

EDUCATION AND THE ART OF MUSIC

Music played an important role in many public and private events in the life of ancient Greece. The need for young people to learn it was therefore imposed from early on, as a required technical accomplishment, beyond its evaluation as a suitable complement to education. Greek music, in combination with poetry and dance, was an essential part of the citizen's education with differences, of course, in degree and quality, depending on the political and cultural level of each centre and the historical period.

Aristotle, echoing theories of the moral effect of music which had already been crystallized by Pythagoras, Damon and Plato, observed in the *Politics* (8.5, 1340b, 11-14) that music can influence the characteristics of the soul and it is therefore necessary for young men to come close to it and to be taught it. Elsewhere in the same work (8.5 and 7), he defines the functions of music as play, entertainment, education and catharsis. So the study of music by the young (8.4, 1339a, 32-39) had direct bearing on the entertainment they could enjoy through it when they became men. The same philosopher also observes an analogy between musical phenomena and the sentiments of the soul, and adds, apart from the desire for pleasure, a moral-political value too. For the Greeks music was truly a political event, to a point that, as Damon says in the time of Pericles, and as Plato repeats in the 4th century BC (*Republic* 424b), the changes in the performance of music followed the laws of the state and the progress of its socio-political life.

Despite the essential role of music, no ancient theoretical treatise was dedicated to Greek musical education. So, our knowledge about this emerges from dispersed *fragmenta* of philosophical/literary works and is complemented by the representations in Attic vase-painting of the 5th century BC, which very often predate the texts.

In general outline, we can say that during the Geometric and the Archaic period musical education had a role analogous to military training and was incorporated in the framework of a bellicose aristocratic ideology. This characteristic emerges already from the Homeric epics (*Iliad* IX 444), with the figure of Achilles, pupil of Cheiron and of Phoenix, who calmed his anger with song, and is expressed in mythology by other tutors of heroes, such as Linos, Mousaios, Eumolpos and Orpheus. Music was combined with athletics in the games held in the palace of Alkinoos (*Odyssey* viii), heralding the canons of ancient aristocratic education, which was based on music and gymnastics.

At a historical level, music in Crete and Sparta presented its most important manifestations in the context of the military training of young men, in a form which seems to imply compulsory teaching. Terpander from Antissa and Thales from Gortyna were its representatives, as well as Theognis from Megara, when he confirmed that music was an essential component of the aristocratic education. This inclusion of music in the aristocratic education continued throughout the Archaic period and characterized various literary expressions, especially in the courts of the tyrants. Concurrently, a concept of morality of music developed with the prevailing of its important influence on the mind. The educative and therapeutic value of music is reflected in myth, in various forms of enchantment, such as those exercised by the Sirens on Odysseus or by Orpheus, who dominated the plant and animal kingdoms

with his song. This conception is found again in the moral perspective of Plato, who reminds us that the Cretans were the first to create schools of musical education (*Republic* 452c-d) and that in Athens too there were laws compelling fathers to educate their sons in gymnastics and music (*Kriton* 50d-e). Aeschines too (*Against Timarchus* 1.7-12) recalls in this respect the laws of Drakon and of Solon. It is significant too that the tyranny of the Peisistratides was favourable in its stance to musical life and by extension to musical instruction. Indeed, it seems that Hipparchos had already instituted rules for the music contests, which demanded preparation and consequently education, which fact is registered in contemporary vase-painting, as on the famous amphora by the painter Andokides (*ARV²* 3, 2). Hipparchos himself invited to Athens Lasos from Hermione, a reformer of musical structures, who favoured the passage from the old fixed canons (*nomoi*) to the variety of harmonies or modes (Aeolian, Doric, Phrygian, Lydian, Ionic) which were linked with different local traditions.

Despite this vitality, however, there is no scene of music education in the iconographic repertoire until the late 6th century BC. Only at the end of the Archaic period and with the heyday in the first half of the 5th century BC did images of music teaching and the life of youths become particularly popular in Attic red-figure vase-painting. The phenomenon is explained as a result of the vase-painters' new choices of subjects, in which the world of athletics appears alongside that of music. But it should also be correlated with the political and intellectual climate that was established with the advent of democracy in the closing decade of the 6th century BC.

In the early 5th century BC music schools were founded in Athens. From what we know, there were no structures for public education and teaching was not compulsory. But the practice of ostracism and the participation of wider social strata in public life contributed to the intellectual development of youths and made knowledge of writing and education in letters, music and athletics imperative. All these, despite the public efforts which are reflected in the contests, were private institutions, which would account for the limited social esteem in which the teacher was held and the even more limited esteem of the pedagogue (Plato, *Lysis* 223a), who was often a foreigner and paid a pittance. Youths were taught between the years of thirteen and sixteen, and a longer and more structured education was only foreseen for the sons of the prosperous, as Plato confirms (*Protagoras* 326c).

The most widely disseminated musical instruments were the lyre and the cradle kithara. Both instrumental and vocal music were taught. In the first case the kithara-player demonstrated to the pupil, who learnt by imitation and rote; in the second, the music master accompanied the young singer on the aulos or a string instrument, such as the lyre or the barbiton. The aulos, which appeared in Attic education after the Persian Wars, was not particularly liked by Athenian educators. Although its presence was demanded on various occasions, especially in the chorus and in the Dionysiac music of the dithyramb, it was treated with some hostility by Attic education, which acknowledged in its sound an orgiastic character that excited and disturbed. Its presence in the hands of youths decreased gradually in the iconography and disappeared in the second half of the 5th century BC, when, due to changes in the preferences for instruments, aulos-players (*auletai*) became in great demand in the neighbouring city of Thebes. Although the aulos was

probably much loved, it was encumbered by the abuses of Pratinos and Alcibiades, and the condemnations of Plato who banished it from the ideal city, as well as of Aristotle, who claims (*Politics* 8.6, 1341b) that the Athenians, being better versed in the ways that lead to virtue, recognized that the aulos weakens the soul instead of strengthening it.

In the mid-5th century BC Athens, under the leadership of Pericles, was living through a decisive period in relation to the early decades of democracy. Representations of youths being taught and practising music decreased, whereas scenes of music in the women's quarters increased. After Damon's theory of the moral effects of different kinds of music, according to which music represents the motions of the soul, affects the ethos and thus has fundamental value for the education and the formation of the citizen, a new relationship developed between music and the public. Music became a spectacle, created its functional space in the odeion, professional virtuosity was born, which was expressed with growing frequency in the closing decades of the century. This new music was liberated from moral and political parameters, broke down the relationship between word and song which narrated tradition, became mimesis and emotion. Its chief proponents were Phrynīs from Mytilene, Philoxenos from Kythera and Timotheos from Miletos. In Athens, the new music found an echo in the tragedies of Euripides. Aristophanes, supporter of the old educational 'curriculum' based on music and gymnastics, railed against it (*Clouds* 961-976).

By the 4th century BC the antithesis had become even clearer, as is evident from the writings of Plato, who, well-versed in music theory and application, opposed the dissolutive trends of his day and the birth of specialist professionalism. Echoing the views of the first half of the 5th century BC, he declares (*Republic* 376e) that music is to the mind what gymnastics is to the body. He identifies the necessary harmonies for correct education and rules out those which are harmful to the mind or cause it to deviate. But his theories no longer evoked a response in the world of images; subjects of music iconography had disappeared by the end of the 5th century BC.

Aristotle, now more in line with the *Zeitgeist*, expressed reservations about the educational value of music and enhanced more its value in relation to catharsis and gratification. By the Hellenistic period, the division between the professional practice of virtuosos and the free but now humble music of the individual was final. Music was frequently absent from the lessons specified for the education of youth.

It was into this historical panorama that the phenomenon of reflecting musical education in the world of images entered, with especial significance, and continued throughout the 5th century BC. The earliest case (510 BC) is particularly important because, in contrast to the subsequent representations which reproduce an imagined typology, it is linked with the musical instruction of Euthymides, a specific figure in the vase-painting of the Late Archaic period, as this appears on a famous hydria by Phintias, now in Munich (*ARV*² 23, 7).

Without by any means covering everything, we can go on to cite about twenty purely school scenes, with the pair of teacher and pupil, sometimes by themselves and sometimes in the presence of the pedagogue or of other youths. In almost all, the teacher sits to the right upon a chair (*klismos*), which gives him status, while the pupil sits in front of him

on a stool (*diphros*). On the wall hang musical instruments, book-rolls and writing tablet, symbols of play and of the palaistra. Representative example is the Douris kylix in the Berlin Museum (*ARV*² 431, 48), a superb presentation of Attic education, in which instruction in the lyre is accompanied by lessons in writing, recitation and song, to the strains of the aulos. Among the singing lessons to the accompaniment of the aulos, we remember the outstanding case of amphora R 339 in the Brussels Museum (*ARV*² 638, 48), on which the ephebe lifts up his head and from his half-open mouth comes out an indicative series of 'oo'. A kylix by the Splanchnopt Painter, now in Melbourne (*ARV*² 892, 7), presents an epitome of details of music education, which include the awarding of prizes and corrective remarks in a milieu with symbols of music, palaistra and play.

Linked with these specific scenes of instruction are a few rarer depictions (ten), in which the young pupil is accompanied by a pedagogue on the road leading to the school or is with him while waiting for the lesson to begin. Frequently the pedagogue, slave or foreigner, is shown with realistic features that verge on caricature, as on the pelike by the Orpheus Painter in the National Archaeological Museum, Athens (*ARV*² 1104, 11).

These are moments of reality which have been recorded by the observant eye of the painter. There is, however, also an idealized representation of this reality, through myth: Herkales, accompanied by his old nurse Geropso, is led reluctantly to his teacher Linos, as on the renowned Schwerin skyphos (*ARV*² 862, 30), and Herakles unruly pupil who rushes at and kills his teacher, as on a cup by Douris in Munich (*ARV*² 437, 128). In contrast to the meek and obedient Iphikles, Herakles represents the insufferable pupil who does not like music, even though in other works he is seen as protagonist in music contests.

More numerous (at least 30 cases, if not more) is the group of scenes in which the musical education of the youths ventures beyond the walls of the school, to be turned into friendly musical events between peers. The environment of the house is denoted frequently by the presence of domestic or exotic animals. The musical instrument in the young men's hands (usually the lyre) typifies the age and the education, and here too creates, with the symbols of play and the palaistra, the climate of a positive attitude to learning. An affined group, but with fewer examples, depicts young men playing music, whilst their lovers, presenting typical love tokens, such as leverets, pay them court. Two kylikes by Douris (one in Malibu and the other in the Louvre: *ARV*² 434, 78) present in refined manner this interplay of music and amours, while depicted in the background are the symbols of play and palaistra – little baskets, strigils, sponges. Similar scenes, more explicit and spatially developed, are encountered on two cups by Makron, in Vienna and London (*ARV*² 471, 193 and 475, 266).

On a group of white lekythoi, we encounter a strong reflection of musical education as an indicator of age and learning, in the context of conceptions concerning the rendering of honours to the dead. Some forty examples, dating between 460 and 410 BC, present musical scenes in funerary loci. The dead are always young men, the musical instruments are those characteristic of the school (lyre or cradle kithara). But in these scenes neither profession nor the conviction that music offers relief in the other world is denoted, but rather the young age of the dead is defined, his virtue and his cultivation. Sometimes the allusion is obvious, as on a well-known lekythos now in Boston (*ARV*² 1231), on which

two basic aspects of education, music and athletics, are immortalized. On a famous vase in the Munich Museum (*ARV*² 997, 155), subject of which is the Muses on Helikon, the spirit of the moment is captured intensely and brings to mind a last group of vases, on which the Muses are an overt reference to the school and in particular to musical education.

Winter 1916. Wegner 1949. Lasserre 1954. Moutsopoulos 1959. Anderson 1966. Beck 1975. Lord 1978. Booth 1985. Beschi 1991. West 1992. Queyrel 1995. Birchler et al. 1996. Cassio et al. 2000.

Professor Luigi Beschi
Member of the Academia dei Lincei