

# The Emergence of the Romanian National School of Composition in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century: Between the Western Canon and the Resources of the Local Music

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*This article aims to explain the rise of Western art forms in the musical creation of the Romanian Principalities in the first half of the nineteenth century, as dictated by a particular European political and economic dynamic. I analyse the spread of Western music – usually described as a consequence of the gradual modernization of Romanian society – in terms of the power relations between the European core and a newly integrated periphery at the Eastern border of the continent. To illustrate this change, I discuss Edward Said's concept of orientalism which helps describe the early interactions between Western musicians and professionals and the local music traditions and customs. I then show how these interactions gave the former access to a distinctive musical material used in compositions targeting an expanding European music market. In an age of national struggle in the Romanian Principalities, national music was both a concept and a practice in demand by the local intelligentsia and fostered by composers. However, in addition to this agreement, the concept of national music signalled some significant societal changes that I elucidate by looking at class stratification and the evolution of musical taste. In the final part of the analysis, I draw on dependency theory authors such as Samir Amin and Daniel Chirot to argue that musical life in the first half of the nineteenth century in Wallachia and Moldavia was closely mirroring the economic development of these countries. Thus, I demonstrate that the emergence of the Romanian school of composition must be understood not only at a national level but also within a broader political, economic and social context, defined by the gradual transition to capitalist modes of production and consumption that happened in the first decades of the nineteenth century.*

## Cultural Framework and First Cultural Reform Attempts in Wallachia and Moldavia

The first efforts to firmly accommodate Western art music in the Romanian Principalities (Moldavia and Wallachia) coincided with a time when music production and consumption in Western Europe were beginning to be determined by market economy principles. In a conscious attempt to modernize its institutions and its manners, various intellectuals and officials were aiming to promote the spread of Western music in countries where, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the dominant forms of musical expression were Byzantine church

music, Turkish/oriental music or folk music – be it rural or urban. To be sure, there had Western music in the Principalities in previous centuries, but in the first half of the nineteenth century, Western music experienced exponential growth and took root in Romanian society. To achieve this, and to nurture the professionals it needed, the Romanian political and cultural elites had to resort to the already expanding Occidental music market. Romanians needed teachers, performers and composers to foster the dissemination of Western art music. As a consequence of the prevalent power hierarchies in Europe at that time, musicians of Italian, German, Austrian, Hungarian or Czech origins produced the first examples of what was later called the Romanian national school of composition.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Moldavia and Wallachia were under Turkish suzerainty. Ever since the 1710s, the Sublime Porte had appointed rulers for these provinces, and all of them were chosen from Phanar, a Greek district from Istanbul. However, the Ottomans were a declining power, facing the growing ambitions of the Russian Empire. Due to the Russo-Turkish wars from the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries, the Danubian Principalities were granted gradual and partial autonomy from the Sublime Porte. The two most important moments for loosening Ottoman power were the peace treaties of Küçük Kaynarca (1774) and Edirne (Adrianopolis, 1829), and the subsequent institution of the Russian protectorate,<sup>1</sup> along with the continuation of the Turkish suzerainty. The Adrianople accord opened the Dardanelles and the Danube to international commerce, which encouraged Romanian landlords to redirect their wheat surpluses from the Ottoman Empire to Western markets.<sup>2</sup> The Revolution of 1821 in Wallachia, led by Tudor Vladimirescu (closely connected with the Greek Revolution of the same year), was another blow to Turkish rule. This event marked the end of Phanariot leadership and a return of the indigenous aristocracy to the throne. Finally, the two Principalities united in 1859 to become Romania. The new state gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire as a result of its involvement in another Russo-Turkish war (1877–78).

Turkish music influence in the region can be dated back to the sixteenth century. As a document from 1578 attests,<sup>3</sup> Turkish music had a long history in Wallachian society, and Romanian professional musicians (*lăutari*, most of them of Roma origin) were constantly trying to adapt their repertoire to the new trends emerging from Istanbul. Starting with the eighteenth century, the cultural exchanges between the Ottoman metropole and the Romanian provinces deepened as many musicians arrived here, accompanying Phanariot princes. The Romanian *lăutari* effortlessly adapted oriental music, becoming its principal local disseminating voice. In this political context, Greek and Turkish/oriental music increasingly expanded its influence in Romanian culture. Throughout the Phanariot period, this music gained the sympathy of the ruling classes and a broad segment of the urban population.

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<sup>1</sup> One of the main accomplishments of the Russian protectorate was the elaboration of the first modern constitutional law for both the Principalities, the Organic Regulation, which would facilitate, among other things, the first wave of cultural westernization in the local society.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph L. Love, *Crafting the Third World: Theorizing Underdevelopment in Rumania and Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996): 25–6.

<sup>3</sup> Tiberiu Alexandru, *Folclorică, Organologie, Muzicologie*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1980): 264.

At the princely courts of Bucharest and Iași, ceremonial bands, called *meterhâne* (for courtly music) and *tabl-khâne* (the military band of the Janissaries),<sup>4</sup> performed the official repertoire. This music was meant to accompany a wide range of events and ceremonies, the most common of which were the coronation of a new prince, the reconfirmation of the prince's reign, various religious festivals, individual feast days of the churches, reception of foreign ambassadors and Ottoman dignitaries, the funerals of princes, and, sometimes, the appointment of dignitaries. Additionally, the *meterhâne* and *tabl-khâne* had a daily performance routine at the court, in the morning, after the Muslim call to prayer, and in the afternoon.<sup>5</sup>

Greek and Turkish/oriental influences permeated not only in official settings but also in the high social strata of Romanian society. Vocal and instrumental repertoires of strictly Ottoman provenance were greatly appreciated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There was also a distinct repertoire, enjoyed by large segments of the population, in which autochthonous and oriental traditions were mixed, resulting in an orientalized compound of worldly music and dances (which will be discussed at a greater length in a following section).

Later, some members of the elite boyars (*boieri*) nostalgically remembered the direct Ottoman imports or the music developed at the intersection of various oriental and Romanian genres as a mark of the old world before the westernization of the Principalities took place.<sup>6</sup> This kind of music (skilfully performed by some boyars, primarily educated in Istanbul) was commonly listened to at popular parties, where people from the upper class could intersect (but not mix) with servants or peasants. A poem by one such boyar, Costache Negruzzi, associates the Romanian-ness with, among other things, drinking wine and singing an oriental genre of vocal-instrumental music called *manea*.<sup>7</sup> In this fashion, a consistent oriental component was disseminated in the musical practices of Wallachia and Moldavia, for both ceremonial and entertainment purposes. This kind of music was popular among the ruling class (the princely courts and the high boyars) and the lower classes of merchants, craftsmen and workers who lived in the few urban centres of the two provinces.

The first initiatives to establish a permanent centre of Western music activity were taken by the Phanariot rulers of the Romanian Principalities. In the first years of the nineteenth century, the documents attest to the employment in the service of the Bucharest court of three Italian and Austrian musicians, whose mission was to perform the modern Western repertoire of dance music, as the dancing parties trend was being established in Moldavia and Wallachia.<sup>8</sup> The role of Western music in the Phanariot courts was not limited to entertainment, but it was also a diplomatic tool used to impress Western officials or guests. Another way to disseminate the Western world's art forms into the societies of these Eastern Principalities was through private music lessons. This practice was considered a

<sup>4</sup> Nicolae Gheorghîță, *Byzantine Chant between Constantinople and the Danubian Principalities* (Bucharest: Sophia, 2010): 41.

<sup>5</sup> Gheorghîță, *Byzantine Chant*, 46.

<sup>6</sup> Costin Moisil, 'A History of the Manea: The Nineteenth to the Mid-Twentieth Century', in *Manele in Romania: Cultural Expression and Social Meaning in Balkan Popular Music*, ed. Margaret Beissinger, Speranta Rădulescu and Anca Giurchescu (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016): 46–8.

<sup>7</sup> Moisil, 'A History of the Manea', 46–7.

<sup>8</sup> Octavian Lazăr Cosma, *Hronicul muzicii românești*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1974): 107.

proper way for the Romanian upper classes to initiate themselves into all of the more fashionable music of the Occident. However, as with the court musicians, there were no Romanian professionals able to teach the principles of Western music theory or the basics of the instrumental playing used in this sort of music. Consequently, teachers were brought in from abroad to instruct the children of the aristocratic families in singing and in instruments such as harp, flute and, most often, piano. Before we turn to the context which generated the first compositions of *national music*, we should take a moment to describe the frame within which the cultural interaction between East and West took place.

### Exoticism/Orientalism and the Representation of the Musical Other in Eastern Europe

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Western political and intellectual elite began a complex process of mapping the territories on the Eastern borders of Europe. The interest in distant continental regions coincided with the early days of modern orientalism, as Edward Said described it. The orient and Eastern Europe were areas of interest for study; but they were also seen as ripe for the expansion of Western power. In most cases, the intellectual inquiry was coupled with a political and/or military conquest and used for the imposition of various means of domination and subordination.<sup>9</sup> Simultaneously, the intellectual mastery of the oriental regions helped Western Europe shape a distinctive image of itself as having achieved the culmination of a civilizational path that the Eastern states were seen to be unable to reach.

Although the musical representation of an Eastern other had already a long tradition,<sup>10</sup> the nineteenth century witnessed the rapid rise of orientalism in Western art music. This phenomenon, Derek Scott argues, must be understood in terms of historical, political and economic change, as it was less a matter of musical style than of socio-historical determination.<sup>11</sup> Orientalism did not offer an empirical survey of foreign lands and populations but a representation of this Eastern other to the Western self. This representation was accomplished through several orientalist signifiers which the listener could recognize without any acquaintance with actual Eastern musical practices. Following Said's remark that 'we need not look for correspondence between the language used to depict the orient and the orient itself, not so much because the language is inaccurate but because it is not even trying to be accurate',<sup>12</sup> we can say that the nineteenth-century composer had no intention of presenting an informed view of the Eastern musical traditions from which he drew his inspiration.

<sup>9</sup> Larry Wolf, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994): 8.

<sup>10</sup> Eric Rice suggests that the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century tradition of the *turquerie* 'has its roots in court entertainments concurrent with diplomacy between Turkey, France, and to a lesser extent, German-speaking countries'. Examples can be found as early as the middle of the fifteenth century, but a more influential work was Lully's *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670). Eric Rice, "Representations of Janissary music (Mehter) as musical exoticism in western compositions, 1670–1824", *Journal of Musicological Research* 19/1 (1999): 57–8.

<sup>11</sup> Derek Scott, 'Orientalism and Musical Style', in *From the Erotic to the Demonic: On Critical Musicology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003): 176.

<sup>12</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003): 71.

Contemporary musicology can suffer at times from what Matthew Head called 'a retreat from theory'. In his view, 'musicology domesticates orientalism as an area of research by folding it back into established frameworks of inquiry that ultimately render orientalism decorative'.<sup>13</sup> The major fault of this retreat from theory is, from our perspective, the (quasi)exclusive focus on the cultural interaction between two (or more) cultures, without a detailed account of the political and economic aspects involved in these interactions. Therefore, in using such concepts as transcultural music or cross-cultural encounter, authors like Jonathan Bellman or Nicholas Cook attempt to surpass the alleged limitations of Said's legacy or the dogmatism of some of the postcolonial critique, but their arguments can only cover aspects of style evolution and stylistic influences. The search for 'evidence of an innocent openness to non-European cultures'<sup>14</sup> or for 'the multiplicity of identities and cultural conversations in transcultural music'<sup>15</sup> is limited, depriving the analysis of explanations concerning *why* and *how* the cultural encounter took place. Furthermore, this approach fails to place the cultural exchange between Western art music and the different Eastern musical tradition under the much broader domain of economic exchange that, as I hope to demonstrate, shapes any cultural interaction.

It would be perhaps misleading to characterize the interactions between the Western culture and the musical practices of Moldavia and Wallachia as falling entirely under the confines of what Said described as orientalism. First, these two provinces were both located within the European continent. Secondly, they were never part of any of the colonial empires of the nineteenth century (although they were, in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, the subject of political and military domination exerted by the Ottomans, the Russians, or the Habsburg). Nevertheless, these particularities distinguishing Moldavia and Wallachia from other countries in the Middle and Far East should not prevent us from observing and analysing the power relations underlining the interactions between the Western culture and these Eastern European provinces. Although Moldavia and Wallachia existed within the borders of Europe, they were categorized as part of Eastern World by the West. This cultural and political framework generated multiple orientalist discursive representations. Standard musical formulas were used to portray different cultures and/or regions in Eastern Europe; in this way, as Mayes observed, 'a whole range of Others' could be represented through the same, relatively restricted repertory of musical gestures'.<sup>16</sup> Using Said's definition of orientalism as 'a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the orient',<sup>17</sup> I argue that this orientalist framework was manifested primarily when the various local music traditions were appraised and processed by the standards of the Western compositional and aesthetic principles.

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<sup>13</sup> Matthew Head, 'Musicology on Safari: Orientalism and the Spectre of Postcolonial Theory', *Music Analysis* 22/1–2 (2003): 218.

<sup>14</sup> Nicholas Cook, 'Encountering the Other, Redefining the Self: Hindostannic Airs, Haydn's Folk Song Settings and the "Common Practice" Style', in *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780s–1940s. Portrayal of the East*, ed. Martin Clayton and Bennett Zon (New York: Routledge, 2016): 17.

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan D. Bellman, 'Musical Voyages and Their Baggage: Orientalism in Music and Critical Musicology', *The Musical Quarterly* 94/3 (2011): 432.

<sup>16</sup> Catherine Mayes, 'Eastern European National Music as Concept and Commodity at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century', *Music & Letters* 95/1 (2014): 71.

<sup>17</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 3.

Functional harmony and the concept of beauty were criteria used to understand and work upon a kind of music that was structured differently in terms of form, harmony or aesthetic appreciation. The imposition of the Western musical canon on the local, vernacular musical practice enabled the domination, restructuring, and authority characteristic of orientalism. Foreign travellers, touring musicians or Western composers who temporarily or permanently settled in the Principalities enacted the setting of this canon in different ways and to different degrees. Most of them came from the Habsburg Empire, the core of the Classic-Romantic epoch, and this is visible in the new musical influences they introduced in the Principalities.

As Catherine Mayes shows, the same set of devices was used to portray a variety of Eastern European national music: duple meter, drone or dance-like accompaniments, exclusive or nearly exclusive use of tonic and dominant harmony, symmetrical, often periodic, formal constructions composed of four-bar phrases with regular cadences, and the juxtaposition and repetition (rather than development) of short melodic and rhythmic cells. In the case of Romanian music, this list can be supplemented with an important addition: the (sometimes intensive) use of augmented seconds as a testimony to oriental influence.<sup>18</sup> For Western Europe, this musical arsenal helped to define and identify the region as an essentially homogeneous and undifferentiated entity, a land of peasants and shepherds living in a state of nature. Hence the simplicity, naturalness and artlessness of their national music were in opposition to the advanced Western civilizations, whose national musics were more elaborate, the result of a rational (as opposed to instinctual) and sophisticated creation process.<sup>19</sup>

In this context and as a result of the specific dynamic of power and knowledge, the Western gaze upon the Romanian Principalities manifested two distinct but related approaches. The first one was an interest in the exotic outlook, most notable in their institutions, manners and culture, and a second in the self-induced sense of *mission civilisatrice*, a duty to understand and then to advance in the Eastern states the rational forms of organization acquired by the Western civilization. Western attitudes towards Romanian music strongly reflected these two approaches; in this case, music's exotic outlook was an essential prerequisite for its desired modernization. Matthew Gelbart's formulation that 'the politics of orientalism were the politics of early folk music study as well'<sup>20</sup> can also be used to describe the situation of Romanian music in the first half of the nineteenth century. Here, folk music was first recognized as such by professional musicians able to notice its uniqueness and potential, musicians skilled enough to try to discipline this music with the norms of the Western canon.

The testimonies of the Western travellers and officials describe the musical life in Eastern Europe in terms ranging from utter disgust to sincere appreciation. Most often, the music and customs in these lands were a matter of amusement, as the Eastern countries were considered the realm of folk music and dance, a territory suited for the condescending research of the emerging discipline of modern anthropology.<sup>21</sup> Romanian music was not exempt from this attitude. It is often

<sup>18</sup> Zeno Vancea, 'Rolul elementelor populare în procesul de formare a limbajului muzicii culte românești din secolul XIX', *Studii de muzicologie* 1 (1965): 129.

<sup>19</sup> Mayes, 'Eastern European National Music', 88–9.

<sup>20</sup> Matthew Gelbart, *The Invention of 'Folk Music' and 'Art Music': Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 113.

<sup>21</sup> Wolf, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 331.

considered a bizarre object, with certain traits of 'naturalness' and melancholy, a symbol of the primitive state of the country itself. The first individuals to describe this musical other in these terms were foreign travellers. Later, Western composers used the same approach to understand Romanian music and classify it according to a scale of relative civilization.

In assessing the position of the Eastern European nations, the Enlightenment's notions of universality and reason played an important role. As Franz Josef Sulzer<sup>22</sup> asserted, the arts and the sciences must be grounded, for all nations, on the same principles and the same theory. He continued by saying that Wallachians and Greeks had poor knowledge of the practice and music theory.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, they were not only lacking the principles of theory and performance, but some of their musical activities, especially those involving Turkish bands, seemed to be chaotic, a confused mixture of the most disparate elements. Sulzer uses such terms to describe a ceremony at the Wallachian court, where Western, Roma,<sup>24</sup> and Turkish music played simultaneously, each with its piece, along with religious singing and gunfire salute.<sup>25</sup>

Lady Elisabeth Craven uses similar terms in describing the sound of the official Ottoman orchestra at the court of the Wallachian prince in 1786: 'My ears were assailed by the most diabolical noise I ever heard'; according to her, all the instrumentalists in the band endeavoured 'to drown out the noise of his neighbour by making a louder noise if possible'.<sup>26</sup> For Sulzer, the explanation for this musical backwardness is the light-minded and whimsy character of the Greeks, who, he believes, cannot find satisfaction in any entertainment for more than half a year. The Swiss scholar was complaining that the Greek nobility lacked the patience to listen to a whole dance or symphony performed by German musicians, urging them to stop in the middle of an Adagio and play something else.<sup>27</sup>

In the first half of the nineteenth century the perception of Romanian music steadily improved. The rigorous universal principles of the Enlightenment were replaced by the Romantic privileging of individual expression and exotic settings. Thus, the Austrian composer Heinrich Ehrlich (1822–1899) published in 1850 a music collection entitled *Airs Nationaux Roumains* (Romanian National Songs) in Vienna. In the collection's foreword, Ehrlich states that 'undoubtedly, these songs will appear very strange at the first sight for their entirely original melody, sometimes wild, for their accompaniment that contains the most fanciful chords, even the most bizarre'. He goes on to characterize the songs as expressing 'a

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<sup>22</sup> A Swiss military man, writer and historian hired in 1774 by the Phanariot Prince of Wallachia Alexandru Ipsilanti.

<sup>23</sup> Franz Josef Sulzer, *Geschichte des transalpinischen Daciens*, Romanian translation by Gemma Zinveliu as *Fr.J. Sulzer în Dacia Cisalpină și Transalpină* (Bucharest: Editura Uniunii Compozitorilor și Muzicologilor din România, 1995): 147.

<sup>24</sup> Sulzer, *Geschichte des transalpinischen Daciens*, 144–5. For Roma, Sulzer uses the term *gypsy music*.

<sup>25</sup> One of the anonymous reviewers of this article has made the valuable suggestion that this seemingly cacophonous musical setting described by Sulzer could be interpreted as a symbol of the exclusive privilege of the prince and a sound representation of his political power. In the context of the Ottoman administration, Turkish music performed at the Romanian courts was the manifestation of the Ottoman sovereignty.

<sup>26</sup> Gheorghică, *Byzantine Chant*, 52 (author's translation).

<sup>27</sup> Sulzer, *Geschichte des transalpinischen Daciens*, 147.

sweet melancholy, depressing, even painful' and as possessing 'mysterious passages which hint at the burning desires that lay in the bottom of the heart'<sup>28</sup>.

Also in Vienna in 1850, another composer, Johann Andreas Wachmann<sup>29</sup> (1807–1863) published a music collection entitled *L'Echo de Valachie* (Echo of Wallachia). In the volume's foreword, Wachmann mentions that he faithfully reproduced the songs as he heard them from the Romanian *lăutari*, and admits that he wanted to introduce them to the judgment of the musical world (that is the Western world), because 'the Wallachian national melodies distinguish themselves by their originality and bizarre character'.<sup>30</sup>

The 'originality' and the 'bizarre character' of the Romanian songs were reasons for the growing interest of the European musicians in autochthonous musical practice. As in other disciplines of orientalist research,<sup>31</sup> the study of Romanian folk music was first an act of construction and representation. It demonstrated the power of the Western civilization over the refractory and exotic musical material from a distant land. Romanian music could be more easily mastered and appropriated if reduced to a few aesthetic categories (melancholic, bizarre) and other socio-cultural categories (wild, primitive).

### Folk Music as Raw Material

The uncanny music of the East was not only a matter of intellectual reflection but also a valuable raw material for composers seeking to imprint their works with originality. As early as the first years of the nineteenth century, Romanian music's potential as a source of inspiration for cultivated works was fully acknowledged. One relatively well-documented example is the case of the German cello virtuoso Bernhard Romberg who, in his European concert tours, included the capitals of the two Romanian Principalities, Iași (1806 or 1807) and Bucharest (1812). For these concerts, Romberg composed and performed, among other works from the Western repertoire, pieces inspired by Romanian music that stirred the audience's enthusiasm. Unfortunately, there is no information about the circumstances in which Romberg discovered the local music that inspired these works. Relying on the Romanian material, he later published a *Capriccio on Moldavian and Wallachian themes* for cello and piano (1827). The German cellist selected various melodies from the countries he travelled to, and then compose instrumental music that incorporated these melodies. Throughout his career, Romberg published several collections with music composed of Austrian, Danish, Russian or Ukrainian themes.<sup>32</sup> In doing this, he obtained the support of a public with an increasing awareness of its national consciousness (to the formation of which he contributed) and assured himself consistent fees.<sup>33</sup>

Folk songs were an attraction in the programmes of different Western musicians performing in the Romanian Principalities. To establish a connection with the local public, performers would compose or improvise a few pieces based on some

<sup>28</sup> Octavian Lazăr Cosma, *Hronicul muzicii românești*, vol. 3 (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1975): 95. All the English translations of Romanian sources are mine unless otherwise stated.

<sup>29</sup> Born in Budapest, who moved and settled in Bucharest in 1832.

<sup>30</sup> Cosma, *Hronicul*, vol. 3: 103.

<sup>31</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 156.

<sup>32</sup> Cosma, *Hronicul*, vol. 2: 200.

<sup>33</sup> *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, no. 28, 8 July 1812, 468.



Romanian themes. One such musician was Franz Liszt, one of the most famous musicians that performed in the Romanian provinces in the first half of the nineteenth century. In a concert from 1847 in Iași, he 'brilliantly improvises on the themes of the Romanian hora and overture',<sup>34</sup> at the end of his recital. Liszt had a strong interest in the traditional music of these regions and his notebook from this tour, which has been preserved, contains transcriptions of songs he heard on various occasions. Among them, there is a ring dance (*hora*) from Sibiu (Transylvania), called Hermannstädter, and a Wallachian melody, both of which are included in a rhapsody composed after the Romanian concerts but which remained obscure until the early twentieth century.<sup>35</sup>

Seeking inspiration outside the Western world's borders was a general trend in Europe then, and even Johannes Brahms was fascinated by the Eastern exoticism to compose a series of Hungarian dances. If for the cultural elite of the Romanian Principalities, the transformation of indigenous folk music into works of art slowly became, by the middle of the nineteenth century, a matter of national importance, the same process was seen in the West as a mere refreshment of the canonical techniques of composition. Along these lines, in a study about music in Transylvania published in 1814 in the reputable *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, the author states that his intention was to present to his readers a general description of the musical practices in this province and to provide for Western composers a novel material to be used for their compositions.<sup>36</sup> Here, in a few phrases, we have two of the most common Western attitudes towards the musical traditions of the East: intellectual curiosity and the use of this music as a decorative device able to endow the compositions with a fancy character.

However, folk and vernacular music was not only valuable as raw material; its appeal was growing because the market demand for 'national' music was expanding throughout nineteenth-century Europe, and the Romanian Principalities were no exception. Here, the segment of middle- and upper-class amateur musicians to whom most of these compositions were addressed was constantly evolving. Most musical creations in the first half of nineteenth-century Romania lacked elaboration not only because this trait was congruent with the ideology of Eastern Europe as uncultivated land, but also because its simplicity was the condition for reaching the bourgeois house or the aristocratic salon. Capitalizing on an idealized notion of the 'nation' as rooted in an imagined past and people, such representations of Eastern European national music were, as Mayes puts it, 'successful commodities in the musical marketplace'.<sup>37</sup> Thus, more than an occasion to redefine the self, the classically trained composer used this cross-cultural encounter to gain access to a broader market of music customers.

<sup>34</sup> George Breazul, 'Muzica românească de azi', in *Muzica românească de azi*, ed. Petre Nițulescu (Bucharest: Marvan, 1939): 277.

<sup>35</sup> Valentina Sandu-Dediu, 'The Beginnings of Romanian Composition: Between Nationalism and the Obsession with Synchronizing with the West', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 14 (2017): 331. The rhapsody was published in 1936 by Universal Edition under the title of *Rhapsodie roumaine*, although it also contains some Hungarian themes. Some Romanian songs from Liszt's notebook were later used in other works: a Moldavian *hora* is included in the Hungarian Rhapsody no. 9 and the second Hungarian Rhapsody contains a drinking song he recorded in his notebook while in Iași. See Theodor Bălan, *Franz Liszt* (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1963): 353.

<sup>36</sup> Cosma, *Hronicul*, vol. 2: 40–41.

<sup>37</sup> Mayes, 'Eastern European National Music', 89–90.

## The Quest for 'National Music'

The cultural heritage of a nation was represented, among other things, by its valuable and original musical works. As expected, a work's value was assessed using the principles of Western aesthetics. For peripheral states such as the Romanian Principalities at the beginning of the nineteenth century, with an increasing aspiration towards modernization, the need for valuable musical works was synonymous with their quest for Western culture and civilization.

Nonetheless, as noted earlier, for the Eastern nations to develop a tradition of cultivated music, the resulting works had to demonstrate their authenticity, to exhibit their unique essence. These were the premises on which the idea of 'national music' was born, a concept that, as Gelbart argues, was easily convertible into two types of cultural capital: a form of 'tradition', representing the whole nation and its 'essence', and as aesthetic achievement obtained by individual artistic geniuses within the nation.<sup>38</sup> It is important to note here that the Romanians' desire for national music based on folk music had as a first resolution the interest of Western composers for the exotic music of Eastern Europe. These composers fall into the category Dave Harker calls mediators (and their activity mediation). In his perspective, their work (collecting, editing, arranging or composing with folk music) was informed by their own taste, attitudes and assumptions about what 'folk music' was or should be, but also by their social position in a class society.<sup>39</sup> The latter determined their access to sources of music, the time and opportunity they had for such activities, and the access to a potential segment of the market or to possible sources of patronage. In this context, the work of these composers can be seen as an active mediation between various sources of 'folk music' and the demand of an expanding market for 'national music'.

The aesthetic qualities of the compositions were, to a certain extent, of secondary importance, as long as the representational capabilities were manifest and effective. One of the most productive ways of representing the nation through music was by designating the latter with proper titles. Most creations published in the first half of the nineteenth century contained in their titles the words 'national', 'Romanian', 'Wallachian', 'Moldavian', 'peasant', or 'popular'. The Austrian composer Josef Herfner (1795–1865) wrote the first *National Overture* in 1837;<sup>40</sup> Johann Andreas Wachmann composed, among other things, the piano piece collections entitled *Romania, recueil des danses et d'airs valaques originaux* (1846), *Bouquet de mélodies valaques originales* (1847), *L'Echo de Valachie, chansons populaires roumaines* (1850), *Les Bords du Danube, Chansons et danses roumaines* (1858), as well as works inspired by the Romanian history and mythology. The German musician Eduard A. Hübsch (1833–1894) composed a fantasy for violin and piano entitled

<sup>38</sup> Gelbart, *The Invention of 'Folk Music' and 'Art Music'*, 236.

<sup>39</sup> Dave Harker, *Fakesong: The Manufacture of the British 'Folksong' 1700 to the Present Day* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985): xiii.

<sup>40</sup> Some of the works published at that time (especially those published in Bucharest) were printed without a publication date printed. This was especially true for small compositions belonging to the repertoire of salon music (like those of Ludwig Wiest for example). This is reflected in the recent literature dealing with the history of the Romanian music in the nineteenth century, in which the years of musical composition are missing. This is also true of other Romanian sources, so that a significant part of the output of nineteenth-century composers is undatable. See, for example, Viorel Cosma, *Muzicienii din România: Lexicon biobibliografic* (Bucharest, Editura Muzicală, 2006).

*Airs Roumains*. From the Italian composer Pietro Mezzetti (1826–1894) we have the piano pieces called *Colecțiune de Cântece și Hore Românești* (Collection of Romanian Songs and Horas) and *Muzică Națională* (National Music). Ludwig Wiest (1819–1899), the Viennese virtuoso violinist living in Bucharest, also had an important compositional output, including his *Cântece populare române* (Romanian popular songs), *Vals național* (National Waltz), or *Hora Daciei* (The Dacian Hora).

These compositions are examples of what Benedict Anderson called the vernacularization of the score,<sup>41</sup> a social process located at the intersection of printing technology and emergent capitalism through which certain groups (in our case, certain classes) of people can forge a sense of national adherence (imagined community) by way of a standard musical repertoire. The importance of such works resides not only in articulating a local, vernacular musical language but also in its symbolic significance in a European context. As Alex Drace-Francis noted about the Romanian literature of that period, its relevancy was enhanced by titles containing the ethnic name of Romania/Romanian even if Romania as a state did not exist at that time.<sup>42</sup> However, its necessity was advocated, locally and abroad, by such artistic creations. Jim Samson considers these works as a manifestation of cultural nationalism (rather than an example of musical exoticism) and argues that their role was to prepare the ground for the political unification between Moldavia and Wallachia.<sup>43</sup>

In dealing with Romanian music, the intention of some composers such as Wachmann or Ehrlich was to provide appropriate support for it, in order for the Romanian people to display, more convincingly, their national traits. In the introduction to his collection of *Airs nationaux roumaine* (1850, two years after the Wallachian and Moldavian failed revolutionary unrest of 1848), Ehrlich said that ‘the cry for nationality and equal rights found a strong echo in the Romanian people’, arguing that ‘the Romanian people displays a compact national element, strong and undivided’.<sup>44</sup> Inevitably, by the middle of the century, cultural emancipation would be joined with the national cause, but the main attribute of these compositions was their descriptive character. In a certain sense, the Western musicians who adapted and arranged Romanian folk music were doing a sort of ethnographic work and, from this position, they became the first professionals able to offer a narrative about these lands for the use of Western interests.

As Wallerstein argues, the ethnographers translated the local customs into an intelligible language, thus offering information and advice for the colonial administration.<sup>45</sup> This function that music can achieve can be exemplified by a collection entitled *Musique orientale* published in Iași in 1834 by the Czech composer François Rouschitzki. The collection contained 42 songs of various origins (Moldavian, Wallachian, Greek and Turkish) and was dedicated to general Pavel Kisseleff who was, between 1829 and 1834, the chief of the Russian administration in Wallachia. Although, at that time, Western repertoire (mostly in its light form of salon music) was already present in the Romanian Principalities, Rouschitzki

<sup>41</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006): 75.

<sup>42</sup> Alex Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture: Literacy and the Development of National Identity* (London: Tauris, 2006): 161.

<sup>43</sup> Jim Samson, *Music in the Balkans* (Leiden: Brill, 2013): 236.

<sup>44</sup> Cosma, *Hronicul*, vol. 3: 95.

<sup>45</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004): 78.

chose to retain only the oriental repertoire, highlighting the exotic outlook of this region. Moreover, some opinions suggest that in his piano arrangements, the composer deliberately accentuated the oriental character of the pieces by adding such orientalist signifiers as sinuous melodic formulas and luxuriant ornamentation.<sup>46</sup> With his collection, Rouschitzki probably hoped to gain the benevolence (and, maybe, the patronage) of the Russian official – by presenting him with the musical codes of the country – and the appreciation of a wide public eager to engage in different sorts of musical entertainment.<sup>47</sup>

The role of interpreter and mediator played by composers in this period can be demonstrated not only in relation to the Western world and the local ruling elite, but also the local society. These composers acted as the designers of complex representations aimed to establish an officially sanctioned and nationally accepted version of the ‘people’ or of the ‘nation’ for the local society: in 1843, the Italian opera company from Bucharest premiered *Trecutul, Prezentul și Viitorul* (The Past, the Present, and the Future), composed by Wachmann and dedicated to the Wallachian prince Gheorghe Bibescu; the following year, the same composer premiered a Romanian cantata inspired by ‘old songs’ in which the soloists performed in ‘national costumes’.<sup>48</sup> At a time when the gap between the high nobility and the lower classes was growing steadily, such a national *mise-en-scène* helped the construction of a certain kind of knowledge, a set of codes: a so-called nation with its imagined music and traditions. The juxtaposition between art music genres (opera, cantata) and exotic signifiers (‘old songs’, ‘national costumes’) proposed a symbolic representation of the nation with which the cultivated members of the society could identify. If orientalism generated a representation of the Eastern cultures for the Western gaze, this sort of musical work, prevalent in the nineteenth century, resulted in a representation of the internal, European other for the use of various European powers and also for the local ruling elite.

### The Social Foundations of ‘National Music’

The works mentioned earlier are only a few examples from a very long list of compositions in whose titles one can find the words Romanian, national or popular.

<sup>46</sup> Cosma, *Hronicul*, vol. 3: 68. The deliberate orientalization is also alluded to by Nicolae Gheorghîță when he remarks on the simplistic accompaniment used for several Romanian pieces from a manuscript containing piano arrangements of salon music, some of them possessing ‘serious technical and harmonic problems as compared to the Romanian pieces’. Nicolae Gheorghîță, ‘Salon Music in the First Decades of the 19th-Century Moldavia. Case Study: Musical MS No. 2663 (Dated 1824) from the Romanian Academy Library in Bucharest’, *Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest* 11/1 (no. 41) (2020): 59.

<sup>47</sup> In the first half of the nineteenth century, a composer’s career in the Romanian Principalities was still largely dependent on aristocratic patronage. Andreas Wachmann, for example, dedicated some of his works to ladies from the high society: Eliza Bibescu, daughter of Prince Gheorghe Bibescu, Cleopatra Trubețkoi, niece of Prince Grigore Alexandru Ghica, and Alexandrina Ghica. See Haiganuş Preda-Schimek, ‘The Changing Taste of the Romanian Elites as Mirrored in Handwritten Piano Cahiers from the First Half of the Nineteenth-Century’, in *Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest*, 10/4 (no. 40) (2019): 297.

<sup>48</sup> Grigore Posluşnicu, *Istoria muzicii la români* (Bucharest: Editura Cartea Românească, 1928): 134.

However, the most crucial aspect in this context is the meaning of these words in the Romanian society of the nineteenth century. Or, to put it otherwise, we need to know what sort of music was believed to be national or popular and by whom.

The population of Wallachia and Moldavia at the beginning of the nineteenth century was involved in a significant, multi-layered transitional process. Notably, these states' population numbers increased throughout the first half of the century<sup>49</sup> and, most importantly for our discussion, the size of the urban population (and of the urban or semi-urban settlements) also grew. Moldavia's urban population rose from 9.11 per cent of the total population in 1803 to 21.75 per cent in 1859.<sup>50</sup> The population of the Wallachian capital, Bucharest, grew steadily throughout the century, with some foreign officials estimating it to have been between 80,000 and 1000,000 people in 1820. A Russian Army statistic from 1832 estimates the total population at 72,595 residents, among which 12,000 were floating population and 45,406 constituted the middle class.<sup>51</sup> The society's main estates were the nobility (boyars), the clergy, townspeople and the peasantry,<sup>52</sup> but none of these were homogeneous social groups, each of them having its internal divisions and stratification.<sup>53</sup> The socio-professional categories populating the urban areas were the boyars (who, in this period, had begun to leave their rural estates to move to the cities), the merchants and craftsmen (most of them Jews, Germans, Armenians, Greeks, Austrians), the administrative clerks, the workers, the domestic personnel (servants and Roma slaves), and the vagabonds and beggars.<sup>54</sup> The most numerous were the merchants and artisans, who counted a quarter of the total urban population by the middle of the century, a number that attests to the increased economic activity of the time.<sup>55</sup> They were followed by the lower ranks of the population such as the agricultural workers, skilled workers, day labourers, servants, and vagabonds, most of them recently arrived from villages in search of employment and living in precarious conditions.<sup>56</sup>

In this new historical context, an emergent middle class began to take shape, composed chiefly of boyars of lower ranks (some of them already involved in some commodity production), wealthy merchants or artisans, individuals with liberal professions (lawyers, doctors, teachers) and civil servants.<sup>57</sup> It is debatable,

<sup>49</sup> Keith Hitchins, *Românii, 1774–1866* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2013): 78–9.

<sup>50</sup> Ecaterina Negruți, *Structura demografică a orașelor și târgurilor din Moldova, 1800–1859* (Iași: Fundația Academică 'A. D. Xenopol', 1997): 25.

<sup>51</sup> Adrian Majuru, 'Modernitate vs. multiculturalitate în Bucureștii epocii moderne (1848–1940)', in *Altera* 5/12 (1999).

<sup>52</sup> Hitchins, *Românii, 1774–1866*, 81.

<sup>53</sup> One of the most critical divisions was among the ruling class, between the high and the petty nobility. The antagonisms between the two developed throughout the first half of the nineteenth century and culminated with the 1821 uprising of Tudor Vladimirescu and the 1848 revolution. For Paul Cornea, this divide resulted from increased economic activity and an extension of market relations, all of which translated as a competition for economic and political power; see Paul Cornea, *Originea romantismului românesc* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1972): 198.

<sup>54</sup> Negruți, *Structura demografică*, 58. For more details about the structure of the urban population in the Principalities, see Alexandru-Florin Platon, *Geneza burgheziei în Principatele Române* (Iași: Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza," 2013).

<sup>55</sup> Negruți, *Structura demografică*, 64.

<sup>56</sup> Hitchins, *Românii, 1774–1866*, 88.

<sup>57</sup> For an extended analysis of the Romanian bourgeoisie in the first half of the nineteenth century, see Platon, *Geneza burgheziei*.

though, to what extent this middle class acted as a bourgeoisie, with specific social and economic interests and well-defined class consciousness. Some authors suggest that this emerging urban middle class had a weak economic position, lacked homogeneity, had contradictory interests, and had an unequal fiscal and juridical regime.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, it was not able to effect a radical change toward a market economy.<sup>59</sup> Another characteristic of this class was its eagerness to get access to the highest echelons of the society, being ready to abandon its status and accept the nobility's values and ideals as its own. For this reason, the most well-to-do segment of this bourgeoisie spent a large amount of their wealth on land (in Romanian, the word *boier* denotes both a landowner, not necessarily of noble lineage, and a holder of a high position in the state) and the purchase of different (usually minor) nobility ranks.<sup>60</sup> Consequently, the number of boyars in Moldavia grew from 888 in 1826 to 3,323 in 1853.<sup>61</sup>

Various musical styles originating from different sources were available for these urban dwellers. Among them were the rural musical traditions of Moldavia and Wallachia, peasant folk music that made its way to the city either due to the migration of peasants to urban areas or the constant travel of the *lăutari* between towns and villages. The internal migration of peasants was a widespread phenomenon in the nineteenth century and was caused by the deterioration of the social and economic conditions of the peasantry.<sup>62</sup> In their search for a better life, these peasants brought with them the cultural traditions of their villages. Among them were the Roma enslaved people who were gradually freed around mid-century, most skilled in different crafts, including music (rural *lăutari*).<sup>63</sup> Moving to towns and cities, this rural population contributed to developing a (mostly) lower class of servants and workers and diversified the musical landscape.

Another source of music available for the urban public was a varied urban popular music that mixed repertoires of different provenances: peasant music, fashionable Western music (salon dances, romances, marches or arias from opera and operetta) or the different types of Turkish/oriental music that were increasingly popular since the eighteenth century. Among the latter, a genre called worldly songs (*cântece de lume*) achieved a special prominence among a broad audience, cutting across divisions of class or education. These were generally love songs whose lyrics were inspired by the post-Byzantine Anacreontic poetry, written sometimes by well-educated members of the elite, boyars such as Costache Conachi in Moldavia or the Văcărescu poets in Wallachia. The poems were written for the author's beloved and sung – in serenades, parties, weddings, and promenades – on a melody composed

<sup>58</sup> Negruți, *Structura demografică*, 71–2.

<sup>59</sup> Cornea, *Originea romantismului românesc*, 43, 415. Cornea describes this middle class as a social stratum composed of wielders of commercial and usurious capital that conformed itself with the seldom relations and the feudal hierarchy, unwilling to gain power on its own. Towards the middle of the century, a proper bourgeois class started to define itself, favoured by the intensification of exchange and money circulation, but it is still weak and divided and dependent on commercial capital rather than other more advanced forms of economic activity such as the manufacture.

<sup>60</sup> Hitchins, *România, 1774–1866*, 87. See also Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, *Evgheniți, cio-coi, mojiți: Despre obrazele primei modernități românești, 1750–1860* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2015): 48.

<sup>61</sup> Negruți, *Structura demografică*, 59.

<sup>62</sup> Negruți, *Structura demografică*, 143.

<sup>63</sup> Negruți, *Structura demografică*, 147–8.

by the *lăutari*. The melody had a solid oriental influence since its melancholy character and luxurious ornamentation originated in the cultural milieu of Istanbul and was brought to the Principalities by the musicians who arrived together with the Phanariot princes.<sup>64</sup> The Romanian *lăutari* adopted this style and mixed it, in various degrees, with the autochthonous rural and urban folk music. But unlike folk music, which was transmitted orally, these songs had, sometimes, a known author and were circulating in print using the neumatic notation.<sup>65</sup>

The period of worldly songs spans about three generations and lasted from the end of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century. With each generation it evolved differently and encompassed different social strata. Originating as a phenomenon linked with the love affairs of the high nobility, the interest in this genre grew among the petty nobility and civil servants somewhere between 1812 and 1832, and after the middle of the century it spread among the merchants, skilled workers and lower urban classes.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, this latter phase coincided with a period of modernization for Moldavia and Wallachia, a 'move towards Europe' that was possible thanks to the easing of Ottoman power,<sup>67</sup> which allowed Romanian society to turn progressively toward Western political and cultural models.<sup>68</sup> In music, this meant the slow decline of the Turkish/Greek repertoires: Wallachian prince Alexandru Ghica dismissed the Turkish bands in 1830 and reorganized the court music with the help of a Viennese musician, Ludwig Wiest.<sup>69</sup>

Western travellers and officials documented this change: Charles de Ligne, a French nobleman passing through the Romanian states, noticed that the ladies of the high society had embraced European attire and that they had also begun to dance fashionable Western dances such as the polonaise, the anglaise or French waltzes, while the old dance repertory was abandoned.<sup>70</sup> Count de Lagarde was a witness to this process. While he attended a ball held at the princely court, he noticed that the ceremony started with English and French quadrilles, a German waltz, and a Polish mazurka, all wonderfully performed. The count mentioned that although the gentry despised the national dances, the musicians performed them for the amusement of the foreign guests.<sup>71</sup> In 1822, a former French teacher at the Moldavian court noted that the manners had changed in the country since the first Western influences appeared. For example, he mentions that 'the Greek, Wallachian and Moldavian ladies enjoy and cultivate European music

<sup>64</sup> Gheorghită, *Byzantine Chant*, 54.

<sup>65</sup> Haiganuş Preda-Schimek, 'Modelling the Public's Taste: Local Habits, Ethnic Pluralism and European Music in Bucharest (1821–1862)', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 14 (2017): 398.

<sup>66</sup> Ovidiu Papadima, *Anton Pann: Cantece de lume si folclorul Bucureştilor* (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1963): 31.

<sup>67</sup> Preda-Schimek, 'Modelling the Public's Taste', 396.

<sup>68</sup> An important marker of the Western culture was the clothing, and some the Romanian newspapers proudly announced the decision of some high state officials or boyars to abandon the Oriental attire and embrace the Western equivalents for their ranks; see Romeo Ghircoiaşiu, *Cultura muzicală românească în secolele XVIII–XIX* (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1992): 17.

<sup>69</sup> George Breazul, *Patrium Carmen* (Craiova: Scrisul Românesc, 1941): 135.

<sup>70</sup> Romeo Ghircoiaşiu, *Cultura muzicală românească în secolele XVIII–XIX* (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1992): 18.

<sup>71</sup> Ghircoiaşiu, *Cultura muzicală românească*, 32.

and almost all of them sing and play an instrument. If by any chance they are condemned to listen to Turkish music, they endure it as so many other things that belong to tradition'.<sup>72</sup>

The rising popularity of Western music overlapped with the already popular repertoires of urban folk music, with their strong oriental flavour. In the first three decades of the nineteenth century, the two types of music cohabitated in relative harmony, fortifying their prominence as major forms of musical entertainment.<sup>73</sup> At their intersection had formed what the Romanian musical critic of the nineteenth century Nicolae Filimon termed 'amphibian compositions', dance suites in which the European and Turkish or autochthonous characters intermingled: the first and the second parts of the suite were a waltz or a mazurek, while the finale was borrowed from the oriental music.<sup>74</sup> These amphibious compositions were in fashion, according to Filimon, between 1830 and 1858, and the spreading of this 'musical revolution' was due to a strong enthusiasm for European music. It is crucial to notice that most of these dance suites were composed by young men and women, educated amateurs from the medium-high echelons of society,<sup>75</sup> wealthy enough to afford music lessons<sup>76</sup> or buy an instrument.

The emergence of the first elements of a capitalist economy, and the changes that took place within the demographic structure of the urban population in the first half of the nineteenth century, had, as a consequence, a deepening social stratification that accentuated the unequal redistribution of resources and the dismantling of the cities' old medieval traditions.<sup>77</sup> This social stratification had begun to manifest itself through different cultural consumption patterns. The same worldly songs that had a great appeal to individuals of different wealth and education at the beginning of the century were slowly being rejected by the middle and upper classes towards the middle of the century. European music (just like foreign languages such as French) began to be perceived as a form of cultural capital that could attest the social distinction of an individual. Gradually, a split could be noticed between those who adhered to the new European values and those who held onto the soon-to-be abandoned old local cultural practices.<sup>78</sup> The first opera company was established in Bucharest in 1835. A second one followed in 1843, and their impact was influential among the political and economic elite and also

<sup>72</sup> George Breazul, *Pagini din istoria muzicii românești*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1970): 155.

<sup>73</sup> Gheorghe Ciobanu, *Izvoare ale muzicii românești*, vol. 1, *Culegeri de folclor și cântece de lume* (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1976): 16.

<sup>74</sup> Eugenia Maria Pașca and Vasile Ionescu, eds, *Rromii în muzica românească. Antologie de texte și sinteze* (Iași: Artes, 2008): 126.

<sup>75</sup> Pașca and Ionescu, *Rromii în muzica românească*, 126.

<sup>76</sup> The prices asked for music lessons were prohibitive for most of the population: a piano teacher from Vienna received 3 *galbeni* (a foreign golden coin) a month for his services; see Dan Dumitru Iacob, 'Elita socială și viața muzicală din Iași și București în prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea', *Historia Urbana* 20 (2012): 102.

<sup>77</sup> Negruți, *Structura demografică*, 81.

<sup>78</sup> To a certain extent, this division along matters of taste resulted from the division among the ruling class. The old boyar families who dominated political life were deemed to be conservative and reluctant to change by a petty nobility that regarded itself as modern and progressive (but which, as Paul Cornea demonstrates, only wanted a broader redistribution of power that could strengthen its positions and allow it access to higher ranks in the state administration); see Cornea, *Originile romantismului românesc*, 198.



among Romanian poets and musicians.<sup>79</sup> However, at the same time, the oriental-influenced repertoire of worldly songs maintained its popularity among the urban populations of small merchants, clerks, schoolteachers, servants, handcraftsmen and dwellers in the suburbs of Iași, Bucharest and other Romanian towns and cities.

The reconfiguration of taste within Romanian society took place over several decades. It engendered a particular type of discourse in which those with an elevated taste opposed those ordinary people from the suburbs who maintained an attachment to the old oriental repertoire. In 1837, politician Mihail Kogălniceanu noticed this differentiation when he wrote that the boyars and their friends were drawing apart, joined by the European music because they despise all that is local. In contrast, small merchants or peasants were drinking in pubs until late in the evenings, together with two *lăutari* who played their favourite songs.<sup>80</sup> We can explain this gradual differentiation in terms of class, education and gender.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, this opposition translated into a conflict between those who aspired toward and were ready to follow the European model and those who were not willing to renounce the oriental customs. In this logic, the West embodied virtue and efficiency, while the East was associated with moral corruption, backwardness and poor taste. This distinction between the two is essential since in its forward trajectory to the European model, the Romanian middle and upper classes had a progressive European model they could follow, but also a model for backwardness and corruption, the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the political and cultural life of an Eastern nation seeking to accomplish its much-desired modernization had to get rid of all its oriental inheritance. In the same way that the Romanian Principalities had to liberate themselves from Turkish rule, Iacob suggests that Romanian music had to purify itself from oriental influences in a sustained effort to shape a new aesthetic taste.<sup>82</sup>

Seen from a social perspective, Romanian 'national music' was the outcome of a double-sided process resulting from the changing patterns of cultural consumption in the first half of the nineteenth century. On the one hand, we end up with devalued cultural products such as the worldly songs or urban folk music performed by the *lăutari*. Indeed, once the musical preferences began to be regulated by the aesthetic norms of the Western culture, the music provided by the uneducated, sometimes poor, mostly Roma fiddlers was no longer acceptable, except

<sup>79</sup> Papadima, *Anton Pann*, 60.

<sup>80</sup> Constantin Bobulescu, *Lăutarii noștri: Din trecutul lor* (Bucharest: Tipografia națională Jean Ionescu & Co, 1922): 157.

<sup>81</sup> Preda-Schimek, 'Modelling the Public's Taste', 411. Age explains the preference of the elderly boyars for the 'old' music, while strict gender roles assigned to women from the middle and upper classes can explain their acquaintance with the modern European instruments and their proliferation of the Western repertoire as hosts and entertainers in the salons.

<sup>82</sup> Dan Dumitru Iacob suggests that the endorsement of Western music by the Romanian nobility was simultaneous with the latter's gradual social dissolution (the boyars lost their privileges in 1859). This process was not translated necessarily into its exclusion from the dominant political positions, but rather it impacted its image and identity as the traditional (cultural) elite; see Iacob, 'Elita socială', 114. This argument is similar to Tia DeNora's claim in her *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius* that the support of the Viennese aristocracy for Beethoven's music (and hence his success) was also a strategy for social distinction in a time when aristocracy's reputation as a cultural arbiter was challenged by the claims and tastes of a strong bourgeoisie.

conditionally.<sup>83</sup> Preda-Schimek astutely remarks that when the nobility abandoned the old oriental costume in favour of the Western attire, some of the old items of clothing were adopted by the middle class and petty bourgeoisie (including the *lăutari*).<sup>84</sup> This is similar to the fate of musical genres mentioned above and demonstrates that the ‘emancipation’ of taste was a general trend in the higher strata of the Romanian society, and from this trend resulted a stricter social division, where the ‘old’, oriental cultural products were left behind for the enjoyment of the lower classes.<sup>85</sup> These products were gradually associated with a low level of education, triviality, violence, promiscuity and vulgarity, becoming typical expressions of Balkanism.<sup>86</sup>

On the other hand, the same music that was abandoned in the quest for modernization made its way back to the upper classes in a new guise, as ‘national music’. Indeed, it was the repertoire of the *lăutari* (worldly songs, folk dances, romances) that was collected by composers or by amateur musicians and arranged as small pieces for piano or ensembles. It was through these arrangements – with their tonal harmony, regular metre and symmetrical form – that the music associated more and more with the suburbs was ‘tamed’ and accepted among the cultured elite. Only in this modified, ‘improved’ shape could a devalued cultural product gain again a significant prominence.<sup>87</sup> Composers like Francis Caudella (1812–1868), Wachmann, Wiest, Herfner and Rouschitzki acted as mediators between different classes and their corresponding repertoires. Their work assumed the reconfiguration of the *lăutar* music – stripping it of certain oriental traces (untempered intonation, asymmetrical rhythms, a vocal sound unlike that of classical Western music). Simultaneously, it retained some of its particularities (chromatic scales) preserving its ‘national’ character in order to suit the tastes of a small social segment eager to emulate European cultural practices while retaining a specific national identity.

Finally, we can ask ourselves *who* was the nation that the compositions from the first half of the nineteenth century referred to in their titles? Concepts like *Nationalmusik* or *Volksmusik* were widely and interchangeably used all over Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, the identity of the *Volk*, as Catherine Mayes shows, was, at best, ambiguous: it varied from an idealized peasantry to the lower-class rabble or the entire national

<sup>83</sup> Preda-Schimek, ‘Modelling the Public’s Taste’, 413. The author demonstrates this idea with a citation from the Romantic poet and folklorist Vasile Alecsandri.

<sup>84</sup> Preda-Schimek, ‘Modelling the Public’s Taste’, 412.

<sup>85</sup> Romanian ethnomusicologist Gheorghe Ciobanu argues that the fashionable Western music was advocated by the young and cosmopolitan boyars, while the worldly songs were suited to the popular taste of the lower/middle classes; see Gheorghe Ciobanu, *Anton Pann: Cântece de lume* (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1955): 29–30. A similar fate was shared by the poetry of these songs. Paul Cornea noticed that this genre fell out of fashion among the boyars, but was still enjoyed by large segments of poorly educated audiences; see Cornea, *Originile romantismului românesc*, 520.

<sup>86</sup> Cornea, *Originile romantismului românesc*, 415.

<sup>87</sup> In one of his books, British author and journalist William Beatty-Kingston mentioned that the music of the *lăutari* was taken up by the elite as a way of saving it from disappearance. One example cited by Beatty-Kingston was hearing queen Carmen Sylva and Zoe Rosetti (a member of an aristocratic family) performing several popular pieces arranged for voice and piano. Constantin Ardeleanu, ‘A British Journalist on Modern Romanian Music’, *Musicology Today: Journal of the National University of Music Bucharest* 10/3 (no. 39) (2019): 214.

population.<sup>88</sup> If we look at the social origin of the music used in composing the Romanian 'national' repertoire, we notice that it was shared among a broad class spectrum of semi-urban and urban populations, including the lowest workers, servants, clerks, small merchants, craftsman to petty nobility and low-rank officials. To some extent, this similar choice of cultural consumption demonstrates a specific class permeability for this music, a permeability that was due to its agent of dissemination, the *lăutari*. Whether hired by an affluent boyar or just offering their services for weddings, fairs or celebrations in taverns, inns or coffee houses, the *lăutari* could amass a considerable repertoire that enabled them to reach such a large audience. It was their music that, in one way or another, was incorporated into all the creations whose titles contained the word national. From this point of view, the nation was, at that time, a large segment of the urban or semi-urban population. However, for most of the time, this segment was not the desired target of national music, a cultivated genre that assumed a minimal acquaintance with Western music conventions performed in the aristocratic salons or some of the few concert halls available in Moldavia or Wallachia. Just as Harker uses the notion of expropriation to describe the activity of the Scottish and English folk music collectors and publishers,<sup>89</sup> we can use the same concept to describe the compositions of national music, inspired by an obsolete and repudiated musical tradition, downgraded to the lower/middle strata of the society, but transformed and aimed to a different public, with an elevated taste. In the Romanian case, this expropriation was accompanied by the pretension that the end product represented the whole nation.

### The Political Economy of Early Nineteenth-Century Romanian Musical Culture

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the market for music production and consumption was steadily expanding in Eastern Europe, and it was this market expansion that provided the first tools for the modernization of Romanian music. As we have seen before, the first teachers, composers and performers who were active for a time in Wallachia and Moldavia were all musicians trained in Western or Central Europe. Also, the instruments and most of the scores used in this renewed musical life were imported from the major urban centres of the West. This aspect reveals the cultural shift taking place to be a consequence of the gradual integration of the Romanian Principalities within the capitalist world system. The transition from the Ottoman suzerainty to the sphere of European powers was also a transition from one type of international division of labour to another, and it marked a profound change in Romanian society.

After 1830, the intensification of the economic exchange with the Occident stimulated the economic development in the Romanian Principalities, especially the agricultural production and cereal exports. Seen in a longer perspective, the growth of the cereal exports was considerable, but it was due to the increase of the arable surface more than to increased productivity. Thus, the Romanian Principalities developed an economic profile based on the cereal trade, resulting from the growing European demand for its grains and its demographic spike in that century.<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, the growing imports from the West also showed

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<sup>88</sup> Mayes, 'Eastern European National Music', 76.

<sup>89</sup> Harker, *Fakesong*.

<sup>90</sup> Bogdan Murgescu, *România și Europa: Acumularea decalajelor economice (1500–2010)* (Iași: Polirom, 2010): 121–2.

increasing economic activity. Initially, the imported goods were products destined for the consumption of the upper classes or the use of the urban population (craftsman or otherwise) but, after mid-century, the imports grew in diversity to include products used in peasant households such as iron, scythes, or cooking pots.<sup>91</sup>

However, this economic fervour came along with a sharp rise in the inequality between those relatively few who owned large areas of land and those who were used as labour force in agriculture. This situation worsened throughout the nineteenth century. In 1907 (the year of the great peasant revolt in Moldavia and Wallachia), 95.4 per cent of landowners (1.2 million peasants) earned 40.6 per cent of the total agricultural income the same percentage as that earned by 0.2 per cent (2,248 members of the nobility), who were large land owners.<sup>92</sup> Consequently, the material conditions of the peasantry were in a staggering decline: they owned insufficient land, their work duties for the landowners were arbitrarily fixed, most of their cob houses were built of clay, water and straw, infant mortality was at a high level, the literacy level was one of the lowest in Europe and pellagra and alcoholism were causing depredation.<sup>93</sup> The situation was caused by the new requirements of surplus extraction and profit accumulation demanded by the capitalist relations of production in which the Romanian Principalities were absorbed after 1830. Referring to this period, Daniel Chirot argues that Wallachia (and to a similar extent Moldavia) evolved into a neo-colony,<sup>94</sup> an 'indirectly controlled state in which there was no single metropole but rather a consortium of overseers'.<sup>95</sup> Its colonial status was nothing new because, according to Chirot, Wallachian society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can best be understood in a modified model of colonial societies, a colony surprisingly similar to the European colonies of the sixteenth to twentieth centuries. The characteristics of such a society were the existence of a substantial nobility, weak and bound villagers, a weak state structure, the requirements of a foreign imperial power, and the estrangement of a significant part of the rurally produced surplus out of the hands of the Wallachians.<sup>96</sup> But Ottoman authority were relatively undemanding compared to the capitalist system into which they were now being incorporated.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Murgescu, *România și Europa*, 113.

<sup>92</sup> Murgescu, *România și Europa*, 129.

<sup>93</sup> Murgescu, *România și Europa*, 125.

<sup>94</sup> The colonial status of the Danubian Principalities is advocated by authors like Daniel Chirot, who follow Immanuel Wallerstein's world system approach. In a text that deals with the second serfdom in Eastern Europe, Manuela Boatcă writes: 'Although never formally colonized as a region, Eastern Europe thus gradually entered into a quasi-colonial relationship vis-à-vis Western Europe, providing raw materials by using labor-intensive technology and state-enforced, labor-exploitative social systems that involved the mass of the local agricultural population'; Manuela Boatcă, 'Second Slavery vs. Second Serfdom: Local Labor Regimes of the Global Periphery', in *Social Theory and Regional Studies in the Global Age*, ed. Saïd Amir Arjomand (New York: SUNY Press, 2014): 378.

<sup>95</sup> Daniel Chirot, *Social Change in a Peripheral Society* (New York: Academic Press, 1976): 89.

<sup>96</sup> Chirot, *Social Change in a Peripheral Society*, 56.

<sup>97</sup> Chirot, *Social Change in a Peripheral Society*, 148. For Chirot, the key aspects of a colonial (enclave) economy are the following: the economy is dominated by a quest for raw materials or agricultural products to be used by the metropolitan economy; import-export trade is either in the hands of foreigners from the metropolitan country or in the hands of agents acting for that country; there is a 'partial dispossession' of the native peasants, as every effort is made to break village self-sufficiency in order to produce an exportable surplus; the purely

The colonial status of the Romanian Principalities is to be understood in terms of unequal exchange and economic specialization. If, in the realm of internal trade, the equivalence of the exchange values of two commodities containing the same quantity of labour is implied, in the sphere of external commerce, the commodities exchanged contain unequal quantities of labour, reflecting unequal levels of productivity.<sup>98</sup> According to Samir Amin, the exchange takes place only if the productivities are different, and this difference in productivity can have the following causes: different 'natural' potentialities (such as climate), or different organic compositions of the capital, reflecting unevenness in the capitalist development.<sup>99</sup> If the Romanian Principalities lacked a different, particularly favourable 'natural' potential, the capital's organic composition of the trade partners differed considerably, as the ratio between the constant capital (capital invested in plant, equipment, and materials) to variable capital (capital invested in the labour costs involved in hiring employees) in the Western industrial economies was positive.

Consequently, the international exchange can be unequal if (wages and rates of surplus value being equal) the organic compositions are different for both parties involved. The prices of production 'are such that the hour of total labour of the more advanced country (characterized by a higher organic composition) obtains more products on the international market than the hour of total labour of the less developed one'.<sup>100</sup>

The reliance of the Romanian economy on grain exports was a strategy that could not help it surpass its underdevelopment and, although the exports were growing for a certain period of time, they could not grow fast enough to fulfil the demand of the Western centres, a situation in which 'it is impossible for a country to catch up on its historical handicap while sticking to the basics of international specialization'.<sup>101</sup> This unequal exchange is a constant characteristic of capitalism in which the financial and commercial relations between centre and periphery serve, according to Amin, the same twofold functions: on the one hand, to facilitate (by extending the capitalist market at the expense of the pre-capitalist systems) the absorption of the surplus and, on the other, to increase the average rate of profit.<sup>102</sup>

The consequences of this type of economic development were visible in the Wallachian and Moldavian societies in the nineteenth century. In the peripheries, an effect of the intensification of external exchange is the strengthening of the social groups which act as chains of transmission between the local economy and the international capital. These groups maintain an internal market that favours demand for luxury consumer goods rather than mass consumer goods; imported goods can fulfil their material needs and, so far as local products are concerned, their demand focuses on services (servants, leisure services, etc.).<sup>103</sup> The demand

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indigenous economy stagnates as it become more subordinate to metropolitan interests and foreign domination; a great 'distance' separates the metropolitan agents and the natives who are relegated to the roles of labourer, servant and peasant; a native landowning elite develops, capable of exploiting the situation by growing exportable cash crops; see Chirot, *Social Change in a Peripheral Society*, 59).

<sup>98</sup> Samir Amin, *Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism*, trans. Brian Pierce (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976): 133.

<sup>99</sup> Amin, *Unequal Development*, 139–40.

<sup>100</sup> Amin, *Unequal Development*, 139–40.

<sup>101</sup> Amin, *Unequal Development*, 290–91.

<sup>102</sup> Amin, *Unequal Development*, 187–8.

<sup>103</sup> Amin, *Unequal Development*, 193, 246.

of these upper classes sustained a market for music production and consumption or leisure activities necessitating luxury imported goods such as professional musicians, musical instruments, scores and opera companies.<sup>104</sup> Simultaneously, the local musical culture was supplying the Western market with exotic tunes and unprocessed raw materials used by educated composers to create new commodities dedicated to consumption on the European market. The enhanced productivity of the Western composers (and their accommodation to the requests of the music market) was visible in their ability to adapt the Romanian popular tunes to the requirements of Western art music and, thus, to the aesthetic taste of a significant layer of consumers. The development of Romanian literature mirrors the same situation in the nineteenth century: the number of translations of foreign authors was twice the number of publications from Romanian authors. Drace-Francis considered these translations as cheap, mass-produced products which flooded the literary market to the detriment of the small, artisanal output of the local intelligentsia.<sup>105</sup>

### Conclusions

By gradually gaining its political independence from the Ottoman Empire, the Romanian Principalities started to develop a closer political, economic and cultural relationship with the Western world. This context favoured the rapid spread of diverse genres of European music in the cultural life of the Romanian urban centres and was also a decisive factor in establishing a national school of composition. The latter aspect involved a complex cultural interchange between the multicultural local musical traditions and the Western art music canon. In this process, Romanian music was adapted to the formal, harmonic and rhythmic requirements used at that time by European composers. The encounter between the two musical cultures was shaped by the ideological framework of orientalism that placed Wallachia and Moldavia at the borders of the civilized world, where music was sometimes characterized as unintelligible noise – other times as exotic or just simple and natural. These characteristics depicted the provinces as ‘unspoiled’ lands, in which music was not the result of a meticulous craft but rather the outcome of an instinctual drive. Thus, the division between West and East was a dichotomy between culture and nature, between the sophisticated Western urban lifestyle and the artlessness of an Eastern rural population.

The political emancipation of the Romanian Principalities came along with cultural emancipation that translated into the Romanian middle/upper classes’ eagerness to access various Western commodities. These commodities represented a way to accede to a modern lifestyle, and music played an essential role in this lifestyle. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the appetite for Western music, in its different forms and genres, was supplied by an expanding specialized European market that provided, among other things, the human resource capacity to create a unique blend of compositions termed ‘national music’. Thus, composers from Central and Western Europe were the first musicians to create a music that the Romanian public could relate to in terms of their ethnic origin and national

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<sup>104</sup> This new European lifestyle demanded consistent wealth, and many boyars spent their fortunes trying to imitate the Western fashions, which led to piling debt or even bankruptcy; see Hitchins, *România, 1774–1866*, 107.

<sup>105</sup> Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture*, 165.

aspirations. The synthesis that these composers achieved between the local (primarily oral) musical traditions and the Western classical canon helped the development of a certain sense of musical identity among the cultivated classes within the Romanian society. The devices used to build this new kind of identity belonged to the arsenal of orientalism, where exotic and simplifying traits were chosen to represent the other, the non-European cultures.

Undoubtedly, foreign professionals and merchants played a decisive role in the modernization of Romanian society throughout the nineteenth century. Different authors have stressed their contribution to the economic development of the Danubian Principalities.<sup>106</sup> Placed usually under the protection of the foreign states (Habsburg Monarchy, Russia or France), some gathered important capitals through trade, becoming the first exponents of a bourgeois class.<sup>107</sup> Their example stimulated similar autochthonous trading initiatives, and they were perceived as social models for the urban populations, contributing to speeding the pace of modernization.<sup>108</sup> Their role is also visible when it comes to music which, like all the socio-cultural phenomena at that time, was involved in a process of structural change. Most of the composers working in the Danubian Principalities were fully integrated into the Romanian society as they developed ties with the local artists and intelligentsia (by composing incidental music for theatre plays or by setting different poems to music) or with the political elite (through private music lessons or recitals). Some of them, like Herfner, Wachmann, Caudella and Wiest, held important positions in the musical institutions of both countries. Moreover, Wachmann was awarded a minor noble title in Wallachia (*pitar*),<sup>109</sup> and Ehrlich was involved in a revolutionary society in the years before 1848.<sup>110</sup>

The essential changes that affected Romanian society resulted in an inevitable social reconfiguration. New social segments began to acquire a more prominent shape in the urban centres, and new class distinctions were forged to mark the existing social hierarchy. To a certain extent, the desired modernization of Romanian music was paralleled by an 'emancipation' of taste for those who aspired to leave behind oriental customs and embrace the new and more fashionable Western culture. In this context, the first decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a significant musical effervescence, where different genres intermingled. Western art music, especially opera or its lighter version of salon music, increased in popularity among the Romanian elite. At the same time, the once popular local genres, with their unpolished and oriental outlook, were gradually abandoned for the enjoyment of the lower classes. However, the local repertoire would be reclaimed by the same elite as 'national' music, but this time this music was

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<sup>106</sup> Bogdan Murgescu demonstrates that the growth of the urban population in the nineteenth century can be mainly attributed to migration, and most of the migrants came from abroad rather than from the villages. For Murgescu, this aspect attests that nineteenth-century Romania was an immigration country that attracted many professionals and skilled workers from Central and Western Europe. Migrants had a considerable impact on the urban landscape and the functioning of the modern Romanian state and economy. Murgescu, *România și Europa*, 124.

<sup>107</sup> Hitchins, *România, 1774–1866*, 92–3.

<sup>108</sup> Vintilă-Ghițulescu, *Evgheniți, ciocoi, mojici*, 331.

<sup>109</sup> Viorel Cosma, *Muzicieni din România: Lexicon biobibliografic*, vol. 9 (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 2006): 285.

<sup>110</sup> Viorel Cosma, *Muzicieni din România: Lexicon biobibliografic*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1999).

collected and arranged by professional composers to adhere to the standards imposed by the Western technique.

All these developments happened at the same time as the economic activity of the Romanian Principalities began to adjust to the demands of the Western markets. The economic profile of Moldavia and Wallachia was determined by their exports of raw materials and the imports of finished products (some luxury goods), placing them in a peripheral, subordinated position. This situation was reflected in musical life, where those who advocated for adopting the European musical culture belonged, most often, to the landowner or merchant class. Moreover, the entire process of creating the 'national' music (collecting, publishing and composing with folk themes) closely resembled this economic profile, where cheap raw materials were used in order to produce more complex (and sometimes expensive) commodities, including works of art. We can conclude that the development of a Romanian school of composition was similar to a certain (and not negligible) extent to the development of a peripheral economy in Wallachia and Moldavia in the nineteenth century. In the end, it was this peripheral integration that ignited and made possible the cultural change that detached the Romanian culture from the oriental influence and engulfed it into the Western cultural sphere.