

MUSIC AND IMAGE
IN CLASSICAL
ATHENS

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<i>Para</i>	J. D. Beazley, <i>Paralipomena</i> . Oxford: 1971.
<i>RA</i>	<i>Revue archéologique</i>
<i>REA</i>	<i>Revue des études anciennes</i>
<i>REG</i>	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

MUSIC AND IMAGE IN FIFTH-CENTURY ATHENS

Athens in the fifth century B.C. has been described as a “performance culture,” an evocative term suggesting the full extent to which the city’s activities revolved around performance: the gatherings of the assembly [*ekklesia*] and the lawcourts; the grand festivals with processions, sacrifices, and theatrical performances; athletic and musical competitions [*agones*]; cult rituals, down to the more private performances of household cult; and rituals of special occasion, from births to weddings to funerals.¹ Collective spectacle, display, and participation were in many ways the essence of the democracy.

Within this fifth-century performance culture, music played a highly significant role, just as it had for centuries. For the Greeks, music was the gift of the Muses and their divine ringleader, Apollo (compare Hesiod, *Theogony* 95–7); Classical Athenians sometimes went an extra step to proclaim that the Muses had been born in their city. Euripides said as much in his *Medea* (808–14), and in the earlier play *Rhesos* (often attributed to Euripides), the character of a Muse states point-blank: “I and my sisters make your Athens great in our art, and by our presence in the land” (941–2).² Most of the activities that colored public and private life were accompanied by music, song, dance, or all three, forming an essential part of education and marking life transitions.

What sets Athens apart from other Greek cities respected for their musical attainments is the vast amount of evidence at our disposal to comprehend the role of music in its society. Not surprisingly, literary sources have received the most attention.³ Poets, playwrights, and philosophers alike refer to the ubiquity and varying functions of music: its sounds, meanings, and sometimes its conspicuous absence. Some musical compositions survive in fragments, allowing for an understanding of notation.⁴ Plato and Aristotle, writing in the fourth century B.C., frequently refer to music in their writings, whereas lengthy treatises from the Hellenistic and Roman periods look back to the “good old days” of Greek music, which for their authors often means the music of Classical Athens.

The written sources, however, provide a tantalizingly incomplete picture of fifth-century music. Although later authors occasionally refer to fifth-century theoretical

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1. Cup by Douris with school scene, ca. 490–480 B.C. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz (F 2285). Photo: Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY.



2. Reverse of the cup in Fig. 1, with another school scene. Photo: Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY.

texts, the originals do not survive. Only fragments of actual compositions do, most postdating the fifth century, and numerous other plays, poems, and texts that concerned music are likewise fragmentary or nonexistent. The dithyramb *Marsyas* by Melanippides of Melos is a perfect example; the complete composition is long gone, but bits of it can be recaptured from quotations in Athenaios' *Deipnosophistae* and other later sources. While texts like the *Deipnosophistae* and the pseudo-Plutarchean *De Musica* provide much information about earlier periods, they also contain hearsay and inaccuracies, having been written decades or even centuries after the fact. The literary evidence is clearly a small part of a much larger story.

We can turn to visual evidence to flesh out the picture, with two strategic advantages: the plethora of representations available and the fact they are contemporary in time. Fifth-century Athens has been dubbed a “a city of images,”⁵ and it is not surprising that many of the images that dotted the Athenian landscape – from the Parthenon frieze to the thousands of vases produced in the potters' quarter – are connected with musical performance. The potential significance of these depictions as a way to increase our understanding of Athenian music has long been recognized.⁶ However, musical scenes, on vases in particular, have often been used as mere illustrations and interpreted as photographic documents of actual practices. Such representations are typically viewed as indicative of *all* Greek music at *all* periods, rarely localized to the time and place of their production. Images such as those on a cup by Douris (Figs. 1 and 2) or on an amphora by the Berlin Painter (Figs. 3 and 4) are frequently presented as scenes of “daily life” in books on Greek

music or culture.⁷ Many assume that, because the Berlin Painter represented a kithara *this way*, *this* is precisely how a kithara looked, or because *this* is how Douris showed a school, *this* is exactly how Greek boys were routinely educated.

Interpreting the Athenian “city of images” is hardly such a straightforward enterprise. One cannot use a vase painting purely as an illustration or as a source secondary to a written text. Indeed, like any text, an image is a document to be read, a premise emphasized in recent iconographic studies.⁸ Visual images are essentially constructions, with the combination of different symbols and signs – musical instruments or otherwise – yielding meaning. Consciously or unconsciously, the artist created an image that expressed the ideals and values permeating Athenian culture, often based in reality but sometimes with an element of fantasy. Furthermore, one must distinguish among types of images. State monuments, like the sculptures of the Parthenon, convey the agendas of the government and the elite, while painted vases, although still often linked to the consumer elite, nonetheless come closer to what we would today call “popular culture” by virtue of their large numbers and wide audience.⁹ Much as movies and television serve as alternative forms of “reality” that reflect the concerns of our own society, so too fifth-century Athenian vases can be read within the larger context of the culture that produced them.

Such an approach invites new questions. Not only can we ask *what* can be learned about musical practice, but also *why* painters chose to depict musicians, *why* certain types of scenes were favored, and, perhaps most important, *why* these

images were popular at a particular point in time. In the case of Douris' school scene, for example: How does it relate to other scenes of this type? To other scenes by Douris himself? To other scenes on the same vase? Where does it fit in the larger chronological spectrum? Where is the line drawn between an image of actual practice and a symbolic image? Douris did not sit in a schoolroom and attempt to photographically document its ambience. He worked with cultural constructs, but what was he trying to say and what can we learn from it? Similar questions can be asked of all fifth-century musical images. Plato or Aristotle each serve as only one voice speaking decades later, but the vases give us a glimpse into a wider, contemporary consciousness.

As part of a larger interest in so-called genre imagery among scholars of iconography, certain scenes that include musicians have already garnered exploration.¹⁰ Representations relating to the Panathenaic musical contests, for example, have been the subject of recent studies, as have wedding scenes.¹¹ Scenes of the symposium and komos have also been examined, although not necessarily from a musical standpoint.¹² Images of women have been a popular subject for scholarly inquiry, with female musicians occasionally coming into play.¹³ Mythological musicians such as Marsyas, Orpheus, and Apollo have had a longer history of academic scrutiny, corresponding to the longtime interest in mythological iconography.¹⁴

But we can go a step further, considering musical scenes not just individually, but broadly: Are certain scenes more popular than others at specific times? Is there a point at which musical imagery as a general category flourishes in the repertoire of Athenian artists? The answer is yes, and this realization inspires the present volume. If one examines the full scope of musical representations from the Early Archaic through the Late Classical period, it becomes apparent that their heyday lies in the fifth century. Whereas in the Archaic period music and musicians are found in a relatively limited range of scenes, a situation duplicated in the fourth century, we find a veritable explosion of new musical subjects and a dramatic transformation of old ones in the period from about 510 to 400 B.C. Thus Douris' cup is but one example of the new school scenes that appear at the turn of the fifth century, while the Berlin Painter's kitharode represents a newly expressive variation on an old musical theme.

Just as images of musicians were reaching a point of greater variety, creativity, and iconographic richness than had previously been seen in Athenian art, musical theorists and performers were expanding the boundaries of the discipline, transforming Athens into a preeminent center for musical innovation. The fifth century witnessed important and sometimes radical developments in organology and composition, as well as in musical theory and philosophy. Music had always been considered essential, but in the fifth century this attitude escalated into a heightened awareness of the power of music and its ability to influence the well-being of the city and its

inhabitants. Texts, mainly later in date, allude to the musical "revolution" of fifth-century Athens, but visual imagery truly shows the extent to which new musical tastes and ideas permeated contemporary society. Music was "on the agenda" in a way it had not been before and would not be again after the century ended.¹⁵

SIXTH-CENTURY MUSIC AND MUSICAL IMAGERY

Athens was a relative latecomer to the musical scene, initially overshadowed by regions better known for innovation, including Ionia, the islands, and certain cities of the Peloponnese, such as Sparta, Argos, and Corinth.¹⁶ During the seventh century, Sparta achieved prominence with the establishment of the festival of the Karneia and its musical contests, as well as the presence of musicians such as the poet Alkman and Terpander of Lesbos.¹⁷ Terpander is recorded as being the first winner of the Karneia *agon* and is further credited in the literary tradition (no doubt with some exaggeration) with inventing the barbitos, increasing the number of strings on chelys lyres from four to seven, and composing the first kitharodic *nomos*.¹⁸

In the sixth century, the cities of the northeastern Peloponnese reached their own level of musical notoriety, so much so that Herodotos (1.131.3) claims that "the Argives were spoken of as occupying the first place for music among the Greeks."¹⁹ Sources preserve the names of such virtuosi as Sakadas of Argos, three times victorious in the Pythian auletic contest at Delphi (see subsequent discussion). At Corinth, tradition accords the invention of the dithyramb to a Lesbian kitharode, Arion, brought to the court of the tyrant Periander (Herodotos 1.23).²⁰ The origin of both Arion and the earlier Terpander at Lesbos testifies to the importance of the islands in the development of Greek music; one need think only of lyric poets such as Alkaios and Sappho.²¹ In Ionia, the tyrant Polykrates of Samos contributed to the positive state of musical affairs, bringing to his court such worthies as Ibycus of Rhegion and Anakreon of Teos.

A significant sixth-century development was the reorganization of the Pythian Games at Delphi to include musical contests [*mousikoi agones*], generally believed to have taken place in 586 B.C. (compare Pausanias 10.7.2–5), although an *agon* for kitharodes may have preceded this reorganization.²² Pausanias makes clear that aulos contests were a new addition to the festival, including one for aulodes (with a singer accompanying the aulos player) and one for auletes, solo performers of the instrument.²³ Sakades of Argos first won the latter with his daring *Pythikos nomos* commemorating Apollo's victory over the dragon, a piece that would become standard fare in competition. Pausanias adds that the aulodic contest was disbanded only four years later because the performances were thought too "elegiac." The auletic competition and the other *mousikoi agones*, however, remained a high point

of the Pythian festival, reflecting Apollo's own status as the musical god *par excellence*. An *agon* for kitharists – performers on the kithara without sung accompaniment – was added to the Pythian program in 558 B.C.

Athens, although not a total cultural backwater, certainly had much to live up to. The sixth century witnessed the efforts of Athens to achieve greater notoriety among Greek cities on a number of levels, the sphere of music being one of them.²⁴ The reorganization – most scholars agree on a “reorganization” rather than the “foundation” – of the Greater Panathenaia in 566 B.C. represents one of these concerted efforts, a desire on the part of Athens to possess its own great festival to rival those of the Panhellenic centers and other cities. Although literary sources do not say, many believe the Panathenaic program included *mousikoi agones* right from the start, based on the evidence of sixth-century vase painting.²⁵ The success of these contests, however, reached nowhere the point of the Pythian *agones* in this period; they remained essentially local in character until the fifth century, when professional competitors increasingly made the Panathenaia a “must” on their tours of Greek festivals.

The tyrant Peisistratos, together with his sons Hipparchos and Hippias, is usually and rightly credited with many important cultural innovations. Tradition explicitly links him with the Greater Panathenaia, although the extent of his actual involvement remains unknown.²⁶ The profusion of Athenian vases referring to the *mousikoi agones* suggests that Peisistratos and his sons shared a keen interest in the musical contests.²⁷ Hipparchos is associated with the promotion of the rhapsodic contests, in which participants recited Homeric passages; although these may or may not have included musical accompaniment, by their poetic nature they can be considered together with the *mousikoi agones*.²⁸ Literary sources show that Hipparchos, in the style of tyrants elsewhere, brought contemporary musical celebrities to Athens, including the poet Simonides, the musician–theorist Lasos of Hermione, and the poet Anakreon of Teos. Peisistratid involvement in the reorganization of the festival of the Delia on Delos and perhaps in the foundation of the City Dionysia in Athens demonstrates an additional yearning to place Athens on the musical map. During the fifth century, the City Dionysia in particular would become a central locus for musical innovation.

There is no question that important foundations were laid during the sixth century for the future development of *mousike* in Athens. Accordingly, we begin to see in Archaic Athenian art a steadily rising visibility of musical imagery, although its settings and contexts remain fairly limited. Not surprisingly, scenes relating to the Panathenaic musical contests make their first appearance around mid-century and grow in number as time progresses. Images of Apollo as Kitharoidos likewise play a significant role. Occasionally, mythical musicians such as Paris, Theseus, and Orpheus are shown with instruments, but these are relatively rare. Exceptions to

this general rule are scenes dating from circa 530 B.C. until the end of the sixth century that depict the hero Herakles as a kithara player (see Chap. 5). By far the most numerous musical scenes are associated with the symposion or komos, either actually showing mortal participants in these elite social occasions or indirectly referring to them through images of Dionysos and his entourage [*thiasos*]. Symptotic scenes themselves reflect elements of sixth-century musical innovation, most notably in the rather sudden appearance of the barbitos, around the time that Anakreon of Teos came to join the Peisistratid court.

THE NEW DEMOCRACY, “NEW MUSIC,” AND NEW MUSICAL IMAGERY

The assassination of Hipparchos in 514 B.C. and the increasingly oppressive regime of Hippias, brought to an abrupt end in 510 B.C., understandably slowed the progress of musical development in Athens. However, with the advent of *demokratia* in 508/7 B.C. and Athens' subsequent rise to prominence as a result of the Persian Wars, the city quickly became *the* center of Greek musical innovation. The cultural seeds sown by the Peisistratids and others during the sixth century bore abundant fruit in the fifth, as musicians and musical thinkers from throughout the Greek world came to Athens to promote their ideas. Early twentieth-century German musicologists coined the phrase *Neue Musik* – “New Music” – to describe the altered state of the discipline, and more recent scholars still agree that the musical mood in Athens at the time verged on the highly radical.²⁹ Virtuosi performing in the theater or *mousikoi agones* tested the limits of musical technique, modifying musical genres and instruments to push the envelope and wow the crowds. Most performers were not Athenian, but from such places as Thebes and East Greece, further attesting to the central role Athens now played. Their ideas won popular support on many fronts but also sparked controversy, alienating more conservative thinkers like Aristophanes and later Plato and Aristotle. In the treatise *De Musica*, the speaker Lysias, himself a musical conservative, refers to specific virtuosi of the day and describes their impact (1135c–d): “Crexus, Timotheos, and Philoxenos, however, and other poets of the same period, displayed more vulgarity and a passion for novelty, and pursued the style nowadays called ‘popular’ or ‘profiteering.’ The result was that music limited to a few strings, and simple and dignified in character, went quite out of fashion.”³⁰

It is surely no coincidence that, beginning with the last decade of the sixth century, Athenian musical iconography dramatically transformed and continued to change over the course of the next hundred years. I argue that the appearance of new types of musical scenes, together with significant alterations of old subjects, reflects not only important developments in the field of Greek music, but the



29. Hydria by Hypsis with Amazons, including one with salpinx; ca. 490 B.C. Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek (2423). Photo: Museum.

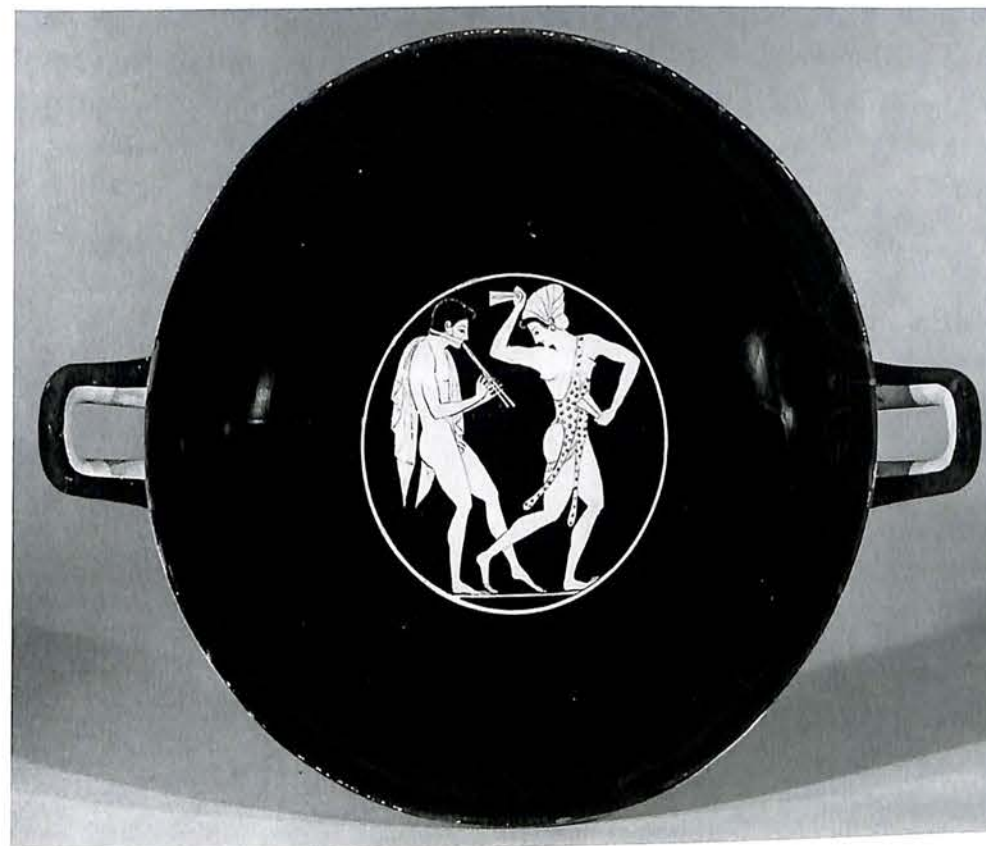
volute kraters, and the like become the preferred forum for rendering battle scenes during the Classical period, the compositions tend to be crowded, and there is literally less room for the salpinx. Further speculation as to the decreased iconographic popularity of the salpinx must await further evidence.

PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS

Unlike stringed and wind instruments, percussion instruments play a relatively minor role. In both the imagery and the literature, percussion instruments are predominantly associated with the god Dionysos, his followers, and his domain of the symposion and komos. Three different types of percussion instruments existed: the tympanon (a handheld frame drum), krotala (clappers), and kymbala (small metal finger cymbals). Krotala appear the most frequently in both sixth- and fifth-century vase painting; these consist of a pair of wooden bars joined by a hinge, with a performer typically holding one such pair in each hand.¹²⁹ We find them in the hands of hetairai or other professional female entertainers, satyrs, nymphs, and male revelers. They would have produced a loud clapping sound and were appreciated

for their rhythmic nature and loud noise rather than for any intrinsic musical value. Compare a passage in Euripides' *Helen* (1308–14), in which the Chorus describes a search for Persephone: “The Bacchic krotala sounded aloud with their piercing clamor, when the goddess yoked wild beasts to her chariot, to seek for her daughter, snatched out of the circling dance of maidens.”¹³⁰ In the tondo of a cup by Epiktetos (Fig. 30), a young male reveler playing the aulos is joined by a barebreasted hetaira clad in a sakkos [cloth headwrap] and animal skin, dancing and playing the krotala.¹³¹ The animal skin references Dionysian nymphs or maenads¹³² while pointing up the wildness of both the music and the dance.

Kymbala, of which several bronze examples survive today, were favored for their clanging noise of metal on metal.¹³³ They seem to have been particularly associated with Dionysian and orgiastic “mystery” cults, and were themselves of Eastern origin. However, kymbala were seldom represented on Athenian vases; the François Vase marks the only surviving black-figure depiction, with a nymph accompanying Dionysos playing the kymbala in the wedding procession of Peleus and Thetis. The Dionysian context here suggests that, even at this early stage, kymbala were associated with the god. Kymbala are shown only a handful of times in red figure, always



30. Interior of a cup by Epiktetos with youth playing aulos and hetaira playing krotala; ca. 500 B.C. London, The British Museum (E 38). Photo: © Copyright The British Museum.

in scenes linked with Dionysos or some kind of cult.¹³⁴ Thus a small boy plays the kymbala on a volute krater by the Curti Painter showing a procession toward two divinities, perhaps Dionysos–Sabazios and Kybele.¹³⁵

This same scene also features a worshiper or nymph playing the tympanon, dancing ecstatically with other female companions as part of the procession. She has a nearly frontal face, suggesting her abandonment into the music and dance; the rhythm of her tympanon complements the rhythm of the aulos being played behind her. Tympana, small frame drums stretched with hide and often decorated, do not appear with any frequency on Athenian vases until the second half of the fifth century, at which point they are also mentioned in the literary sources for the first time.¹³⁶ Here text and image corroborate one another, as tympana in both cases are connected with Dionysian cult and revelry. On the vases they are almost exclusively shown in the hands of nymphs or Dionysian worshipers.¹³⁷ We can compare Dionysos' address to his female followers in Euripides' *Bacchae* (55–63), calling on them to “lift up the tympana” around the palace of Pentheus.¹³⁸ Nymphs play tympana in scenes of the Return of Hephaistos,¹³⁹ in the so-called Lenaia scenes,¹⁴⁰ and in more generic gatherings of the Dionysian *thiasos*.¹⁴¹ Unlike other musical instruments such as the barbitos and phorminx, the tympanon does not disappear from Athenian iconography at the end of the fifth century, but continues to be found on fourth-century vases, probably the result of the heightened popularity of Dionysian imagery and cult.

MOUSIKE: THE ART OF THE MUSES

The Greek word *mousike*, first attested in late sixth-century texts, encompassed much more than its English cognate *music* might suggest.¹ Literally *the art of the Muses*, *mousike* included anything over which the Muses presided, not only instrumental music but also dance and the singing of poetry. From early in Greek history, the discipline of *mousike* formed the backbone of a traditional education – what Aristophanes would describe as the *archaia paideia* (*Clouds* 961) – together with athletic training [*gymnastike*].² Particularly associated with the elite, this traditional training in *mousike* emphasized the attainment of “amateur” musical skill, enough to demonstrate one’s culture, sophistication, and by extension social status in the company of peers. It seems that instruction was informal in nature, at least until schools began to appear in the late sixth and early fifth centuries.

Recent studies of Classical Athenian education have emphasized the fifth century as a time of change that witnessed a gradual shift from the *archaia paideia* to a curriculum increasingly grounded in rhetoric and literacy [*grammatike*].³ We do find *mousike* remaining an educational focus during the fifth century, again primarily among the elite; the term *mousikos* continues to describe someone of good education and background, with its opposite, *amousikos*, denoting a boor.⁴ References in literature to not knowing how to play a stringed instrument can similarly be interpreted as descriptions of an uneducated person.⁵ In his *Life of Themistokles*, Plutarch reveals that critics of Themistokles ridiculed him for not knowing how to tune a lyre, that is, for not being educated enough to have received instruction in music.⁶ Perikles, in contrast, had an exemplary education under the auspices of the musical theorist, Damon, and was thus regarded as a man of culture.

Literacy, however, was on the rise, challenging the traditionally oral culture and likely spurred on by the growth of democracy.⁷ Citizens actively participating in the assembly [*ekklesia*] and other democratic institutions had greater need for at least rudimentary knowledge of reading and writing. Rhetoric likewise became more essential for those citizens wishing to hone their public speaking skills for the *ekklesia* or lawcourts, although it remains unclear to what extent training in rhetoric was available during the fifth century.⁸ The sophists, who seem to have

begun teaching in Athens around the mid-fifth century, found willing pupils for the newer branches of learning in the sons of the rich; Sokrates, for example, reportedly described philosophy as “the most important *mousike*.”⁹ The chiefly aristocratic ideals of education in *mousike*, although not completely obsolete, were increasingly downplayed. This trend was further augmented by the growing political power of the *demos* as opposed to the “old guard” of aristocratic families, especially after the death of Perikles in 429 B.C. The newer strain of democratic politicians did not necessarily have a background in the *archaia paideia*.¹⁰

Texts of the late fifth and fourth centuries give insight into contemporary ideas about education and suggest that the new developments were not without controversy. Plato and Aristotle advocate reform in their philosophical dialogues, with both of them promoting a continued significant role for *mousike*. The very satirical, often very conservative Aristophanes frequently uses comedy to make biting comments on the state of education and its effects on Athenian culture and politics. The plot of the *Clouds*, produced in 423 B.C. for the City Dionysia, revolves around the tension between the “old learning” and the “new learning,” culminating in a spirited *agon* between the Just and Unjust Arguments. The Just Argument [*Dikaios Logos*] nostalgically describes the education of “the old days . . . when moderation was in fashion” (966–72):

Next, he [the *kitharistes*] taught them to sing a song without knotting their legs together – something like “Pallas the terrible sacker of cities” or “The cry that rings out afar” – stretching out the melody which their fathers had handed down. And if any of them fooled around with the tune or twisted any twirls – the sort of knotted-up twists we get nowadays from Phrynis – he was soundly beaten for obliterating the true Muses.¹¹

Aristophanes’ criticisms in the last decades of the fifth century refer to the type of education that a youth would formerly receive – learning to sing epic and lyric songs to musical accompaniment – while also satirizing changes in musical composition. The “fooling around with the tune” and “twisting any twirls” allude to experiments with the *harmoniai* and modes of music that were being instigated by professional musicians at this time.

The potential significance of visual imagery, as well as texts, in documenting the spread of literacy in fifth-century Athens has long been recognized, although specific interpretations of this evidence have varied. But we can also use images as a means to explore educational attitudes toward the discipline of *mousike*. Although references to the ideal of being *mousikos* had appeared earlier in Archaic iconography, the early fifth century witnesses a dramatic expansion of this theme on a number of levels. The plethora of images referring either directly or indirectly to the benefits of education in *mousike* demonstrate a concern for the discipline at this time. These

scenes advertise training in *mousike* for the good of the city and democracy, no matter how grounded they essentially are in aristocratic ideals. It is understood by the viewer that *mousike* affords the types of virtues most beneficial to oneself and the *polis*, including *sophrosyne* and *harmonia*. Yet the iconography does begin to change around mid-century, with less focus on “amateur” musical education and performance, and more emphasis on “professional” musical accomplishments. The educational controversies hinted at in the texts seem to be confirmed in the visual imagery. Indeed, the term *mousikos* itself in literary sources increasingly describes theorists and musical professionals, rather than citizen amateurs, as time progresses.¹²

THE ART OF THE MUSES

A white-ground Early Classical pyxis in Boston, the name vase of the Hesiod Painter (Fig. 27), depicts a remarkable scene of epiphany: A cowherd, quietly overseeing his animals, finds himself in the midst of the Muses.¹³ Two of the goddesses have phorminxes, one is seated with a chelys lyre, another seated Muse plays auloi, one has a fillet, and one holds not only a syrinx but also a phiale, a cult object pointing up the solemn and almost sacred nature of the occasion. None of the figures on the pyxis have inscriptions confirming their identities, but the outdoor setting, the number of female characters, and the array of instruments leave no doubt that the women are Muses. The identity of the poet remains contested; although he was originally named as Hesiod in the scholarship (leading in turn to the designation of the painter), the discovery of a fragmentary text by Archilochos of Paros recounting a visit from the Muses similar to that discussed in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (22–35) has reopened the question.¹⁴

On the one hand, the pyxis presents the viewer with an image familiar from texts: the Muses as forces of inspiration, capable of bestowing sweet words on a poet and endowing him with god-given talent. What is striking, however, is that although this aspect of the Muses had been proclaimed in poetry for centuries by this point – with the *Theogony* being perhaps the most well-known instance – it had not been visualized in art. The Hesiod Painter’s pyxis, together with other fifth-century representations of the Muses, presents a completely new iconographic conceptualization of the goddesses specifically as musical virtuosi; on the pyxis they appear with a virtual panoply of instruments ranging from the pastoral syrinx to the chelys lyre, the quintessential instrument of *mousike*. In Classical Athenian art the Muses iconographically come into their own in a variety of dramatic ways, assuming a new range of roles and at last attaining a definitive visual identity.¹⁵

Previously, on sixth-century vases, the Muses were rarely given musical attributes or identified by inscriptions, so that it is often difficult to recognize them. There are



46. Cup by Douris with scene of long jump, accompanied by aulos player; ca. 480 B.C. Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig (Kä 425). Photo: Museum (Claire Niggli).

with acrobatic exercises.¹²⁵ In scenes in which auletes appear with athletes holding strigils only, the importance of aulos music is still conveyed despite the lack of a specific activity.¹²⁶

A cup by Douris in Basel masterfully represents the role of auletes in the javelin throw and long jump (Fig. 46).¹²⁷ On each side of the cup, the aulete stands in the center with athletes surrounding him. The auletes are set apart from the athletes not only by their beards but also by their distinctive long patterned robes, similar to those found in scenes of musical contests. For each athletic event – the javelin on one side and long jump on the other – the painter emphasizes the variant positions of the body and the rhythmic grace of the athlete. On the side with akontists [javelin throwers], four young men are shown in different stages of the throw: two with javelin in hand preparing to release, and two others perhaps walking to take their place for the throw. The side with long jumpers similarly depicts one with *halteres* in hand preparing to jump, one in midair (an innovative pose), and one who presumably has just landed. The aulete stands near the center of the composition, his prominent position amid these accomplished athletes and their trainers vividly reminding the viewer of the music's purpose.

An unattributed hydria in London demonstrates the relationship between aulos music and the diskos throw (Fig. 47).¹²⁸ Whereas athletic scenes on cups often have a friezelike quality, here the figures are tightly integrated. A trainer with a staff and a robed aulete frame the action; in the center of the composition, a diskobolos prepares to hurl the diskos while another, half-seated athlete ties a hurling-cord around a javelin. A pair of *halteres* lie on the ground, alluding to the long jump and therefore representing all three of the events most typically associated with aulos

music. The pose of the diskobolos is striking – it is not realistic, but rather seems designed to accentuate the graceful movement of the athlete and lend a dancelike quality to the image. The aulete, like the aulete on Douris' cup in Basel, wears long robes; in both cases the garments are transparent, revealing the lines of the body beneath and further emphasizing physical excellence.

The dynamic poses of the athletes on these and other vases recall the contemporary artistic interest in *rhythmos*, as expressed for example in the work of some Early Classical sculptors.¹²⁹ In a visual sense, *rhythmos* meant form or pattern, showing the body in an arrested movement that summarized the sequence of motions associated with an activity. Thus in Myron's Diskobolos, the athlete's pose is not a realistic one and does not correspond to any moment in an actual throw, and yet the form – the *rhythmos* – of the figure artfully conveys the actions involved, suggesting “both the fact of the backswing and the potentiality of the front swing.”¹³⁰ Later authors also attribute the quality of *rhythmos* to the sculptor Pythagoras of Rhegion: “And they say that there was another Pythagoras, a sculptor from Rhegion, who seems to have been the first to aim at *rhythmos* and *symmetria* [commensurability].”¹³¹ The idea of form and pattern is ultimately related, it would seem, to dance, for which movements, pauses, and *rhythmos* are of the utmost importance. This may account for the dancelike qualities of some Early Classical images, for example, of athletes. When we consider representations of auletes and athletes together in a scene, there



47. Unattributed hydria with diskos thrower, athlete with javelin, trainer, and aulos player; ca. 510–500 B.C. London, The British Museum (E 164). Photo: © Copyright The British Museum.

appear to be multiple layers of *rhythmos* at work: the *rhythmoi* of the athletes' poses, coupled with the underlying sense of *rhythmos* provided by the music of the aulos.

Rhythmos was central to the pyrrhic or weapon dance, whose original aim was allegedly to prepare young men for military service.¹³² The martial theme of the *pyrrhike* rendered it a type of passage rite for young men on the brink of manhood.¹³³ In the *Deipnosophistae* (629c), Athenaios discusses the beginnings of the dance:

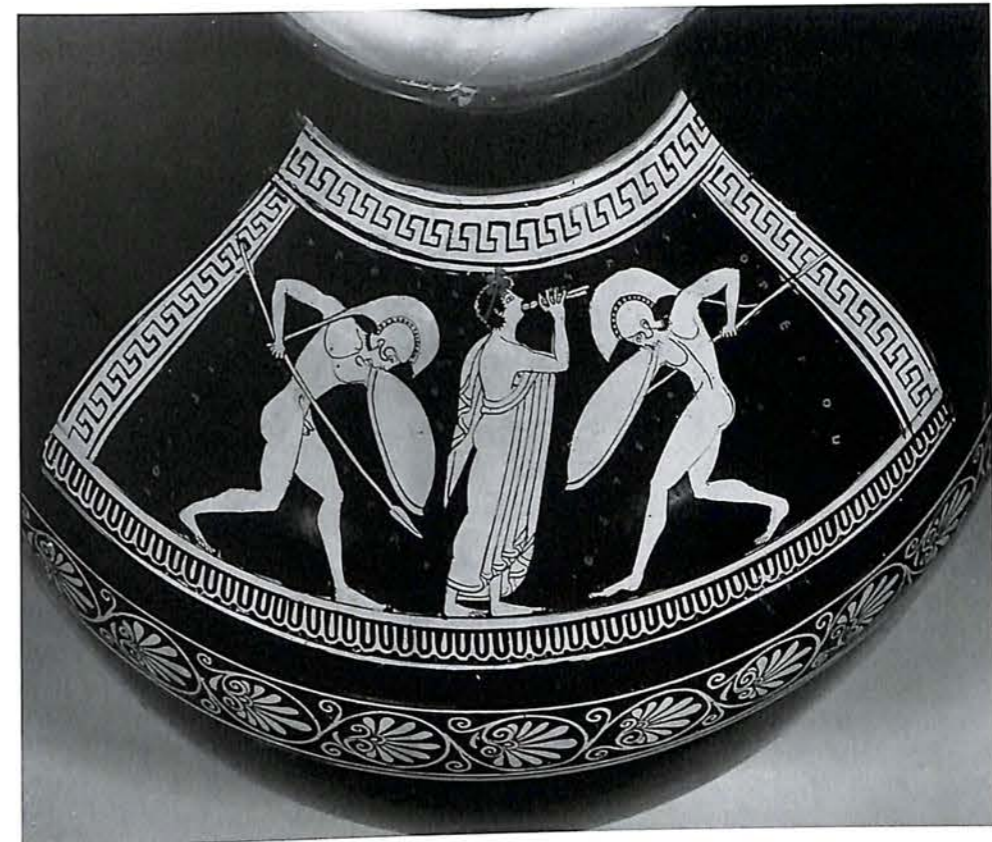
Further, through their music and the cultivation of their bodies they [Greeks] acquired courage, and they exercised with song to train themselves in movements under arms. This was the origin of the movements of what are called the *pyrrhichai*, and the whole of that style of dancing.¹³⁴

Plato provides a fuller description in the *Laws* (815a):

One might properly designate the warlike category of dancing the pyrrhic. It represents defensive postures against all kinds of blows and shots by turning the head aside and ducking and leaping upward or crouching; and it also aims to represent the opposite kinds of movements leading to active postures of offence when shooting with bows or javelins, or delivering blows of any kind.¹³⁵

Like other athletic events, Athenian youths performed the *pyrrhike* in the palaistra as part of training in *gymnastike*. This dance also formed part of the Panathenaic games and, judging from texts, was one of the most popular events there.¹³⁶ A fourth-century inscription (*IG II² 2311*) records that the event was open to three classes of competitors: men, youths [lit. *ageneioi* or beardless ones], and boys.¹³⁷ Each pyrrhic chorus was sponsored by a wealthy citizen as *choregos*, and the prize in each event was 100 drachmas and a bull. Although this inscription marks our earliest epigraphical evidence for the *pyrrhike* as a Panathenaic event, it was probably included in the festival program much earlier.¹³⁸

Representations of male pyrrhic dancers on Athenian vases date from the late sixth century until roughly the mid-fifth century. A large number are found on black-figure vessels, especially on lekythoi, an appropriate shape for oil used in the palaistra.¹³⁹ Red-figure scenes are less common, but sometimes appear on cups, a suitable choice for a sympotic audience familiar with the dance.¹⁴⁰ Whereas the literary sources allude to the use of music but do not give specifics, the vases show that the aulos was the instrument of choice. The clear, piercing tones of the aulos and its ability to provide cadence and rhythm rendered it particularly appropriate in this context. Although Athenian vases do not show the aulos being used in a strictly military capacity, it probably was; we can compare the seventh-century Corinthian



48. Unattributed hydria with pyrrhic dance, including aulos player; ca. 500 B.C. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1921 (21.88.2). Photo: All rights reserved, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Chigi Vase, which prominently features an aulete among a phalanx of marching soldiers.¹⁴¹

An unattributed, early fifth-century hydria in The Metropolitan Museum of Art vividly conveys the strength, grace, and action of the *pyrrhike* (Fig. 48).¹⁴² The aulete wears a simple himation and wreath, while the pyrrhic dancers are nude, save for helmets, and carry swords and spears.¹⁴³ The two dancers face each other, but they do not seem to be “fighting” in the pantomime of the dance.¹⁴⁴ Rather, the artist concentrates on a pleasing composition by making the dancers mirror one another; the one on the left has his chest turned out toward the viewer, while the one on the right twists so that his back is visible. The rhythm of the dance is suggested by the slightly crouching dancers and the lines of their spears and helmet crests; the uplifted head of the aulete balances their downcast heads. The spears slightly overlapping the frame at either side add to the sense of movement. The emphasis on grace found in this scene can be compared to a cup by the Eucharides Painter in Paris, where the languid pose of the dancer is almost balletic, the line of his spear echoing the auloi of the musician and visually suggesting their concord.¹⁴⁵