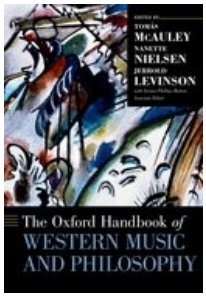

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CHAPTER

6 Ancient Greece C6

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Abstract

This chapter outlines the evidence for musical history in ancient Greece, connecting it to philosophical approaches represented by Plato and others, as well as to recently elucidated documents with Ancient Greek musical notation. Ideas of ethos and mimesis are related to what may be known about the sounds of ancient Greek music as elicited from descriptions, surviving scores, and replicas of instruments such as the *aulos* (double pipe). The chapter seeks to elucidate the notion of *mousikē* ('music', as derived from the name of Greek divinities *Mousai*, the Muses) in its cultural context, and to connect elements of ancient musical traditions such as metre and harmonics to contemporary aural and musical realities.

Keywords: aesthetics, aulos, ethos, harmonics, metre, mimesis, Muses, Plato

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WHERE does music come from and what is its purpose? What effects does it have on listeners, and how can these be best exploited? How are the sounds of music to be described and analysed? Such questions were the object of keen inquiry by ancient Greeks, evidence for whose musical practices goes back to prehistoric times (Younger 1998). In the archaic, classical, and post-classical periods (spanning roughly a thousand years from around 750 BCE), Greek writings present a vigorously musical environment in which emotional, aesthetic, and ethical dimensions of music were subjected to a range of analysis and philosophical discourse. This extensive and sophisticated written record laid the basis for subsequent philosophizing about music in the Western world (see Bowman 1998; important modern contributions include Kivy 1984, 1997; Levinson 1990; Budd 1995; and Scruton 1997). C6.P1

Greeks attributed to the philosopher-sage Pythagoras of Samos (*c.*570–495 BCE) the discovery that musical intervals can be analysed in terms of numerical ratios, as demonstrated by the way a vibrating string or a hollow pipe will produce different pitches when different proportions of their length are utilized: the octave is produced by the ratio 2:1, the fifth by 3:2, the fourth by 4:3.[1] In the face of these phenomena, early C6.P2

Pythagoreans ascribed a cosmic and ethical significance to music as they did to number. Music was esteemed as a tangible earthly counterpart to the mathematical pattern of the universe; and the ratios of musical attunement were believed by Pythagoras and his successors to reflect the principle of cosmic order, the so-called harmony of the spheres, with the resulting sounds being thought to have magical and therapeutic qualities (see Rocconi 2009).

C6.P3 In addition to sayings attributed to Pythagoras, the earliest evidence for Greek ideas about music is found in testimonies regarding the chorus director Lasus of Hermione (late sixth century BCE) and citations of the sophist Damon of Oa (mid-fifth century BCE); these were practising musicians and thinkers interested in analysing musical structures. Influences from these quarters, explicit or otherwise, are evident in Plato (427–347 BCE) and his pupil Aristotle (384–322 BCE), who along with later theorists also preserve
p. 118 discussions of epistemological, methodological, and metaphysical ideas ↳ relating to music. Fundamental ancient categories of philosophical inquiry into the mimetic, inspirational, and ethical-emotive aspects the nature of music were laid out in the lengthy if unsystematic discussions in the dialogues of Plato, followed by the more methodical analyses of Aristotle.

C6.P4 Subsequently, Aristotle's pupil Aristoxenus of Tarentum (born *c.*375 BCE) made major contributions to musical theory in his voluminous writings, of which only *Elements of Harmony* (nearly complete) and fragments of other works survive. Later divergent treatments of philosophical and theoretical importance include the *On Music* of the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus of Gadara (first century BCE), the *Harmonics* of the mathematician Ptolemy (born *c.*90 CE), and the compendious *On Music* of Aristides Quintilianus (third century CE). In addition, the scholar-philosopher Athenaeus of Naucratis (early third century CE) provides important information about music in a discussion presented in his *Deipnosophistae* (Experts at Dinner); elements of all of these are valuably compiled in a work once attributed to the historian Plutarch now known as the Pseudo-Plutarchan *On Music* (perhaps fifth century CE). In addition to these writings there are around sixty "musical documents", texts preserved on papyrus and stone that have come to scholarly attention since the sixteenth century, featuring ancient Greek melodic signs. The pitches indicated by the signs are known from tables preserved in a precious handbook that has survived in manuscript tradition from the time it was compiled in late antiquity (perhaps fifth century CE) by Alypius.[2]

C6.P5 Scholarship on ancient music, beginning with the important Renaissance treatise of Vincenzo Galilei *Dialogo della musica antica e della moderna* published in 1581, has focused on discussing and elucidating the ancient accounts.[3] While the focus of attention has tended to be technical rather than philosophical, discussion has also revolved around the vexed question of the role of ethos—ethical character—in relation to the mimetic (i.e., representational or imitative) qualities of musical modes, or *harmoniai*. Modal ethos and mimesis were key concerns for Plato and Aristotle; but it should be noted that *harmonia* in archaic Greece (which has almost nothing to do with harmony in its modern sense) connotes something different from the scale-structures used in later Church music, and that Aristotle disagreed with Plato in many areas and details of the interpretation of modal ethos, as exemplified by his rejection of Plato's commendation of the Phrygian *harmonia* as suitable for inculcating good character.

C6.P6 Uncertainty about the precise sonic referents of such terms has meant that important modern discussions of ethos in ancient Greek music are prone to offer general reflections and analyses rather than to relate the issue to specific musical examples (see, for example, Lippman 1964; Anderson 1966; Mathiesen 1999; Halliwell 2002; Barker 2007; and in general Rocconi 2009). Musical referents are generally assumed to be available to be heard in discussions of more recent music, and this chapter attempts a novel approach to ancient Greek music by seeking to relate philosophical and theoretical discussions to what is known about how actual sounds might have been heard. (For a fuller account of this approach, see Phillips and D'Angour 2018.) The attempt to relate theoretical perspectives to ancient auditory realities has generally been considered an impossibility in view of the scant evidence for the actual sounds. However, a better

p. 119 understanding of ↳ these sounds is clearly desirable, since faulty assumptions in this regard are bound to vitiate, if not altogether impugn, attempts to engage with or critique Greek philosophical approaches. If we seek, for instance, to understand what Plato meant by the calling the Dorian mode "manly" and the Ionian "effeminate," it will help to know something of the sounds produced in practice by voices or instruments performing in those modes.

The study of ancient music has also been bedevilled by excessively technical presentations and the unhelpful application of obscure ancient terms.[4] In recent years, however, investigations into practical, organological, and ethnographic aspects of ancient performance have begun to illuminate how some kinds of music in ancient Greece may have sounded in practice (West 1992; Pöhlmann and West 2001; Hagel 2009).[5] The task of relating these sounds to ancient musical philosophy may now be tentatively attempted: later in this chapter I discuss some actual examples of ancient Greek songs preserved on stone and papyrus, attempting to relate them directly to what we learn about music from philosophical and theoretical discourses. C6.P7

Archaic Greece (*c*.750–500 BCE): The Age of Epic and Lyric Song C6.S1

In ancient as in modern times, music was widely associated with religious worship and ritual activity. The Greeks believed that the gods were required to be honoured and gratified by sung invocations and prayers, and music itself was spoken of by Greek poets as being a creation and gift of the gods. The invention of the principal instruments of the string and wind families, the lyre and the aulos (double pipe), was attributed to divinities Hermes and Athena respectively.[6] The foundational literary figures of Greek culture, the epic poets Homer and Hesiod (eighth–seventh centuries BCE), attribute the inspiration for their own musical practices and skills to the Muses, goddesses of song, dance, and story, who are invoked at the beginning of their songs. C6.P8

From the name of the Muses (*Mousai*) arose the technical term *mousikē*. This had a much wider connotation than our term "music," embracing a variety of disciplines and genres as suggested by the names attributed to the goddesses by Hesiod that were indicative of their appropriate domains. Thus, Melpomene was later identified as the Muse of tragic song (*molpē*), Terpsichore the Muse of dance (*choreia*), and others of the nine Muses were assigned to forms of musico-poetic expression including epic song (Calliope), love songs (Erato), comedy-pastoral singing (Thaleia), and historical narrative (Clio).[7] These genres are for the most part intimately wedded to discursive structures and semantic content, and their disparate character makes it difficult to ascribe to *mousikē* a uniform set of ethical or aesthetic categories. C6.P9

The musical idioms and styles of Greek song were in large part related to the natural musicality of spoken Greek: prior to the change to dynamic stress accents around the mid-second century CE, the language had a
p. 120 quantitative rhythmical structure and an ↳ intrinsic melodic component (Horrocks 2010, 167). The rhythmic basis arose from the relative durations that were accorded in everyday speech to each syllable, which conventionally were assigned either short or long quantities. For the purposes of song, these were combined into more or less complicated regular patterns to which metrical names such as "dactyl" and "iamb" were later accorded. The melodic element of speech involved a rise or fall (or both) in pitch, usually on the vowel of one particular syllable of a word. These pitch-changes were eventually indicated by the writing of accents (acute, grave, and circumflex) over the vowels (Probert 2003, 3–8). Both the melodic and rhythmical elements formed inescapable aspects of archaic and classical song, or *melos*, a term that covers much of the poetic and literary output of ancient Greek song-culture. (For the notion of "song-culture" see Herington 1985, 3–4.) C6.P10

In the earliest literary accounts of musical practices, those depicted in the epics of Homer and Hesiod, music is presented as an adjunct to words and dancing. It is conceived as a divine gift to be enjoyed both in public (by Homeric audiences who invariably listen in silence) and in private. In a scene in Homer's *Iliad*, the hero Achilles, having withdrawn from the fighting in anger at being slighted, "gladdens his heart" by singing of the feats of warriors, accompanying himself on an elaborately decorated lyre. The narrative of Homer's *Odyssey* features two minstrels (evidently modelled on Homer himself) who are experts on the lyre (*phorminx*) and sing songs describing stories of heroes and gods, attributing their skill both to self-instruction and to divine favour (Homer, *Odyssey* 22.347). C6.P11

The sounds of the minstrels' songs, which are likely to reflect Homer's own output, may be speculatively reconstructed from the texts of epic poetry whose words preserve evidence for both their rhythm and melodic shape. The rhythm used by Greek bards was dactylic hexameter, called by Aristotle (*Poetics* 1459b34) "the stateliest and weightiest" of metres. In it, words are placed into a regular syllabic pattern consisting of six dactyls, a dactyl being ♩♪♪ or ♩♩ (the contracted form was always used in the last bar of each verse). The melody was likely to have accorded with the pitch contours inherent in Greek speech, with the melodic line restricted to a few fixed notes that follow the pitches to which the strings of the *phorminx* were tuned (West 1981 offers a speculative musical reconstruction). The general musical effect would have been formulaic, repetitive, and perhaps somewhat hypnotic; one of the key Greek terms used to describe its effect is *thelxis* (enchantment) (Halliwell 2011, 47–51). C6.P12

The assumption that epic songs were not melodically arresting or adventurous is supported by the fact that by the sixth century BCE they were no longer sung to their original melodic formulae, but declaimed by professional reciters called rhapsodes. On contemporary vase-paintings, rhapsodes are invariably shown with an arm outstretched resting on a staff, rather than holding a musical instrument; and in the fifth century new musical settings of Homeric passages were performed by kitharodes, who sang to the accompaniment of the kithara (Power 2010). Meanwhile, new kinds of musical expression had been developed during the centuries following Homer, notably music used to accompany the solo lyric songs of poets (properly singer-songwriters) such as Sappho and Anacreon, and choral lyric songs such as those of Stesichorus and Pindar. Information ↳ about how these poets' songs and instrumental accompaniments sounded is virtually non-existent, though some indications can be derived from the texts themselves through analyses of rhythms and details provided of instrumental accompaniment. Prior to the appearance of a standard system of notation (first attested in the late fourth century and probably devised in the mid-fifth century BCE), the melodies to which words were set are likely to have involved semi-formulaic manipulations of melodic shapes within a received framework of harmonic idioms. (One suggestion for a Pindaric melodic setting can be found in D'Angour 2013.) C6.P13

p. 121

The Classical Period (*c*.500–300 BCE): From Lasus to Aristotle C6.S2

Alongside the mathematical approach to musical sound, Greeks of the sixth and fifth centuries BCE pondered the ethical aspects of music in relation to its role in forming character, promoting social harmony, and educating young citizens. Those influenced by Pythagorean thought made progress in investigating the acoustic underpinnings of musical sound, but alongside such scientific approaches the notion that music has a transcendent, divine origin and inspiration persisted. However, a distinction arose between the work of investigators of musical sound (*mousikoi*, "experts on music," later also called *harmonikoi*, "experts in *harmonia*") and its practical realization by singers, instrumentalists, and choral directors. While musical composition and performance continued to follow their own practical logic, "harmonics" was to develop along its own path, eventually becoming (as music in mathematized form) one of the disciplines in the quadrivium of the Renaissance educational curriculum. C6.P14

Performers in the late sixth century BCE are said to have made changes in many elements of traditional music, introducing fresh rhythmical and melodic forms and new harmonic modulations. Testimonies from contemporaries such as the poet Pindar and later scholarly commentators confirm the interest of the famous lyric poet and choir conductor Lasus of Hermione in questions of euphony and choral coordination. For example, he is known for having sought to reduce the unpleasant effect of clashing sibilants in the dithyramb, a ritual song in honour of Dionysus involving large forces of singer-dancers, first by removing the "s" from his compositions altogether, and later by reforming the performance arrangement from a line to a circle to ensure better visual and aural coordination (D'Angour 1997). The tendency towards greater complexity of melodic form and musical mimeticism brought critical reactions from traditionalists. Authoritative commentators from the late fifth century BCE onwards tend to commend the simplicity and decorum of earlier music, in contrast to what they heard as the disreputable and excessive styles of later musicians, particularly the so-called New Musicians whose heyday was the mid- to late fifth century (see Csapo 2004). C6.P15

p. 122 The sophist Damon of Oa is quoted approvingly by Plato as insisting that "any change in styles of *mousikē* invariably leads to major disruptions in the political and social sphere" (*Republic* 424c). Taking his cue from Damon, Plato made his own determination of the right kind of music to be permitted in an ideal state by adjudicating on the presumed ethical dimensions of different modes. His discussions concentrate on the qualities of Greek song-poetry, and in particular on the ethos that might be attached to or associated with *harmoniai*, the specific harmonic structures recognized as underlying the melodic, non-polyphonic, expression of song (see Winnington-Ingram 1936). Plato's main concern was that these *harmoniai* and the words to which they were sung have the power, via an unexplained process of mimesis, to affect the condition of the soul or psyche (*psūchē*). In consequence, he writes, C6.P16

> those who are looking for the best kind of singing and music must look not for the kind that is pleasant, but that which is correct. An imitation would be correct, we claim, if it turns out to be like the object imitated in quantity and in quality. C6.P17
>
> (*Laws* 668b4–7)

Different *harmoniai* were thought to possess distinguishable, intrinsic ethical qualities and effects: thus Plato claims that the Dorian *harmonia* is "manly and conducive to courage," the Phrygian *harmonia* "represents moderation," while the Lydian is "effeminate and over-emotional" (*Republic* 398d–e). He gives no account of how a particular ethos arises from the sounds produced by these *harmoniai*, whether on voice or instruments. C6.P18

Crucial to understanding the scope of Plato's concern and of the ethical issues raised by him is the fact that the *mousikē* on which he focuses his attention is attached to a verbal component in genres such as epic, lyric, or tragic poetry. Although by the time of Lasus the nature and effect of musical sound was analysed separately from those of words, Plato argued that *logos*, which means both "reason" and "speech," was central to all human activity. This led to his repudiation of purely musical sounds, whether they were melodic, rhythmic, or instrumental effects, as insusceptible to and unworthy of philosophical examination (*Laws* 669e). Given that the use of any particular *harmonia* was regularly associated with the singing of specific musico-poetic genres, it may seem surprising that the philosophers did not consider (as Philodemus was later to argue) that the different effects of *harmoniai* arose largely, if not wholly, from the semantic associations of the texts with which different *harmoniai* were traditionally associated. Plato's ethical focus was to mean that issues of musical aesthetics long remained undeveloped in ancient Greek thought. C6.P19

Alongside his ethical preoccupations with *mousikē*, however, Plato acknowledged *en passant* that music as such can provide straightforwardly auditory pleasure. In the dialogue *Philebus* (51d), we read: C6.P20

> Sounds which are smooth and clear and emit a single pure note are beautiful, not relatively, but absolutely, and there are pleasures which relate to these by nature and result from them. C6.P21

p. 123 Plato's recognition of the sheer sensual power of sound is clear from his concern in his *Republic* that a young man should not be "unharmonized" by allowing music "to captivate his soul with its piping, and to pour into his soul through his ears, as through a funnel, the sweet and soft and mournful *harmoniai*, so that he spends his whole life humming, enraptured by song (*melos*)" (*Republic* 411a5–9). The pleasure afforded by musical sounds could, however, be guided to good purpose through the use of reason (*logos*): C6.P22

> The function of compositions that make use of audible sound is to express harmony. Harmony has motions akin to the revolutions in our souls; it is a gift of the Muses if we engage with it intelligently, i.e., not for the sake of irrational pleasure in the way most people now make use of it, but as an ally for bringing order to the revolutions in souls that have lost their harmony so as to restore them to concord. C6.P23
>
> (*Timaeus* 47c7–d7)

Plato's admission that "irrational pleasure" (*alogos hēdonē*, in literal terms "pleasure without *logos*") is what most people derive from music indicates that the predominant response was held to be an aesthetic one: an engagement of the senses with musical sound rather than an ethical or cognitive approval of a song's poetic content. But Plato advised that in practice the choice of *mousikē* should be guided by the judgements of older and wiser men whose notions of pleasure were better informed than those of the man in the street: C6.P24

> I agree with the majority that pleasure is a proper criterion in the arts, but not the pleasure felt by just anybody. The finest productions of the Muses are the ones that appeal to men of high caliber and good education, and particularly to those whose education and moral standards are superior to others. C6.P25
>
> (*Laws* 658e6–659a1)

Aristotle and Musical Aesthetics C6.S3

Aristotle took his cue from Plato by taking the mimetic basis of music as his point of departure. He argues in *Politics* that since music influences the character or disposition of those who listen to it, it must involve the right kind of ethical representation: C6.P26

> Rhythm and melody supply imitations of anger and gentleness, and also of courage and temperance, and of all the qualities contrary to these, and of the other qualities of character, which hardly fall short of the actual affections, as we know from our own experience, for in listening to such strains our souls undergo a change. C6.P27
>
> (Aristotle, *Politics* 1340a)

Aristotle takes leave of Plato, however, in arguing that music can reasonably be used for purposes of recreation and pleasure rather than solely for education, and that even purely instrumental music can be a means of relaxation and enjoyment: C6.P28

p. 124 > It is generally agreed that the conduct of life should allow not only goodness but pleasure, since happiness comes from a combination of the two. We all say that music, whether purely instrumental or accompanied by song, is one of the most pleasurable things there is. C6.P29

> (*Politics* 1339b)

Despite this acknowledgement of the frankly aesthetic appeal of music per se, we find no systematic explanations of how the distinctive elements of musical sound—its specific rhythms, *harmoniai*, instrumental timbres, and so on—achieve their effects, pleasurable or otherwise. A writer of Aristotle's school outlines an argument of the kind that the philosopher himself might have proposed: C6.P30

> Why does everyone enjoy rhythm and melody and all concordant sounds? Is it because we naturally enjoy all natural movements? An indication of this is that children enjoy these from the moment they are born. We enjoy different kinds of melody because of their *ēthos*, but we enjoy rhythm because it is divided up in a distinctive and regular way and moves us in an orderly manner. Orderly movement is more closely akin to us than disorderly, so is more natural. C6.P31
>
> (Pseudo-Aristotle, *Problems* 19.38)

Even if it were accepted that what is "natural and orderly" is a prerequisite for pleasure (and the Greeks themselves were often uncomfortably aware that unnatural sound-effects and irregular rhythms could be no less appealing to listeners), surviving ancient treatments give limited help in explaining how music achieves its impact in practice. Moreover, while Aristotle was still wedded to the notion that certain kinds of music created different ethical states in listeners, others were already inclined to deny it: the anonymous philosophical author of the Hibeh musical papyrus argues that empirical observation proves that different musical styles cannot engender the ethical qualities that are claimed as their effects.[8] C6.P32

The strongest rebuttal of the idea of musical ethos emerges in the incompletely preserved work of the Epicurean writer Philodemus of Gadara, writing in the first century BCE. Philodemus asserts that musical sound evokes solely aesthetic responses, and that the ethical effects of music arise solely from the words it accompanies. The function of music, he argues, is to provide pleasure or entertainment through sound alone, which plays no part in rational thought: C6.P33

> Musicians also produce pieces which have no significance, such as instrumental music and trills… Men like Pindar and Simonides were not simply musicians, but musicians *and* poets: it is as musicians that they gave pleasure, and as poets that they wrote the words. C6.P34
>
> (*On Music* 4, 143.17–21, 27–33)

Coming after and opposing the attempts by Plato and Aristotle to find an ethical basis for music (particularly for educational purposes), such a view might be characterized as "reductive" (Halliwell 2002, 242). Philodemus's thoughts may be related both to the argument of the Hibeh papyrus author and to modern debates about musical formalism, but he does not form part of a continuous tradition of musical C6.P35
p. 125 philosophizing. It is ↳ noteworthy that he raises a distinction between music and words in the work of two named lyric poets—a rare example of comment on the specifically musical effects created by particular ancient composers whose music the author would have been in a position to hear performed.

Even less common is comment on the music of a particular song or section of song. A passage in which Dionysius of Halicarnassus, writing in the first century BC, analyses the musical effects of some lines of a Euripidean choral song is unusual enough for Pöhlmann and West (2001, 10–11) to accord it the status of a "document of ancient music" in its own right. There is no similar commentary that might allow us to understand better the way the melody or rhythm of, say, a song of Sappho or a passage from a Homeric hymn were heard in ancient times. Rare and passing mention is found in classical writers about the musical effect of the works of composers such as the tragedian Phrynichus of Athens, who "was always sipping on the nectar of ambrosial melodies to bring forth sweet song" (Aristophanes, *Birds* 748–751; cf. *Wasps* 220); or Tynnichus of Chalcis, whose paean (prayer to Apollo) "is virtually the most beautiful of all songs" (Plato, C6.P36

Ion 534d5–e1). Nowhere do we find an articulation of the reasons why particular melodies should be honoured for such qualities as sweetness or beauty, let alone a description of their specific musical features.

C6.P37 Of course, having an understanding how a particular song or piece of music sounded is not the same as having a sense of how it was heard by listeners in ancient times. The comic parodies of the dramatists' songs in Aristophanes's *Frogs* perhaps offer the most valuable (if partial and, given the context, exaggerated) evidence for the way the effects of melody or rhythm in specific instances might have been received by contemporaries. Otherwise we are largely dependent on authors of the Roman period and later for scattered and unsystematic insights into the musical impact of songs or poetic compositions. Thus, the grammarian Dionysius of Halicarnassus (first century BCE) illustrates the way specific Homeric verses were felt to deploy rhythmic effects, while Pollux (second century CE) preserves details about the structure and intended effects of the Pythian Air (see West 1992, 212–213). Aelian (early third century CE) records how the sixth-century statesman Solon of Athens, entranced by his nephew's singing of a *melos* of Sappho, expressed the feeling that he might happily die if only he could be taught to perform the piece (fr. 187). As neither the poem in question nor the precise basis of Solon's enthusiasm is identified, it is unclear how far the reported response should be thought to relate to the words of the song rather than to its rhythmic or melodic expression or to the particular vocal and instrumental virtues displayed on the occasion.

C6.P38 The ecstatic response to a song performance is likely to have depended on a combination of all these factors; but the attempt to find musical commentary on a particular text is particularly impeded by the tendency of ancient authors to conflate words and music when commenting on the effect of *mousikē*. Many modern scholars of ancient music overlook this tendency due to the modern predilection for understanding music as distinct from semantic content. (For an approach to distinguishing words from music in ancient discussions of *mousikē*, see D'Angour 2015.) When the literary critic Longinus many centuries later (the date of his
p. 126 treatise is not certain, but is generally thought to be ↳ third century CE) presents a descriptive interpretation of a specific song by Sappho, the musical dimension is wholly submerged: his treatment of a substantial portion of the poem deals exclusively with style and imagery (Longinus 10). What might account for the apparent lack of interest by ancient authors in recording and preserving the specific melodies that formed such a large part of their musico-literary heritage?

C6.P39 One element is that while melody was not a negligible aspect of a song's power in ancient ears, it was in theory secondary to rhythm.[9] Although the particular musical realization of a song might have made a difference to its reception, the absence of comment on the nature of a melodic line or passage from the classical period may suggest that in many cases the tune was not considered to be a fixed and memorable feature of the poet's composition. This thesis is consistent with the fact that the philosophers' and musical theorists' emphasis is less on melody than on *harmonia*.[10] In the absence of a system of vocal notation classical poet-composers and singer-performers may have employed variable, orally-transmitted melodic motives conforming to appropriate *harmoniai* (see D'Angour 2011, 203–204). As with oral folk music traditions universally, melody will often have been applied in a flexible and relatively free fashion.[11]

C6.P40 Consequently, the melodies of most sung texts until around the mid-fifth century might seldom have been determinate or carried significant authorial status. Strikingly, no ancient source raises the distinction between the words of a song and its music as such. The disposition of rhythm, however, which was a function of the syllabic quantities of words, was to a greater extent at the author's command, and during the earlier period of Greek musical history, when standard rhythms were being established, metre was considered of greater importance than melody.[12] But equally, the rhythms that arose from words—iambic (∪ – ∪ –/∪ – ∪ –…), dactylic (– ∪ ∪/– ∪ ∪…), paeonic (– ∪ –/– ∪ ∪∪…), and so on—rapidly became conventional within their generic contexts. Although a few individual composers, most strikingly the fifth-century poet Pindar and the dramatists of the period (the tragedians Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, and the comic poet Aristophanes) in their choral compositions, created new and original bodies of

rhythmical movement for their songs, the rhythmic effects of a particular song or passage tended to attract notice in ancient sources only if they were heard as being wilfully unconventional.[13]

Rhythm in Musical Texts C6.S4

In addition to the songs that survive solely as literary texts, some precious fragments of ancient Greek music survive inscribed on stone and papyrus, and detailed explanations of the notation used in these documents are preserved from late antiquity. The fragments offer invaluable indications of how ancient music and song were heard and played in practice, and provide a new basis for evaluating philosophical approaches to ancient music. Scholarly work in recent decades (West 1992; Pöhlmann and West 2001) has led to a more or less accurate transcription into modern musical notation of the bulk of musically notated papyri and inscriptions. What remains to be done is to elicit musical ↳ sense from the scores, a task that has hitherto led to expressions of frustration such as "that way madness lies" (Matthiesen 1999, 5). C6.P41 p. 127

Before considering the evidence of these melodic "scores," it is worth attempting to extract the way rhythms inherent in Greek texts might repay analysis of their musical effects. The late Roman musical author Aristides Quintilianus writes: C6.P42

> Long syllables create magnificence in diction, short ones the opposite…Feet in which long syllables come first, or cannot be resolved, or form the foot's boundaries, or are in the majority, are the most elegant and dignified…Those in which short syllables predominate are plainer and less elevated. C6.P43
>
> (Aristides Quintilianus 2.11.35–42)

In practice, the composition of verses using predominantly long or short syllables creates a far greater variety of effects than those described. Some of these are obviously intended to be mimetic. Thus we find in the *Iliad* a wholly spondaic verse (twelve long syllables), the sound of which clearly aims to represent the emotional keening of Achilles over his slain companion: "repeatedly calling on the spirit of poor Patroclus" (*Iliad* 23.221). Elsewhere, predominantly dactylic verses depict the agitated galloping of mules (*Iliad* 23.116) or (in the *Odyssey*) imitate the clattering descent of Sisyphus's rock as "the irrepressible boulder tumbled back down to the plain" (*Odyssey* 11.598). Such metrical onomatopoeia is combined with suggestive assonance and consonant clusters representing the rattling of hooves or the clattering of the boulder over rocks. Verbal music of this kind, of which many instances of a more subtle kind may be detected, is more regularly found in Latin verse; however, the occasions for purely mimetic effects in poetry are infrequent, and programmatic effects would become hackneyed if overused. C6.P44

While the above examples point to an undoubted awareness of Greek musician-poets and their followers that metrical devices, along with other aural techniques, might be employed for musical function and effect, they are rarely highlighted in this way by ancient theorists, who tend to concentrate on the imagery evoked by a poet's choice of words rather than on the qualities of rhythm and sound. This may be because metrical effects were largely taken for granted; and it is also significant that the dynamic rhythm (i.e., the pulse) of Greek verse may have been articulated by bodily movement as much or more than in the enunciation of words. Aristides writes: C6.P45

> Rhythm as a whole is perceived by these three senses: sight, as in dancing; hearing, as in melody, and touch, by which we perceive, for instance, the pulsations of our arteries. Musical rhythm is perceived by two of them, sight and hearing. In music, rhythm is imposed on the movement of the body, on melody, and on diction, either on their own or in conjunction with the others. C6.P46

> (Aristides Quintilianus 1.13.16–22)

While bodily sensation is the basis for both the generation of rhythm and its appeal, the purely quantitative study of metre elides any presence of a felt pulse. Aristoxenus speaks of *arsis* and *basis* in metrical feet, terms which refer literally to the "raising" and "stepping" of a dancer's feet or body (the term *thesis* for "placing" is later more common), but he leaves unclear how the rhythmical pulse of a particular metre was heard in practice. ↳ A few instances of the use of diacritical marks on the musical documents, in the form of dots or points (*stigmai*) placed above syllables and indicative of *arsis*, give pointers to how certain rhythms may have worked in practice. While they give invaluable indications of the rhythmic feel of some metrical systems, they equally demonstrate that we cannot wholly rely on our own rhythmic assumptions or aesthetic intuitions when attempting to appreciate the pulse underlying Greek metre.

C6.P47

p. 128

The discrepancy is demonstrated when we consider the metre of the Seikilos song, a complete four-line ditty dating from the second century CE, inscribed on a marble column (Pöhlmann and West 2001, 88–91). It may be translated thus to preserve a sense of its rhythm and rhyme:

C6.P48

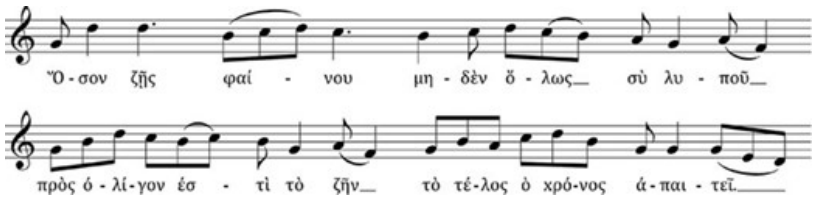
> While you live, shine bright;
> don't let sorrow you benight;
> We don't have life for long, my friend;
> To everything Time demands an end.

The song's metre is in theory iambic (the basic unit being short–long–short–long ∪ – ∪ –, or long–long–short–long – – ∪ –), and it contains both syncopation (literally elided beats, for example, ∪ – ˄–, but in vocal practice a prolongation of syllables) and resolution (two short syllables in place of a long one, for example, ∪ ∪∪ ∪ – for ∪ – ∪ –). In the absence of other indications, the second line of the song, standardly scanned in the Greek text – ∪ ∪ –/∪ – –, is likely to be read with dynamic stresses on the long positions and a compensatory shortening of the value of the double-short element, creating a somewhat insistent and offbeat effect (cf. West 1982, 23–24). The duration-signs and *stigmai* show, however, that the intended rhythm of those words had evenly spaced pulses, as indicated by the modern transcription in Example 6.1. The balanced musical phrases seem designed to have a tranquil and measured effect, well suited to the meaning of the song. The composition also reflects a surprisingly familiar sensibility regarding melodic shape: there are, for example, mimetically falling cadences on the word "benight" and on the plangent last syllable of the song. In its general musical effect, the melody of this late pagan music would not seem out of place in the context of Gregorian chant from seven centuries later. It seems ↳ perverse to rule out a connection (as scholars have been inclined to do) to the earliest acknowledged Christian roots of the Western musical tradition.

C6.P49

p. 129

Example 6.1



"While you live, shine bright; don't let sorrow you benight; we aren't alive for long, my friend; to everything time demands an end." Seikilos Song, transcribed from an inscription on stone (2nd century AD). Transcription and translation by the author.

C6.F1

Another instance of counter-intuitive rhythmic indications, this time from the classical period, appears on the papyrus fragment that contains part of a choral ode from Euripides's *Orestes* (lines 338–344), including what scholars generally suppose was Euripides's own musical setting. The ode is in dochmiacs, a metre

C6.P51

found in choral passages in every extant Greek tragedy and known for exhibiting qualities of agitation or passion, as the accompanying words here ("I weep, I weep for you! Your mother's blood is driving you to frenzy!") make explicit. The agitation is inscribed into the metre's irregular pattern of heavy and light syllables, and is intensified by its tendency to admit extensive resolution (the replacement of a heavy position by two light ones) and to drag syllables so that they become heavy where they are standardly light in that position of the metre.

The basic dochmiac colon is ∪ – – ∪ – (short–long–long–short–long), and when a reader stresses the heavy positions, the result is the rhythm of the mnemonic "the wise kangaroos [*…di dum*] / prefer boots to shoes [*…di dum*]." This realization of the metre also serves to regularize it by attributing syllable durations to each metron of 1–3–2–1–3 [+2] (i.e., ending with two beats' rest). This regularization, however, does not respect the ratio of 2:1 that ancient musical theorists propose as the standard relation of heavy to light syllables: the correct time-durations of syllables in a pair of conjoined dochmiac cola should be 1–2–2–1–2/1–2–2–1–2. The papyrus marks *stigmai* over the first and third syllables, thus indicating that the dancer's feet should rest on the ground on the second and fourth + fifth elements of the pattern. If these syllables bore the resultant dynamic stress, a very different effect emerges: a more accurate mnemonic (with stresses italicized) would run "that *ol*' man *riv*er, he *jus'* keeps *ro*lling" (see D'Angour 2006b, 491–492). The correct time-durations splits the colon into an unequal ratio of syllable durations (3:5), reinforcing what ancient musical authors speak of as the mixed rhythm of the dochmiac: with its cross-rhythms and offbeat stresses, this was a naturally agitated rhythm. C6.P52

The offbeat nature of the dochmiac bespeaks a connection between the use of particular metrical patterns and the evocation of different kinds of aesthetic appreciation. "Compound rhythms are more emotional," writes Aristides, C6.P53

> because the rhythms which constitute them are generally unequal. The impression they give is turbulent, because the pattern by which they are constructed doesn't keep the same order of parts —sometimes starting long and ending short, sometimes the reverse, sometimes starting with a downstep and other times not…By imposing a diversity of movement on the body they lead the mind into great confusion. C6.P54
>
> (Aristides Quintilianus 2.15.34–44)

In a fragment from an early fifth-century satyr-chorus by Pratinas of Phlius, the dramatist employs a medley of different metrical cola, drawing explicit attention to the agitated conflict of rhythm and melody by coining an extravagant compound word "rhythm-tune-step-violating." With their effusive verbal expressions, the satyrs ↳ condemn the transgressive volubility of the aulos, mimicking through sound and rhythms the restless excitement aroused by the instrument's sonic effects: C6.P55

p. 130

> What commotion is this? What are these dance-steps?
> What outrage has reached the noisy altar of Dionysos?
> . . . . . .
> Strike the pipe with its breath of dappled toad!
> Burn the spit-consuming reed with its deep-voiced chatter,
> the rhythm-tune-step-violating body moulded by the drill!
>
> (Pratinas, *Poetae Melici Graeci* 708:1–2, 10–12)

The surviving lyrics of late fifth-century New Musicians such as Timotheus of Miletus demonstrate a similar rhythmic freedom and exuberance of a kind that made them feel strikingly lawless to musical traditionalists, but ensured their widespread popularity and continued appeal for centuries (Csapo and Wilson 2009). C6.P56

Melody, Voice, Instruments C6.S5

Sound quality and melodic composition are no better served by ancient comments and analyses than are rhythm and metre. The Greek term commonly used to commend a quality of musical sound produced by voices or instruments is *ligus*, "clear" or "penetrating." An Aristotelian commentator describes the quality as being C6.P57

> pure and concentrated, like the voices of cicadas, grasshoppers, and nightingales, and generally like any pure vocal emission with no extraneous noise mixed in. It is characterized not by loud volume, low register, or interacting sounds, but by a high-pitched utterance that is pure and well-defined. C6.P58
>
> (Pseudo-Aristotle, *De Audibilibus* 804a21–28)

Ligus is found with reference to both human and animal voices, and to instruments that include both the lyre and the aulos. The appreciation of sonic qualities was bound to be partly a matter of taste, which Plato connected to the moral inclinations of individual hearers: C6.P59

> People to whom what is said or sung or performed in any way is congenial (on the basis of their nature, habits, or both together) enjoy them and praise them, and are bound to call them good. Those to whose nature or disposition or habit they are contrary cannot enjoy or praise them, and must call them bad. C6.P60
>
> (Plato, *Laws* 655d7–e5)

Aristides Quintilianus follows Plato's lead in connecting the enjoyment of particular instruments to the way these seem to imitate the particular *ēthos* of a hearer: C6.P61

> Just as no one kind of voice or *harmonia* is pleasing to every listener, but one gives delight to some and another to others, so with instruments, whatever sounds a ↳ particular character resembles will lead him to enjoy and approve of the corresponding instruments. C6.P62
>
> (Aristides Quintilianus 2.16.17–22)

p. 131

Plato insisted, as we have seen, that music can only be judged good if it is correct in its imitation of action and character. But how should such correctness be interpreted in practice? As regards the use of instruments, Plato proposed banning the aulos altogether from his ideal state, not because of the sounds it produced (though its sheer volume and volubility may have added to its excessive and disreputable associations) but because of its suspect "panharmonism," that is, its ability to be played in all the different *harmoniai*. Such versatility attested to its promiscuous character by comparison with instruments such as the lyre, whose strings would have to be tuned to one particular *harmonia* and ideally would not be required to deviate from that mode.[14] C6.P63

Styles of musical composition should similarly be restricted, in Plato's view, to what is appropriate and fitting in mimetic terms: C6.P64

> The Muses would never make so gross an error as to compose words suitable for men and then give the melody a colouring suitable to women, to put together a melody and postures of free men, and then fit to them rhythms proper to slaves and servile persons…nor would they ever put together in the same piece the sounds of wild beasts and men and instruments, and noises of all sorts, ostensibly in imitation of a single object. C6.P65

> (Plato, *Laws* 669c3–d2)

The objects of Plato's distaste will have included popular bravura instrumental performances of pieces for solo kithara or aulos, the latter being well exemplified by the "Pythian Air," a dramatic musical depiction of the myth of Apollo's slaying of the python at Delphi. This variegated five-part competition piece, composed and performed by the sixth-century piper Sakadas of Argos, included virtuoso technical devices such as the use of the aulos to imitate the hissing of the dying snake. A prize-winning fifth-century performance of the "Many-Headed Air," a piece with similar mimetic and structural qualities depicting the slaying of the Gorgon by Perseus, may be the event celebrated by Pindar in his Twelfth Pythian Ode (Phillips 2013, 39–40). The longevity of these pieces suggests that Greek audiences were enthralled by their extravagance and variety.[15] Plato's repeated repudiation of common musical taste indicates that the majority of hearers did not share his aesthetic conservatism in this respect. A similar expressive mimeticism informed the narrative songs (*nomoi*) of Timotheus, which boldly exploited musical onomatopoeia and dynamic extremes: one of his pieces ("Nauplios") had a musical representation of a storm, while another imitated Semele's cries in labour ("Birthpangs of Semele").[16] C6.P66

The fact that the "Pythian Air," as an auletic composition, had no place for words (*logos*) will have compounded its ethical baseness in Plato's eyes. Correctness for Plato would require, at least partly, that musical sound conform accurately to the rhythms and pitches of spoken Greek: C6.P67

> We should not pursue intricately varied rhythms with every kind of motion, but find the rhythms that belong to an orderly and upright life. When we have found them we ↳ must make the foot and the melody follow the words proper to such a life, and not make the words follow the foot and the melody. C6.P68
>
> (Plato, *Republic* 399c9–400a2)

p. 132

The few surviving musical scores of songs appear to obey Plato's strictures, in that the melodies are for the most part composed according to the pitch-profiles of Greek words. This conformity would have made the melodization seem natural to traditionally minded listeners, and it was something that musically educated youngsters in classical times was trained to observe by instructors: C6.P69

> When they have taught him the use of the lyre, they introduce him to the poems of other excellent poets—the lyric poets—setting their verses to the lyre, and familiarizing the children's souls to their rhythms and *harmoniai*. C6.P70
>
> (Plato, *Protagoras* 326a6–b2)

Conformity to the rhythms of everyday speech will standardly have required setting no more than a single musical note of appropriate duration to a syllable, a practice indicated by the strictness with which metres are generally handled and responsional verse is composed. C6.P71

"Every Greek poet was his own composer," writes Ann Dale, "and no poet would write words in elaborate metrical schemes merely to annihilate and overlay these by a different musical rhythm" (Dale 1969, 161). While this dictum seems to be largely true of the classical period, it should not be assumed that a convention of carefully metricized verbal composition cannot coexist with a looser approach to the application of melody to words. Deliberate deviation from pitch-accents for the sake of effect in a composed melody may have been a New Musical innovation adopted or even pioneered by Euripides himself (see D'Angour 2006a). Significantly, such nonconformity is a feature of the *Orestes* musical papyrus, where the melodic line appears to be composed to match the words' meanings rather than their pitch inflections: thus, the last three syllables of *katolophuromai* (I lament) and *kathiketeuomai* (I beseech) are set to a falling cadence while the final three syllables of *anabakcheuei* ([your heart] leaps like in frenzy) are set to a strikingly higher- C6.P72

pitched note than what precedes them. A commentator on this text notes that when it came to the words "terrible toils," the chorus did not sing but loudly declaimed the words, a prefiguring of the technique of *Sprechstimme* with a striking effect in performance. This kind of word-painting was considered a notable feature of the New Musicians' oeuvre; to many listeners it will have represented an emotionally powerful, rather than simply disreputable, aspect of the avant-garde musical aesthetic (D'Angour 2020).

Conclusions

C6.S6

The aim of this discussion has been twofold: first, to suggest that the understanding of musical philosophy in ancient Greece might aim to go beyond standard restatements of ancient ideas of ethos and mimesis, and secondly to indicate something of the potential ↳ that exists once actual musical sounds from antiquity—some only recently revealed, but others (such as metre) often overlooked in accounts of the material—are brought into the discussion. While the unspoken assumption of modern philosophers of music is that a body of familiar sound makes references to music relatively uncontroversial, the same cannot be said for students of ancient music, for whom the philosophical approaches of ancient thinkers can pose something of a challenge and a puzzle, not least due to the lack of knowledge of sonic referents. As another part of this discussion as demonstrated, the puzzle has been further deepened by the tendency of scholars to overlook the broad and strongly verbal connotations of the Greek word *mousikē* when discussing ancient philosophical approaches to music. In this chapter I have tried to offer a clearer delineation of the domain of investigation, and to provide a more focused approach to how we might think of the relationship of philosophical terms such as ethos and mimesis to that domain.

C6.P73

p. 133

Notes

C6.S8

1. The attribution to Pythagoras is undoubtedly fanciful: see discussion in Burkert 1972, 375–383.

C6.P74

2. Barker 1984–9 gives translations of musically relevant passages in Homer, Pindar, and other poets, as well as the key musical writings of Aristoxenus, Ptolemy, Aristides Quintilianus, Pseudo-Plutarch, and Athenaeus. The musical documents are expertly compiled, laid out, and discussed in Pöhlmann and West 2001.

3. Galilei's *Dialogo* has been translated into English, with introduction and notes, as Palisca 2003.

4. Even the significance of non-technical terms may be far from obvious: Mathiesen 1984, for example, analyses the rhythm of musical fragments using Aristides's terminology of "masculine" and "feminine" notes, as if the aural implication of these terms were self-evident.

5. Painstaking reconstructions of ancient auloi discovered by archaeology have been undertaken since 2013 by the European Music Archaeology Project (http://www.emaproject.eu).

6. *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, Pindar, Twelfth Pythian Ode.

7. Hesiod, *Theogony* 77–9; the spheres of musico-poetic operation of the canonical Nine Muses was probably a Hellenistic (third-century BCE) development.

8. Barker 1984–9, 1:183–185. The date of the author is unknown: West (1992, 247) writes "perhaps around 390 BC."

9. See West 1992, 129–130. However, many passages of ancient poetry may be thought to suggest a play on words between *mélē* (songs) and *mélei* (it matters): see D'Angour 2005, 98.

10. Plato, for instance, while prepared to discuss the ethos of different *harmoniai* at length, pays little attention to the specifics effects of *melos* itself, and warns of the dangers of tunes generated in less admirable *harmoniai*; see *Republic* 411a5–9.

11. This is an uncontroversial point for ethnomusicologists, but it bears repetition as the standard model for modern Western music (regularly projected on to ancient music) is to think of the music (that is, melody/harmony) as a determinate component.

12. Pseudo-Plutarch, *On Music* 1138bc (quoting Aristoxenus). How rhythm worked in non-vocal music is a matter of speculation, but some evidence may be extracted from theorists or derived from poetic sources (for example, see Phillips 2013).

p. 134 13. Aristophanes's extended prolongation of the first syllable of *heilissō* in *Frogs* (1314, 1348) aims to parody Euripides's violation of this principle; see D'Angour 2006a, 277. Although West states (1992, 201) that "no increase in duration…is implied or indeed admissible in these cases," the repetition of the diphthong *hei-* (up to seven times, according to one MS) can hardly have failed to extend the syllable beyond its normal duration.

14. Plato, *Republic* 399c7–e3. The modulations employed by the New Musicians were felt to corrupt even lyre-playing, as indicated by a lively passage from the comedy *Muses* by Pherecrates: see D'Angour 2006a, 269.

15. A parallel may be drawn with aesthetic criteria for visual art, which emphasized illusionistic sensation and naïve representationalism, see D'Angour 2011, 151–153.

16. Athenaeus 8.337–8, 352a; see also Csapo and Wilson 2009, 283.

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