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The Musical Frogs in *Frogs*

In 1969 Gary Wills published his article in *Hermes* 'Why are the Frogs in the *Frogs*?', in which he reviewed several decades of scholarship and speculation about the nature and implications of the *agōn* between Dionysus and the frogs in Aristophanes' *Frogs* 209–68.¹ Wills concluded that attempts to explain the contest in terms of rhythm (the frogs interjecting βρεκεκεκεξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ to a faster beat than Dionysus' rowing speed), dynamics (Dionysus out-shouting the frogs), or even violence (Dionysus beating the frogs) were all fatally flawed. The correct interpretation, Wills argued, is that what is being played out is a mock-aesthetic scenario that prefigures the subsequent literary contest between Aeschylus and Euripides. In this case, he suggested, the 'beauty' of the frogs' croak βρεκεκεκεξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ is conquered by the aesthetic superiority, in equivalent terms, of an explosive finale created by Dionysus – a thunderous fart.

Elements of Wills' critique are confusing (not least his doxographical juggling), irrelevant ('how can the Frogs outrow Dionysus when they are not rowing at all?', 306), rhetorical ('Some critics have noticed – how could they not? – that it makes no sense to have one loud shout put an end to the Frogs' resolve to croak on "all day"', 308), and tendentious ('The metres are not clearly enough distinguished for there to be a dramatic clash between them', 310). Nor did Wills explain how the supposed final sound-effect could be created in such a way that Dionysus could be heard to have 'won' the contest, or how his proposed victory can be squared with his words 'I will overcome you with the κοᾶξ' (266) – rather than, say, with a ψόφος ('loud sound'), which might better describe the putative fart.²

Of course, stage directions, sound effects, gestures, or changes of speaker are not explicitly indicated in ancient texts (even where *paragrapheis* are found as indications of speaker-change, they cannot necessarily be trusted). In practice, such matters will have been left to the playwright or producer to instruct on. However, changes of speaker are crucial to interpreting the passage, since it matters who is supposed to be uttering βρεκεκεκεξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ at different stages of the

¹ Wills 1969; his rebuttal of earlier views and his solution to how Dionysus defeats the frogs continues to attract support; Di Marco (2015, 1) writes that his explanation 'is the only one able to provide an adequate answer'.

² A fart-joke is signalled earlier at 237–8, setting up the phrase βρεκεκεκεξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ, presumably uttered by Dionysus (it is vocally expressive of a rumbling fart) and preceding the melodic reprise of the frogs' chorus.

contest. Nor do any external reports about the production survive. We have only the text as transmitted to suggest what might have been at issue for the *agōn* within the broader context of the comedy. The effect of Wills' attempt to cast doubt on the traditional explanations has been to demote the importance of the musico-metrical play that is undoubtedly central to this passage. At the same time, the metrical explanations given by previous or subsequent editors (such as Rogers, Stanford, Zielinski, Dover, and Sommerstein) have either been over-general or insufficiently compelling to attract general consent.

I propose here to elucidate the metre of the *agōn* and to offer a fresh perspective on the passage's interpretation, drawing on insights that have arisen from my research into the sounds of ancient Greek music. Allowing that in performance one may change, exaggerate, or even add extraneous elements for effect, my goal in attempting to explain the passage is to try and understand what, given the surviving text and its cultural and musical context, the playwright is most likely to have intended the actors and chorus to perform.

The aulos-playing frogs

The first premise of my explanation is that, since this passage is choral and largely in lyric metre, the verses uttered by the frogs will have been composed to be sung or chanted by the twenty-four members of the comic chorus accompanied by an aulete (possibly decked out in frog-costume like the choreuts). Dionysus' responses were, evidently, not similarly sung or accompanied,³ but the melodic aspect of the chorus cannot be ignored as it generally has been.

The second premise, which has also been insufficiently observed, is that this essentially musical *agōn* is associated specifically with the sounds and techniques of the aulos (double-pipes). The frogs are, as Dionysus claims, a song-loving breed (240: φιλωδὸν γένος) who rejoice in song (244–5: χαίροντες ᾠδῆς μέλυσιν), who croak 'with the aulos' (212: ξύναυλον), and whose home is among the reeds, i.e. the plant species (232: δόνακος) from which the mouthpieces (reeds) and pipes (chanters) of the aulos were and still are constructed.

The aulos was notorious in the fifth century for its characteristic visual and sonic effects: it rendered the player's face ugly, it had a penetrating 'toad-like'

³ We have no hard evidence either way, but his iambic dimeters suggest that, as with iambic trimeters in the drama, we should assume a non-melodic utterance.

timbre, and unlike the discrete tones of lyre-strings it produced a voluble, continuous, and fluid sound.⁴ The recreation of ancient auloi in recent years and the rediscovery of techniques for playing them have made the visual aspect of aulos performance patently evident. The characteristic technique used by auletes, then and now, is circular breathing, which requires the player to take air in through the nose, hold it in the cheeks, and use the puffed-out cheeks as a reservoir to supply air to the reeds while snorting new air via the nose into the lungs. The result is a regular filling and emptying of the cheeks, which gives the player an immediate and unmistakable resemblance to a frog inflating and deflating the vocal sac that makes its croak (oboe, saxophone, and other wind players using this technique demonstrate this effect).⁵ The circular breathing allows for continuous sound to be emitted, while the movement of pitches can be as rapid and voluble as the fingers and embouchure of the aulete permit.

The frog-like appearance, sounds, and actions of the aulete are central to why Aristophanes chose these creatures to constitute the first chorus in this comedy.⁶ It is indeed surprising that this identification, based on striking visual and aural parallels, has eluded commentators. Here the frogs themselves are, in short, representatives of auletes and aulos-playing, in particular the modernistic kind of aulos-playing associated with Euripidean tragedy and the 'New Music'.⁷

The aulos was the most conspicuous avant-garde instrument of the late fifth-century New Music, of which Euripides was a prominent representative, and it was also the traditional instrument of Dionysus, the god of drama.⁸ How did Dionysus come to be associated with the aulos? Fifth-century aetiologies of the instrument include Pindar's account of its invention by Athena after hearing the keening wail of the dying Gorgons slain by Perseus, and Euripides' narrative of

4 See Csapo 2004a, 218–19.

5 On the myth of Athena's rejection of the aulos for aesthetic reasons see Wilson 1999, 60. The frog-like movement of cheeks can be well observed in performances of the launeddas maestro Luigi Lai (google e.g. 'Luigi Lai Ghetto degli Ebrei Youtube').

6 In Aristophanes *Birds* the aulete is represented by the nightingale (see Barker 2004); but while the bird's throat oscillates when it sings, the puffing of frogs' cheeks offers a much closer parallel. The sound of the aulos was also compared to amphibian croaking: Pratin. fr. 708.10 *PMG*, τὸν φρυνεοῦ ποικίλου πνοᾶν ἔχοντα, refers to the aulos' 'toad-like' visual and sonic properties.

7 Csapo 2004a, 216–21; πολυκολύμβοισι ('diverse-diving', 245) and αἰόλαν ('varied', 248) are the kind of epithets that are strong associates to the New Music with its variegated sounds and modulations.

8 Aeschylean tragic choruses were also (it is assumed) accompanied by the aulos, but the repetitive, old-fashioned Aeschylean music could be considered more akin to the strumming of the kithara (φλαττοθρατοφλαττοτρατ, Ar. *Ran.* 1286–95), since it did not exploit the capacity of the aulos in the ways for which the New Music was notorious (D'Angour 2015, 189).

its presentation by Zeus to the Great Mother (syncretised with Demeter) as a consolation during her search for Kore (Persephone).⁹ Dionysus' Phrygian connections will have suggested a link to the goddess and her music. Here, however, Aristophanes seems to be creating a new, comic, aetiology for the instrument, since Dionysus is depicted adopting the aulos and its sounds from the frogs themselves: 'This I am seizing (λαμβάνω) from you' (251) are his words. Although the phrase is sometimes interpreted as Dionysus 'taking up' the frogs' rhythm against his will, the context makes clear that it is an active gesture of appropriation. Dressed as Heracles, Dionysus is playing the aggressive hero (463: καθ' Ἡρακλέα τὸ σχῆμα καὶ τὸ λῆμ' ἔχων), ready to appropriate opponents' accoutrements just as he has already appropriated Heracles' club and boots (108–9). Here his aim is to 'overcome' (266: ἐπικρατήσω) the frogs, and he does so by defeating them with the use of their own refrain: the moment at which he does so is the point at which he asserts himself, at least by the logic of comedy, as the god of drama.¹⁰

Similar kinds of appropriation will later occur when Aeschylus seeks to defeat Euripides with the repeated refrain of ληκύθιον ἀπόλεσεν (1209 etc.: 'lost his bottle of oil, he did!') in the standard metre of Euripidean prologues, when Euripides seeks to overpower Aeschylus by using his own words and metres against him, and when both tragedians combat each other by parodying the other's lyrics.¹¹ But a question remains: when Dionysus says 'This (τουτί) I am taking from you' (251), what exactly is he indicating that he is appropriating? The frogs' response to his words is one of alarm: 'If you do that it will be a terrible outcome for us' (253), whereupon Dionysus retorts 'Even more terrible for me if I burst asunder from rowing' (254–5). I will return to the likely meaning of the deictic τουτί, but one clear implication of the exchange is that Dionysus *needs* to appropriate the frog's croak if he is to prevent himself from bursting, and that if he does 'seize' it, as claimed, the frogs will be disadvantaged in some way other than by merely being defeated in a contest of words.

⁹ Pind. *Pyth.* 12, Eur. *Hel.* 1352, on which see Weiss 2018, 167–75.

¹⁰ While Dionysus' victory over the frogs suggests a commandeering of the stage, his appearance in a boat will already have been reminiscent of how a statue of the god was transported on a ship-cart during the Anthesteria (Griffith 2012, 159).

¹¹ Ar. *Ran.* 1198–1363. Griffith (2012, 136) notes that the rhythm is 'cretic rather than dactylic'; it would not be lost on an ancient audience that φλαττοθραττοφλαττοθρατ (cf. n. 8) is no less a lekythion than the frogs' refrain and Aeschylus' ληκύθιον ἀπόλεσεν.

The musico-metrical imperative

At this point, one aspect of the traditional metrical interpretation, details of which go back at least to Wilamowitz, is unavoidable:¹² the frogs are forcing the pace with their song, and Dionysus needs to take charge so as not to be compelled to row faster than he can manage. Given that he is wholly inexperienced at rowing (204: ἄπειρος ἀθαλάττωτος ἀσαλαμίνιος), he must be allowed to row at a slower pace lest he ‘burst asunder’ (255: διαρραγήσομαι).¹³ Analysis of the metre compels this conclusion.¹⁴ The frogs initially sing (211–19) in mixed rhythms (iambic and dactylic), but the refrain βρεκεκεκέξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ with which they begin and end their overture is a lekythion – ∪ – ∪ – ∪ –. Starting invariably with a long-short or equivalent (here we find a resolved long, ∪ ∪ ∪ –, in βρεκεκεκέξ), the lekythion constitutes a ‘falling’, trochaic rhythmical unit, in contrast to iambs, which is a rising rhythm beginning with short-long (∪ –) or long-long, regularly reprised with short-long in the standard tragic form of the metron (x – ∪ –).¹⁵ The name ‘trochaic’, from Greek τροχᾶϊος, ‘running’, is indicative of speed, and the initial resolution of the long in βρεκεκεκέξ adds further movement; iambic, by contrast, is said to have been enunciated at a sedate, walking, pace.¹⁶ Whatever rhythm Charon sets up for Dionysus to row at with his ὦ ὄπόπ in 208, the irruption of the frogs’ refrain is undoubtedly a challenge to row to a rhythm that is faster than the one initially set. I suggest three further considerations:

1. There is no reason to suppose that either the utterance of Charon’s ὦ ὄπόπ or of the frogs’ refrain should be limited to the verses shown. While the text shows just two repeats of ὦ ὄπόπ and just two lines of βρεκεκεκέξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ at the start of the frog chorus (209–10), both of these are very likely in practice to have been reiterated multiple times and thus extended beyond the two written utterances of the phrase. What we are surely invited to imagine is that Charon, seated facing Dionysus at the boat’s stern and guiding it with the tiller, sets the pace, using as many ὦ ὄπόπ as might be required, and that Dionysus follows his command with

¹² Wilamowitz-Moellendorf 1921, 592–4.

¹³ Clay (2002, 274) notes that rowers avoided attrition to their rumps by the use of a cushion, but Dionysus has not brought a cushion with him.

¹⁴ Detailed metrical analyses are given by Zimmermann 1985, 155–63; Dover 1993b, 219–23; and Parker 1997, 466.

¹⁵ The lekythion may also be interpreted as an acephalous (‘headless’) iambic dimeter, but here its trochaic quality sets up an opposition with the ‘rising’ iambs.

¹⁶ Korzeniewski 1968, 44, 64; *pace* Dover 1993b, 222 (the metre ‘tells us nothing about tempo’).

the rhythmical movement of the oars. As he settles into a steady row, he is hijacked by the frog chorus, singing βρεκεκεκεξ κοάξ κοάξ continuously for as long as is needed. Dionysus must appear to battle to maintain his original rhythm while they insist on a different and faster one. All his interjections during lines 221–41 are accordingly in iambic dimeters, indicating that he insists on the original slower rhythm that he wishes, as a novice oarsman, to maintain. Only at 250 does he realise that he can best overcome the frogs by taking over their refrain and adapting it to his own desired speed.

2. Why should the frogs' croaking disturb Dionysus' preferred rhythm in such a way that he feels it is inducing him to row faster against his will? The specific context provides the answer: the aulos was, as is well known, the instrument with which time was set and maintained by a κελουστής for oarsmen of Athenian triremes.¹⁷ The audience would not be surprised that the refrain of the frogs should be expected to dictate the time for the rowing, insofar as that refrain was accompanied by the aulos. We may thus surmise that the frogs' refrain was not just a sequence of memorable syllables, but that it was also sung to a melody played on the aulos. This melodic nature of the utterance is emphasised in the text: Charon tells Dionysus to expect the frogs' beautiful singing (205: μέλη), the frogs describe their utterance as 'accompanied by aulos' (212: ξύναυλον), and they sing about their 'harmonious song κοάξ κοάξ' (213–14). We should perhaps visualise the frog-aulete directing the chorus as standing in the middle of the boat between the seated Dionysus and Charon and setting the rhythm just as the aulete presided as κελουστής in the trireme. Initially inactive while Dionysus rows to Charon's command, the aulete sways into action as soon as the frogs are about to sing, giving them the cue for their refrain with a purely instrumental rendition to indicate its rhythm and melody.

3. The accompaniment by the aulos of βρεκεκεκεξ κοάξ κοάξ means that the refrain will have had a definable melodic shape, and the tune to which it was accompanied would have been that sung by the frog chorus. So my third consideration, which I will expand on below, is a technical one: we might seek to derive a reasonable understanding of that melodic shape from the very phonemes with which Aristophanes constructs the sound of the croak.¹⁸

¹⁷ Cf. Clay 2002, 273. Aulos (and also syrinx) kept time for rowers: West 1992, 29 n. 83.

¹⁸ The refrain may have mimicked the sound of the European marsh frog (*rana ridibunda*): Sommerstein 1996, 176–7.

The singing of the frogs

Aristides Quintilianus preserves some information on the use of ‘vocables’ by ancient Greek musicians, going back at least to the early fifth century BCE.¹⁹ Vocables were the non-lexical monosyllables (like *do re mi*) whereby instrumental music might be represented, transmitted, and committed to memory. Aristides tells us:²⁰

Four of the vowels that are readily prolonged by the singing voice turned out to be useful for representing the notes. Since a consonant had to be added to them, to avoid the hiatus which would be produced by a sound consisting of vowels alone, we adopt tau, the most attractive of the consonants. [...] In the primary *systema*, the tetrachord, the first note is sung to the letter epsilon, while the remainder follow the order of the vowels. Thus the second note is sung to alpha, the third to eta, and the last to omega [so *te ta tē tō*].

These details differ slightly from those given by the author of the musical papyrus known as Anonymus Bellermanni, who sets out the alternative *te tē tō ta*, with *te* used for the ‘tonic’ and *ta* for a fourth above.²¹ These indications, however, taken together with the melodisation principle of following pitch-accents, may suggest that the aulete and singers in the chorus were directed by Aristophanes (who composed and directed the melodies as well as the words) to use one pitch to indicate the ε of βρεκεκεε-, a slightly higher pitch on the barytonic (grave-accented) -κεξ, and two successive higher pitch changes on the second syllable of κοάξ. A purely conjectural setting of the music of the frogs’ refrain, based on these principles and using the so-called ‘enharmonic’ tetrachord, might suggest note values with a rising tune as follows:

Vocables:	te-te-te-tē	tō-ta tō-ta
Phonemes:	βρεκεκεκεξ	κοάξ κοάξ
Notes:	e e#	f a f a

Regardless of the actual shape of melodisation, the combination of voices and aulos would have created a powerful *melodic* sound for the frogs’ refrain. The strongly rhythmical and penetratingly auletic sound is what Dionysus is portrayed as seeking to combat with his declaimed, slower iambic interjections, uttered without the accompaniment of the aulos.

¹⁹ See D’Angour 2016; Bélis 1984 proposed that the syllables *to te* and *tē* indicated on a fifth-century clay epinetron should be interpreted as vocables.

²⁰ Aristid. Quint. 77.30–79.5, 79.26–80.1 (Barker 1989, 479–81); Anon. Bell. 9–10, 77, 86, 91.

²¹ Cf. Barker 1989, 481; West 1982, 265.

The victory of Dionysus

We have thus arrived at a picture of Dionysus first rowing according to a steady rhythm, declaiming his interjections in iambic metre, and being interrupted by the frog chorus singing their refrain βρεκεκεκεξ κοάξ κοάξ in melody to the accompaniment of the aulos. The fact that their refrain is nothing but meaningless phonemes is what, I suggest, is implied by Dionysus' comment that the frogs are 'nothing other than κοάξ' (227); that is the frogs have nothing of any semantic sense to contribute, only the sound of their tuneful refrain.²² The implication is made yet clearer in the light of the familiar and repeated exploitation by Aristophanes of the near-homophony of μέλη, 'songs', and μέλει, 'it matters'. In the previous interjection by Dionysus, 'I suppose you don't give a song (224: ὑμῖν δ' ἴσως οὐδὲν μέλει)', a pun on μέλη (as suggested by my italicised translation) is unmissable.²³ One possible way of interpreting it is that while 'nothing' (οὐδέν) is uttered by the frogs, theirs is a *melodised* nothing. And when Dionysus later triumphantly shouts at them 'You groan away, I don't give a song' (257: οἰμώζετε, οὐ γάρ μοι μέλει) – οἰμώζετε can be construed both as an imperative ('groan away!') and an indicative ('you're groaning away') – he may equally be heard to be punning on the express *lack* of melodisation for his own utterance.²⁴ The conclusion must be that the contest involves Dionysus defeating the fast-singing frogs by asserting a slower, declaimed, utterance to match the tempo of his rowing.

This returns us to the god's claim to be appropriating the frogs' refrain when he states 'This I am seizing (λαμβάνω) from you' (251). The statement implies that the refrain βρεκεκεκεξ κοάξ κοάξ in the previous line (250) is used by Dionysus alone (*pace* Sommerstein and Wilson, who gives the line to Dionysus and frogs together). It would be strange, however, if the strong deictic was used to imply no more than that Dionysus was taking over the use of a *verbal* refrain. What τούτι suggests is something more: the μέλος in its total aspect, as sung and accompanied by an instrument.²⁵ Dionysus has appropriated not just the syllables

²² Wills (1969, 312) interprets the phrase less plausibly as implying the physical absence of the frog-chorus.

²³ There was a tradition from archaic times of punning on μέλη/μέλει: D'Angour 2005, 99.

²⁴ The frogs' first unaccompanied refrain (256) will have had a different and less musical sound-quality, contrasting with their singing up to this point: οἰμώζετε suggests an unmelodised or semi-melodic cry.

²⁵ As τούτι is neuter, it cannot refer to the (masculine) aulos but to the melodised refrain βρεκεκεκεξ κοάξ κοάξ (cf. 262: τούτω), which Dionysus has just 'seized' and stripped of its tune. A

of the refrain, but he has strikingly divorced them of their accompanying melody, so that he can enunciate them at his own, slower, tempo. It may hint at something more concrete for the performer: I would suggest that simultaneously with his utterance of τούτι, Dionysus momentarily abandons one of the oars and physically snatches the aulos (or at least one of the two chanters of the double-pipe) from the grasp of the frog-aulete who is guiding the chorus's song.²⁶ If so, Dionysus' unmelodised βρεκεκεκὲξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ truly represents something that he has 'seized' from the frogs: he has removed the aulos and its capacity to provide the melody, and so made their refrain his own.

Dionysus is now able to declaim in 'trochaic' lekythia, which he proceeds to do for the remainder of the exchange, because he has slowed the frogs' tempo to that with which he has set out, and is now allowed to row at his own pace. Just a moment earlier the frogs recognise in alarm that they 'will be in serious trouble' (252) if this happens. That is because not only will Dionysus have defeated them in the rhythmical contest, he will have done so by literally 'seizing' their song, with its melodic phrasing and auletic accompaniment, leaving them with just a tuneless croak. They can no longer 'rejoice in their diverse-diving song-melodies' (244–5: χαίροντες ὥδῆς | πολυκόλυμβοισι μέλεσιν). And more fatally for them, they cannot regain the initiative simply by croaking their refrain bereft of melody and aulos (258: κεκραξόμεσθα, and 259: φάρυξ, seem to emphasise the frog-chorus's now purely vocal utterance). When they attempt to do so with a defiantly rapid but now tuneless croaking of βρεκεκεκὲξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ (256, 261), Dionysus is unconcerned and triumphantly retorts τούτῳ γὰρ οὐ νικήσετε (262), 'That isn't going to win the day!'

Dionysus may be presented, in fact, as declaiming in *trochees* (or lekythia, i.e. syncopated trochees) – presumably at his own preferred pace – from the moment he claims to have 'taken over' the refrain from the frogs and initiates his victory by appropriating βρεκεκεκὲξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ, unmelodised and in slow time, in line 250. This invites a small adjustment to the standard colometry.²⁷ With the first syllable of 251, Dionysus 'caps' the lekythion of 250 to make it a trochaic dimeter, which is followed by a syncopated trochaic dimeter (lekythion). The same is true for 256–7. The frogs attempt to reassert their authority in 258–9, but

scholium *ad loc.* suggests that the reference is to τὸ λέγειν, 'the utterance', but that would imply that Dionysus stops the frogs saying the refrain, which he manifestly does not.

²⁶ I am grateful to Dimitrios Kanellakis for stimulating me to visualise this detail.

²⁷ The transmitted colometry tells us nothing about how Aristophanes conceived the passage. It should be clear that this is not primarily a textual issue, but a suggestion about how the passage might best be conceived in performance.

they have to croak (258: κεκραξόμεσθα) rather than sing their refrain, as recognised by Dionysus' οἰμώζετ' (257). When the frogs return with a defiant rapid βρεκεκεκέξ κοὰξ κοὰξ in 261, this is triumphantly capped off by Dionysus with the first syllable of 261–2, which he follows with his own continuous trochaic run (*pnigos*), slapping down the frogs' inadequate attempt to regain control by echoing their threat (260) to 'croak all day if necessary' (265).

I here present the passage as understood according to the above analysis, first in Greek (with metrical indications) and then in a broadly isorhythmic translation, from the point that Dionysus, speaking at his own slower pace (as marked in bold), seizes the sound of their refrain from the frogs and the aulos from the frog-aulete:

ΔΙ.	βρεκεκεκέξ κοὰξ κοὰξ. του-	<i>2tr</i>	250
	τί παρ' ὑμῶν λαμβάνω.	<i>lek</i>	
ΒΑ.	δεινά τάρᾳ πεισόμεσθα.	<i>2tr</i>	
ΔΙ.	δεινότερα δ' ἔγωγ', ἐλαύνων	<i>2tr</i>	
	εἰ διαρραγήσομαι.	<i>lek</i>	255
ΒΑ.	βρεκεκεκέξ κοὰξ κοὰξ. ΔΙ. οἰ-	<i>2tr</i>	
	μώζετ', οὐ γάρ μοι μέλει.	<i>lek</i>	
ΒΑ.	ἀλλὰ μὴν κεκραξόμεσθά γ'	<i>2tr</i>	
	ὀπόσον ἢ φάρυξ ἂν ἡμῶν	<i>2tr</i>	
	χανδάνη δι' ἡμέρας.	<i>lek</i>	260
	βρεκεκεκέξ κοὰξ κοὰξ. ΔΙ. τού-	<i>2tr</i>	
	τω γὰρ οὐ νικήσετε.	<i>lek</i>	
ΒΑ.	οὐδὲ μὴν ἡμᾶς σὺ πάντως.	<i>2tr</i>	
ΔΙ.	οὐδὲ μὴν ὑμεῖς γ' ἐμέ,	<i>lek</i>	264a
	οὐδέποτε, κεκραξομαι γὰρ	<i>2tr</i>	264b
	κἂν δέη δι' ἡμέρας, ἔ-	<i>2tr</i>	265
	ως ἂν ὑμῶν ἐπικρατήσω τῷ κοὰξ,	<i>3tr</i>	
	βρεκεκεκέξ κοὰξ κοὰξ, ἔ-	<i>2tr</i>	
	μελλον ἄρα παύσειν ποθ' ὑμᾶς τοῦ κοὰξ.	<i>3tr</i>	267
ΔΙ.	(<i>Snatches the aulos and chants at his own pace</i>)		
	Brekekekex ko-ax ko-ax – look,		250
	now I've seized your song from you.		
FR.	This will mean the end of us!		
ΔΙ.	Worse for me my end would be, to		
	burst asunder at the oar!		255
FR.	(<i>At their pace, but now chanting without melody or accompaniment</i>)		
	Brekekekex koax koax.		
ΔΙ.	(<i>slowing the pace</i>) You		
	groan away, for all I care.		
FR.	(<i>faster</i>) Fine, we'll croak and croak our hearts out,		
	all day long we'll croak our hearts out,		
	Croaking, croaking, all day long,		260

- brekekekex koax koax –
- DI. (*slowing the pace*) **That
isn't going to win the day!**
- FR. *You will not defeat us, never!*
- DI. (*pnigos*) **Nor will you lot conquer me –
never, for I'll croak my heart out,
all day long if that's required,** 265
**brekekekex ko-ax ko-ax, un-
til I've got you beat with my ko-ax,
brekekekex ko-ax ko-ax, I
knew I'd put an end to your ko-ax.**

Dionysus's final *pnigos* (263–7) might thus be represented as a sequence of trochaic metra (fourteen!) that pointedly deprive the chorus and aulete of any melodic contribution or rhythmical authority.²⁸ Dionysus has not just won the exchange with the frogs; he has seized their characteristic melodic croak and turned it into his own enunciated declamation. By establishing, in that moment, his victory over the aulete and control of the stage action, he asserts himself in suitably comic fashion as the god of comedy.

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²⁸ The usual view is that Dionysus shouts the frogs into silence and then waits before triumphantly uttering the final iambic trimeter. This alternative setting suggests that by launching a run of continuous trochees, perhaps afforded by further repetitions *ad lib.* of the refrain βρεκεκεκξ κοᾶξ κοᾶξ, Dionysus contrives 'finally (πῶθ') to stop [the frogs] from croaking'.

