European Cultural Appropriation of Percussion Instruments from the Ottoman Empire

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Introduction

The history of European percussion instruments has been for some time a topic of discussion amongst musicologists, medievalists, and Middle-Eastern scholars alike. There is a general consensus among them that the origins of western percussion instruments are found in the Middle East. Scholars have further shown that these instruments were incorporated into the European musical context in a variety of ways.¹ It is the aim of this paper to describe the cross-cultural travel of percussion instruments and attempt to define their cultural role, focusing specifically on the Western European adoption of musical practices from the Ottoman Empire. With reference to these two competing political entities, I will show the importance of Western Europe’s appropriation of powerfully symbolic Ottoman musical instruments, emphasizing the role of percussion instruments in the Western European subversion of Ottoman imperial power. To this end, the discussion of percussion instruments as cultural signifiers will be segmented into sections, the first of which will discuss percussion as an invocation of the divine and as a visual and sonic representation of monarchs and sultans. Second, I will outline the development of Ottoman percussion from its origin as a primarily military/political musical tool to one of great dramatic power in the hands of Western European composers, specifically Handel, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven².

¹ Saoud (2004) divides this continental dissemination into three important cultural/geographical points of contact: Spain and the Southern France connection, the Sicilian connection, and the Turkish connection.
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Today, musicians and non-musicians alike know that percussion instruments have long been associated with military music. Marches and parades are often characterized by the inclusion of instruments such as the bass drum and cymbals, which serve to articulate the repeated rhythmic pattern of this music. In the Ottoman Empire, percussion instruments were used in this very way. Indeed, we associate percussion with martial music due to the Western European adoption of the Ottoman military’s musical tradition. Furthermore, Ottoman percussion instruments represented a sonic connection between military and political power. This relationship was established at the very beginning of the Ottoman Empire.

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History

When Osman Ghazi founded the Ottoman Dynasty by winning independence from the Seljuk Sultan (Giyasettin Mes’ut II) in 1289\(^3\), power was symbolically transferred from the Sultan to the new ruler through gifts of instruments (*nakkare*, cymbals, drum, and horn) along with horsetail and standard (Tuglaci 1986: 4). When presented with these instruments, Osman Gazi stood and remained standing during their performance. According to the account of Nishanji Mehmet Pasha, his standing signified the “exaltation of Him [God] who raised him, and . . . respect for the gift which had come.” (Ibid.). Implied in this statement is a connection between the divine and the secular ruler, whose power was symbolized by musical, particularly percussion, instruments.

These instruments became the basic elements of the *mehter* ensemble, the musical representation of the Ottoman Janissary military institution. The term *mehter* comes from the Persian *mihter*, meaning supreme or exalted (Tuglaci: VI). Note that the term Janissary, which in Turkish means “new troops,” is an English misappropriation when applied to the military music ensemble. The term *mehter* will be used instead throughout this paper.

Many such *mehter* ensembles were created and spread throughout Ottoman territory, acting as a visual and sonic symbol of the Sultan’s dominion. They were charged with the responsibility of performing at each call to prayer, further emphasizing the connection between the Sultan and God. Connections between music and the Muslim

\(^3\) There is some debate as to the date of the Ottoman Empire’s founding, partly due to the use of a different calendar in the Ottoman Empire. For a complete discussion of this matter, see Stanford Shaw’s (1976-1977) *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Volume I.
faith can also be seen in the mystical religious ceremonies of the Mevlevi (sometimes referred to as the “whirling dervishes”), which intertwine mystical ritual with musical practice. In mystical Islam it is believed that the artistic (musical) aspect of life is an important means of spiritual development. For the Mevlevi brotherhood, music reflects the tradition of *samʿa*, or auditioning, which makes possible an elevated state by which one can approach the divine (Hourani 1991: 183). Percussion instruments commonly used in the Mevlevi ceremonies include *daire* (frame drum), *kudülm* (kettledrums), and *halile* (cymbals) (Pennanen 1993-1994: 1). Thus percussion instruments are embedded to a considerable degree in mystical Muslim practice, linked to God and also as a means for spiritual growth.

Ottoman rulers enhanced the symbolism of percussion instruments by limiting the size and instrumentation of *mehter* ensembles according to the rank of the official under whose authority they performed. Although the size of these ensembles varied over the centuries of Ottoman rule, the sultan’s ensemble was consistently the largest, and was the only one to include the *kös*, the largest kettledrum (Tuglacı 1986: VI). In performance, the *kös* was placed in the middle of the *mehter* (Tuglacı 1986: 65), once again symbolizing the centrality of the sultan’s power and dominion over the whole of the empire. The sultan’s ensemble also performed on religious feast days, at royal weddings and circumcisions, and at major political meetings attended by ambassadors from the Ottoman provinces. The inclusion of percussion in spectacles at which it was important to reinforce the sultan’s power was intentional; the *mehter* ensemble with its symbolic percussion instruments was a valuable political tool, one maximized by sultans throughout the history of the Ottoman Empire.
Review of Ottoman Percussion

The Ottoman percussion instruments in question include the following. First, *nakkare*, pairs of small kettledrums, could be played seated on the ground or mounted on horseback. In either case they were played with wooden or ivory beaters (Tuglacı 1986: 44). Second, *zil* (cymbals) came in a variety of sizes, the smallest of which were used in the Mevlevi ceremonies discussed earlier. The larger *zil* were found in *mehter* ensembles and closely resemble cymbals used in today’s orchestras (Tuglacı 1986: 46). Third, the *davul* was a large double-headed drum. One head was tuned lower than the other, and each head was struck with a different sized beater to better differentiate between the accented and unaccented beats in a given rhythmic cycle (Tuglacı 1986: 42). The *davul* is represented in European music by the bass drum. The most important drum in the Ottoman military was the *kös*, the largest kettledrum. Its huge sound was reserved for use by the Sultan and, because of its weight, had to be mounted on camels or elephants during military campaigns (Sanal 1964: 75). First-hand accounts describe the sonic effect of the *kös* as that of the “sky being torn apart” (Sanal 1964: 76). This instrument’s potential for dramatic effect clearly made an impression on Western European composers; this will be discussed shortly. The only Ottoman percussion instrument not to become a regular feature in the European percussion section was the *çengane*. The Turkish crescent or Jingling Johnnie, as it was known in English, was a
large pole adorned with jingles and bells played by shaking it up and down. The çengane was replaced with the triangle (Blades 1970: 227).  

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4 For a more detailed discussion of the triangle, see Blades’ chapter on the development of this instrument in *Percussion Instruments and Their History*. 
Case Study Part I: European adoption of Ottoman Percussion Instruments

From the 14th to 17th century, successful military campaigns greatly increased the borders of the Ottoman Empire (Appendix A, Figure 1). Note that a number of currently Eastern European cities were at that time well inside Ottoman boundaries. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the power and prestige of the Ottoman Empire was reaching its apex and Western European powers were under constant threat of invasion. It is at this point that historians have identified a significant increase in Western interest in Ottoman culture (Shaw 1976-77 Vol. 1: 143). Scholarly writings from the sixteenth century note that European monarchs were already using Ottoman instruments in their royal/military music. At what point did mimicry of Ottoman musical practices become fashionable? These were once the instruments of the Muslim infidels, whose percussion instruments were derided as “rumbling tubs”, vilified in descriptions such as this quote from Virdung in the early 16th century: “And I verily believe that the Devil must have had the devising and making of them, for there is not pleasure or anything good about them” (Virdung 1511: 115). That academics inveighed against these instruments reflects a growing European awareness of the power of the Ottoman Empire. Although the music of mehter ensembles was known to Europeans not only on the battlefield but also from Ottoman court ceremonies and the accounts of European travelers, it was the firsthand experience of Ottoman military music that was foremost in the minds of Western

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5 Published in 1511, Sebastian Virdung’s Musica Getutscht is the earliest printed treatise on musical instruments in Western Europe. Written not as an academic document, but in the German vernacular, it was meant for use by the layperson as a practical guide to common musical instruments. As such, Virdung was free to include his personal opinions of many instruments discussed therein, including percussion instruments from the Ottoman Empire. These opinions were likely adopted by many of its early readers, reinforcing the Western Europe’s hostile attitude toward Ottoman culture.
European leaders. There is extensive documentation of the frightful role played by the *mehter* bands in battle, at once striking fear into the hearts of the besieged and spurring on the Ottoman legions (Chelebi, trans. Farmer 1976: 24; Blades 1970: 187; Powley 1968: 26; Seeman 2004: 4; Tuglacı 1986: 6). The clashing of cymbals and hammering of drums, accompanied by the shrieking shawm-like instrument (*zurna*) was an imposing sonic representation of the might of the Ottoman legions.

Western European leaders needed to minimize, in the public consciousness, the threat posed by the armies camped on their borders. While it betrays an obvious arrogance on the part of Western European rulers, their mimicry of the cultural prerogative of their imperial counterparts, particularly their military musical practice, allowed for the gradual subversion of the power associated with these Ottoman cultural forms. Thus we find that as early as the 15th century, following the Ottoman raids on Hungary, European courts began to adopt the instruments of their adversaries, particularly the timpani and horns of the *mehter* ensemble, as emblems of their own authority and royalty (Montagu 1976: 108). For example, cavalry kettledrums resembling the nakkare of the mounted *mehter* ensemble were included in the delegation of Ladislaus of Hungary when he asked for the hand of Charles VI’s daughter in 1457 (Kirby 1928: 37).

Visual substantiation for the adoption of kettledrums and horns can be seen in the “Triumph” of Maximilian I (the Great), a large set of pictures representing the achievements and passions of the Holy Roman Emperor. Though it remained unfinished at his death in 1519, it shows in great detail the military music ensembles employed by Maximilian I including a plate dedicated to the “Imperial Trumpeters”, which depicted
ornate kettledrums (Montagu 1976: 84). In 1542, Henry VIII of England sent to Vienna for kettledrums to be played on horseback “after the Hungarian manner” (Fortescue 1899, quoted in Farmer 1912: 35). Further kettledrums were supplied to other courts of Europe, as noted by Fronsberger (1566) and Tabourot (1588), most of them coming from Germany (Fronsberger 1566 and Tabourot 1588 cited in Farmer 1912: 35) or captured during military campaigns.

Kettledrums were more than a simple instrumental addition to Western European court music ensembles. The association of military percussion with the Imperial power of Ottoman sultans was well established by the sixteenth century, and Europeans were intent on appropriating symbolism, musical or otherwise, which would bolster their own displays of power. To that end, Karl V, Holy Roman Emperor, began the tradition of Western European monarchs’ patronage of trumpeters and kettledrummers (Titcomb: 1956: 56). Subsequent decrees permitted these musicians to work only in the employ of kings and emperors and made them exempt from military law. Other musicians were forbidden to play trumpets or kettledrums unless granted an apprenticeship with a master musician. In 1623, Emperor Ferdinand II officially founded the “Imperial Guild of Court and Field Trumpeters and Court and Army Kettledrummers” (Titcomb 1956: 57). The rhetoric associated with kettledrummers in this group shows just how powerfully symbolic these instruments were. The guild was referred to as a “closed guild,” comprised of “honorable” men, who performed an “exalted, noble, knightly art” on their “heroic kettledrums.” (Titcomb 1956: 58). Until the late 18th century, many composers, including J.S. Bach used timpani only sparingly, restricted by Guild rules (Montagu 2002: 88).
The first references to army regiments in West Germany using full complements of Ottoman percussion date back to the early- to mid-17th century (Bowles 1991: 428). These ensembles were rarely comprised of authentic Ottoman instruments, but their use provides valuable insight into the origins of percussion in the Western European context. The inclusion of these instruments was a reflection of the newfound interest in the novelty and exoticism of Ottoman culture – a sign of both fear and respect for the military might of which percussion instruments were a symbol. According to research into the so-called “Turkish affect” in festivals and parades from 1625 – 1700, early incorporation of Ottoman percussion instruments into Western European music was often coupled with military games that invariably emphasized European supremacy over the “heathen infidels”. Bowles’ research documents a number of these performances, all of which took place as part of outdoor military-style festivals (Bowles 2006: 540).

These examples serve to highlight a gradual shift in imperial symbology. Percussion instruments such as the kettledrums initially acted as a sonic and visual representation of Ottoman power. Once acquired by Western European rulers, they came to symbolize the power of whomever they belonged to. Much as they were originally associated with Muslim divinity, these instruments were imbued with Christian symbolism once incorporated into the European musical context. For example, beginning in the early 16th century, trumpet and kettledrum flourishes marking the entrance of royalty at banquets and coronations were played three times in close succession. This is perhaps a reflection of the importance of the Holy Trinity for Christians, particularly rulers of the Holy Roman Empire. Percussion instruments’ role in the threefold sounding
of the fanfare could be viewed as a parallel to the religious implications of mehter percussion discussed previously.

How were Ottoman percussion instruments introduced to the Western European musical context? This process is closely related to the shifting political tides of the late 17th century. It is at this point that the Ottoman armies were forced to abandon their second siege of Vienna, and Ottoman rulers signed peace treaties with both the Holy Roman Empire and Poland, effectively ending the Turkish advance into Western Europe. At the signing of the 1683 treaty, Sultan Mehmet IV presented King August of Poland with the gift of a full mehter ensemble (Bowles 2006: 545). This event is significant for two reasons. First, recall that the founding of the Ottoman Empire was symbolized by a similar gift. Such a gesture would have been powerful for both the Polish king and the Ottoman Sultan. Second, this treaty ushered in a new era of political stability that greatly facilitated cultural exchange between East and West. Gifts between ambassadors to and from the Ottoman Empire included costumes, jewelry, musical instruments, and musicians. August of Poland kept the mehter in his entourage permanently, and during his reign amassed a large private collection of Ottoman items. Such fascination with all things Turkish has been termed “turquerie”, a trend among Western European rulers that lasted until well into the 19th century. This trend is commonly held to be the beginning of a pre-romantic interest in artistic exoticism that would become fully developed in the 19th century (Obelkevich 1977: 368).

Musicians were not the only artists subject to turquerie. Scholars note the inclusion of Turkish elements in Western European court entertainment from as early as the 16th century (Obelkevich 1977: 367). Novelists and playwrights commonly
substituted sultans and grand viziers for the more traditional kings and princes to add an element of exoticism to stock stories, and the “passionate tales of seraglio intrigue introduced a sensuality and luxuriousness that had been lacking in Western literature.” (Meyer 1974: 474). Visually symbolic Ottoman elements were also very popular, particularly amongst Western European royalty. Following the end of the second siege of Vienna, Empress Maria Theresa symbolically celebrated the victory by having her portrait painted while wearing a Viennese interpretation of Ottoman formal dress (Seeman 2004: 10). Despite the variety of media that were influenced by the turquerie currently in vogue, it seems that Ottoman musical flavor may have provided the rich source of material that propelled the popularity of this trend (Obelkevich 1977: 367)

Louis XVI of France shared the Habsburg Empire’s fascination with Ottoman culture. Following a visit from Ottoman emissaries, the French king was so taken with Ottoman culture that he insisted a Turkish episode be inserted into Jean-Baptiste Lully’s (1670) incidental music for Molière’s Le Bouregois Gentilhomme (Meyer 1974: 482.) As mentioned before, little effort was made to replicate actual Turkish instruments, the intent being instead to capture something of the Turkish musical color. The novel sounds of cymbals are couched in traditional Western-European musical practice in such a way that they were only a superficial musical element that enhanced the overall exoticism of Molière’s writing.

When Louis XIV appointed Lully director of all court and military music in 1672, turquerie was well established amongst royalty. However, according to one scholar, the French king was “deeply concerned with the practical as well as artistic aspects of military music . . .which supported an underlying desire to rival and surpass the music of
Janissary bands. (Obelkevich 1977: 381). In order to satisfy the King, Lully familiarized himself with Arbeau’s monumental “Orchesographie” from 1588, which included a catalogue of military drum signals (Obelkevich 1977: 376). The use of percussion signals in the Janissary corps is well documented elsewhere, as is the adoption of this practice by Western European armies (Farmer 1912; Bowles 1991; Kirby 1928; Titcomb 1956; Blades 1970). Arbeau’s work seems to have been the source on which Lully based his percussion writing (Obelkevich 1977: 381). The composer’s use of military signals in a court music setting is significant because it helps us understand the gradual trajectory of percussion use in Europe. Musical practices and instruments of the Ottomans were adopted by the Western European military, and were used by Western European royalty to symbolize their own power. Court composers such as Lully then used these military sources as a starting point in their use of percussion in non-military music. The French connection between military and court music is strengthened by manuscripts from the Royal Music Library at Versailles, which include a number of works commissioned by/from Lully as well as the virtuoso timpanists the Philidor brothers, who wrote some of the first solo and duet works for timpani. These works contain optional percussion parts probably played on timpani (Obelkevich 1977: 377-378). One such manuscript is Lully’s opera *Thésée*, part of which is a march for trumpets, violins, and timpani, and is considered to reflect the court style of timpani and trumpet playing from this era (Obelkevich 1977: 379). Thus, at least in France, we can identify shared primary sources among a number of composers who wrote in both military and non-military genres, mixing Ottoman percussion instruments with Western European common musical practice.
English incorporation of these instruments began with Henry Purcell. The symphony to Act IV of his opera *The Fairy Queen* (1692) features two timpani solos commonly held to be two of the first written, rather than improvised, in the orchestral context (Kirby 1928: 39). Fifty years later, Handel used the timpani as a purely dramatic device in his opera *Semele*, where the sounding of the drums signifies the oath of Jupiter (Kirby 1928: 39). This is a great example of the timpani used as a symbol of power whether divine or mortal much like the Ottoman kös.

Handel’s *Music for the Royal Fireworks* is another English example of the orchestral use of Ottoman percussive forces, in this instance three pairs of kettledrums accompanied by field drums. The music was composed in 1749 for the celebration of King George II’s securing the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, ending the War of the Austrian Succession. That the kettledrums used in the performance were captured during the Battle of Malplaquet suggests that European rulers, as did Ottoman rulers, were eager to capitalize on these powerful sonic symbols (Peters 1975: 51).
Case Study Part II: European Orchestral Development of Ottoman Percussion

While the musical examples listed above give insight into the early use of Ottoman percussion instruments, they do not fully explain the transition from musical turquerie, mere orchestral color, to their use as an integral part of the Western European orchestral palette. Three of the greatest composers in Western musical history played important contributing roles during this transition: Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven.

Mozart’s score to *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, the plot of which involves the rescuing of a young woman from a Turkish harem, is the first instance of a Western European composer using the full complement of Ottoman percussion instruments. Given the above discussion of turquerie in the courts of Europe, it is interesting that Mozart writes for the entire percussion section, when Lully, Purcell, and Handel had used these effects only sparingly. What is intriguing is the degree to which the percussion section is used in a particularly Turkish way. Matthew Head notes that in letters to his father, Mozart discussed his intention to include Ottoman costumes in *The Abduction*, and elaborates on his presentation of elements of Ottoman musical style (Head 2000: 27). Was Mozart making an attempt to use these instruments as the Ottomans did, eschewing the popular trend of superficial turquerie?

To answer this question let us first examine what is commonly held to be Mozart’s most Turkish composition, the 3rd movement of his Piano Sonata No. 11 in A major K. 331 (c. 1783), often referred to as the Rondo Alla Turca. What exactly is Ottoman about this work? Examination of the left hand piano part shows the emphasis of a regular rhythmic pattern (see Appendix A, Figure 2). This pattern is closely related to
the Ottoman rhythmic pattern (or usûl) known as düyek (Ungay 1981: 588) (see Appendix A, Figure 3). In Ottoman classical music, the term usûl refers to a rhythmic mode or pattern. Unlike Western European music, the Ottoman tradition has no generalized duple and triple elements. Rather, distinct rhythmic patterns of predetermined length, usûl, are divided into accented and unaccented beats (Belaiev and Ping 1935: 362). The strong beats are referred to as ‘düm’, and weak as ‘tek’.6 There are as many as twenty-six of these rhythmic modes associated specifically with the mehter ensemble, of which düyek is only one example (Sanal 1964: 45-62). There are many more in the larger context of Ottoman classical music.

Haydar Sanal’s research describes düyek as an eight beat pattern. Much as a measure of 2/4 time in Western music can be divided into four eighth notes or eight sixteenth notes, the düyek mode’s eight beats can be subdivided into 16 or 32 beats. In the case of a subdivided mode, the overall pulse does not change, because the accents reinforce the basic form of the rhythmic mode. In its original Ottoman context this usûl would have emphasized the accents much as the lowest left hand notes do in the Mozart excerpt (Sanal 1964: 56.) (See Appendix A, Figure 4). The remaining un-accented beats would have been articulated more softly, again, like the left hand of this excerpt. Analysis of the Overture from The Abduction from the Seraglio (1782) shows the very same rhythmic pattern in the percussion section. Not only does Mozart use the düyek usûl, he offsets the percussion and melody so that the rhythmic contrast is brought to the fore (see Appendix A, Figure 5). Note that Mozart treats the presentation of Turkish rhythmic units

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6 Until the late eighteenth century, Ottoman classical music was an oral tradition. As such, the assignment of phonemes to rhythmic syllables was an important mnemonic device when memorizing the longer usûl, the longest of which is 128 beats in length.
in a very Western-European manner, using augmentation and segmentation to extend or contract the phrases, and therefore the düyek pattern. There is no reason to believe that the composer was intentionally obscuring his possible source material. Rather, I believe that Mozart was simply using the musical tools at his disposal in his characteristically intuitive way.

In Ottoman musical practice, each usûl had specifically prescribed uses. In the case of düyek, it was the rhythmic cycle most commonly used in mehter melodies (Sanal 1981: 54). According to one source, “brilliant military works were composed for düyek usûl including [those for] ritual, pageantry, war, and processional music for monarchs.” (Sanal 1964: 54) It is these types of music that would have been most commonly heard in the courts of both European and Ottoman rulers. For instance, traveling ambassadors from Turkey would have had musicians in their retinue who would play upon their arrival at a given court. Likewise, European emissaries would have been greeted, at least in peaceful times, in much the same way when they arrived at Ottoman courts. Furthermore, there were many first-hand accounts of the wartime use of Ottoman military music from soldiers and scholars alike (cited above). It is not a stretch to suggest that the düyek may have been inscribed into the collective consciousness of those who had such first-hand experience.

Both of the aforementioned works were composed shortly after Mozart’s arrival in Vienna in 1782, where he had a number of audiences and performances in front of Emperor Joseph II and other prominent visiting dignitaries (Angermüller 2007). It is very likely that on one or more of these occasions he came into contact with Ottoman classical music. Whether or not he saw transcriptions of Ottoman music is unknown at this time,
but given his considerable musical abilities, it would not be surprising if he assimilated some basic rhythmic elements from this music and incorporated them into compositions that he was working on at the time (particularly those with Turkish themes such as The Abduction). Note that Mozart did not employ the düyek pattern repeatedly, instead allowing the larger musical picture to determine how the percussion section is used. In other words, while the source material for his percussive effects may have been authentically Ottoman, Mozart went beyond this prescribed rhythmic model to achieve greater musical effect. Thus we have Mozart to thank for initially treating the percussion section as a means to a greater musical end.

Mozart’s friend and sometimes collaborator, Franz Joseph Haydn, who would have been familiar with The Abduction, made use of the percussion section in a similar way in his 100th symphony, popularly known as the Military Symphony. Written twelve years after Mozart’s opera, the naming of this work is significant. There is no mention of “alla turca” when referring to this symphony, only that it is written in the military style. I consider this to be a reflection of the growing European acceptance of percussion instruments (particularly the cymbals, bass drum, and triangle) as part of the standard military ensemble, and a shift away from the identification of those instruments as specifically Ottoman. It is interesting that each of the scores consulted in the research for this paper have the bass drum part notated with both stems up and stems down (indicated in the score with Gr. C. Italian for bass drum (see Appendix A, Figure 6.) There is an emphasis (stems down) on the first beats of each bar, and not on the others (stems up), much like the dum-tek relationship of accented and unaccented beats in Ottoman classical music. Mozart also scores the bass drum part in this way (see Appendix A, Figure 7). In
fact, one might view Haydn’s percussion parts as an extension of Mozart’s compositional style, for in the Allegretto of Symphony No. 100, the percussion sounds enhance the overall musical effect without relying on a strictly repeated percussive pattern.

The final musical example discussed in this paper is probably the most famous Western European orchestral instance of Ottoman percussion instruments employed in a military style. It is found in the finale of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. Composed between 1822 and 1824, the Alla Marcia variation of the “Ode to Joy” theme is yet another example of Ottoman percussion used as an orchestral color rather than in a literally Ottoman style. It is no coincidence that Beethoven employed Ottoman instruments in what is now recognized as one of the greatest Viennese compositions. While use of these instruments was well established by the early nineteenth century, examination of Schiller’s text and consideration of the deeper philosophical implications of Beethoven’s Ninth reveals another, more fundamental, reasoning behind this instrumentation. Previously, I discussed how Ottoman percussion instruments were symbolic of the Ottoman Empire’s might, invoking images of the Sultan’s armies on the battlefield and striking fear into the hearts of Western European forces. Although the presence of Ottoman percussion instruments in Beethoven’s Finale can be viewed as a particularly military reference, the allusion to an Ottoman enemy, past or present, is treated here in a totally different way. Schiller’s An die Freude speaks of brotherly love and the unification of all mankind, a joyous celebration of human equality under God. Rather than symbolizing the defeat of an Ottoman threat, the powerful combination of Ottoman percussion instruments with Schiller’s text reverses the trivialization and disdain generally granted to Ottoman cultural forms, folding them into the brotherhood of
mankind. Furthermore, a number of prominent Beethoven scholars note that Schiller’s poetic premise is slightly modified to create the underlying philosophical premise of the Ninth (Thayer: 1921, Scherman and Biancolli: 1972, Buch: 2003, Kramer: 1998). The concept of joy in Schiller’s poetry is replaced with Beethoven’s hope for a liberated Europe where all men are equal. His intentional use of Ottoman percussion, formerly a representation of Western Europe’s much-feared imperial counterpart, acts as a musical symbol for the unification of all mankind. This occurrence of Ottoman percussion in the Western European context is all the more striking, given the fact that by the early nineteenth century these instruments were being increasingly written for by Western composers in ways no longer necessarily reflective of their Ottoman origins. That Beethoven writes for mehter percussion instruments in such a deliberate manner suggests that he saw these instrumental forces as a means to underline the philosophical premise of the Ninth Symphony.

It may come as something of a surprise, given the greatly augmented importance of the timpani for which Beethoven is responsible (consider the transition from the third to fourth movements of his monumental Symphony No. 5), that he should return to an earlier model for the rest of the percussion section. But we must keep in mind that these instruments were still not fully liberated from their association with the military ensemble. One should note, however, that all vestiges of Ottoman rhythmic modes have disappeared. Subsequent composers such as Berlioz and Liszt continued to use Ottoman percussion instruments in increasingly adventurous ways, fully weaving them into the Romantic orchestral fabric.
Conclusion:

The history of percussion in Western Europe has been well documented for the most part. Since the 1950s, scholars such as Blades, Holland, and Montagu have contributed greatly to our understanding of the origins of these instruments. Much of their information has come down to us through the early 20th century writings of Henry George Farmer, who can be credited with first researching the potentially Arabic origins of elements of Western musical practice. While an analysis of the early studies of what he called “oriental” music is not possible here, it should be noted that with increased scholarship in modern day Turkey, new information is being published that deals with many of the themes with which Farmer was concerned. In terms of percussion historiography, we must be increasingly careful not to rely too heavily on the traditional early sources such as Farmer, which, despite their seminal nature, focus on Arabic sources rather than specifically Ottoman, and do not take into account more recent research. Only since the 1990’s have scholars begun to re-assess the significance of Ottoman classical music in terms of its influence on Western European musical practice. This research will no doubt shed yet more light on the story of instrumental cultural exchange from East to West.

Many of the cultural studies from the early-twentieth century, including Farmer’s work, have been criticized not only for their limited source material, but also for the limitations of the theoretical perspective from which they originate. The very terminology of Farmer’s studies, dividing musical and cultural practices into “oriental” and “occidental”, is problematic. Edward Said discusses these concerns in his study of orientalism, which he defines as a group of ideologies reinforced by the cultural practices
of Western Europe (Said 1978, cited in Seeman lecture, September 19, 2007). The Eurocentric position of Western scholars to which Said objects tends to focus on the then-justified subjugation of non-Western traditions through the imposition of supposedly superior Western traditions. But in the matter at hand, the appropriation of Ottoman percussion instruments can be considered in terms of its reflection of cultural practices as a metaphor for significant ideological shifts. Rather than the traditional process of colonization through dominion, Western European rulers subverted Ottoman imperial might by ingesting the symbolic Ottoman cultural practices by which they were the most threatened. By claiming Ottoman percussion instruments as their own, Western European powers showed an uncharacteristic awe and respect for their imperial counterparts, one that would later enrich their own musical traditions. Indeed, the adoption of these instruments during the 16th and 17th centuries proved vital to Western musical developments in the 20th century. The momentous changes that characterized the art music of the early 1900’s were dependent, to a large extent, on the sonic potential of a greatly expanded percussion section, the origins of which can be traced back to the Ottoman mehter ensembles.

The trajectory of percussion instruments from the Ottoman military, to Western European military, to Western European art music is a compelling example of cross-cultural exchange, one which has led to some of the most dynamic developments in Western European musical practice. A thorough understanding of this process is invaluable for today’s scholars, composers and percussionists alike. With the renewed study of Ottoman classical music, it is increasingly possible, and therefore necessary, that we examine the historical relevance of Western European percussion instruments from a
number of theoretical perspectives, addressing the political, social, and cultural
development of which they were such an integral part.
Appendix

Figure 1: Map of Ottoman Empire, 1300 – 1683.  
Figure 2: Mozart, W.A. 1782. Sonata No. 11 in A Major, K.331. In Complete Sonatas and Fantasies for Solo Piano. New York: Dover. Pg. 126.
Figure 3: Left Hand Piano and düyek reduction. Sanal, Haydar. 1964. Bestekâr Mehterler - Mehter Havalari. Istanbul: Milli Egitim Basimevi. Pg. 56.

Figure 4: Division of beats between percussion instruments in Ottoman presentation of düyek rhythmic cycle. Sanal, Haydar. 1964. Bestekâr Mehterler - Mehter Havalari. Istanbul: Milli Egitim Basimevi. Pg. 57.

Figure 5: Mozart, W.A. 1782. The Abduction from the Seraglio. New York: Dover.
Bass Drum and Cymbals play düyek rhythm

Flute and Violin 1 melody duplicate the düyek pattern, offset by one half-note.

Figure 6: Haydn, F. J. 1794. *Symphony No. 100 in G Major* (Military Symphony).
Note Bass Drum note stem directions.
Figure 7: Mozart, W.A. 1782. *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. New York: Dover. Pg. 12.
Works Cited:


