

“Musiki’de Usulün Vezin ve Rakama Göre (Tesbit ve İcra’nın) İlimi” (The Science of Usul in Music according to Vezin and Number): How to transcribe and analyze Cantemir Music Collection with in the Rhythmic Pattern (Usul) and Tempo

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“Usul is the balance and proportion in music; such that, through the power of usul, it is ensured that the rhyming of the tune is not more or less than it is necessary.”

Cantemir

In music education “meshk” involves all aspects of musical training; theory, instrumentation, vocalization, the teacher’s stylistic approach, performance technique, and interpretation. In practice, however, the scope of “meshk” was not limited to the study of music only. Almost all-vocal pieces of the classical repertoire were taken from poetry, which was written in a rhythmic structure called “Aruz”. In order for this rhythmic structure to be in harmony with the “usul” of the music, it was necessary to be familiar with both. This made the study of poetry an essential part of music education. In case of the “meshk” system of study for religious music repertoire, students were required to study related subjects such as theology and mystical philosophy. This multi-dimensional characteristic of education usually resulted in long periods of study and life time associations between the mentor and his students.

For students at the beginning levels, “meshk” can be conducted in small groups. Although there is no age restriction to attend “meshk” sessions, most beginners were young students who demonstrated some inclination towards music during their primary education years. Familiarity with or affection for music were not the only requirements for teacher to accept students for “meshk”; candidate’s character traits, mannerisms, and familiarity with the “meshk” ethic were also important considerations. After a period of preliminary studies, individual sessions became more preferable and productive for both the teacher and the students.

An interesting aspect of Ottoman “meshk” is the consistent “non-usage” of music notation as a tool. In fact, starting with Ali Ufki’s system, several notation systems were developed within the last four centuries but none were embraced by the teachers, or the students of the “meshk”. It is true that, these notation systems were instrumental in preserving some music, but compositions saved in notation account for a very small proportion of the whole repertoire, which owes its survival entirely to the “meshk” system.

In order to provide an explanation of this “rejection”, Turkish and foreign musicologists, and travelers wrote extensively suggesting different solutions. As a performer and a teacher of music I find Dr. Cem Behar’s approach the most applicable. In this book titled “Klasik Türk Musikisi Üzerine Denemeler” he writes:

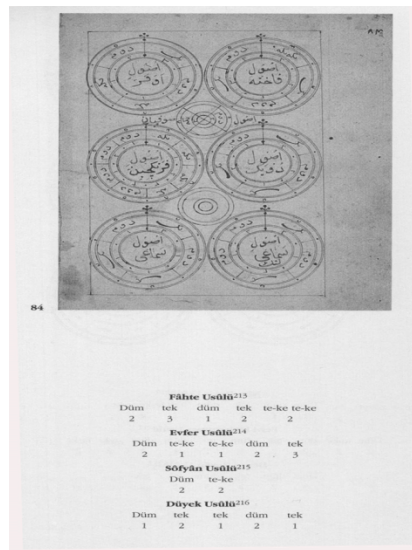
“We can observe this phenomenon yet from another angle. When we take into account the whole Classical Turkish Music tradition, we can conclude that notating a piece produces a “standardized” version of it, and this standardization inevitably limits the freedom of interpretation enjoyed by musicians during their own rendition of the work.”

Multifarious scores of almost all works of repertoire are found today because using notation had been rejected and standardization disregarded. While this diversity is a result of the varying informants in the “meshk” system, the problem is based on that there isn’t any problem stemming from whether any informants or any master who teaches a work is more reliable or captious than any other person practicing “meshk” with. Other sources of the problem are that the works have been notated many

years after the death of the composer, and that various versions are accepted as if each is the original work of the composer. It is generally a misleading idea to claim that the performances of work composed before the 19th century fully reflect the idea and the design of the composer, while there is no possibility to compare the original composition with the current one. The performed versions of any work are shaped by the initiative of the performer, the performer's mood during the performance, the social status of the listener and the spontaneous demands of the listener. These several versions have been performed and varied according to the musical taste of the period. For this reason, while a researcher studies Ottoman-Turkish music, it becomes impossible to examine the repertoire according to the centuries, the composers, and the characteristics of the era when the composer lived, and to analyze the style.

The aims of this study are to discuss how to analyze and transcribe Ottoman-Turkish music 17th and 18th century's repertoire in Dimitri Cantemir's music collection. It is the most important musicological material created in the 18th century. It is well known by the full name of "Kitabu'ilmil'-Musiki 'ala vechi'l Hurufat (Musikiyi Harflerle Tespit ve İcra İlminin Kitabı"/"The Book of Demonstrating Music by Letters and Science of Performance"). The autograph manuscript of Cantemir's treatise and the music collection bound in one volume is undated, but it is generally assumed that the work was written towards the beginning of the 18th century.

Cantemir; during performance, the unit of time which determines the tempos of the rhythmic patterns, thinking that the Western system used, has to be valid in writing, established the units according to the fastest striking with the plectrum of the *tanbur* and named them as Big Meter, Small Meter, and the Smallest Meter. Defending the Big Meter has to be in slow motion, the tempo of the big meter equals to eighth value. The tempo of the small meter equals to fourth value. And the tempo of the smallest meter equals to the half note. Instead of this, the rhythmic patterns, which are being used today and are changed from past to present. The performances have to be performed with the rhythmic patterns, defined by Cantemir, creating harmony between the melodic patterns of the pieces and the rhythmic pattern when the 20th century transcription and analysis emphasizes different rhythmical patterns and different accents in a performance and the harmony between the melody and the rhythmic pattern is spoiled.



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Fähte Usûlü²¹⁵
Düm tek düm tek te-ke te-ke
2 3 1 2 2

Evfer Usûlü²¹⁴
Düm te-ke te-ke düm tek
2 1 3 2 3

Sofyan Usûlü²¹⁵
Düm te-ke
2 2

Düyek Usûlü²¹⁶
Düm tek tek düm tek
1 2 1 2 1