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AN INSTRUMENT EMERGED FROM EAST AND WEST INTERACTIONS: FRETLESS CLASSICAL GUITAR

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Abstract

The Latest years, fretless guitar hasn't belonged to any mentionable musical kinds. Currently this new instrument's popularity is rising dramatically. However fretless guitar, especially classical fretless guitar has no substantial degree. At the same time, this recent explosion of fretless guitarists is mostly made up of electric guitar players in which has no connection with the traditional fretless instruments such as oud, cumbus, sarod or any others. These instruments have been used for several years in many kind of cultures. Mostly fretless players use the standard harmony with twelve tone system .The reflection of different musical cultures simply transformed and shaped the fretless classical guitar. Eventually it becomes known or prominent due to east and west interactions.

This paper explores the formation process and the effects of different cultures on this new and unknown instrument which is able to apply both musical perspectives of western and eastern cultures.

Keywords: *Fretless Classical Guitar, Instrument, Performance, Musical Perspective, Interaction.*

1. Introduction

When one explores about the any detail of an art form, it shouldn't be a specific explanation or short cuts. Even small tendencies have big impacts or affects on any kind of ideas, especially on art. An art form is long and complicated process to build and also it could be very effective on the way to express. On the other hand, it is very possible to mention that these dramatic differences are quite comparative. However they are real and obvious. In other words, affectivity is quite comparative.

Additionally, an art form or a tool as a part of an artistic communication that emerged from to different ideas and perspectives also include the the effects of aesthetic responses received from nature. An artist is the witness of his own era or period. Connected to that, it is possible to see the positive or negative traces of artist's time. At the same time, these contitionas are subjective. Also an artist creates his works by using technologies and tools related the possibilities of intensive period that he belongs. Tendency can be one of the consequences to these circumstances.

2. Musical Tendency

How does a tendency take its shape? It is inclination to do something. It is inclination to move somewhere. Because it needs a source. Source is a starting point. It is not a pushing point for an idea. For instance, invention of photography has a big effect on art of painting. That was a source. Afterwards it grows and touched the art of film and video. It was one of the starting sources of impressionism. It is quite dramatic to see that art has moved continuously and keep proving to the different directions. Postmodernism is known as the last art movement so far. Even though there are some discussions and unclarity about postmodernism, it still keeps evolving. It is not stable. Therefore art has been always needs sources to change, reformed or move.

Another point to be emphasized is that art is a humanly phenomenon. Something created spontaneously in nature is impossible to describe as an art or art form. Willed action which is combined with the creative power of human kind is one of the main sources of art. It is given a specific form benefiting from experience, perception, thinking, objectives, status, events or imagination, According to the this point of view, it is an activity and an effort that aims to produce a particular object or specific method.

There are basically three stages or gradations to the modulate an art formation :

- Perception of the external material properties by the artist.
- Aesthetic concerns.
- Establishing in order of perception and aesthetic.

An art work or an art material which is modulated by these stages, is sort of self explanation of an artist. However it doesn't need to be an individual point of view. It could be a cultural glance or transformation as well.

“Art is a creation of tool to bring people's minds to each others. Therefore it should be a common direction.” says Cubist artist Andre Lhote (1885-1962). This directions could be an instruments that come from different paths. On this specific point, fretless classical guitar is an interesting example to explain this combination of different musical perspectives. It is a creation of movement and reformation of different cultural approaches in the art of music. With an overall way to mention, these approaches are basically eastern and western.

3. Western Influence

There are no doubt some steps that could be describe as musical westernisation movements in Turkish music history. It wouldn't be wrong to mention that these movements could be the structure of some part of the musical perspective in Turkish music. Eventhought Ottoman music has effected from these movements, it keeps its main form and ideology.

Originally, communication with western countries, in the area of art has started during the Renaissance period. Throughout Fatih Sultan Mehmet era (1432-1481) who was the seventh Ottoman Sultan, are many architectures and painters visited Istanbul. However these cominations hasn't involved music. After Ottoman treaties between France and Ottoman, King I. Louis Francois has sent Kanuni Sultan Süleyman (1494-1566) who is the tenth Ottoman Sultan, a group of instruments. That is counted as the first official attempt in musical area. Even though They have returned back as thinking of disrupting the music's soul by Kanuni, the sense of three/four measure remains. In 1797, III. Selim (1761-1808) who was the 28th Ottoman Sultan, conducted some researches about art of opera. Additionally, brought an opera and played in the palace in 1797. That was the first presentation of the opera to the palace. Muzıkayı Hümayun was founded in 1828, conducted with Giuseppe Donizetti (1788-1856) is the another important step on westernization inclination in music. This institution was formed the basis of Presidential Symphony Orchestra

(1932) and many music education institutions as well. Also it would front up with the growth of many musicians.

The military pause that started from the sixteenth century is one of the important turning point of Otoman art ideology. It was the manner of continuously increasing resources of modern European civilization. Financial resources of the Ottoman Empire was founded on traditional agricultural production and military expansion (Ergür-Beşiroğlu,2009:15-16). Ottoman empire had unable to deal with these indications. As a way of solving savior, a westernization consciousness and movement had occurred in the Ottoman intellectual class and arts viewpoint. This orientation was peaked with the announcement of Tanzimat reform which literally meaning of reorganization the Ottoman Empire, movement of westernization foresaw a social change in the area that related with the cultural life also. In addition to that, Tanzimat reform era was characterized by various attempts to modernize the Ottoman Empire and to secure its territorial integrity against nationalist movements from the aggressive powers from outside of the state. With the many areas of the cultural, these changes also inevitably has a mentionable affect on the Otoman Music.

After the proclamation of the Republic, Orchestral formation, structured by Muzıkayı Hümayun was invited to Ankara by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938) who is the founder of the Republic of Turkey. It gave the first concert in Ankara, conducted by Zeki Üngör(1880-1958). In 1924, it is named as “Riyaset-i Cumhur Musiki Heyeti” Finally, it takes its current name as “Presidential Symphony Orchestra” in music history of Turkey in 1932.

Since the mid-1960s, There was a movement had begun against the modernity's institutional dimension and a huge mechanism that controls the human life. It was started especially by the young generations. Reflections of these movements on music were inevitable. They were sources for new configurations, new ideas and new forms ect. Therefore musicians tended for the new lookouts. Changing or using an instrument as different than its original form was one of this point of views. However there was no attempt on this new instrument until 1976 in Turkish music history.

4. Roots Of Fretless Classical Guitar

There is no certainty about where the fretless classical guitar belongs. However if it would be described in the field of functionality, it is not enough to mention that fretless classical guitar is only emerged from the westernizations of Turkish music. Recently, it has been using as multicultural instrument in many different kind of musics such as popular, different sort of jazz, Turkish traditional music ect. Its popularity is getting worldwide; therefore players from different nationalities add some new ideas of its music and repertoire. It is an instrument that still keeps its development. But the appearance of fretless classical guitar in music circle surely goes to electric fretless and standard classical guitar. Even though they have quite different from each others, they are connected in some ways such as tuning and some articulations. Because firstly, classical and electric guitar players started to get interested with it. So this instrument started to grow. Surely, fretless and standard classical guitar are made by almost exactly the same material too. That is also another important point. However in comparison of the musical perspective and technical abilities, they are different from each others.

The first think that classical guitar players realize when they try to play a fretless guitar might be to notice that it is a kind of experience of dealing with a totally new instrument. In Addition to that usual guitar stuffs and techniques wouldn't work on it. A fretless is more than just a transformed guitar. It's a whole different world of musical perspective which both belongs to western and eastern. It is an instrument that emerged from musical alteration of Turkey.

Guitar players are recently discovering fretless guitar more and more every day. Just like the instrument itself. Because classical fretless guitar is a very recent instrument which still keeps its development. Also it is difficult to get information about it. Even the classical fretless players do not have much information. The main reason of the limited information is there are no certain ideas about classical guitar repertoire. We have surely much more information about electric fretless which is more common and popular.

In 1965, John Cale and Sterling Morrison's song called Stainless steel gamelan was the first record of fretless guitar (Yengi, 2005:17). After that, with his oppositional and avant-garde point of view, Frank Zappa used fretless on his well known records such as King Crimson's Three of a Perfect pair. That was a mentionable big step of fretless guitar history. Fretless instruments were definitely not new. But to make the guitar fretless was something dramatically new.

Tim Donahue is another electric fretless guitar player and maker. He made his first fretless in 1980 and later he transformed the fretless and experienced the electric harp-guitar in 1984. Other worldwide famous makers are; Patrice Vigier and Godin Glissentar.

Edward Powell plays the fretless in Indian classical music style. His articulations and his musicality is very similar to sarod techniques. He is also experimenting to build new kind of fretless guitars.

That is to say, during 1960's, musical boundaries started to violated by the musicians. Classical, jazz, popular, traditional music forms etc. were used to classified as a conceptual framework of music genres. It has begun to change by the inspiration global effects. These effects, in this case are musical. Surely has chanced and touched the local musical perspectives too. Eclecticism increased and became so effective. As a solution, new musical genres were born.

5. Fretless Classical Guitar In Turkey

During 1970's, in Turkey, Anatolian Rock and Arabesque music were two types of musics revealed from the experience of eclecticism. That global idea of eclecticism was one of the starting point of this two genres in Turkey. Origin of such eclecticism was a diversified life that was connected with immigration from rural to urban. This kind of alteration also reflected the musicians in way of orchestrations. Many of them begun to use traditional instruments on their compositions. Global musical circle also presents musicians to another choice: Using local instruments in orchestrations as a national identity. That was an other source of eclecticism in music. As a requirement of this point of view, structure of Turkish folk music and Ottoman music entered to Turkish popular music. Erkan Ogur, in such a music market, remove the frets from his classical guitar and in his own words reached the eternal fretted guitar in 1976 (Arin: 2014:87). Turkey is not an unlikely birthplace for the fretless guitar since fretless instruments in general are ideally suited to Turkey's music which is so rich in micro-tones. It is possible to say that Erkan Ogur invented the classical guitar version of the fretless guitar. He constructed different guitars and experimented with the E-bow, (a magnetic bowing device that can produce a variety of sounds reminiscent of Turkish music.) Without frets, the guitar became capable of producing the complex untempered scales of his beloved folk melodies. Classical fretless is very suitable for the compositions which have quarter notes included. It is also enabled players to attain microtonal realm, quarter-tone, different sounding slides, bends, and other ornamentations collectively called "makam" to their lines. Makam is the structure of Turkish classical music. It is provided from some rules for composing, performance and improvisation which is formulated by a dissimilar intervallic structure and a distinctive continuity.

6. Makams

The classical music traditions of Turkish Arabic and the western music are based on the same musical theories which are connected with Pythagoras. During centuries these three music traditions have found their separated ways to develop.

Western classical music system is known as equal temperament, where the musical octave is divided into 12 equally half tones. It doesn't consist quarter tones.

Arabic classical music has started to develop during the 9th through the 12th centuries. It has called maqamat which is a system of 24 equally spaced quarter-tones in one octave. After Arabic music researchers' and analysts' specific works by studying and interpreting the works of the ancient Greeks, the Arabic system of modes known as makam have founded. In Arabic makams, the octave is divided into 24 equally quarters note. When we look at the improving of Arabic music, composers do numerous works for the development of melodic line basics.

The high point of development of Turkish music system was during the Ottoman Empire era. That was between the 15th and the 20th centuries.

An octave is not divided equally in Turkish Makams. In theory, there are 24 tones in the Turkish octave, however in practice there are probably 31 and perhaps more. Like Arabic composers, Turkish classical composers show skill in the melodic development of makams through melody.(Hinesmusic.com, Edward Hines Music ,Wendell, MA USA 01379) Makams can't be played on well-tempered instruments. You can play a few notes of some makam, but a makam is not just a scale, or only a combination of fourths or fifths. You cannot place a makam on a tempered scale: a makam is moving fourths or fifths in a special logic, in a special combination.

7. Conclusion

Cultural perspective is one of the sources that related with ideas and personality. Additionally, there is no obstacle for a nation to be influenced from the other musical minds. Music is common to all human raise and one of the main factors of an artwork is the cultural interaction. This interactions starting from an individual, reaches to a national form. Finally, it becomes an universal dimension.

Social changes are the important factors that related with an artistic point of view. These factors can create, destroy or just effect an art form in a maximum or minimum level. It could be a dimension to comunication. An Artist could assimilate the ideas by consulting the cultural approaches. This recreation or reinventing was emerged between the cultural boundiries.

Eventhough cultural values created in the past were perceived as shared and common, communities consider art in a way that to their own history. In this context, national art or an artistic form is consisted from a society accumulation. An newborn instrument could be bouncing point of this aggregation. It could be a crossover to universality that is indispensible to hold a national artistic identity. A fretless classical guitar simply covers the prior condition of universalism.

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