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# Tra lyra e aulos: tradizioni musicali e generi poetici. Quaderni della "Rivista di cultura classica e medioevale", 14

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## Review by

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Luigi Bravi, Liana Lomiento, Angelo Meriani and Giovanna Pace (edd.), *Tra lyra e aulos: tradizioni musicali e generi poetici. Quaderni della "Rivista di cultura classica e medioevale", 14*. Pisa; Roma: Fabrizio Serra editore, 2016. 406 p. ISBN 9788862278256. € 120.00 (pb).

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[Authors and titles are listed at the end of the review.]

This book collects a revised version of almost all the papers presented at the 7th Annual Meeting of MOISA – International Society for the Study of Greek and Roman Music and its Cultural Heritage (Urbino, 5th-6th September 2014) on the subject: "Between *Lyra* and *Aulos*. Musical Traditions and Poetic Genres". The essays are divided into six sections: 1) musical performance and poetic genres, 2) lyra, 3) aulos, 4) musical traditions, 5) between lyra and aulos: philosophical readings, 6) between lyra and aulos: iconographic tradition. Apart from this partition, almost all the texts focus on the two musical instruments, aulos and lyra, or at least on one of them, offering a wide range of strictly interwoven perspectives (poetic, musical, philosophical, religious) and dealing with different materials (textual, archeological, iconographic) from the archaic age to the late antiquity. Music in Roman culture, however is the focus in only two texts, those written by Wyslucha and Romero Mayorga.

Andrew Barker examines the fifth section of the book VII of Plutarch's *Quaestiones convivales*, focusing on the description of a musician's performance at a symposium and the short speech of Callistratus, the host, in defense of music of that sort. The author deals with textual matters at 704c5 and 704c8, suggesting that the musician is not an *auloidos* but an *auletes*, plays solo music without any chorus <sup>1</sup> and, as a musician, appears like a "sophist". A proper sophist is Callistratus, whose speech proves nothing and convinces "nobody capable of thinking clearly" (p. 23).

Luca Bettarini deals with bucolic poetry and shows that, while Theocritus seems to know only the syrinx and single pipe aulos, post-Theocritean poems also mention other wind instruments (plagiaulos, double pipe aulos) and a stringed instrument (pektis) and have had an influence on the Greek novels.

According to Claude Calame, the transformations of the heroic figure of Helen in different poems by Alcman, Sappho, Alcaeus and Stesichorus show that ancient Greek melic poetry built up a network based on a right balance of constancies and changes.

The evolution of ancient Greek music was not linear. After the Persian Wars, some of the musical instruments which were familiar to the archaic lyric poetry (VII-VI BC) – that is the “orientalizing lyric” – fell into disfavour, but Mariella De Simone suggests that the so-called “new musicians” could have taken inspiration from that musical paradigm.

Serena Ferrando’s paper deals with lyrai and auloi found in some graves at Locri and their function, suggesting that they were linked to ceremonies in lifetime or during the burial. The possibility that they were connected to beliefs about the life after death or the journey to the underworld is just mentioned at the end of the paper, but I think this is the right way to understand the meaning of those musical instruments. Later in this volume, the paper by Antonietta Provenza shows that auloi and lyrai were usual instruments of the Sirens at the gate of the underworld and that music had a great importance in the context of Mysteries and Orphism in leading the dead souls to the underworld safely. In her argument, Provenza focuses both on literary sources, mainly Euripides’ *Helen*,<sup>2</sup> and on funeral iconography.

Egert Pöhlmann examines deeply the *Hymnus on the Holy Trinity* from Oxyrhynchos (POxy 1786). It is the first Christian hymn with melody and the author believes that it “must be considered as a witness of the Alexandrian syncretism of Greek tradition and early Christianity” (p. 89). After a detailed textual and metrical analysis, Pöhlmann says that “solo singing remains a possibility” for the performance and that musical prosody confirms this option, although he cannot entirely exclude a “responsorial performance” (p. 100). Accompaniment by the kithara remains a working hypothesis, even though no proof is available.

A survey on the works of Vergil, Horace, Propertius and Ovid shows that the Latin verbs *canere* and *legere* are related to different poetic genres of the Augustan age, but Kamila Wyslucha argues that they have no implication in the actual performance, because “the process of fictionalizing the performance begun at a relatively early stage of literary theory when the canon of genres was being established” (p. 122).

Amir Yerucham analyses the text of Euripides’ *Bacchae* in order to show the role the music played in acts of cult foundation and cult diffusion in classical and archaic Greece. “Soundscape” is meant as a synthesis of dance, organology, poetic style, attributes of the performative area, cultic narrative, sound patterns, ritual ideology and paraphernalia (p. 140), and its specificity is fundamental in the contrast to the universality of sacrificial practices: “music served as a mean of converging and

mediating cultic identities” (p. 151). At the very end of this paper the author observes that the association of music and cult foundation...was also well practiced in the kingdoms of the Near East. <sup>3</sup>

Also investigating material evidence, Stephan Hagel offers some interesting suggestions about the features of a lyre from a fifth-century B.C. grave at Locri in comparison with those of Mainland Greece.

The Thracian itinerant poet Thamyras is the subject of the paper written by András Kárpáti, which mainly deals with the contest between Thamyras and the Muses. The author focuses on the Polion vase in Ferrara and the theatrical version of the myth starting from some fragments of Sophocles' *Thamyras*. In the scene on the Polion vase we see small statuettes of the Muses which look like “‘voodoo’ dolls”, i.e. dolls “endowed with magic powers” (p. 185): such a scene “may remind us of an *agon* in which Thamyras called for the help of the little Muse figures at the pivotal point of the story” (p. 187). Some details (clothes and musical instrument) also suggest that this picture reflects the debate on the musical innovation of the last decades of the 5th century.

A marble statue from Roman times found at Merida, in Spain, shows Mercury with a lyre: Claudina Romero Mayorga investigates it in order to point out the relationship between this god with his musical instrument and the Mithraic cult, i.e. the Mysteries of Mithras. “The uniqueness of the piece from Merida” mainly lies in “the musical instrument already created” (pp. 203-204): Mercury as ruler of the first initiatory degree is joined to the lyre that allows the reception of Apollo's teachings and the initiation into oracular powers.

Nadia Baltieri and Adelaide Fongoni deal with two fragments of “new music”: Melanippides' *Marsyas* ( *PMG* 758) and Telestes' *Argo* ( *PMG* 805). Fongoni analyses the debate, real or fictional, between these poets about the musical instruments, particularly aulos and lyra, within the context of the musical innovations. Fongoni argues that Telestes offered a new version of the refusal of the aulos by Athena (p. 241), but Baltieri (pp. 214-215) suggests that he might have gone back to a Boeotian tradition attested by Pindar ( *Pyth.* 12) and Corinna ( *PMG* 668). Baltieri thus offers a quite different reading of these two fragments, and she also observes that they allude to mimetic movements of a “new dance”.

Sylvain Perrot investigates the Lambda strophe of an alphabetic poem, preserved by a fragmentary papyrus found in Oxyrhynchus, in order to ask the genre that the poem belonged to. Aulody and threnody are well discussed on the ground of other literary sources from Greece and Rome. This text alludes once more to the presence of a lyre and an aulos in a grave (see above, Ferrando and Provenza's papers). Perrot links the aulos to the poet Olympus and explains the allusion to the lyre simply on the basis of “an obvious phonic play”, i.e. the repetition of the sound [ly] in the words “Lydian”, “lyre” and “Olympus” within the Lambda strophe, but the arguments in Provenza's paper about the associations with the afterlife could perhaps cast a different light on this matter.

A survey on Mixolydian, Syntonolydian, Ionian, Dorian and Phrygian harmonies and their features allows Tosca Lynch to discuss the reasons that Plato selected only the Dorian and the Phrygian ones, as well as why he chose the stringed instrument and refused the aulos.

Joan Silva Barris asserts that in *Iliad* 18.570 the word *linon* is not a direct object and doesn't mean Linos-song; rather, it is the subject and means "lyre-string" or "flax" (i.e. the material which lyre-strings were made of. This reading was common in translation and commentaries from antiquity to the 19th century and is still corroborated by comparing this text to other ones.

Andrea Tessier offers a *specimen* of a planned new critical edition of the anonymous treatise *de metris* with many references to Pindar's *Olympian Odes*, contained in the ms. *Vat. Gr.* 896.

Sebastian Moro Tornese deals with the opposition and complementarity of lyre and aulos in a philosophical perspective, focusing on Neoplatonism (Proclus) and the myth of Apollo and Marsyas.

Finally, there are two papers on vase paintings. Theodor Ulieriu-Rostás investigates iconographic sources from the Late 5th century to the Early 4th century in order to show the relationship between Dionysus or Satyrs and stringed musical instruments. He asserts that "the appearance of lyre-players and the decline of the *barbitos* seem two complementary vectors of the same phenomenon" (p. 350) and "these signature-features go very much against the musical polarizations known from textual sources", e.g. "the Apollonian/Dionysian dichotomy" (p. 352). Alexandra Goulaki-Voutyra surveys vase paintings of the Classical period, focusing on some details of playing technique and trying to explain some problems connected to the simultaneous playing of stringed and wind instruments in association with song or instrumental performance.

This book has the usual strengths and weaknesses of collections of conference proceedings: it offers a lot of materials on musical matters, and it is very interesting for both a beginner and an educated reader, but probably it may be more appreciated by the latter. Papers are furnished with many bibliographic references, but these are mostly in the footnotes (only Hagel's bibliography is also at the end of his paper): probably a general bibliography would have been more useful. At the end of the volume there is a list of the quoted texts, but it lacks a list of the figures and those discussed in Karpati's paper are missing.

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## Notes

1. This reading needs a change in the punctuation at 704c8: modern editions of this text (e.g. Françoise Frazier, Jean Sirinelli, *Plutarque. Tome 9.3: Propos de table. Livres 7-9*, Paris, 1996) usually shows a comma after *en agoni*, while Barker suggests putting it after *metà toû choroû*.

2. About the text of Euripides' *Helen* 167-178, quoted and discussed by the author in this book (p. 108 n. 6), I suggest a different reading of line 171: see Mattia De Poli, "Esempi di responsione libera nelle monodie di Euripide", *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* n.s. 94 (1), 2010, pp. 47-50.

3. About King David and lyre, see John C. Franklin, *Kinyras. The Divine Lyre*, Washington, 2015, pp. 149-184.