

# Jordi Savall

Saturday, June 9, 2012, 8pm  
First Congregational Church

Jordi Savall *rebec & rebab*  
Dimitri Psonis *santur & Moorish guitar*  
David Mayoral *percussion*

## A Dialogue of Souls: Orient–Occident

FROM ANCIENT TIMES, there have been constant references to the extraordinary power and effects of music and instruments on people, animals, and even trees and plants. These are the most characteristic attributes of Orpheus, and it is precisely because of Orpheus's musical power and skill that he became the subject of one of the most obscure and symbolically charged of all the Greek myths. The Orpheus myth developed into a whole theology around which a copious and, to a great extent, esoteric literature has grown up. Orpheus is the Musician *par excellence*, of whom it is said that he played melodies so enchanting that even wild beasts, trees and plants bowed down before him, and the fiercest of men were calmed by his music. The myth had an exceptionally long life, reaching to the distant East and beyond.

It is precisely from the East that the first bowed instruments came. Unknown in Antiquity and even in the early Middle Ages, one of the most probable hypotheses is that bowing technique gradually developed in Europe thanks to the influence of musicians from Arabo-Islamic countries. In this context, we should recall the sophistication of Arab and Byzantine culture in the tenth century, as well as the high frequency of cultural exchange that was often associated with conflicts between East and West. It therefore comes as no surprise that the earliest representations, dating from the tenth century, of plucked and bowed instruments in European art are Hispanic in origin and are to be found in the Mozarabic Beato de Liébana manuscripts (ca. 920–930) and in various Catalan manuscripts, including the Bible of Santa Maria de Ripoll. By the fourteenth century, textual references to these instruments abound, such as this description given by Juan Ruiz, Archpriest of Hita, in his famous book *Libro de buen amor* (ca. 1330):

In a bevy of instruments, out roll the drums.

A Moorish guitar fills the air as she comes with high-pitched strumming and garrulous tones; her place in the dance takes the full-bodied lute, while the Latin guitar closely follows their suit; the trilling *rebec* with her shrill, soaring note and the twang of the jew's harp clearing her throat; from their midst the psaltery's voice floats aloft and the plucky *vihuela* throws in her lot. The harp, the *qanûn* and *rabab's* joint refrains in a French reel merrily mingle their strains; high as a steeple the flute sings along in time with the *taborin* who tempers her song; the bowed *vihuela* with cadences sweet, who by turns both rouses and lulls us to sleep; her lilting sweet chords, both clear and in tune, all hearts fill with gladness, not one is immune.

Protesting uncertain progress and hampered by a lack of the necessary knowledge and skills, the Western world has preserved little of its ancient organological (instrumental) heritage; it has, however, succeeded in preserving the most significant works of its musical

heritage, thanks to the invention of musical notation. Eastern cultures, by contrast, have adhered to a strong oral transmission of extraordinary continuity which, until the eighteenth century, remained faithful to the use of a large number of instruments of very ancient origin, such as the lute, the lyre, the psaltery/*santur*, the *saz* or Moorish guitar, the flutes and the *rabab*, despite the virtual nonexistence of written accounts of their music. One major exception is the manuscript entitled *Kitâbu ilmi'l- musiki alâ vecbi'l- hurûfât* ("The Book of the Science of Music with Notation"), compiled by the Moldavian-born musician Prince Dimitrie Cantemir (1673–1723), containing 355 instrumental and vocal pieces—some of which are original compositions by the author, while others are older pieces gleaned from the Turkish popular tradition—written down in a system of notation of his own invention. Four of these compositions are featured on this program.

Until the invention of polyphony and harmony, the Iberian Peninsula shared a common musical language—that of monodic composition—as a result of more than seven centuries of coexistence between the three major cultures of the Mediterranean world: the Jewish, the Muslim and the Christian. This contact and mutual influence explain a certain capacity for intercultural exchange and traffic. Sadly, this phenomenon was not always voluntary; moreover, it was progressively eroded by the marginalising tendencies of an increasingly intransigent society, culminating in the expulsion of unconverted Jews and Moriscos in 1492 and 1502, respectively.

*Orient–Occident* is divided into three sections, the pieces presented in alternating sequences to contrast their different origins: Eastern and Western, as well as courtly and traditional, from both the written and oral cultural traditions. Grounded in its pursuit of the musical styles proper to each period and cultural space, this program avoids the superficialities of cultural crossover, instead endeavoring to re-establish a dialogue that respects the musical identity of each of those spaces and cultures. The recognition of all cultures, independently of their power and prestige, is a fundamental part of that cultural dialogue. For that very reason, we feel that today, more than ever, it is crucially important to believe that, through the language of music, the exchange of ideas and emotions expressed by music and musicians of such diverse origins and cultures is both possible and necessary. Like all minstrels and musicians down the ages, we are convinced that, in spite of our religious and cultural differences, through music "our souls can be moved to courage and strength, to generosity and magnanimity, all of which are conducive to the good government of peoples":

*Ut eorum animos ad audaciam et fortitudinem,  
magnanimitatem et liberalitatem commoveat,  
quæ omnia faciunt ad bonum regimen.*

—Johannes de Grocheo, *Ars Musicae* (ca. 1300)

Jordi Savall  
*Bellaterra, spring 2006*

## PROGRAM

*Taking the form of a fascinating journey in time and space, tonight's program is devised as a dialogue of Ottoman, Arabo-Andalusian, Jewish and Christian music from Medieval Spain and around the Mediterranean. In the words of Amin Maalouf, "If we are to restore some hope to our disoriented humanity, we must go beyond a mere dialogue of cultures and beliefs towards a dialogue of souls.... The diverse does not have to be a prelude to the adversarial; our cultures are not enclosed behind impenetrable barriers; our world is not doomed to interminable rifts; it can still be saved.... After all, hasn't that, since the dawn of the human adventure, been the overriding purpose of art?"*

## ORIENT–OCCIDENT

### I.

Alba	Castellón/Berber
Danza del Viento	Sefardic/Berber
Saltarello (CSM 77-119)	Alfonso X "El Sabio" (1221–1284)
Istampitta: La Manfredina	Italian (13th c. MS)
Menk kadj tohmi	Armenian (trad.)

### II.

El Rey Nimrod	Sephardic (Istanbul)
Lamento "Pax in Domine nomini"	Improvisation/Marcabru (fl. 1130–1150)
La Quarte Estampie Royal	"Le Manuscrit du Roi" (Paris, 13th c. MS)
O'h intsh anush	Anonymous (Armenian trad.)
Der Makâm-i «Uzzâl uşüleş Darb-i feth» (209)	Derviş Mahmed (Turkey)

## INTERMISSION

### III.

Rotundellus	Alfonso X "El Sabio" (CSM 105)
Alagyeaz & Khnki tsar	Armenian (trad.)
Nastaran (Naghma instr.)	Afghan (trad.)
Lamento di Tristano	Italian (13th c. MS)
Danza de las Espadas	Andalusian (trad.)

### IV.

El Rey Nimrod	Sephardic (Istanbul)
Lamento: Hov Arek	Armenian (trad.)
Chaharmezrab	Persian
Ductia (CSM 248)	Alfonso X "El Sabio"
Saltarello	Italian (13th c. MS)



*Tonight's program is made possible with the support of the Departament de Cultura of the Generalitat de Catalunya, the Institut Ramon Llull and the Culture Programme of the European Union.*

## Jordi Savall

Sunday, June 10, 2012, 3pm  
First Congregational Church

Jordi Savall *rebec & rebab*  
Dimitri Psonis *santur & Moorish guitar*  
David Mayoral *percussion*

### A Dialogue of Souls: Istanbul

#### Dimitrie Cantemir's *The Book of the Science of Music* and the Sephardic and Armenian musical traditions

AT THE TIME OF DIMITRIE CANTEMIR (1673–1723), the city which stands at the crossroads of the continents of Europe and Asia, Istanbul for the Ottomans and Constantinople for the Byzantines, already marked a veritable high point in history. Despite the memory and very palpable presence of the old Byzantium, it had become the true heart of the Muslim religious and cultural world. An extraordinary melting-pot of peoples and religions, the city has always been a magnet for European travelers and artists. Cantemir arrived in the city in 1693, aged 20, initially as a hostage and later as a diplomatic envoy of his father, the ruler of Moldavia. He became famous as a virtuoso of the *tanbur*, a kind of long-necked lute, and was also a highly regarded composer, thanks to his work *Kitâbu ilmi'l-musiki* (“The Book of the Science of Music”), which he dedicated to Sultan Ahmed III (1703–1730).

Such is the historical context of our project on Dimitrie Cantemir's *The Book of the Science of Music* and the Sephardic and Armenian musical traditions. We aim to present the “cultivated” instrumental music of the seventeenth-century Ottoman court, as preserved in Cantemir's work, in dialogue and alternating with “traditional” popular music, represented here by the oral traditions of Armenian musicians and the music of the Sephardic communities who had settled in the Ottoman empire in cities such as Istanbul and Izmir after their expulsion from Spain. In Western Europe, our cultural image of the Ottoman Empire has been distorted by the Ottoman Empire's long bid to expand toward the West, blinding us to the cultural richness and, above all, the atmosphere of tolerance and diversity that existed in the Empire during that period. As Stefan Lemny points out in his interesting essay on *Les Cantemir*, “in fact, after taking Constantinople, Mahomet II spared the lives of the city's Christian population; what is more, a few years later he encouraged the old aristocratic Greek families to return to the district known as Fener or Phanar, the hub of the former Byzantium.” Later, under the reign of Suleyman—the Golden Age of the Ottoman Empire—contacts with Europe intensified on a par with the development of diplomatic and trade relations. As Amnon Shiloah reminds us in his excellent book *La musique dans le monde de l'islam*: “Although Venice had a permanent diplomatic mission to Istanbul, the Empire turned its sights towards France. Toward the end of the sixteenth century, the treaty which was signed in 1543 between Suleyman and ‘the Christian king’ Francis I of France was a decisive factor in the process of rapprochement which led to greater interaction. On that occasion, Francis I sent Suleyman an orchestra as a token of his friendship. The concert given by the ensemble appears to have inspired the creation of two new rhythmic

modes which then entered Turkish music: the *frenkcin* (12/4) and the *frengi* (14/4).”

From 1601, the Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church, the rallying point for the Greek aristocracy proceeding from all corners of the Empire—from the islands in the Aegean, the Peloponnese, Europe and Asia Minor—finally became established in the Phanar district, where the old aristocratic Greek families had settled after the fall of Constantinople. Thus, thanks to the presence of this Greek community, the ancient Byzantine capital continued to be the seat of the Orthodox Church throughout the Empire. In this sense the Patriarchate's Academy, or Great School, was crucial in ensuring cultural hegemony. Based on his reading of Cantemir, Voltaire listed the disciplines taught at the Academy: ancient and modern Greek, Aristotelian philosophy, theology and medicine: “In truth,” he wrote, “Demetrius Cantemir reiterates many old myths; but there is no question of his being mistaken about the modern monuments he has seen with his own eyes, or the Academy where he himself studied.”

Cantemir's *Book of the Science of Music*, which has served as the historical source for our recording, is an exceptional document in many ways; first, as a fundamental source of knowledge concerning the theory, style and forms of seventeenth-century Ottoman music, but also as one of the most interesting accounts of the musical life of one of the foremost Oriental countries. This collection of 355 compositions (including nine by Cantemir), written in a system of musical notation invented by the author, constitutes the most important collection of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ottoman instrumental music to have survived to the present day. I first began to discover this repertory in 1999, during the preparation of our project on Isabella I of Castile, when our friend and colleague Dimitri Psonis, a specialist in Oriental music, suggested an old military march from the collection as a musical illustration of the date commemorating the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman armies of Mahomet II.

A year later, on our first visit to Istanbul to give a concert with Montserrat Figueras and Hespèrion XX, we visited the Yapi Kredi Cultural Center, and our friends in Istanbul, Aksel Tibet, Mine Haydaroglu and Emrah Efe Çakmak, gave us a copy of the first modern edition of the music contained in Cantemir's *Book of the Science of Music*. I was immediately fascinated by the music in the collection, and by the life of Cantemir, and I subsequently set about studying both the music and the composer in order to learn about a culture which, despite its proximity, seems remote to us as a result of sheer ignorance. I was determined to find out more about the

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#### ISTANBUL

##### I.

##### Taksim

Der makâm-ı ‘Uzzâl uşüleş Devr-i kebir MS D. Cantemir (118)  
El Rey que tanto madruga Sephardic (Sarajevo)  
Azat astvatsn & Ter kedzo Armenian (trad.)  
Der makâm-ı Uzzâl Sakil “Turna” Semâ’i MS D. Cantemir (324)

##### II.

##### Taksim

Der makâm-i Sûri Semâ’i MS D. Cantemir (256)  
Paxarico tu te llamas Sephardic (Sarajevo)  
Lamento: Garun a Armenian (trad.)  
Der makâm-ı Hüseyinî Semâ’i MS D. Cantemir (268)

#### INTERMISSION

##### III.

##### Taksim

Der makâm-ı [Hüseyinî] uşüleş Çenber Edirne’li Ahmed (MS D. Cantemir (96))  
A la una yo naci Sephardic (Sarajevo)  
Al aylukhs Armenian (trad.)  
Taksim & Makâm “Hicâz uşüleş Devr-i Kebir” MS D. Cantemir (220)

##### IV.

Las estrellas de los cielos Sefardic (I. Levy I. 34, I. 80)  
Garun a Armenian (trad.)  
Istampitta: Saltarello Italian (13th c. MS)  
Taksim  
Der makâm-ı Hüseyinî Sakil-i Ağa Rızâ MS D. Cantemir (89)



*This afternoon's program is made possible with the support of the Departament de Cultura of the Generalitat de Catalunya, the Institut Ramon Llull and the Culture Programme of the European Union.*

historical and aesthetic context with a view to embarking on an interesting project. Six years later, during the preparation of our *Orient–Occident* project, I selected four magnificent *makām* which gave the project a new dimension in that it was the only Oriental music to come not from an oral tradition, but from a contemporaneous written source. Finally, in 2008, as a natural continuation of our original project on the dialogue between East and West, we succeeded in bringing together an exceptional group of musicians from Turkey (*oud*, *ney*, *kanun*, *tanbur*, *lyra* and percussion) together with musicians from Armenia (*duduk*, *kemance* and *ney* “*Beloul*”), Israel (*oud*), Morocco (*oud*), Greece (*santur* and *morisca*) and our principal specialist soloists in Hespèrion XXI, with whom we have prepared and carried out a recording project. I would like to take this opportunity to express to them all my heartfelt gratitude, since without their talent and knowledge this project would never have been possible.

To begin with, we had the difficult task of selecting about ten pieces out of a total of 355 compositions, choosing the most representative and varied pieces from among the *makām* which struck us as being the most beautiful, although we are aware that this preference was influenced by our Western sensibility. After this “bewildering” choice, we had to complete the pieces chosen for the Ottoman part with the corresponding *taksim*, or preludes, improvised before each *makām*. At the same time, we had also selected Sephardic and Armenian pieces for the Sephardic repertoire we chose music from the Ladino repertory preserved in the communities of İzmir, Istanbul and other regions of the former Ottoman Empire, while for the Armenian repertoire we selected the most beautiful of the various pieces proposed by the Armenian musicians Georgi Minassyan (*duduk*) and Gaguik Mouradian (*kemance*).

Nowadays, all of this music is probably performed very differently from the way it was at the time of Cantemir. Therefore, in our quest for other possible performance techniques, we had to rely on various accounts, often written by European travelers, which describe the specific characteristics of Ottoman music during those historical periods and provide a series of interesting considerations on musical performance, practice, instruments, court orchestras and military bands, as well as the ceremonies of the mystical confraternities. One such account is that of Pierre Belon in 1553, who remarks on the Turks’ extraordinary skill at making bow and lute strings from gut which “are more common here than in Europe,” adding that “many people can play one or several types [of instrument], which is not the case [he observes] in France and Italy.” He also mentions the existence of a great variety of flutes, remarking on the wonderfully sweet sound of the *miskal* (panpipe), although in 1614 the Italian traveler Pietro Della Valle wrote that the sweetness of the instrument “does not match that of the long flute (*ney*) of the Dervishes.” Around 1700, Cantemir himself observes in his *History of the Ottoman Empire*: “Europeans may find it strange that I refer here to the love of music of a nation which Christians regard as barbarian.” He concedes that barbarism may have reigned during the period when the Empire was being forged, but remarks that, once the great military conquests were over, the arts, “the ordinary fruits of peace, found their place in men’s minds.” He concludes with the following words, which must have come as a shock to his European readers: “I would even venture to say that the music of the Turks is much more perfect than that of Europe in terms of metre and the proportion of words, but it is also so difficult to understand that one would be hard put to find more than a handful of individuals

with a sound knowledge of the principles and subtleties of this art” (*HOE*, II p.178).

We would like to draw attention to this remark on the complexity of Turkish music which “is much more perfect than that of Europe in terms of meter,” since we have experienced the truth of it ourselves: In the nine *makām* that we selected, the following metres (or rhythms) are found: 14/4, 16/4, 10/8, 6/4, 12/4, 48/4 and 2/4. Of these seven metres, only the 6/4 and 2/4 rhythms are usual in the West. Meter determines the rhythm and the *tempo*, but *tempo* is more subjective and may even be influenced by specific circumstances, social context and situations which are moulded by changing social custom. As in the Western world, where the majority of originally lively dances, such as the *folia*, the *chaconne*, the *sarabande* and the *minuet*, which had their origin in popular traditions, were toned down or even became slower as a result of the influence of court pomp and ceremony, it seems more than likely that a similar phenomenon took place in Ottoman court music. Indeed, the dances and instrumental music created by court musicians who took their inspiration from popular musical forms progressively and, particularly during the nineteenth century, slowed down considerably as a result of the formal influences of the court itself, as well as the religious notion that all music of a certain dignity must be controlled and moderate. We believe that, in the sixteenth century and during the time of Cantemir, this evolution had not yet begun. The synthesis of classical and popular music can be clearly seen in the compositions of the period, particularly in the works included in Cantemir’s collection and in the compositions of Eyyûbi Bdekir Agha (who died in 1730). It was during that flourishing time for the arts, in the years from 1718 to 1730, known as “Lâle devri” or the “era of the Black Tulips,” named after the tulips which were cultivated on the banks of the Bosphorus, that the court musicians discovered in the imperial gardens the art of the folk bards (*âsik*).

For this reason, our choice of *tempi* is much livelier than those generally heard in modern-day performances of music from the Ottoman repertory. Another major difference is the instrumentation; unlike modern ensembles which almost always perform pieces using all the instruments, we have chosen to use a varied instrumentation, so that all the instruments may be present in the sections equivalent to our *rondeau* or *ritournelle*, whereas in the other sections of the *makām* the various instruments alternate or are present according to the nature of the section or depending on the development of the piece. It is important to observe that whereas the earliest notation used by Turkish musicians resembled alphabetical notation, the notation invented by Dimitrie Cantemir is a highly intelligent and precise system, allowing us to clearly differentiate the various tunings of the flats and the sharps, depending on the modes used.

We therefore wanted to show not only that this imaginary musical dialogue, devised for the present recording, is possible, but, above all that it reflects a genuine historical reality. As well as the enormous diversity and cultural richness of Istanbul at the time of Cantemir, we should also remember the presence at the imperial court of Greek, Armenian and Jewish musicians, as is confirmed in the various sources. According to the Comte de Saint-Priest, the French ambassador to Istanbul, the Ottomans’ prejudices regarding the arts in general led them to relegate the musical profession to non-Muslims. Indeed, “most of the Great Sultan’s musical retainers, including Cantemir himself, who are the musical élite of the Turkish Empire, are of Greek, Jewish or Armenian origin.”

Among the most illustrious musicians towards the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century were the Armenian Nikiğos and the Jewish *tanbur* player Tamburî Ishaq (who died around 1815).

It was against this backdrop of musical excellence that Cantemir became renowned as a *tanbur* virtuoso. The chronicler Ion Neculce expressed his utmost admiration in the following terms: “Nobody in Constantinople could play better than he.” This instrument, Cantemir asserted, “is the most complete and perfect of all known instruments or those that we have seen” and the one which “faithfully and flawlessly imitates the human song and voice.” This opinion may seem exaggerated until we recall that at the time in question the instrument could equally be plucked like a lute or played with a bow and held like a *viola da gamba*; and also that, by a telling coincidence, during the same period in France the *viola da gamba* was also regarded as the instrument which most closely imitated all the nuances of the human voice.

Jordi Savall  
Edinburgh, August 2009

*I would like to thank Amnon Shiloah, Stefan Lemny and Ursula and Kurt Reinhard for their research and analysis on the history, music and the period, which I have used in documenting some of the sources in my commentary.*

Translated by Jacqueline Minett



David Ignaszewski

As one of the most multi-fariously gifted musicians of his generation, Jordi Savall (*rebec*, *bowed lyre & rebab*)’s career as a concert performer, teacher, researcher and creator of new projects, both musical and cultural, make him one of the principal architects of the current revaluation of historical music. Together with Montserrat Figueras, he founded the ensembles Hespèrion XXI, La Capella Reial de Catalunya and Le Concert des Nations.

He has recorded over 170 CDs and won many awards, including Officier de l’Ordre des Arts et Lettres (1988), Honorary Member of the Konzerthaus in Vienna (1999), Victoire de la Musique (2002), the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik (2003) and various Midem Classical Awards (1999, 2000, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008 and 2010). His double-CD *Don Quijote de la Mancha, Romances y Músicas* (Alia Vox) was among the five nominees for the 2006 Grammy Awards in the Early Music category. The book-CD *Jérusalem, La Ville des deux Paix*, was awarded the 2008 Orphée d’Or de l’Académie du Disque Lyrique and the 2008 Cæcilia as best CD of the year. He was also awarded the 2009 Händelpreis der Stadt Halle (Germany) and the 2009 National Price of Music by the Catalan Arts Council.

In 2008, Mr. Savall was appointed “Artist for the Peace” in the UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador program. In 2009, he was appointed Ambassador of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation by the European Union. In 2010, he was awarded the Prætorius Musikpreis given by the Niedersächsisches Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kultur in Germany. In 2011, the book-CD *Dinastia Borgia* received the Grammy Award for Best Small Ensemble Performance. This year he received the prestigious Léonie Sonning Music Prize.



Dimitri Psonis (*santur & Moorish guitar*) specializes in the instruments of Greece and the Mediterranean countries, including the *santur*, Moorish guitar, *tzuras* and various percussion instruments. Over the past few years, he has devoted himself to the study and interpretation of classic Ottoman music and to the popular music of Greece and Turkey. He founded the groups Krusta, Acroma, P’An-Ku and Metamorphosis. Mr. Psonis has performed with Jordi Savall since 2000.



David Mayoral (*percussion*) performs and records with numerous Spanish ensembles across many genres, ranging from Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque to ethnic and fusion. Among the ensembles he performs with are L’Arpeggiata, Ensemble L’Amoroso and his own ensemble, Transit. Mr. Mayoral has performed with Jordi Savall’s various ensembles since 2005.