

Turqueries: European Ballet with Turkish Content According to Metin and Neo-Ottoman Turkish State Opera-Ballet Productions

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This paper, indebted to the extensive research of my great Traditional Turkish Theatre Teacher in my drama school, Metin And, aims to follow Turkish images in Western opera, theatre and ballet performances which were influenced by Ottoman invasions in European lands beginning in the sixteenth century; and after this negative association with the Turks, to examine the mostly negative, but some positive examples relating to Turks on European stages from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries onwards. After that research I would like to examine that image of the Turks in relation to the Neo-Ottoman image which has been created by the Turkish State and Opera Ballet stages in Turkey during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In conclusion I would like to compare the aesthetic and historical/political meanings of these two images of the Turk in opera, theatre and ballet performances during their respective time periods.

Metin and approached the art of theatre and dance from different angles both historically and critically. In some of his books such as *Gönlü Yüce Türk: Yüzyıllar Boyunca Bale Eserlerinde Türkler*, *İtalian stage in Turkey*, *Turkey in İtalian Stage: Türkiye’de İtalyan Sahnesi*, *İtalyan Sahnesi’nde Türkiye*, *İstanbul in the Sixteenth Century: 16.Yüzyılda İstanbul*, *Turkish Miniature Painting-the Ottoman Period*, *Türk Minyatür Sanatı-Osmanlı Dönemi*, *Tiyatro, Opera ve Bale Sahnelerinde Kanuni Süleyman İmgesi: Kanuni Süleyman İmge in Thetare*, *Opera and Balle Stage*, *A History of Theatre and Popular Entertainment in Turkey: Türkiye’de Tiyatrove Popüler Eğlenceler...* he followed the historical trails of western and eastern stages together. But mainly after seeing Feulliet’s *The Great Turk (BüyükTürk)* dance hand-writing and Bernardo Belotto’s drawing of *Le Turc Geneveux (GönlüYüce Turk)* in British Museum he decided to write about a book which examines Turks and Turkish characters or stories about Turks in opera and ballet performances between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. His book suggests that working on the history of dance had some deficiencies and disadvantages compared with the history of theatre or opera. The reason for that was because the sources were very limited since almost none of the ballet performances have been documented on paper. The main studies which had been published about the art of dance were also few in number. In general, the sources were widely varied and scattered.

The main problem of Turk image at that time was about the identity of Turks in the performances. Who are the Turks, Turks was called “Morisco” and the negros, africans, muslims and Turks are the same under the “Morisco”. It was the main problem for the research of this study first of Him. Everybody was talking about only *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, *L’EuropeGalante*, *LesIndes Galantes*. At the beginning they were just for all about the Turks in Europe. Reading librettos, newspapers, people’s writing about that age made him one step forward and he founded Italian choreographer Angiolini’s *Soliman Secondo Ballet’s* and Giovanni Galzerani’s *Ali Pascia di Giannia (Tepedelenli Ali Paşa)* handwritings. And then he founded the main parts of the Choreographer Justamant’s *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme Performance (1876-Paris)*.

Then he was in the middle of the position which can be stated like...Two main reasons why Turks have been presented in many ballet pieces. The first was “aesthetic” and the second “historical/political”. And states that in the beginning, the writings and memoirs of Western travellers journeying in the East motivated the curiosity of Europeans about these unknown lands and their life styles, best reflected in orientalist paintings. Turkish ambassadors appearing in European cities had also received much attention. In the age of Louis XIV, memoirs of Chevalier Laurent D’Arvieux effected Molière’s *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, *Turc Ceremony (TürkTöreni)* part, Romantic ballets of Théophile Gautier, *LaPéri...*

At the beginning of this movement dressing like turks was the starting point, but at the end it was an aesthetic choice to make it bigger effect of imaginations on the audiences about the performance. In historical and political contexts, Turks as bearers of big empires had a great influence on world history; therefore, their relation to the western empires provided a rich source for the themes and plots of ballet pieces. Single events like military victories or the Sultan's coming into power also constituted stories of these ballets. Well-known Turkish figures and their stories also found a place in ballet performances. Metin and forms the sections in the book according to the contents of certain ballets. Choreographer Franz Hilverding prepared a ballet named *Le Turc Généreux* in 1758 in Vienna. *Les Indes Galantes* was the main structure of the ballet and Choreographer Gasparo Angiolini made a piece which is named *Les Nouveaux Argonautes (Yeni Argonotlar)* in 1770 in Russia after Hüsameddin Pasha's run out from Sakız Island.

The main point and the main problem were the crises between Christians and the Muslims at that time. The subject was the turks are the enemies of Christians and the reason that was the religious man and that periods in Europe. The *Rageing Turke (Öfkeli Türk)* was the main title of the ballets at that time and Metin And findings was the more important issues for to change this image, and showing the real approaches and it was the opposite idea for Turks in Europe actually. At the end we have two images at the same time, one of is positive, the other is not very positive.

Turks are founded in ballets firstly 15th and 16th century and then 17th and 18th century's **Carrousel** and **Trionfos** (atlibaleler) or (Trionfi and Mascarade-zaferalayları). These ballets with horses was called *ballo a piedi e a cavalli* in Italy, and *Rosballette* in Austria. Dance, music, costumes and choreographic organizations are the main elements of ballets. In 1443 in Napoli, and in 1468 in Bruges, some performances tells us about Turks and Turks tradition at that time. In 1558, Henri II, in 1594 James VI, in 1662, Louis XIV organized some quadrilles and today Henri De Gissey's and François Cheauveau's examples about that events gives us some information about that period. In 1626, *Grand Bal de la Douairiere de Billebahault (Bilbao'lu Dul Kadın Balesi)* there is an entrance in which Great Turk comes in a real horse to the stage, and the critics was that: dance makes an imagination on the stage, it is not a real world. Joseph M. Vien's gravures talks us about a mascarade in Rome, which is named *La Caravane du Sultan a La Mecque* in 1748, and also we can see the paintings of R. Morghen y Jean François de Troy's *Celebre Mascherata Fatto Nella Splendissime Citta di Napoli* in 1778.

The first performance we faced with Turks in ballet performances is *Voëu de Faisan* in 1454 in France. Entrées in the age of Henri IV's ballets until 1610 we can talk about some ballets also. Like *le grand ballets des Etrangers*, turks are not warriors but the lovers. *Ballet des Turcs* and *Ballets des Janissaires (Yeniçeriler Balesi)* are also the examples of turks in ballets in 1600, *Ballet de Monseigneur le duc de Vendosme* (which is an example of ballet *mélodramatique*). In 1613, *ballet de la courtisane*, 1620 *ballet dansé en la presence du Roy A Bordeaux* and *ballet de l'amour de ce temps*, in 1622 *ballet de monseigneur le prince de Türk*, in 1625 *ballet de la magnifiqueduscesse de dendoye*, in 1626 *grand bal de la douairiere de billebahault...*, in 1627 there are two turks in the *ballet de monsieur le prince*, in 1627 *ballet de l'extravagant* there is a great sultan and two hadım, in 1633 *bacchustriompantsurl'amour* there is one turk, two odaliques and one hadım, in 1634 *ballet de la félicité sur le sujet de l'heureuse naissance de monsieur le dauphin* there is also great turk image, and three pashas, and *ballet des princes indiens* there is one turk, in 1640 *ballet du bureau d'adresse*, in 1643 *le libraire de pont-neuf ou les romaines*, there is İbrahim Paşa and two janissaires. In Moliere's *Siciliens* there is also turks and also in 1670, the play which is named *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* or *comédie-ballet* and the part of *Turc Ceramony*. Lastly the most important french ballet is *L'Europe Galantes* which is played in 17th century.

In Italy *entremets*, *intromesso*, *intermedio*, *moresca* and *brando* are the words which are related dances and the dancers. In 1473 the first *morisco* was performed in Italy by Cardinal Pietro Riario. But the most important ballet is the *Ballo di donna Turche (türk kadınlar balesi)*. It is choreographed by Santino Comesari and are the parts of *calata*, *corrente*, *canari*, *galliard* dances. There are the parts of *ballomesto* and *ballo basso* in it. This is starting the *melodramma* style in ballet at that time. In 1640 *ballet des alchimistes*, in 1650 *Il tobacco* ballets also has some turks images in themselves. In Britain there are masks in 15th and 16th centuries. It is also called *Revels in Tudor, Elisabeth and Stuart* time period. It was coming from Italy and *Alla Turchesca* style is effected by coming of Sultan Bajazet II to the Florence in 1483 and 1487. In 1510 and in the disguising, in 1554 and 1555, a masque of venetian senators with galley-slaves for their torchbearers here are also Turks. In 1559, *masque of Turks*, in 1635 the *triumphs of the prince d'amour...* But the main time period is the 18 and 19th century in Britain.

These performances in which Turks appear took place mostly in France, Italy and Britain. The appearance of Turks in ballets started with the horse-ballets and in victory processions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The “turquerie” fashion as a new style was an important influence reflected in ballet performances. Also the curiosity for dervish whirling was quite high and adaptations of the seritualistic practices could be found in various ballet performances. The use of Turkish characters next to different nationalities was also performed. In addition to these, well known political incidents like the siege of Vienna found their place in ballet performances. As an Example, *Les Indes Galantes* was a very important political opera-ballet performed in 1735 in Académie Royale de Musique, where one section was called *Le Turc Généreux*, and was based on the true character of *Veziroğlu Osman Paşa*.

Metin And states that in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the rising of nationalistic feelings in the Balkan areas where Russians emerged as their “guardian”, ballet had been used as a propagandist tool against the Ottomans. One such example was famous choreographer Petipa’s *Roxana, The Beauty of Montenegro* staged in 1878 which stirred up nationalistic feelings in the Balkans against the Turks. He underlines the fact that the ballets which were about Turks or had stories related to Turks were keystones in the history of ballet.

According to And, in these ballets, one could identify different styles overcoming others in terms of aesthetic perceptions. Therefore ballets which had contents about the Turks were also marked by their different aesthetic styles. According to And’s analysis, whether or not this was a deliberate choice or only a coincidence, one could not guess. And provides examples of such ballets, stating that *Ballo di Donne Turche* was one of the first examples of a melodramatic ballet, where *L’Europe Galante* had been the start of opera-ballets. One of Noverre’s ballets, *Les Fêtes ou Les Jalousies ou les Fêtes du Sérail*, was given as an important example of ballets d’action in his letters. Among many operas, we learn that the originator of modern ballet Jean Georges Noverre had created three ballets about Turks in the eighteenth century. Another choreographer, Franz Hilverding, created *Le Turc Généreux* and Gasparo Angiolini created *Il Solimano Secondo* ballets during the same period.

At the end of the study, Turks are in the ballets sometimes for such a kind of dances which are wanted to bring in to the performance somehow. Vincenzo Saunier’s *Del Bedestano o Mercato di schiavi* (*bedestenveyaesirpazarı*), or Pierre Gardel’s *La Dansomanie* in 1800. Also in the famous play like *L’Ourset le Pasha*, Madame Angot a Constantinople Turks are still dancing. In a once, there is an example of Verdi’s *Othello* has a part of Turks are dancing in it. Today 20th century and 21st century the point is directed not into the Europe but also in the eastern countries, Balkans and the Russia. Like Angiolini’s *Les Nouveaux Argonautes*, Petipa is choreographed a ballet with Minkus music in 1877 which is named *Roxanna, the Beauty of Karadağ*, it is a kind of propaganda about Turks in Balkans, and it has a kind of message for the Slav brothers to contradict them in the position of Christians and Muslims. Actually it was a good try and everything has well done in Balkans, and there is nothing to do about them. Also Stevan Hristić’s *Ochrid’s Legends* is about the tension between Macedonians and Janissaries. In Russia, the *Corsari* (*korsan*) ballet is also about the Turks who are not very positive.

In 1947 after Ninette de Valois’s journey of Turkey established a new Turk subject in ballet firstly in Turkey and then in the world hopefully. But the main thing is the ballets which are having a subject about Turks, are the important ballets and directed the ballet and dance history in the world like *Ballo di Donneturche*, *Ballet Melodramatique* or *Dramma per Musica*. *Grand Bal de Douairière de Billebahault* means that ballet a entrée style is over the ballet melodramatique style anyway. *L’Europe Galante* is the starting point of opéra-ballet style, *Les Indes Galantes* is the most important elements of Rameau Age. Noverre says that *les fêtes ou les jalousies du sérail* composed by Mozart is the most important elements of ballet d’action. The study and appreciation of Turkish State Theatre and State Opera and Ballet Productions in Turkey is a new thing which is followed by the government politics. The reason why Turkish theatre, opera and ballet last neo-ottomanist productions (TV series are also included) has been thus neglected lies probably in the government fact that until very recently it has been a closed look to the artists’ houses. Many of the theatre plays by some directors, ballets and dances by produced Merih Çimenciler, Beyhan Murphy and Uğur Seyrek are directly about the new approach of Ottoman Empire which is called neo-ottoman styles on the ballet stage like *Harem*, *GülDestan*, *Hüsn-ü Aşk*, *Barbaros* have a kind of Turk image which is sympathetic and equal to the Ottoman emperors, pashas or sultans.

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