

Chapter 2

HISTORY OF ORIENTALISM IN MUSIC

Grove Music Dictionary defines Orientalism as followed:

In its strict sense, [Orientalism is] dialects of musical exoticism within Western art music that evokes the East or the Orient. In a broader sense, it specifies the attitude toward those same geo-cultural regions as expressed in certain musical works, regardless of whether a given work evokes the music of the region or not. The '[o]rient' in the term 'orientalism' is generally taken to mean either the Islamic Middle East (e.g. North Africa, Turkey, Arabia, Persia), or East and South Asia (the 'Far East', e.g. India, Indochina, China, Japan), or all of these together... The strict definition and broad definition of 'orientalism', mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph, correlate with two paradigms – one primarily style-focused, the other more comprehensive – for studying any exotic musical work.²²

The primary purpose of this chapter is to outline the Orientalist phenomenon in the musicological context and to distinguish different approaches of Orientalism. This chapter is divided into sub-chapters with contents covering progression of Orientalism and several compositional techniques in Orientalism. The first part of this chapter will focus on historical context of Orientalism in the Western music. The second part of this chapter will examine more specific musical techniques used to evoke the imaginary "Orient."

²²Ralph P. Locke. "Orientalism." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40604> (accessed July 14, 2010).;

Orientalism as Representation

The earliest Oriental representation in Western music was found in the late Renaissance, when a dance called the *Moresca*, whose origin is considered to be the Moors of North Africa, was included in French *ballets de cour* and Venetian *intermedi*²³. Any portrayal of the Orient was not much found between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries because the climate of the West was against the influence of other cultures, as reflected on the political actions of the Crusades.²⁴

The representation of the Orient began to surface more in operas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as the Enlightenment movement in France gained its ground and stimulated learning of the non-Occidental cultures.²⁵ The popular geographic regions that were set to set to operas of this period include Turkey, Persia, India and China. The eighteenth-centuries operas whose titles are indicative of Oriental inclusions are *Les Indes galantes* [The Romantic Indies] by Philip Rameau, *Le Cinesi* [the Chinese Women] and *Le Cadi dupe* [The Duped Qadi] by Christopher Gluck, *Entführung aus dem Serail* [The Abduction from the Seraglio] by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and *La Caravane du Caire* [The Traveler from Cairo] by André Ernest Modeste Grétry.²⁶ In the instrumental music of the eighteenth century, an attempt to incorporate the Oriental elements was based on the imitation of gestures. The examples could be seen in the imitation of Turkish music, which was exotic enough to be considered “Oriental” in the Europeans’

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴Janós Kárpáti, “Non-European Influences on Occidental Music (a Historical Survey),” *World of Music*, 22, no. 2 (1980), 23.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 22.

²⁶Kárpáti, 23.

eyes, and reflected on the finales of the Violin Concerto K. 219 and the Piano Sonata in A major, K. 311 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Despite of the composer's intention, the musical content of these works have little effect in evoking the Orient to today's audience.²⁷

In the nineteenth century, due to French occupation of Algeria in 1830, there was a rising interest in North Africa, and French composers actively incorporated subjects and themes that were perceived to be from the Maghreb region.²⁸ At the same time, an operatic portrayal of Oriental images underwent transformation in the nineteenth century. The image of the Orient, which maintained its presence within a comedic role for eighteenth-century operas, began to surface in romantic grand operas by the second half of the nineteenth century. This change of trend reflects on the general sentiments of the two centuries; the rationalism of the eighteenth century takes importance in the contrast between Europe and the Orient, while the Romantic notion of the nineteenth century focuses on the sentiment toward the mysteriousness of the Orient, not the differences between the two worlds. Operas from the nineteenth-century that contain Oriental materials include *Le Caïd* [Ruler of Algeria] by Ambroise Thomas, *Reine de Saba* [Queen of Sheba] by Charles Gounod, *L'Africaine* by Meyerbeer.²⁹

The foremost French composer who attempted the incorporation of Eastern musical characteristics in the 19th century was Félicien David (1810 - 1876). David's affiliation with the political group Saint-Simonianism took him on a missionary trip with

²⁷Kiyoshi Tamagawa, "Echoes from the East: the Javanese Gamelan and Its Influence on the Music of Claude Debussy"(D.M.A. thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 1988), 2

²⁸Daniel Pistone, "Les conditions historiques de l'exotisme musical française," *Revue Internationale de Musique Française*, no. 6 (Nov. 1981): 22.

²⁹Kárpáti, 24-25.

a small group of friends to Constantinople, Smyrna, Jaffa, Jerusalem and Egypt. During his voyage, the composer was fully inspired by the customs, religions and landscapes of the countries he visited. Upon the completion of the missionary trip, he stayed in Cairo for two extra years, made a living by teaching piano and explored around the desert. He eventually returned to Paris, and published *Mélodie orientales pour piano* in 1836 with his own expense. Its preface by the composer claims that the melodies in *Mélodies orientales* are genuinely of the Orient in his mind, and he supplied them with harmonies to be more accessible to European ears. *Mélodies orientales* received little attention from the public, but his symphonic ode *Le désert*, which premiered on December 8th, 1844, became a success. Evocations of the Orient in *Le désert* contains actual muezzin (a call to prayer in a mosque) for each of three movements, and the dance movement included both Egyptian and Syrian melodies.³⁰

Orientalism as Musical Gestures

Several changes are observed toward the end of the nineteenth century. According to the linguistic survey in France, the word ‘*Orient*’ in French language in the late nineteenth century was used to indicate the Far-East region more often than the Islamic Middle East.³¹ With a growing popularity of tourism and a gradual improvement of the photographic reproductions, the Europeans were better informed with the reality of the Islamic Middle East, which was far more Westernized than they had initially imagined.

³⁰Hugh Macdonald and Ralph P. Locke. "David, Félicien." In *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40038> (accessed July 13, 2010).

³¹Geneviève Balardelle, “L’Exotisme Extrême-Oriental en France au tournant du siècle” *Revue internationale de musique française*, no. 6 (Nov. 1981), 67.

In consequence, Islamic Middle East gradually lost its mysterious quality in the eyes of Europeans, and the Europeans, especially the artists, lost their interest in the regions as exotic locales.³²

Coupled with the aforementioned changes in social issues, new approaches of exoticism have emerged to further the artistic endeavors. The continuing practice of exoticism prior to Symbolist era was what Locke coined as *Overt Exoticism*, which involves a way of portraying, mimicking, or sometimes exaggerating unfamiliar places and peoples. Serious composers from the turn of the twentieth-century disdained a use of *Overt Exoticism* as it was overused in the music from the past decades and no longer possessed the impact that it once had.³³ In addition, revolutionary movements in literature and visual-arts communities became a catalyst for musical community to steer away from the conventions and crave for new artistic outputs, which resulted in intensifying one's subjectivity to another level. This resulted in *Submerged Exoticism*, which Locke defined as, incorporating "distinctive scales, harmonies, orchestral colors and other features that had previously associated with exotic realms."³⁴ Locke lists characteristics of *Submerged Exoticism* as followed;

- (1) the *arabesque* melodic figures
- (2) unusual scales – especially whole-tone and octatonic and their specific harmonies.³⁵

Submerged Exoticism itself is not necessarily the Orientalism as it represents simply composer's dream world in program music (e.g. *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* by

³²*Ibid*, 68.

³³Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 214.

³⁴*Ibid*, 217.

³⁵*Ibid*. 217.

Debussy), or it could represent non-Western regions that are not the Grove-dictionary definition of the Oriental region (e.g. *The Rite of Spring: Pictures of Pagan Russia* by Stravinsky).

An exoticism that transcends the *Submerged Exoticism* is *Transcultural Composing*, which Locke defined as “the practice of composing for Western contexts – for example, a piano recital or a wind-ensemble concert - a work that incorporates certain stylistic and formal conventions of another culture’s music, often a music that has a quite different context.”³⁶ *Transcultural Composing* is a mixture of three elements: *Overt Exoticism*, *Submerged Exoticism* and the direct experience of the music of other traditions. In other words, in order for composition to be recognized as “transculturally composed” it needs to encompass compositional procedures of *Submerged Exoticism*. Locke consider “*Pagodes*” (from *Estampes*) by Debussy to be a product of *Transcultural Composing* because it was inspired by Debussy’s memory of gamelan performances in the various Southeast Asian pavilions in the 1889 World’s Fair, and uses compositional procedures that are outlined in the *Submerged Exoticism*, including pentatonic scales, the pentatonic hybrid scales and rhythmic figures that are more impressions than melodic.

To clarify discussion on Orientalism in music of Reynaldo Hahn’s *Rossignol Éperdu*, the concept of Orientalism will be investigated by the followings three aspects;

- (1) Representation of the Orient – each of the six pieces in the *Series Deux* “Orient” has a programmatic title. The significance of each title, particularly in its correlations to the Oriental cultures, will be examined.
- (2) Compositional Procedures that evoke exoticism– once the title is confirmed with its relation to the Orient, I will then investigate the presence of exotic materials in

³⁶*Ibid.*, 228.

the compositional contents. This will include identification of the exotic scales (whole-tone, octatonic, pentatonic), arabesque-figures, and less-conventional tonal harmonies.

- (3) Hahn's Direct *Transcultural* Experience– Investigation of Hahn's life and recognition of his direct experience to the live performance of the Orient.