ŞERIF MUHIDDIN TARGAN: AS THE ACTOR AND INDICATOR OF MODERN COMPOUNDS

Bilen Işıktaş

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Virtuosity is regarded as one of the concepts with no equivalence in the performance tradition of Turkish music. In Ottoman music, human voice was essentially at the core of performance while *saz* (instrument) performance developed as accompaniment. It is not arbitrary to observe the reference of human voice as the most developed, *tamam* (finished) instrument in music texts whereas instrument is referred to as *na-tamam* (incomplete). For *makam* music in which the skill of improvisation is regarded as a significant criterion in performance, human voice pushes the limits with a mastery of pitch, agility and technical music; while instrument music and performance remained subordinate. A skilled accompanier should not be tempted to rival the vocal and should create a musical impact without standing out too much. For instance, musicians who are good accompaniers in Arabic music are described with the term *tevrîk*, where the essential quality lies in the soloist accompanied by the instrumentalist avoids producing a technically more complex or ornamented melody. [1] Meanwhile in Western music, the developments in the 17th century paved the way for the birth of new music. Major and minor scales replaced church music. Counterpoint was replaced by harmonic music, with developments taking place in the production of instruments. As new forms appeared in instrumental music, virtuoso instrumentalists and singers became prominent figures in the music world in Europe.[2] Especially with the dawn of the Romantic period, performers started to not content themselves with what the composer offered them and developed a new approach to performance in which they could demonstrate their talent in a way that even challenged the composer. While the composer freed himself from the obligation to entertain the audience with his technique and interpretation, the performer became a virtuoso and emerged as the master of great sounds, the absolute ruler of the music world, in the words of Finkelstein. Such a performer therefore turned into an individual that performed a ritual of heroism almost overshadowing the composer in the eye of the audience.[3] Technical talent was integrating with the individual talent and creativity of the performer, serving the development of new playing techniques and methods while pushing the limits of the instrument. Such was where stood violinist Niccola Paganini who tore off three strings of the violin and played with the fourth string or the pianist Franz Liszt who charmed the audience with his variations on renowned opera arias.

The phenomenon of modernization created the individual, which had an impact in the development of virtuosity. In a world centered around the individual that

1 Ali Jihad Racy, Arap Dünyasında Müzik: Tarab Kültürü ve Sanatı, çev. Serdar Aygün, İstanbul 2007, s. 129.

2 İlhan Mimaroğlu, Müzik Tarihi, Varlık Yayınları, İstanbul 2012, s. 37.

3 Sidney Finkelstein, Müzik Neyi Anlatır, çev. M. Halim Spatar, Kaynak Yayınları, s. 69-70.

rose out of modernization, virtuosity can be defined as a special situation in the perspective of the performer who reproduces music and individualizes himself in spite of music. This is where the style of individualization and the attitude in the output come to the forefront. It should be duly noted that virtuosity is not only related to technical agility or musical plays with which it is often confused. This attitude has an expressionist style that goes on a par with the process in which the performer is allowed to make a show of talent in what could be defined as market music as well as the commodification of music. It is without a doubt that this attitude is the consequence of the need to offer music to the appreciation of the masses and an emphasis on visual quality rather than listening. In brief, virtuosity means further than a technical show or mastery of the instrument. Contrary to popular belief, agility and show have a limited impact in virtuosity, which therefore has little chance to of marketability. As is stated by Öğün as well, thanks to his virtuosity, the musician enables the music to re-emerge in a pure and direct form in an age which traditions of music are destroyed in the process of modernity and become rapidly socialized. This is an entirely spiritual or introspective state. The composition is almost recomposed in performance. According to the same view, the virtuoso creates new meanings, shades and nuances within the existing partitions, thereby alluding to lost traditions and defeating alienation. [4]

What could be regarded as equivalent to virtuosity in Turkish music tradition is embodied in Tanburi Cemil Bey at the turn of the twentieth century. Agility and swiftness in performance, creation of unfamiliar sound compounds and the search to come up with new tunes are first revealed by Tanburi Cemil. He is also the first to demonstrate a freer and lyrical approach to partition, which was first found strange but was later adopted and spread by his followers. However, he manifested his virtuosity in gramophone records and did not leave a method or other work. The artistic performance he demonstrates for the audience in his records is considered as models. Although he developed the tanbur technique, he didn't have enough time to produce a work out of that development. [5] Following Cemil Bey, the most important figure in virtuoso performance in instrumental music is Şerif Muhiddin Targan.

Both in terms of his autobiography and his contribution in oud in Turkish music performance and composition, Şerif Muhiddin Targan could be regarded as the ideal counterpart to the concept of virtuosity in Turkish music. Şerif Muhiddin was born in Istanbul in 1892. His father was Şerif Ali Haydar Paşa, appointed as Emir of Mecca by the Ottoman government in 1916. Targan's lineage went back to Prophet Muhammad and enjoyed a reputable position in the Ottoman high culture. From his childhood, he received quality education in a colorful social environment.[6] The education of Muhiddin Targan was mostly based on homeschooling within the family and private tutoring. He especially learned philosophy and religious matters from İsmail Hakkı İzmirli. His family played a substantial role in his private tutoring

4 Süleyman Seyfi Öğün, "Türk Müziğinde Bireyselleşme ve Tanburi Cemil'in Virtüözitesi", Türk Politik Kültürü, Alfa Yayınları, İstanbul 2000, s. 438.

5 Cem Behar, "Geleneksel Türk Musikisinde Virtüözlük Kavramı ve Uygulamaları", Zaman, Mekân, Müzik: Klasik Türk Musikisinde Eğitim, İcra ve Aktarım, Afa Yayınları, İstanbul 1992, s. 107-108.

6 Babası Şerif Ali Haydar Paşa hakkında bkz. İsmail Hakkı İzmirli, Mekke-i Mükerreme Emirleri, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara 1972, s. 144-145,

given by the leading masters of the period. He learned English, French, Arabic and Persian at an early age to the degree that allowed him to read the masterpieces of Eastern and Western cultures. He completed his higher education successfully in two different faculties. He graduated from both Literature and Law Faculties in five years. [7]

The house of Şerif Ali Haydar Paşa in Çamlıca, referred to as the Şerifs Mansion, was a popular spot for the intellectuals and artists of the age. It was within this cultural atmosphere that was first discovered Targan's interest in music. He first started to work on oud secretly but when his family took notice of his keen interest in music, Targan started to receive lessons from major masters of the age. Musicians who came to Şerif Mansion included Kanuni Hacı Arif Bey, Ahmet Irsoy as well as Ali Rifat Çağatay who played a major role in his training. The guests of the Mansion where the cultural memory of Targan took shape also included prominent performers in Western Music. Music by Godowski and Hungarian violin virtuoso Charles Berger also echoed in the halls of the house. [8] Most probably as a result of the said atmosphere, Targan started playing violoncello at age 13, encouraged by his uncle. He then started to receive lessons from Monsieur Riki. The cello repertoire included works by composers such as Debussy, Ravel, Bach, Locatelli who later made into his own repertoire. These works were not easy to perform, which was a result of the good education and genius of Şerif Muhiddin.

Cosmopolitan identity and culture played a determinant role in the formation of Targan's music and his identity as a modern performer. The heritage of a society thrown off balance between the East and the West since the Tanzimat period nourished his artistic talent. Targan emerged as one of the rich portraits of the 19th century, the longest century in the history of Ottoman Empire, as is pointed out by İlber Ortaylı. The Empire was going through an economic crisis, fought wars in 1908 and Tripoli and Balkan Wars in later years with the eventual outbreak of the World War I, the reason behind major crises. The social conditions that rose out of this political climate gave birth to a virtuoso, Şerif Muhiddin, who found himself in limbo (âraf).[9]

What was it that distinguished Targan from the oud players that preceded him or his contemporaries? It is known that Istanbul did have renowned oud players who demonstrated their skills with agility. Sermet Muhtar Alus speaks of Afet whom he states that was a part of the Kemani Tatyos band that gave oud lessons in mansions: *He is one of the leading masters. When he grabs the oud as a toy, the plectrum as an acrobat, he plays so well that you cannot even see the eagle feather in his fingers. I have never seen and will probably never see anyone else in my life with such a good command of his instrument.*"[10]

This quote indicates that Afet had substantially matured in technical terms.

7 M. Hakan Cevher, Şerif Muhiddin Targan: Hayatı-Besteciliği-Eserleri, Ege Üniversitesi Basımevi, İzmir 1993, s. 2-3.

8 Mithat Cemal, Mehmet Akif, Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, Ankara 1986, s. 187-188, Emin Erişirgil, İslamcı Bir Şairin Romanı, Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, İstanbul 1986, s. 66-67.

9 Bilen Işıktaş, "The Innovative Nature of Şerif Muhiddin Targan's Music", International Journal of Turcologia, vol. VIII, n. 15, Spring 2013, s. 43-53.

10 Sermet Muhtar Alus, İstanbul Yazıları, Haz. Erol Şadi Erdinç-Faruk Alıkan, İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Dairesi Başkanlığı, İstanbul 1994, s. 191.

What factors determined Şerif Muhiddin's consideration as a virtuoso and not instrumentalists such as Afet who charmed the listeners? This report seeks to answer the question and to interpret the virtuosity of Targan.

In referring to virtuosity, Cem Behar indicates that virtuosity gains continuity out of instrument teaching methods and existing repertoire of pieces in addition to practical performance techniques. Continuity in virtuoso performance depends on three elements: 1) Special teaching methods in training virtuoso performers, 2) Special instrument performance techniques, and 3) An instrument repertoire that enables the demonstration of virtuosity skills. These three interdependent conditions combined and developed virtuosity in Western music.[11]

The term virtuoso used in reference to Şerif Muhiddin's identity as a performer, his works and his legacy is not a general term but is equivalent to what it stands for in Western terminology. [12] The elements Behar regards fundamental in continuity in virtuoso performance are directly found in the artistic career of Targan. Şerif Muhiddin gave concerts in New York Town Hall in 1928 and was regarded as a virtuoso performer in music circles. During these concerts, Targan performed classical pieces not only with oud but with violoncello as well, one of the basic instruments of Western music, thereby joining Eastern and Western music on stage. Targan brought Turkish music in the concert hall with a modern presentation style outside his repertoire and established an understanding of recital. This performance symbolizes a transition from an understanding of music performed in houses and mansions, played within a tradition of exercise in small circles; to one which is put on stage and is performed before an audience. Turkish music from then on was positioned in a level that targeted concert halls and the masses. Needless to say, this attitude by Targan is different from the world of the traditional musician. The musician here turns into a performer whose existence alone as a modern actor is confirmed on stage. Actually, this substantial transformation manifested by Targan in New York in 1928 was going to be repeated in Istanbul in 1931 by Münir Nurettin who received voice training in Paris. The traditional *mutrip* or *muganni* now became a soloist performer. Approaches to costume, concert venue, repertoire and performance undergo changes with the impact of modernization, with new styles and forms developing as a result.

Individualization, on of the most decisive consequences of modernization was an important quality in Targan as a performer. Individual performance or soloism is at the core of Şerif Muhiddin's artistic production and performance. Unlike other instrumentalists of his age, he did not join official or private singing societies. He chose to become a soloist that pushed the limits of his instrument, rather than an accompanying instrumentalist.

The repertoire of Şerif Muhiddin Targan is actually reflective of his rich musical identity. Targan closely studied the musical traditions of the East and the West and acquired an identity with a command of both repertoires, able to perform competently in both. Indeed, his alteration between musical traditions is the secret to his technical talent. Playing violoncello affected his handling of the oud and even the design of the oud touché, which contributed to the development of technical

11 Behar, age., s. 85.

12 Tuğrul Hocaoğlu, "Klasik Türk Müziğinde Enstümantal İcra ve Virtüözlük", Musıkişinas, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Türk Müziği Klubü Yayını, İstanbul 1999, sayı 3, s. 67.

boundaries of oud. Master Targan completed the two movements of Hüzzam Saz Semai at age thirteen, with Rauf Yekta Bey referring to his Irak Saz Semai as "Iraq section is now complete." In brief, he had a thorough proficiency of tradition as well as a keen interest in modern patterns. It is observed that he showed and intellectual interest in every field of fine arts. During his years in Baghdad, he opened the conservatory and the music department as well as theater and sculpture departments. Going beyond taboos of representing the Haşimi family, and therefore the lineage of the Prophet, he sought a high artistic and aesthetic approach. This attitude indicates that he was one of the portraits created by Ottoman modernism. However, he also belonged to tradition in a certain respect.

There is a close link between music and social structure and the identity of the musician raised within that society. As a creative identity, a musician actually makes the music of the life he is living. It is within this perspective that one should read Münir Nurettin, Targan, Cemil Bey and Hasan Ferit Alnar. The spiritual quest of an artist in a transition society can be found in Targan. He masterfully used traditional forms in saz semais, while asserting his own style in partitions within a traditional composition. Familiar colors were seen in the main course of his *makam* and he presents his entirely original style following the prelude. The same can be seen in saz semais as well. He made use of a traditional texture in the first three movements and used musical phrases requiring technically difficult and different positions in the fourth phrase. He adopted the same approach in saz semais Hüzzam, Uşşak, Ferahfeza, Dügah, Nihavend and Müstear.

Targan created himself as an individual, a soloist in other words, while transforming instrument as a soloist instrument with his works, thereby challenging the traditional perception.[13] He increased the sound pitch of oud as high as four octaves. The virtuosity of Targan is manifested in his idea to write a piece for an instrument, idea of position, use of nuance signs, use of plectrum and fingers for various difficult passages, a thorough use of the keyboard, ornamentations of his own, polyphony in oud, use of various violoncello techniques in finger pressing and the propagation of the idea of recital. [14]

Şerif Muhiddin Targan was a trailblazer in composition of pieces for oud in Turkish music. The six concert etudes he wrote are a manifestation of what kind of a soloist he was and how he adapted this Western music form in Turkish music, which fell outside tradition. Two elements stand out in the etude form: Exclusively musical elements and those exclusively related to instrument techniques. A well-written etude should be equal in terms of music and instrument mastery. Etude was used by Cramer and Celementi in late 18th century and demonstrated its most ideal examples in virtuoso performers such as Chopin and Lizst[15]. Targan's etudes meanwhile are comprised of select examples of the oud repertoire. Nevertheless, it is not quite possible to argue that the records of his etudes can be thoroughly examined both in technical and aesthetic terms.

Safiya Ayla Targan emphasizes Bach, Chopin and Lizst when she refers to

13 Ersu Pekin, "Evliya Çelebi Müzik Değişiminin Neresinde?", Çağının Sıradışı Yazarı: Evliya Çelebi, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul, s. 334-335.

14 M. Hakan Cevher, Şerif Muhiddin Targan: Hayatı-Besteciliği-Eserleri, Ege Üniversitesi Basımevi, İzmir 1993, s. 15.

15 Andre Hodeir, Müzikte Türler ve Biçimler, çev. İlhan Usmanbaş, Pan Yayınları, İstanbul 2002, s. 33.

musicians that her husband Targan was influenced by. Targan not only knew his Itri, Sadullah Ağa and Dede Efendi but showed a mastery of Western music to such a degree as to perform the violoncello concerto of Haydn in the symphony orchestra directed by Cemal Reşit Rey. Targan had an ideal knowledge of Eastern and Western music traditions, which reflected in his works as a performer. It is possible to find traces of this knowledge in his works such as Koşan Çocuk (Running Child), Kanatlarım Olsa İdi (If I Had Wings) and Kapris (Capricio). It is not a coincidence that he created an example of Turkish music in the Capriccio form, which is a composition that has a vibrant, vigorous content but without a definite structure that aims to create an unexpected impact. The form was previously composed in the fugue style in Western music. Following the New York concerts, oud acquired a new identity.

A trip (1924) by Targan to NY was extremely important for the development of a new manner of Turkish performance. In particular, Targan was the first to advance the notions of a 'soloist'(solist) and an 'artist' in alaturka, two western notions of musical performance which he had experienced while attending concerts in New York. Further, he was the first concert artist in alaturka, Targan appropriating the musical mannerisms of 'western' music when presenting an 'eastern' tradition, both in terms of concert settings and concert convention. Targan is widely recognized as the first soloist to present ud in a concert setting. His of presentation was also different. The following discussion examines the form and content of this concert, showing how this musical event differed from traditional pratice yet built a traditional precedent. He adapted western techniques (such as ornamentation and portamento) to ud performance. It is relates to a musical performance by him in the Town Hall, New York (13 December 1928). Playing the cello and the ud, the artist presented a somewhat varied repertoire of popular arrangements and 'classical' Works on the cello. The concert was divided into four sections, the artist performing his own compositions on the ud in the third section. These included a 'Capriccio' (either 'Kapris I' 1923 or ('Kapris II'1924). S-amaei Ferahfeza' ('Ferahfeza Saz Seamisi' 1926) and a piece entitled 'Running Child) (probably 'Çocuk Havası'1928). In addition, 'Raja' (described as 'old Arabian dance') is detailed on the programme. Interestingly, the 'S-amaei Ferahfeza' is described as 'a kind of oriental composition which has its own rhythm and form'. By way of clarification, the piece entitled 'Runing Child' is probably not hte composition called 'Koşan Çocuk' ('Running Child) which was composed much later (in 1956).[16]

This concert was reviewed in the Sunday Telegraph (16 December 1928), amongst other newspaer. Reports of the concert were publised subsequently in Turkish newspaper. Signifcantly, a copy of the original programme is to be found in Selçuk's archive. The musical reviews focus on the technical dexterity demonstrated bt Targan. On the celllo, he is complemented on his rich sound, noble style and technical mastery. On the oud, his, his virtuosic displays are compared with musical innovations developed by Andres Segovia (1893-1987) on the guitar. Altough both musicians employed different fingering techniques to the oud, a legato style of fingering that deviated significantly from traditional practice. Notably, this particular style of oud performance was imitated later by Arab (such as Jamil Bashir 1920-

16 John Morgan O'Connell, Alaturka: Style in Turkish Music (1923-1938), Ashgate Publishing Limited, England, 2013, s. 146

1977) and Turkish (such as Cinuçen Tanrıkorur) musicians. In a separate review published earlier in the New York Herald Tirubune (24 August 1924), the pianist Leopold Godoswsk (1870-1938) likened Targan to 'the Paganini of ud'.

Targan transformed the performance of oud in the Middle East and in Turkey in an innovative style. In addition to his classical instrumental pieces and a few songs, in an effort to develop virtuosity, he created pieces with names inspired by the virtuosity tradition of Western music such as caprice, etude and concert piece. In particular, he created the first serious method to train a virtuoso in oud. [17]

Training a pure virtuoso or solely an instrumentalist has never been a primary goal in Ottoman Turkish music tradition. Methods put forward by Hafız Mehmed Efendi in 1901, by Ali Salahi Bey in 1910 and later Fahri Kopuz are a clear manifestation of this absence. However, Targan's attitude in this regard represents a modern approach, which is draws attention. [18] The method he started to write in 1919 remained as a manuscript and was not published in his lifetime. This manuscript now in İstanbul Süleymaniye Library was published in 1995.[19] Targan's method uses both major or minor scales and *makam* within a three-octave sound pitch on a single string.

Targan was not able to have followers as a virtuoso like Tanburi Cemil. A cartoon in the 50th issue of Akbaba Magazine in 1934 is a naïve expression of this situation. The concert ha gave in the French Theater on December 4, 1934 was found exciting by authorities but could not find sufficient support from other music circles of the time. As is referred to by Cem Behar, Targan's oud performance was considered inanimate, emotionless and lacking in musicality.

His performances were regarded too Western and therefore incompatible with the Turkish oud style. As a result of this prejudiced attitude, no followers emerged out of these territories to take his legacy further. Targan could not train students in Turkey. During his twelve year tenure as administrator and oud instructor in the Music Department of the Baghdad Institute of Fine Arts, he instructed Münir Beşir and Cemil Beşir brothers and Selman Şükür, considered as the greatest oud players of the Arab world in the 20th century. [20] In brief, his greatest and deepest impact was in Arab oud players.[21] Targan's instruction plays as much role in the development of modern oud playing style in Iraq from late 1930s as the creativity of local Iraqi artists and the increasing effect of Western music education. [22]

Conclusion

Şerif Muhiddin is a musician that hangs in limbo, a state which inspired his artistic creativity rather than producing an anguish of depression age. However, as is argued by certain people, he was aware of the fact that both types of music developed in their own cultural reservoir. He did use major and minor scale structure indeed. But

17 Hocaoğlu, age., s. 69.

18 Targan'ın modern üslubunu benimseyen metotlardan bir diğeri de Mutlu Torun'a aittir. Cem Behar, Aşk Olmayınca Meşk Olmaz: Geleneksel Osmanlı/Türk Müziğinde Öğretim ve İntikal, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul 2012, 4. Baskı, s. 185.

19 Şerif Muhiddin Targan, Ud Metodu, Yay. Haz. Gökhan Matbaası, İstanbul 1995.

20 Simon Jargy, "Musician of wisdom or magician of the ud", Mesopotamia: Munir Bashir, Harmonia Mundi, s. 28.

21 Behar, age., s. 110-111.

22 Racy, age., s. 15.

this was not an assertive or defensive use. He did not consider taking the music he thought of as his contemporary and turning it into a polyphonic Turkish music. He rather stated that it would be possible to leave the national identity and acquire a universal identity with our own motif and music by mastering both of these music types with their repertoires, history and all the aesthetic emotions related to them. Mehmed Akif Ersoy, his close friend, says of him "The Sole Genius of the East". We have not been successful enough to comprehend this genius. Understanding Targan, evaluating his music and legacy as well as finding out what kind of a society he was a cultural product of will be determinant in elucidating modernization and individualization in performance in Turkey, just as is the case with Tanburi Cemil Bey.

He was legendary figure, greatest intrumental virtuoso of his time and the most creative composer of ud's music and he was a bold innovator within the tradition of ud style. Targan provided a stylistic bridge between the past and present, a cultural bridge the 'east' and the 'west'. He is often represented in a different light. Although historical documents indicate a pragmatist, ethnographic narratives suggest an idealist. Was the artist really a revolutioanary as ethnographic representations would suggest or was he simply a reactionary as historical sources would confirm? Was he modernist or a traditionalist? I argue that he was both since he represented a traditonal engagement with modernity that dated back to the nineteenth century. Perhaps, he would once have been called 'a man of the Tanzimat (1876) or he would be more recently have been known as 'a gentleman of Istanbul, a mediator between the east and the west.

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