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Flute and Recorder in Art

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Abstract

Music as an abstract art could show what kind of place it has in mythology, religion and society in previous ages. The musical instrument icons in art subjects contributed to history by supplying valuable information which belongs to various periods. These icons responded the questions such as; how instruments emerged or the end of their use and their evolution. Painters also used flute and recorder in a considerable extent among these musical icons. This study will represent and shortly refer to the place of flute and recorder in painting art and exemplify the works made before. In this study, literature review and observational method was used as a data collection method and we benefited from paintings in instrument museums and various museums. As a result painters not only give place often to flute and recorder in religious figures but also in mythologic subjects and in musical-theme paintings.

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Keywords: Flute, recorder, art;

1. Introduction

Flute is one of the oldest instrument and has a long history. Flute made from antler or empty bones in its' primitive period. During Renaissance Period, It had one piece of wood body. By the Baroque Period, flute divided into three parts and curtains began to be added. Even if number of the keys increased in Classical Period the actual development was made by Theobald Boehm in Romantic Period. The flute in present-day, has three added metal parts and has wide range of register (Şenol, Demirbatır 2011).

Recorder is another of the oldest instruments and has been developed by different nations. Recorder, which was previously produced from reeds or animal bones, started to be produced from wood later on (Ausoni, 2009). It has seven holes in the front –some holes are pairs to obtain half a tone- and another hole used with the thumb of the left hand (Say, 2010). Having been used in Europe since the Middle Age, recorder became widespread in the 16th and 17th centuries. Recorder, which is not an orchestra member, but it is used very often in training music, especially in Turkey, today.

Although the interaction between arts increased in the 20th century, it is a fact happening all along. History of the painting arts search for partnership with music dates back to the Renaissance (İpşiroğlu, 2010). Music, which is an abstract art, was able to show what kind of a place it had in the previous ages, mythology, religion and society, thanks to allegory. Musical instrument icons in art issues have made contributions to history by providing valuable information relating to many periods in many respects. These icons have replied to such questions as the emergence of the instruments or expiration or evolution the use thereof. Artists have used the flute and the recorder among

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these musical icons to an important extent. They have included musicians and instruments in their paintings very often.

In his painting called “Idyll” (1880-81), Frederic Leighton (1830-1896) pictured a man playing the flute by the lake and two ladies listening to him. Jan Kupecky (1667-1740) pictured the virtuoso flutist Josef Lemberger in 1710; Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) painted William Wollaston (1730-1797), who was a lover of music, in 1758; Adolph Menzel (1815-1905) painted the King of Prussia Frederick II and Carl Philip Emmanuel Bach while accompanying him in his painting called “The Flute Concerto of Frederick II” (1850-52).



Picture 1. Jan Kupecký, Portre Josef Lemberger, 1710, Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum (left).

Picture 2. Thomas Gainsborough, Portre William Wollaston, 1758, Ipswich, Borough Council Museum and Galleries (right).

Aim of this study is to exemplify the works done telling of the flute and the recorder’s place in the art of painting. Literature review and observation methods were used as data gathering methods in the study. Paintings in the instrument museums and works from various museums were made use of. The data has been classified under such titles as Symbol and Allegories, the Mythological Heritage, Religious Subject and Music and Its Performance.

2. Flute and Recorder in Art

2.1. Symbols and Allegories

2.1.1. *Harmonia Mundi (Harmony of the Spheres)*

In the beginning of the Middle Age; music, science and vocal art were represented by the deific-based relations of allegories and the relationship of cosmos with harmonies. Many elements of classical music concept – for example, the idea of music- have been attributed and adapted to the Middle Age civilization by Christian theology. The concept of *Harmonia Mundi* developed by Saint Augustine and Boethius was transferred from the planets to the Christian heaven gradually in a manner that it represents the harmony between the God and his subjects.

In the gravure called *Taypus Musices* made by Gregor Reisch in 1504;

- The female figure (probably the personalization of music) holds a painting consisting of the hexachord musical notes of Guido d’Arezzo in her hand.
- Tubalcain descending from Cain, which is a figure from the Bible, is the first man working with metal. According to the legend, Pythagoras got inspired from his theoretical-musicality in the blacksmith workshop. With this figure in the painting, the roots of music was tried to be explained.
- With musicians playing the harp, lute, recorder and portative organ; music rehearsals were represented (Ausoni, 2009).



Picture 3. Gregor Reisch, Typus musices, engraving from Margarita philosophica, Strasbourg, 1504.

2.1.2. Marital Harmony

Many portraits aimed at the institution of marriage are available. Artists used musical instruments often to symbolize the ideal life in these portraits.

In the painting drawn by Joseph Wright of Derby in 1760;

- Mr. and Mrs. William Chase are pictured in a room in their house.
- Although such strings as lute were generally pictured in that period in Marital Harmony paintings; Wright drew Mr. William Chase playing the flute and his wife.



Picture 4. Joseph Wright of Derby, Mr. And Mrs. William Chase, 1760, Private collection.

2.1.3. Lust

Music is often portrayed not as a gateway to contemplation but as a charm with power over the sense, often with erotic over-tones, especially in 17th- century Northern art (Ausoni, 2009). In the system of seven deadly sins; music was often associated with lust. Art of music was used as a seductive figure by Flemish artists in the 15th and 16th century allegories.

In the painting pictured by Gappare Traversi in 1760,

- Accompanied by a transverse flute and a cello, the woman is performing cembalo. While the music is being carefully executed, the curve of the harpsichord is curiously on the wrong side.
- The music lesson presents a gallery of amusing characters from the upper bourgeoisie, in the context of a typically aristocratic form of entertainment. These sorts of scenes, painted in an explicitly satirical vein, were characteristic of Neapolitan genre painting in the 18th century (Ausoni, 2009).



Picture 5. Gaspare Traversi, *The Music Lesson*, 1760, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

2.2. *The Mythological Heritage*

2.2.1. *Marsyas*

According to Greek mythology, Marsyas from Phrygia discovers the flute and starts playing it after Athena's invention of the flute. He was very impressed by the sound of flute and becomes a good performer. This being the case; his fame gets through to Apollo, who is the god of fine arts and music. The God Apollo invites Marsyas to competition. Apollo and Marsyas, who first ended in a draw in the competition; later on, Apollo objects and plays things that cannot be played with flute with his harp; he wins the competition and punishes Marsyas. In the age of humanism, Neo-Platonist artists symbolize Apollo with strings and Marsyas with a flute.

1631-32 depicting Apollo and Marsyas' competition:

- Marsyas is accompanied by the other satyr and the Phrygian king Midas. As is in mythology, Midas is depicted as a jury member in Apollo and Marsyas' competition, as well.
- Marsyas challenges Apollo with his flute. Seductive, high and provocative sounds resound from his flute.



Picture 6. Pietro Novelli, *Musical Contest between Apollo and Marsyas*, 1631-32, Caen, Musée des Beaux-Arts.

2.3. *Religious Subject*

2.3.1. *Musical Angels*

In the art of painting, a choir consisting of angles or instrumental ensembles, as well as images like heaven, accompany them while the lives of Virgin Mary, Christ and the saints' life are being told. As well as playing many instruments; these angels are often observed to play flutes and recorders. Furthermore, many pictures of angels depicted with flutes, recorders and pipes are available in the Vatican museum.

In the "Angels and Virgin" painting drawn by Jaume Huguet in 1450;

- Virgin Mary with Jesus Christ sitting in her arms, a choir made up of angels on her right side and angels playing recorders on her left side were depicted.



Picture 7. Jaume Huguet, Mare de Déu amb Angels, 1450, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.

2.4. Music and Its Performance

2.4.1. Court Music

Music accompanies banquets, court dances and the principal ceremonies by which princes and monarchs make a spectacle of the supernatural character of power. Ever since antiquity, especially in the culture of the Roman Empire, music was an important signal to show power. At the royal court, where life was ruled by etiquette and conceived as a monumental work of art, music figured prominently not only during the great celebrations but also ballets, theatrical performances or diplomatic visits.

Frederick II was a King in Prussia. He patronized the arts and philosophers, and wrote flute music. He was most important king for music and musician. So “The Flute Concerto of Frederick II” was drawn by artist Adolph Menzel.

In the painting drawn by Adolph Menzel between 1850-52;

- Frederick II is being accompanied on the harpsichord by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, whose father had written the famous fugue.
- Johann Joachim Quantz was drawn with Frederick II because he is composer and great virtuoso flutist, taught Frederick II to play the instrument, becoming his adviser and intimate friend.



Picture 8. Adolph Menzel, *The Flute Concerto of Frederick II*, 1850-52, Berlin, Gemaldegalerie.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion; the idea of music was attributed and adapted to the Middle Age civilization by the Christian theology. Many artists used musical instruments in their paintings. The place of the flute and the recorder is important among these musical instruments. Flutes and recorders are encountered in many paintings treating different subjects starting from the Renaissance period. These instruments were often included, not only in paintings discussing music genres or instruments, but also in works of arts depicting the marriages of the aristocrats. Furthermore, music was associated with lust. For example; the flute and cello accompanying a woman playing the harpsichord and aristocrats watching her lasciviously were depicted in the “The Music Lesson” painting.

The place of the flute in mythology is important and this subject was often treated in art. According to the Greek mythology, the goddess Athena created the flute. The matter taking place between Marsyas and Apollo, who discovered the flute, and which is considered as the first music contest was depicted by many artists. Angels, which are religious symbols, are situated especially next to Virgin Mary together with their flutes and recorders. Music has been an important means of symbolizing power since the archaic age. Not only the aristocrats, who are lovers of music, but also the nobility were interested in music and were drawn in many paintings with their flutes.

Thanks to the art of painting; music has been able to prove its place in mythology, religion and society in the previous ages.

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