

THE INFLUENCE OF JANISSARY MUSIC UPON SELECTED  
COMPOSITIONS OF LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

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A Thesis

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED . .	6
The Problem . . . . .	6
Statement of the problem . . . . .	6
Importance of the study . . . . .	6
Limitations . . . . .	6
Hypothesis . . . . .	7
Definitions of Terms Used . . . . .	7
Janissary Music . . . . .	7
Janissaries . . . . .	7
III. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE . . . . .	9
IV. PROCEDURE AND RESULTS . . . . .	10
Procedure . . . . .	10
Results . . . . .	10
V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION . . . . .	22
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	24

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Excerpt from Beethoven's "Turkish March" . .	13
2. Excerpt from the "Marcia: Rule Britannia" from Beethoven's "Battle of Vittoria" . .	15
3. Excerpt from the "Marcia: Marlborough" from Beethoven's "Battle of Vittoria" . .	17
4. Excerpt from the final movement of Beethoven's "Ninth Symphony" . . . . .	19
5. Excerpt from the final movement of Beethoven's "Ninth Symphony" . . . . .	20

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Janissary music was a type of Turkish military music which was popular at one time in European armies.<sup>1</sup> It consisted of music for brass and percussion instruments (triangle, cymbals, and bass drum).<sup>2</sup> The Janissaries' repertoire was a combination of Turkish classical and folk music which made widespread use of big drums and bells to punctuate the rhythm. European composers copied this style which is known as Alla Turca.<sup>3</sup>

The word "Janissary" comes from the Turkish word Yenickeri meaning new troops. The Janissaries were the regular infantry created by the Ottoman Turks in the fourteenth century, and became the principal force that made possible the vast conquests of the Turks. They were organized in 1326 during the reign of Sultan Orkhan, conscripted among the Christian subjects of the Sultans in their boyhood, converted to Mohammedanism, and brought up under fanatical tutorship and strict

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<sup>1</sup>Perch A. Scholes, The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 304.

<sup>2</sup>Albert E. Wier, The Macmillan Encyclopedia of Music And Musicians (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1941), p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Turkish Information Office, Turkish Music (New York 22, New York: Turksy-Turkish Information Office, 1952), p. 2.

discipline. Originally they were not permitted to marry or learn any trade, and they possessed a decisive superiority in war until the development of European armies during the wars of the Emperor Charles V.<sup>4</sup>

The Janissaries developed martial music of the most effective kind, well adapted for marching and for the battlefield.

During the battle the musicians were stationed and played incessantly, thus encouraging the fighting spirit of their men and instilling horror into their enemies.<sup>5</sup>

The Janissaries were so intensely hated by the populace that their armories were set on fire and the men were hunted like wild beasts. Therefore, the instrumentation of Janissary Bands is difficult to restore because of the thorough destruction and dispersion of property and effects of the Janissaries.<sup>6</sup>

Records show that by 1544 European musicians were using giant kettle drums and military oboes which they borrowed from the Turks. In 1529, and again in 1683, Vienna, which was a center of music, was captured by the minions of the Sultan of the Ottomans. These battles were accompanied by the sounds of drums, cymbals, jingles, trumpets, and oboes of the Janissary

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<sup>4</sup>Nicholas Bessaraboff, Ancient European Musical Instruments (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1941), p. 20.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 384.

or the Sultan's Elite Guards.

During peacetime, the Sultans realized the impressiveness and influence of Janissary music, and sent small Turkish bands with their envoys to European capitals. The European Monarchs liked the new sounds so much that they sent their bandmasters to Istanbul to study Janissary music.<sup>7</sup>

Janissary music first attracted the attention of European armies in the early 18th century. During the second decade of the 18th century, Augustus II of Poland, who died in 1735, received a full Turkish military band as a gift from the Sultan of Turkey. The influence was so great on the Western world, that by 1782 the British Royal Artillery Band had the bass drum, cymbals, and tambourine, and before 1805 they were employing the Turkish crescent. The British enlisted Negroes to play these instruments, and dressed them in extravagant Eastern style of gaudy coats plus elaborate turbans. These musicians developed a special style of playing, juggling the drumsticks, clowning, and contorting themselves for the amusement of the spectators.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Karl Signell, "Boomings, Jinglings, And Clangings," Music Educators Journal (May, 1968), p. 39.

<sup>8</sup>Eric Blom, Groves Dictionary of Music And Musicians IV (New York: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1954), p. 585.

The musical instruments used in a Janissary Band were of six types:<sup>9</sup>

1. Zurna - a kind of oboe.
2. Buru - a Turkish trumpet.
3. Zil - Turkish cymbals.
4. Naqqara - small kettledrums.
5. Kos - giant kettle drum or the Turkish bass drum.
6. Turkish Crescent - the ancestor of the Jingling Johnny.

The Jingling Johnny was the name given the Turkish Crescent by the British 'Tommies.' It was a brass pole with a wooden handle and a sliding sleeve surmounted by a small crescent, below which is a small sphere and four bells. Further below there are (1) a round, pavilion-shaped perforated piece with twelve bells on the lower rim; (2) a large crescent with six bells; (3) a sphere with five-pointed star inside the crescent; and (4) a perforated paraboloidal skirt with twelve jingles on the lower rim. Inside the skirt there is a brass ferrule with a helical spring fixed to the pole; the sliding sleeve has a short spring attached to its top. The instrument is carried at the head of a band and assists in keeping the marching rhythm. The lower end of the pole is inserted into a leather pocket attached to a shoulder belt to facilitate the holding. The sliding sleeve is moved up and down, striking against the spring and causing the jingles and bells to jingle.<sup>10</sup>

To this day the bass drum, sidedrum, cymbals and triangle are still retained in most European military

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<sup>9</sup>Bessaraboff, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.



bands, and are the 'Battery' of our symphonic and operatic orchestras.<sup>11</sup> Even in our era of marching bands, drum-majors have imitated the ideas of 'fancy steps' and baton jugglery of the European Janissary Bands.

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<sup>11</sup>Blom, op. cit., p. 585.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

#### I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The problem of this study is to analyze the influences of Janissary music upon selected compositions of Ludwig Van Beethoven.

Importance of the study. When the Turkish music was at its height in influence and importance, it was only natural for the influence to attract composers in the Western world. Therefore, it is important to show the influences of Turkish musical instruments on Beethoven's music by analyzing sections, or portions of the compositions which contain characteristics of Janissary music.

Limitations. This study is subject to certain limitations.

1. This study shall be limited to these selected compositions of Beethoven:
  - A. "Turkish March" (1812) from "The Ruins of Athens."<sup>12</sup>
  - B. "The Battle of Vittoria," also entitled

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<sup>12</sup>Paul Nettl, Beethoven Encyclopedia (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), p. 203.

"Wellington's Victory," composed in 1813 to celebrate the victory of the English forces over Napoleon on July 27, 1813.<sup>13</sup>

C. A small section from the final movement of the "Ninth Symphony" completed in 1824 entitled "Ode To Joy."

2. This analysis shall be limited to the characteristics of Janissary music present in the selected compositions.

Hypothesis. Sections of certain compositions of Beethoven show the influence of Janissary music.

## II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Janissary Music. Janissary music was the music of the military bodyguard of the Turkish sovereigns.<sup>14</sup> The Janissaries made use of static harmonies that do not change when the melody seems to require it, frequent alternating between major and minor, and the heavy, jangling bass chords.<sup>15</sup>

Janissaries. The Janissaries were the Turkish

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<sup>13</sup>Nettl, op. cit., p. 305.

<sup>14</sup>Willi Apel, Harvard Dictionary of Music (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 371.

<sup>15</sup>Reinhard G. Pauly, Music in the Classic Period (Englewood, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 124.

infantry which formed a bodyguard for the Sultan. Their music made use of percussion instruments which included the Turkish Crescent or Jingling Johnny.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Eric Blom, Everyman's Dictionary of Music (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1962), p. 269.

## CHAPTER III

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There have been no other specific research studies done in this area; only a brief summary of other composers using Janissary musical characteristics will be given here.

Although the primary concern is the influences of Turkish music in Beethoven's music, other composers were also influenced by the Janissary sound of music. Around 1760, Gluck wrote the first "Turkish" opera, "Le Cadi Dupe," which was followed by others such as Mozart in his "Abduction from the Seraglio" in 1781. In the last movement of Mozart's "Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in A Major (K. 219)," there is a humorous outbreak of sound and fury in the "Turkish" style.

Mozart borrowed the noisy tutti in A minor of this "Turkish" intermezzo from himself: it had originally occurred in the ballet "Le Gelosie del serraglio," which he wrote in 1773 in Milan for his "Lucio Silla." It is in duple meter, and contrasts as naturally as it combines with the irresistible Tempo di minuetto of the main portion of the movement.<sup>17</sup>

He wrote the harmony of the horns in fifths and octaves that did not change when the melody requires it, and used grace notes to help embellish the melody in the solo violin. In 1778, Mozart incorporated a spirited

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<sup>17</sup>Alfred Einstein, Mozart (Translated by Arthur Mendel and Nathan Broder. New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 281.

"Rondo alla Turca" into his "Piano Sonata in A Major, K. 331." He used the oboe to hint at the arabesques of the Zurna in the melody and imitated the Naqqara (small drums) in the light rhythmic accompaniment. He wrote forte arpeggiated chords in the second section to imitate giant kettle drums and cymbals.<sup>18</sup>

Franz Joseph Haydn's "Symphony No. 100" (the "Military"), composed in 1784, contains influences of Janissary music in the second movement where he employs the European alla turca effects: heavy beats emphasized with bass drum (large stick) and cymbals, and the small stick and triangle trotting along.<sup>19</sup>

During the 1820s, Louis Spohr wrote his composition "Notturmo for Turkish Band." The Turkish influence is characterized by the inclusion of piccolo, triangle, bass drum, and cymbals.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Signell, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Louis Spohr, Notturmo for Turkish Band, Opus 34 (Edited by Eric Simon. New York: Alexander Broude, Inc., 1966).

## CHAPTER IV

### PROCEDURE AND RESULTS

#### I. PROCEDURE

This study consists of an analysis of excerpts from compositions of Beethoven which contain Janissary musical characteristics. The excerpts used were taken from these compositions:

1. "Turkish March" (1812) from "The Ruins of Athens." (See Figure 1, Page 13.)
2. "The Battle of Vittoria," also entitled "Wellington's Victory." (See Figures 2 and 3, Pages 15 and 17.)
3. A small section from the final movement of the "Ninth Symphony." (See Figures 4 and 5, Pages 19 and 20.)

The musical elements investigated were those of meter, rhythm, chord structure and progression, melodic elements, and instrumentation (trumpets, shawm-oboes, and percussion instruments) used in the classical symphony to achieve the Janissary warlike sound.

#### II. RESULTS

The Janissary percussion instruments, which Beethoven used in all three of his compositions, were the triangle, bass drum, and crash cymbals,

and followed the Janissary style (*Marcia alla turca*) of emphasizing the first beat of every measure as a drone. The meter signatures are either two four or six eight reflecting meters of march types. The supporting harmonies are static (chords that do not change when the melody seems to require it) in relation to florid melodies. Bands employed this procedure to keep armies in step, and Beethoven used these characteristics in his music to portray military scenes.

Beethoven's "Turkish March" shows two four meter employing tonic and dominant chords throughout the composition (See Figure 1, Page 13). The tonic or dominant chords remain unchanged for a number of measures. The tonic chord holds through for the first six measures with contrabassoon, trumpets, and horns punctuating the root of the chord. The purpose is to help the bass drum and cymbals accent the strong beats, and also to obtain a brassy effect. The strings help to emphasize the strong beats by accenting the root of the chord with a sixteenth note triplet moving to the upper neighboring tone and back to the root in unison. Grace notes embellish the melody in measures one, two, five, and six.

The melodies of the "Turkish March" appear





mainly in thirds. The melody, played by the flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons, is harmonized in thirds, and remains in this style through most of the composition. The melody and harmony moves in thirds throughout the march as in measures one, two, five, and six in figure 1, page 13. The horns are playing the root of the chord in octaves to give quality and resonance to the rhythm of the triangle and contrabassoon playing eighth notes.

The "Turkish March" is incidental music which conveys the idea of military music. Its overall texture seems thin in contrast to some other marches by Beethoven such as the "Funeral March" (2nd movement) from the "Third Symphony" ("Eroica").

In 1813 Beethoven wrote a "battle symphony" called "Wellington's Victory," or the "Battle of Vittoria," Opus 91. It was originally written for the "Panharmonion," a mechanical instrument invented by Maelzel, to celebrate the victory of the Duke of Wellington over the forces of Napoleon at Vittoria (1813). Beethoven later arranged the work for orchestra. The composition includes two marches which contain Janissary musical characteristics: "Rule, Britannia" and "Marlborough" (better known as "We Won't Get Home Until Morning").<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Nettl, op. cit., p. 305.

Marcia: Rèle Britannia.

Flauto piccolo. *p*

Clarineti in B. *pp*

Fagotti. *p*

Corni in Es. *p*

Tromba in Es. *p*

Triangolo. *p*

Piatti e Gran Tamburo. *p sempre*

Violino I.

Violino II.

Viola.

Violoncello e Basso.

I I V II I IVIV  
4 2

FIGURE 2

Beethoven's march "Rule, Britannia" is cast in two four meter employing tonic and dominant chords throughout the composition (See Figure 2, Page 15). The supporting harmonies are static in relation to the florid melodies, and the fifth of the chord is omitted through most of the composition. The E flat trumpet plays a fanfare using the root of the chord, and the bassoon and first horn are punctuating the root of each chord. Octaves occur between the bassoon and the first clarinet and oboe throughout the composition as in measure one of figure 2. The melody, played by the flute and first clarinet, is simple and flowing with little use of wide intervals.

The obvious Janissary characteristic involved in the march "Rule, Britannia" is the use of the bass drum, cymbals, and triangle. The bass drum and cymbals are punctuating the first beat of every measure with a quarter note and quarter rest, and the triangle keeps a steady eighth note pattern moving through the march.

The march "Marlborough," in six eight meter, uses harmonies that do not change with the florid melody, and without the use of the fifth <sup>as</sup> the chord (See Figure 3, Page 17). The tonic chord continues for the first four measures except for

### Marcia: Marlborough.

Flauto piccolo. *p*

Flauti.

Oboi. *p*

Clarinetti in C. *p*

Fagotti. *a 2.* *p*

Corni in C. *p*

Tromba in C. *p*

Triangolo. *p*

Piatti e Gran Tamburo. *p*

Violino I.

Violino II.

Viola.

Violoncello e Basso.

I II I I I  
7

FIGURE 3



the II chord on the first beat of the second measure. The tonic chord is emphasized with the bassoon and trumpet playing the same rhythm as the melody. The interval of the third occurs frequently between the melody and harmony in the oboes, clarinets, and horns. In the "Turkish March," Beethoven used the horns in octaves to accent the root of the chord. In the march "Marlborough," he uses the first horn to reinforce the melody. The beat of the bass drum and cymbals in the four measures of figure 3 is heard repeatedly throughout the march, while the triangle plays the same rhythmic accents emphasizing beats one and four of the six eight meter in Janissary fashion.

Some of the most exciting examples of Turkish music are found in the Alla Marcia of the Finale (4th movement) of Beethoven's "Ninth Symphony (1824)" (See Figures 4 and 5, Pages 19 and 20). Following a tremendous tutti by the orchestra and chorus, the harmony suddenly shifts from A major to an F major chord. There is one beat of dramatic silence in the first measure, and then follows a muffled squawk from the bassoons, bass drum, and contra bassoon, played on the offbeat and in unison on B flat, which begins the accompaniment for an unusual march in the new key of B flat. The strangeness of the key is emphasized by the

FINALE—CHORAL SECTION

Allegro-sar vivace, (♩ = 84)  
A la Marcia.

Kleine Flöte.

2 Flöten.

2 Hoboen.

2 Klarinetten in B.

2 Fagotte.

Kontrafagott.

4 Hörner  
in D.  
in B.

2 Trompeten  
in D.  
in B.

Pauken.

Triangel.

Becken.

Große Trommel.

1. Violinen.

2. Violinen.

Bratschen.

Tenor Solo.

1. Tenor.

2. Tenor.

Baß.

Violoncelli  
u. Kontrabasse

INTRODUCTION

I I I I I

Fl.

Hr.

Kl.

Fg.

Kfg.

Hrn.

Tr.

Trgl.

Beck.

Gr.Tr.

PRINCIPAL THEME IN MARCH FORM

I I I II I V V II

FIGURE 4





colorful effect created by the pianissimo Janissary triangle and cymbal.<sup>22</sup> This section represents a showy military march-movement with big drum, piccolo, flute, triangle, cymbals, and all other apparatus of warlike parade. The whole episode might well convey the poet's dread at the thought of battle.<sup>23</sup>

The march is in six eight meter, and again, in figure 5, measures 42 through 46, Beethoven uses harmonies that do not change against a flowing melody.

The text of the tenor solo, beginning on measure 45 of figure 5, page 20 is in German and comes from this stanza of Schiller's poem "Ode To Joy":

Glad as burning suns that glorious  
Through the heavenly spaces sway,  
Haste ye, Brothers, on your way,  
Joyous as a knight victorious.<sup>24</sup>

The text adds to the military flavor of the march-movement along with static harmonies against a florid melody, and the use of Janissary bass drum, cymbals, and triangle.

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<sup>22</sup>Signell, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>23</sup>George Grove, Beethoven And His Nine Symphonies (London: Novello and Co. Ltd., 1896).

<sup>24</sup>Ludwig Van Beethoven, Choral Final to the Ninth Symphony (English Version by Henry G. Chapman. New York: G. Schirmer, Inc.).

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The following compositions of Ludwig Van Beethoven were examined, and found to contain the influences of Janissary musical characteristics:

1. "Turkish March" (1812) from "The Ruins of Athens."
2. "The Battle of Vittoria," also entitled "Wellington's Victory."
3. A small section from the final movement of the "Ninth Symphony."

The Janissary musical characteristics, used by Beethoven and other European composers, were the influences of the Janissary military bands during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Janissary musical characteristics, which influenced selected compositions of Beethoven, were those of static harmonies that do not change when the melody seems to require it, heavy, jangling bass accents, meter signatures of either two four or six eight reflecting meters of Janissary march types, and followed the Janissary style (*Marcia alla turca*) of emphasizing the first beat of every measure like a drone. Beethoven used the Janissary triangle, bass drum, and crash cymbals to accent the first beat of every measure, and to convey the idea of Janissary

military march music.

Mr. John N. Burk said, "The keys Beethoven specially preferred for march music were E flat, D, and C major."<sup>25</sup> This study proves that Beethoven also wrote march music in B flat major. The "Turkish March" and the "Alla Marcia" section from the final movement of the "Ninth Symphony" are in B flat major. The choice of keys was conditioned by the character of those instruments which satisfied the actual dynamic needs and the mechanical construction of the instruments. The keys of C and B flat major are most natural to the mechanism of the trumpets.<sup>26</sup>

This study ~~os~~ the influences of Janissary music upon selected compositions of Beethoven shows his acceptance of the Turkish percussion instruments and music during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the orchestra as well as the military band. This influence was caused by Turkish military dominance of Europe during this period of history. Composers took advantage of these influences to portray battle, or marching to war to the firm, definite and overpowering, predominating beat of the Janissary Bands.

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<sup>25</sup> John N. Burk, Life And Works of Beethoven (New York: The Modern Library, 1946), p. 171.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Bekker, The Orchestra (New York: W W Norton & Company, Inc., 1963), p. 110-111.

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