

## The Evolution of French Musical Orientalism in the Works of Francisco Salvador-Daniel

Noémi KARÁCSONY<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *The present article aims to present the figure of a neglected French composer of Spanish origin, Francisco Salvador-Daniel whose works as scholar and composer are of great importance to the evolution of French Musical Orientalism. Alongside other French composers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, among whom Félicien David, Ernest Reyer or Camille Saint-Saëns can be mentioned, Salvador-Daniel can be considered one of the initiators and contributors to the gradual development of a specific musical language. What sets Salvador-Daniel apart from his contemporaries, both composers and scholars, is his vast and direct experience with Arab music from different regions. He admires and celebrates cultural differences, aiming to discover the hidden connection between European and Arab music. Musical Orientalism is more pronounced in the compositions of Salvador-Daniel than in the works of David, for example, due to the composer's use of unusual harmonic constructions and sensual rhythmic patterns in an attempt to re-create a truthful and vivid sonorous image of the Orient.*

Key-words: *Orientalism, Salvador-Daniel, Arab music, ethnomusicology, transcription*

### 1. Introduction

The art of the Romantic Era represents a reaction against the Industrial Revolution, against the political and social norms promoted by the Age of Enlightenment and also against the strong rationalization of life itself. Desiring to escape from a reality that seems foreign, the Romantic artists found refuge either in the past or in imaginary settings. Longing to elude the expanding urbanization, they turned their attention towards medieval surroundings and the beauty of untamed nature. The fascination of exotic places offered yet another possibility to evade from a world that would alienate the artist. In the second part of Félicien David's "ode-

---

<sup>1</sup> Ph. D. Student of the Transilvania University of Braşov, the Faculty of Music  
[noemi.karacsony.singer@gmail.com](mailto:noemi.karacsony.singer@gmail.com)

symphonie” *Le Désert*, the words of which were written by Auguste Collin, the section *La Liberté au Désert* expresses precisely this desire of freedom: “*Restez dans vos tombeaux de pierre,/ Pâles habitants des cités,/ Sans voir du ciel ni de la terre/ Les majestueuses beautés.*”

The Orient offers to the artists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a multitude of possibilities to express the infinity of their inner world. The evolution of French musical Orientalism is marked by the figure of several composers, whose works had a significant impact regarding the enhancement of this specific musical language: Félicien David, Ernest Reyer and Francisco Salvador-Daniel. Despite the fact that the oriental traces in his works could be considered “mild” by the present listener, used to the peculiar sound of augmented seconds and well-defined rhythmic patterns associated with the Orient, with his “ode-symphonie” *Le Désert* Félicien David opened new perspectives regarding authenticity and the use of local colour to recreate, from a musical point of view, an accurate image of a distant, exotic setting. In the “symphonie orientale” *Le Sélam* Ernest Reyer strives to evoke the Orient in a manner similar to that employed by David, however, in the work of Reyer this local colour is more intense, while the influence of Arab music seems to be an organic part of the musical material. Composer and ethnomusicologist Francisco Salvador-Daniel reveals new facets of musical Orientalism in his works, at the same time attempting to recreate Arab music from a more scientific perspective and render it approachable for the occidental listener of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 2. Francisco Salvador-Daniel – Biographical Notes

British musicologist and specialist in Arab music and culture, Henri Farmer in his preface to Salvador-Daniel’s work on Arab music, *The Music and musical instruments of the Arab – with introduction on how to appreciate Arab music*, strives to explain why the works of the French composer were neglected and associates his figure with the notion of *progress*: “*Heine warned those who fought with him in the War of Liberation, that they must expect their names to be uttered with slander in Philistia. That is the penalty all soldiers of progress must pay. If they are fortunate enough to win a place in the annals of men, their fame may live down: if not, their portion is a sneer or silence. (...) Such is the case of a certain Salvador Daniel, musician and savant, composer of the «Chansons Arabes», author of «La Musique Arabe», and director of the Paris Conservatory of Music, the successor of Auber and predecessor of Ambroise Thomas*” (Salvador-Daniel 1915, 1-3).

Fascinated by the cultures he encountered in the course of the years he spent in Algiers and also during his travels in Tunis, Morocco, Malta, Egypt and Spain, Salvador-Daniel transcribed the music he heard, thus leaving behind a

precious musical, even ethnomusicological legacy. Avidly seeking that which is profound and true, the rebellious traits of Salvador-Daniel's political and social views are also reflected in his artistic creation. In search of new means of sonorous expression, he strives for an authentic musical representation, and most often the composer's revolt against the political forms in society is reflected in the aesthetic ideas which lie at the core of his music. The sonority he brings to life is unknown and *strange*, as different from the norm as Salvador-Daniel's revolutionary personality is. Raised as a Royalist and Catholic, the events he experienced throughout the course of his life, as well as the personalities he encountered, among whom the name of Félicien David must be mentioned, all contributed to his becoming a revolutionary socialist and an atheist. This almost insurgent artistic mind conceived works inspired by the music of the Arabs, musical creations in which sensual rhythmic patterns are combined with bizarre yet fascinating harmonies, all woven together in refined and delicate pieces.

Born in 1831 Francisco Salvador-Daniel was the eldest son of a Spanish nobleman and officer, Don Salvador Daniel, who took refuge in France and eventually settled in Bourges where he became a teacher of languages and music, organist, professor of singing, piano and harmony. The young Francisco Salvador-Daniel began his education in Bourges and later continued his musical studies at the Paris Conservatoire. He played the piano and was considered a good violinist, however, his true talent revealed itself in composition, as Farmer evokes (Salvador-Daniel 1915, 5-6). He also possessed thorough knowledge regarding wind instruments, due to the musical education he received as a child in his family.

The figure of Félicien David and the friendship between the two composers played a significant role in Salvador-Daniel's decision to travel to regions yet unknown for the voyager of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Algiers, Tunis, Morocco and Kabylia. Analyzing the composer's life and works, Farmer suggests that Salvador-Daniel's political and aesthetic views could have been influenced by the beliefs of Félicien David and the ideas of the Saint-Simonianism: "*Indeed, it is not at all unlikely that Salvador formed his earliest ideas of social revolution, which he afterwards espoused with fervour, from David's ecstatic communistic faith*" (Salvador-Daniel 1915, 7).

Thus, in 1853 Salvador-Daniel traveled to Algiers, where he lived until his return to Paris in 1865. At the beginning of his sojourn, he was a music and violin teacher, at the same time striving to learn the Arabic language, which later permitted him to translate valuable ancient music treatises written by Arab authors. Due to his contact with the *Société Historique Algérienne* the French composer had the opportunity to make acquaintance with orientalist scholars of that period. This scientific approach, together with the dances and songs he transcribed during his travels inspired Salvador-Daniel to write musical works with pronounced oriental features as well as studies regarding Arab music.

The publication of his studies, among which the most important is *La Musique Arabe*, as well as his *Chansons Arabes* brought Salvador-Daniel recognition. He was much appreciated in Algiers and perhaps he would have continued his musical and scientific activities there, were it not for the unfortunate event which made him return to Paris in 1865: the composer was engaged to the daughter of a merchant in Algiers, but his future wife died just before their wedding. This tragic incident deeply affected Salvador-Daniel, who decided to leave Algiers. Back in Paris, he had hoped he would be appreciated as a teacher, scholar and conductor, among the literary and artistic circles he frequented. His ethnomusicological activities were well-known even before his return to France, thus Salvador-Daniel became an authority in Arabian music in particular, as well as regarding the domain of Greek music or plain-song.

His collection *Chanson Arabes* was reissued and the transcriptions became popular salon pieces during this period. In 1867, encouraged by Prince Napoleon and on the occasion of the *Exposition Universelle*, Salvador-Daniel organized “ancient and oriental music concerts” (“*concerts antiques et orientaux*”) at the Maison Pompéienne, a series of musical events in the course of which several orientalist works were represented.

Ever in the search of a music which could reflect his advanced aesthetic, political and social views, a music of the future, Salvador-Daniel also believed in the vitality of national folk songs, as well as in the importance of that which the composer referred to as “*la musique sociale*” (Salvador-Daniel 1915, 21). He was also music-critic and sub-editor of a music periodical, but his views were often considered unconventional.

During the Paris Commune, he was elected director of the Paris Conservatoire for a short period, following the death of Auber and preceding Ambroise Thomas as head of this institution. His activities as composer, teacher and ethnomusicologist were abruptly interrupted in 1871: Francisco Salvador-Daniel was executed during the “*Semaine sanglante*” of the Commune.

## **2.1. Musical Works and Studies regarding Arab Music**

As other French musicians of the time, Salvador-Daniel traveled to the Orient, and the specific traces of the music he carefully transcribed during his voyages influenced his compositions. However, the work of this unjustly neglected French composer has a considerable musicological value and plays an important part in the gradual development of musical exoticism, as Bartoli states: “*Tout comme David et Reyer, il fut l’un des rares musiciens français voyageurs à jouer un rôle déterminant dans l’évolution de l’exotisme. Mais à la différence des deux premiers, Salvador-Daniel a publié des travaux d’ordre musicologique avec, entre autres, un des*

*premiers essais de classification des modes d'Afrique du Nord. Son mode de «ponctuation» de la musique arabe est donc sensiblement différent car il relève d'une attitude plus scientifique (...)*" (Bartoli 1997, 147).

According to Bartoli the notion *ponctuation* refers to a specific functional reaction, a response to an external stimulant (event, object etc). In the above cited study the term is used with regards to the message of orientalist musical works of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where *ponctuation* refers to how the composer understands and re-interprets Arab music, incorporating specific elements of this music in his creation.

The manner in which Salvador-Daniel understands and assimilates Arab music is different from that of other French composers whose works were inspired by the Orient. An important part of his creation, the transcriptions of Arab songs he collected were published in various collections. The composer arranged these songs for voice and piano and most of these set himself to French or Spanish words. Among these Algerian (*Ma Gazelle, Heus ed-douro, Chebbou-Chebban, Yamina*), Tunisian (*Le Ramier, Soleima*), or Kabile songs (*Zohra, Stamboul, Klaa beni abbes*) can be mentioned. An album of Salvador-Daniel's songs, *Chansons Arabes, Mauresques at Kabyles* was also published by Richault and later reissued by Costallat. Henry Farmer states that these *Chansons Arabes* "reveal the high-water mark of genius, for there is as much Salvador as Arab in them. He took the rough, unpolished song of the Arab, and created a veritable art work out of it" (Salvador-Daniel 1915, 12). The British musicologist makes a clear distinction between the composer's transcriptions of Arab songs, in their unrefined form, and the aforementioned edition, in which Salvador-Daniel strives to create a balanced union between Arab music and the European compositional techniques grounded on specific rules of harmony.

Salvador-Daniel also composed instrumental works, based on certain Arab modes or inspired by Arab songs. He wrote symphonic works, a suite of Arab dances (*Danses Arabes*), works for violin and piano, and works for piano in variation form. His *Fantaisies Arabes* for piano were later arranged for orchestra.

One of Salvador-Daniel's most important scientific works was an ample study dedicated to Arab music, first published in the *Revue Africaine* in 1862 and 1863. This study was published in 1863 with the title *La Musique Arabe, ses rapports avec la Musique Grecque et le chant Gregorien: et Essai sur l'origin et les transformations de quelques instruments*.

### 3. The Composer and the Scholar

Regarding Orientalism and the question of alterity, Edward Said states the following: „*For that is the main intellectual issue raised by Orientalism. Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be genuinely divided, into*

*clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly?"* (Said 2003, 45)

Said believes that the manner in which the term *Orientalism* is often used implies a negative, even depreciative approach. Thus, the desire to gradually discover and understand the Orient should rise from the inner desire to genuinely understand that which is *outside* the self, that which appears to be different, for these differences are nothing but the various shades of a painting. Accepting differences does not imply losing the self, but the expansion of the inner being. Salvador-Daniel's approach towards the fascinating Arab culture and music was inspired precisely by this idea of uniting that which is on the inside with that which is often erroneously perceived as *the Other*.

An orientalist composer, Salvador-Daniel was also a scholar and an expert in Arab music, who strived to endow musical Orientalism with new meanings. His sonorous images are based on systematized studies of Arab music, in his works Orientalism resembles a mechanism which produces new approaches, new explanations, as Stefano Leoni observes in his study: *"(...) Salvador-Daniel pensa ad un effettivo dialogo interculturale, riuscendo in questo a unire l'infatuazione sansimoniana giovanile, l'esperienza emotiva vissuta nel Nord Africa, la cultura francese che lo permea, l'orientalismo esotizzante e à la mode, e il desiderio di riformare in senso effettivamente egualitario (seppur utopico) i rapporti sociali e culturali. Non è poco, per un oscuro musicista ibero-francese"* (Leoni 2013, 302)

The ethnomusicological activities of Salvador-Daniel continue the research regarding the music of the Orient initiated by such figures as Guillaume André Vilotteau, who contributed with scientific papers regarding oriental music in the monumental work edited between 1809-1826, *La description de l'Égypte*, Raphael Georg Kieswetter or Alexander Christianowitsch. However, unlike the aforementioned scholars, Salvador-Daniel's acquaintance with the music of the Orient goes beyond the study of theoretical works, for the composer had vast and direct experience with this music. During the years spent in Algiers, the composer transcribed the music he had the chance to hear during his travels, and also played with local musicians, thus having the opportunity to personally experience the particularities of Arab music. Stefano Leoni refers to Salvador-Daniel as a genuine *ethnosociologist*: *"Da un lato ci appare come un ricercatore 'sul campo', innamorato della musica 'araba' (...), dall'altro però ci si propone come una sorta di etno-sociologo ante litteram, scrivendo musiche orientaliste ed esotizzanti à la manière di David, cogliendo elementi melodici arabi e arrangiandoli, adattandoli al gusto occidentale e parigino (...)"* (Leoni 2013, 291-292).

Moreover, the fact that Salvador-Daniel traveled to various regions in Algiers, Tunis, Morocco, Egypt, Spain and even Malta, some of which were not

influenced by the European musical tradition, contributes to the complexity of his ethnomusicological work, as both Farmer and Leoni observe: *“Secondo Farmer, Salvador-Daniel ha compiuto un lavoro originale: non si è limitato a studiare i trattati di teoria e non si è limitato ad un contatto fugace con un solo ambiente musicale, ha bensì studiato a lungo varie forme espressive musicali in diversi luoghi, a partire da quelli meno influenzati dalla cultura occidentale, viaggiando per vari anni senza limitarsi al territorio algerino”* (Leoni 2013, 302)

Not only does he strive to understand Arab music, Salvador-Daniel endeavors to create certain correspondences between oriental and occidental music, as the composer himself explains: *“Comparing Arab music with plain-song, I asked myself whether it would be a rash supposition that this present-day music of the Arabs was the same as that which existed up to the thirteenth century, and if, with the information supplied by this music still existing in Africa, and studied on the spot, it would not be possible to reconstruct the music of the first centuries of the Christian era, and thus, with the study of the present, fill the gap in the musical history of the past”*(Salvador-Daniel 1915, 47-48).

His musicological approach situates Salvador-Daniel between tradition and innovation, the composer attempts to discover those features which connect Arab music and European medieval music, to find connections between Arab music and the music of the Greeks, according to Arab philosophers of the ninth and tenth centuries. From his point of view cultural differences represent an inestimable value: *“I now revel in Arab music. But it is not the pleasure of a difficulty surmounted that I seek, it is a desire to participate in joys which the music of the Arab procures for those who understand it. In fact, to be able to judge Arab music it is necessary to understand it, just as it is necessary to possess a language in order to be able to appreciate its real beauties”* (Salvador-Daniel 1915, 44-45).

#### **4. Oriental traces in the song transcribed by Salvador-Daniel**

Salvador-Daniel was inspired by the works and ideals of Félicien David, yet his compositions have a more pronounced oriental nuance than the music of David. The composer inserts musical elements characteristic for Arab music in his works, however, he adapts these oriental features to the taste of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century European listener. Bartoli observes the unusual, surprisingly modern harmonic constructions employed by the composer: *“Comparée aux partitions de David et même de Reyer, la caractérisation modale orientale est beaucoup plus évidente même si elle donne lieu à une harmonisation insolite. Peu de musique de cette époque réalise des configurations aussi «modernes»”* (Bartoli 2010, 15)

The collection of Arab songs *Chansons Arabes, Mauresques et Kabyles* contains songs transcribed by Salvador-Daniel for voice and piano. It is important to note that these are *transcriptions*, not compositions inspired by Arab music.

Regarding the songs he transcribed, it is interesting to note that most often Salvador-Daniel mentions the name of the Arab musical mode to which the song belongs (however, this is not the case with the songs from the collection of *Chansons Arabes*), as well as the genre (*Chant Kabyle, Vieille Chanson des Maures d'Espagne, Chanson Mauresque d'Alger*), and he also gives indications regarding the *tempo* (*Andantino, Quasi valse, Declamato quasi recitativo*), thus striving to give an exact image of the manner in which the songs should be performed in order to approach its original form.

The music of the Middle-East is characterized by the use of complex rhythmic patterns, sophisticated melodic improvisation and the use of open-ended forms, which have the potential for spontaneous alteration. The most important instrument is “the voice”, alongside percussion and wind instruments. Salvador-Daniel strives to preserve these essential features in his transcriptions. The piano accompaniment is a reconstruction of the original rhythmic accompaniment, the freedom and suppleness of the music is re-created in a most refined manner, as illustrated in the following example, a fragment from the song *Chebbou-Chebban* (*Chanson Mauresque d'Alger*):

The image shows a musical score for the introduction of the song 'Chebbou-Chebban'. It consists of two staves: a vocal line labeled 'CHANT.' and a piano accompaniment labeled 'PIANO.'. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 6/8. The tempo marking is 'Andantino. (Metr: 144 = ♩)'. The piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and accents. At the bottom of the piano part, there is a note: 'Sempre marcato il basso.'.

Fig. 1. Introduction

Another transcription, the *Chanson Mauresque de Tunis* is accompanied by the composer's explanations regarding Arab music and the manner in which this can be transcribed. In order for the piano accompaniment to reproduce the rhythmic accompaniment of the various percussion instruments, the composer indicates that the three notes in the left hand which are marked *sf* >, must be attacked firmly, while the others should be played more lightly, as illustrated in the following excerpt from the *Chanson Mauresque de Tunis*:





Fig. 2. *Rhythmic accompaniment*

Salvador-Daniel's Spanish descent can be traced in the transcription of a Moorish song from Spain, *L'Ange du Désert*, in which the composer's use of augmented seconds, according to Bartoli, anticipates the harmonic constructions in the works of composers such as Isaac Albéniz or Enrique Granados (Bartoli 1997, 150).

Musical Orientalism could be evoked in various ways in the works of 19<sup>th</sup>-century French composers. The musical material collected by the composer could be more or less accurately transcribed using the Western music notation, a technique Bartoli refers to as "*l'emprunt adapté*" (Bartoli 1997, 142). However, the work thus transcribed could appear rather "distorted", because the Western system of music notation can only part reproduce the characteristics of Oriental music, in Salvador-Daniel's case of Arab music. Regarding this aspect, the composer observes the following: "*The Arabs have fourteen scales or modes, in which the semitones are changed so as to form fourteen different modalities. The grouping of sounds is made by tones and semitones as with us, and I have never been able to discover in Arab music, those third and quarter tones which others claim to find*" (Salvador-Daniel 1925, 45).

In his transcriptions, Salvador-Daniel uses certain modes belonging to Arab music in order to create a sonorous atmosphere that resembles the original songs he collected. This will inspire other French composers of the period to use the distinct language of modal music in their sonorous representations of the Orient, as Bartoli observes: "*Après la publication des mélodies de Salvador-Daniel, nombre de compositeurs français vont avoir recours à ce qu'on appelle usuellement la «modalité» pour évoquer l'Orient*" (Bartoli 1997, 148).

Salvador-Daniel strives for accurate transcriptions of the Arab music, for sonorous evocations in which each mode is represented in a manner suitable to the character of these modes, without altering their specific traits.

## 5. Conclusions

Regarding the differences between the East and West the Indian philosopher and writer Sri Aurobindo remarks the following: „*The peculiar and striking opposition of thought, temperament, culture and manners between Asia and Europe has been a commonplace of observation and criticism since the times when Herodotus noted in his history the objection of both men and women to be seen naked as a curious and amusing trait of Asiatic barbarism. (...) But if circumstances have changed, the essential opposition abides; East is still East in its soul and West is still West and the misunderstanding of continents still flourishes (...)*” (Aurobindo 1997, 389).

Ever in the search of a music of the future, a music which could express the beauty and wealth these oppositions give birth to, Salvador-Daniel appears as the scholar and composer able to see the true value of Arab music in a period when this art was misunderstood and misjudged.

## References

- Aurobindo, Sri. 1997. *Essays Divine and Human – Writings from Manuscripts, 1910 – 1950*. India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press.
- Bartoli, Jean-Pierre. 1997. “L’Orientalisme dans la musique française du XIXe siècle, la ponctuation, la seconde augmentée et l’apparition de la modalité dans les procédures exotiques” [Orientalism in French music of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, punctuation, augmented second and the apparition of musical modes in the representation of exoticism]. *Revue belge de musicologie* 51: 137-170.
- Bartoli, Jean-Pierre. 2010. “Exotisme musical en France et modernité à l’époque de Berlioz” [Musical exoticism in France and modernism in the époque of Berlioz]. *La modernité française au temps de Berlioz*, actes du colloque de l’Opéra-Comique, fondation Bru-Zane, en ligne: <http://www.bruzanemediabase.com/fre/Parutions-scientifiques-en-ligne/Articles/Bartoli-Jean-Pierre-Exotisme-musical-en-France-et-modernite-a-l-epoque-de-Berlioz>
- Leoni, Stefano A.E. 2013. “L’Orientalismo eclettico di Francisco Salvador-Daniel, musicista, ricercatore e comunardo: una prima ricognizione [The Eclectic Orientalism of Francisco Salvador-Daniel, Musician, Researcher and Communard: A First Recognition]”. *Studi Urbinate B-Scienze umane e sociali* 81: 289-302.
- Said, Edward. 2003. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books.
- Salvador-Daniel, Francisco. 1915. *The Music and Musical Instruments of the Arab: With Introduction on how to Appreciate Arab Music*. London: William Reeves.