka and the polonaise – Poland, and so on. Explosive topics – such as fights for liberation from a foreign power and the desire for union into a national state – penetrated into the salon repertoire, as they did in musical theatre, in the form of marches, hymns set to simplified verses, dances of a national character, or ballads which reminded listeners of popular heroes' deeds.

National dances were promoted as an expression of local tastes, both with and without political connotations. In Romanian circles, a newly devised salon dance – the *romana*, filled with elements borrowed from Transylvanian folklore – was encouraged as a local reply to mazurkas, polonaises and waltzes. A Serb, Cornelije Stankovics (1831-1865), also stylised the Serbian dances *kolo*, *oro* and *svatovac* in his salon pieces. These were ultimately signs of a general European trend, aimed at finding, in one's own culture, the marks of a romantic and transfigured »national identity«.

The repertoire, with its pan-European commonalities, could therefore be seen as a trend towards economics-induced standardization of taste over large geographical areas, as a pre-phase of global »mass« production and consumption. With reference to Stuart Hall's definition of identity, the musical culture of the Balkan can be seen after 1830 as a »continually changing process«. What at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (and in Greece after 1910) bore the name of »national school« was the result of a symbiosis between regional elements and European composition technique. The latter was itself the result of a historical, transnational process.

If during the Romantic period music was often seen as »national« and »patriotic«, present-day exegesis underlines, on the contrary, its multiple roots and cosmopolitan traits. The reason for these different perspectives lies in the differing conceptions of identity: whereas past ideologies referred chiefly to »who we were« and »where we came from«, the main question today is »who we are about to become«. Notions of what constitutes identity – musical ones included – will surely continue to change as the search continues for new definitions based on political, social, and other circumstances.



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