

Dmitry Konstantinovich Sartinsky-Bey

The Scoundrel of St. Petersburg



Gregg Miner



Dmitry Konstantinovich Sartinsky-Bey was a well-known harp guitarist in the late 1890s and early 1900s in St. Petersburg. His ancestry was possibly Turkish/Polish, with sources indicating that he was a native of Turkey, with citizenship at the time of his arrival in Odessa from Constantinople about 1894. He stated that his father was a Turkish pasha (general), a hero of the wars in the Balkans, and that he himself grew up at the court of the sultan. A seemingly wild claim, that one might indeed be true. With Sartinsky-Bey, it seems impossible to separate fact from fiction!

Indeed, the most salient “facts” I was able to glean from a translation of his biography in “The History of the Guitar in Faces.”¹ were that he was a notorious liar, or at least, extreme embellisher (for example, claiming to have met and studied with Mertz, who was, unfortunately, dead) and an unrepentant bigamist (he married three times without ever getting divorced – each time, absconding with his bride’s funds, never to be seen again).

His rare harp guitar was a 10-string (4+6) “*lyra-guitarre*” by F. Schenk, built around 1840 in Vienna. Someone later added a pickguard to the soundboard, and its bridge may or may not be a replacement. The pieces of paper attached are presumably the “strokes (signatures) on his instrument ... authentic autographs left by P.I. Tchaikovsky and A.G. Rubinstein,” which Sartinsky-Bey insisted were authentic. Ever boastful and deceitful, he of course claimed that he invented his instrument.²

In St. Petersburg, he performed frequently in aristocratic salons and theaters in the 1890s and early 1900s, with positive reviews: “Sartinsky skillfully performed Liszt’s Csardas and a waltz of his own composition on the melodic guitar-lyre” (“Petersburg Vedomosti,” January 26, 1899). Another writer penned that “Sartinsky-Bey’s repertoire was quite diverse; he performed his waltz, reminiscent of Strauss’s, a spectacular gavotte, etc. His performance made a good impression, which was significantly strengthened when Sartinsky Bey masterfully played the quartet from the opera “Rigoletto.”³

¹ https://www.guitar-times.ru/pages/guitarists/sartinsky_bei.htm

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*



He was perhaps best known as a composer, with many famous artists recording his songs and romances.⁴



Pictured are select published compositions, most often romantic waltzes such as "New Romances, Music by D. K. Sartinsky-Bey" at left.

After the October Revolution of 1917, D. K. Sartinsky Bey was arrested and sent to prison until at least November 1918. He was presumably released at the end of 1918 and most likely went abroad, possibly returning to Turkey.

About The Author: Gregg Miner is, at various times of the day, a plucked stringed instrument collector, scholar, recording artist and performer. He is widely considered the world's leading authority on harp guitars. His web sites include Harpguitars.net, Harpguitarmusic.com and Minermusic.com.

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⁴ *Ibid.* A.Vyaltseva, M.Vavich, Y.Morfessi, N.Tamara (Mitina-Buinitskaya), A.Ilmanova, V.Panina), made at the first recording factories in Russia: "Metropol Record", "Gnom-Concert-Record", "Gramofon-Concert-Record", "Zonophone" ("International Zonophone"), "Russian Joint-Stock Company of Gramophones" (RAOG), "The Pathé Brothers".