

Chapter I: Introduction

Of all the musical instruments of the ancient world, the *aulos* was perhaps the most popular. While it was known as the *aulos* (Gk.: tube) in Ancient Greece, Rome knew it as the *tibia* or *fistula* (Lat.: pipe). This aerophone was common in the Mediterranean and the Near East and consisted of two divergent cylindrical pipes with a single or double-reed for a mouthpiece. The *aulos* was used in religious contexts, in drama, during private gatherings (symposia), revels, and weddings.¹ The story of this musical instrument is comparable to a jigsaw puzzle where the pieces consist of scattered remarks in classical texts, depictions found mainly on vases, and fragmentary instruments retrieved at archaeological sites. As a result, a study of the *aulos* involves a cross-disciplinary field of research and therefore, different approaches.

This book presents a study based on material finds, as well as inquiries into textual and iconographical sources of the musical past of different cultures with a particular focus on the *aulos*. So as to present a review of the history of this musical instrument, this book examines written and material sources from the Mediterranean and the Near East. The sources range from prehistoric times to late antiquity. Thus, this investigation results in a synchronically and diachronically examination of sources. At times, the research takes the form of a dialogue between the ancient sources and the ethnomusicological present so as to emphasize the idea of continuity of musical practices of the past, and evidently of the *aulos*. It also presents an idea on to how musical practices related to this aerophone disseminated from one culture to another.

This research is supported by extensive fieldwork in Sardinia and Egypt where the musical instruments, the *launeddas* and the *arghul* respectively,

¹ See Bélis 2001; Roberts 2005.

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are investigated in order to search for parallels between these instruments and the ancient *aulos*. One of the objectives of this fieldwork is to attempt to fill unaccounted gaps in the story of this iconic instrument.

1.1 The Aims of this Research

The main objective of this research is to present a holistic view of the *aulos*; its past and consequential history, as well as to trace how this instrument was transformed from classical antiquity (c.1000 BC-AD 395) to late antiquity (c.395-AD 600).² The reason why this research is being conducted lies in the fact that the history of the *aulos* presents unclear passages that need to be explained, such as its origins, and ensuing past.

Much of the literature on ancient musical instruments is descriptive rather than explanatory.³ This study aims to review existing literature so as to account for past changes. In order to do so, the research makes use of historical explanation while focusing on cultural processes, specifically on how these influenced changes in musical instruments. Based on the fact that social processes have a strong impact on musical practices, the study aims to determine the manner in which the processes of acculturation, diffusion and syncretism influenced changes in the morphology and meaning of the musical instrument of our concern.

² Classical antiquity begins with the rise of the Greek city-states (c.1000 BC) and ends with the death of the Emperor Theodosius I (c.AD 395). After this event, the Roman Empire split into two parts, namely, the Eastern and the Western Empire. Late antiquity begins with the further split of the Western Roman Empire into Germanic Kingdoms and ends with the Persian and Arab invasion of the Eastern Roman Empire (Cameron 1993: 1-11).

³ See, for instance, Schlesinger 1939; Sachs 1940; Hickmann 1949; Manniche 1991; Melini 2014; Köpp-Junk 2018; Jiménez Pasalodos and Pippa Holmes 2018; Klavan 2021.

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Acculturation implies cultural change as a result of immediate contact between peoples of different cultures, regardless of their social complexity.⁴ Diffusion has to do with the spread of cultural traits from one society to another through the movement and exchange of people, trade, or any other social interaction. Sometimes, this involves the study of the origins and distribution of distinctive traits.⁵ Syncretism refers to a fusion or blending of, for instance, musical practices which can be evaluated through the analysis of similarities between two or more music traditions.⁶

Another objective of this study is to formulate hypotheses and construct models to be deduced and validated. The research aims to answer specific questions regarding the reconstruction of the history of this musical instrument, rather than to produce material evidence. Last but not least, the study will attempt to trace the technological progress of this instrument, focusing on its manufacture, different techniques, and details of production.

1.2 Studies in Music Archaeology

The research presented in this book relies principally on the theory and methodology of historical ethnomusicology and organology. Historical ethnomusicology can be defined as the ‘ethnomusicological scholarship on the musical past’,⁷ while organology is broadly defined as the ‘systematic study of musical instruments’.⁸ As this book is primarily about an ancient musical instrument, namely the *aulos*, both approaches related to these disciplines are suitable for this research.

⁴ Rice 2001: 67.

⁵ Winthrop 1991: 82.

⁶ Rice 2001: 850-1.

⁷ Sturman 2019: 1089.

⁸ Nettl 2015: 364.

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Organology encompasses issues that include design, classification, and historical development of musical instruments.⁹ As a result, its methods are mostly applied in museums and places where collections of musical instruments are exhibited. In 2017, I had the opportunity to take part in the XV Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Music Archaeology & Workshop of the Music Archaeology Project (EMAP). The event was held at the Slovenian Academy of Science and Arts and at the National Museum of Slovenia, in Ljubljana, Slovenia. The main topic of the Symposium was the music in the Stone Age. Research on prehistoric sound tools and their implications on the origins of music were discussed. A panel and roundtable was also held so as to consider different views on the so called 'Neanderthal flute'. This find, discovered in Slovenia, stimulated further research over the last two decades, and the debate is ongoing. Another important event was an afternoon with a guided tour to the travelling multimedia music exhibition *Arheomuzika* (Archaeomusica) at the National Museum of Slovenia. Here, a number of replicas of musical instruments, which ranged from the Stone Age to Classical Antiquity, were exhibited. This method of acquiring knowledge of past musical practices by making replicas of instruments is very important within the discipline of archaeomusicology. The reconstruction of ancient musical instruments is further discussed in Chapter V. I have to remark that the exhibition was well curated and interactive, thus it enabled the audience to feel close to the past and its music, both physically and sensorially.

This symposium served to highlight the importance of the field of archaeomusicology, to some extent, a subfield of ethnomusicology, which mainly depends on the study of musical instruments as artefacts. Secondly, it also shed a light on the ever-increasing importance of organology to various disciplines and subfields such as musicology,

⁹ See Post 2019: 1627.

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ethnomusicology, historical ethnomusicology, and musical iconography.¹⁰ It is worth mentioning that, like organology, historical ethnomusicology also focuses on the study of musical instruments, as their study is essential for the understanding of performance practices of the past. In other words, musical instruments provide tangible evidence of past ways of life and the role of music in those contexts. Ethnomusicologist Beverly Diamond (2013: 169), for instance, sees artefacts, including musical instruments, as embodiments of historical relationships. She claims that artefacts can refer to history through mimesis (imitation, in the sense of representation) and thus they embody change. This is further discussed in Chapter V.

Historical studies in ethnomusicology involve data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Data may include images, musical artefacts, sound recordings, music notation, and interviews.¹¹ Historical ethnomusicology may also involve fieldwork and ethnography. According to Bernard Lor-tat-Jacob (1995: ix), ethnographic work should portray ‘living people and their behaviour rather than focusing primarily on their institutions, examining the techniques they bring into play and their ways of seeing the world, as well as the material signs of their existence’. In January 2017, I carried out fieldwork on the Mediterranean island of Sardinia. There, I interviewed Mr Pitano Perra, a *launeddas* player and maker. He was very kind in sharing his knowledge with me both on the *launeddas* and the ancient *aulos*. Overall, I can say that Mr Perra is a ‘hunter of ancient sounds’, as he enabled me to comprehend his own way of understanding the musical past, not only of Sardinia but also of the Mediterranean world. His creations, which consist of *launeddas* and replicas of *auloi*, make clear his commitment to the research into different types of cane, sounds,

¹⁰ See, for instance, Nettl 2015: 364. Conference program: https://www.academia.edu/50978670/The_Conch_Shell_as_a_Musical_Instrument_in_Prehistoric_Malta.

¹¹ See Sturman 2019: 1089-90.

and inquiries on the musical past. This dovetails with what Scott L. Marcus claims regarding ethnography. Marcus (2007: xiii-xiv) states that ethnography should show how ‘people experience music and through it express shared culture’. The ethnographer may focus on ‘a specific culture or a few countries within a larger region’.¹² With regards to ethnographic reporting, Marcus claims that this should describe the contemporary musical situation and provide historical information on the traditions investigated, as these explain the present.¹³ This links to Tim Ingold explanation of ethnography. Ingold (2013: 3) claims that ‘ethnography is a study of and learning about, its enduring products are recollective accounts which serve a documentary purpose’. Ethnography, for instance, studies a person from whom one learns; a study which is essentially documentary. Thus, one has to ‘look back over the information collected so as to account for trends and patterns’.¹⁴

Such observations of current musical practices can provide a better understanding of past ones. Thus, the researcher can elaborate on an interpretation, although sometimes hypothetical, by combining historical and ethnographic data.¹⁵ Research outcomes may shed intriguing information on ancient musical instruments, both socially and culturally, and help to speculate on the ways artists performed music in the past.

The analysis of past discourses and practices, with specific reference to ancient authors who wrote about different aspects of music, may also help to construct past cultural patterns, which evidently differ from our own.¹⁶ Cultural patterns are a set of norms that govern the behaviour of an

¹² Marcus 2007: xiii-xiv.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ingold 2013: 3.

¹⁵ See, for instance, Wong 1991; Wade 2014; Nettl 2015, Correa Caceres 2019.

¹⁶ See Tomlinson 1993: ix.

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organised group of people. The nature of this set of norms determines, amongst other domains, the character of music.¹⁷ For instance, as a basic cultural characterization, ancient Greek society had significant values and laws that governed civic life, and these could also be seen in sound and musical behaviour. One such value that ancient Greeks embraced was the notion of *ēthos* (character). Within music making, they linked different musical genres with different kinds of personality, emotion, or disposition. Consequently, they believed that the use of certain harmonies and rhythms could shape the moral character of young men, who eventually would lead governments and pass legislation. By extension, one can also say that music helped shape politics in ancient Greece, enabling music to be a powerful force for cultural change.¹⁸

Tomlinson (1993: ix) suggests that a researcher can analyse the past in view of cultural difference.¹⁹ This can be done by exemplifying the history of difference, simplistically, by contrasting and comparing one culture to another. For example, our information about how the *aulos* was perceived in ancient Greece, as well as in another parts of the ancient world, comes principally from written sources. Ancient Greek poets and philosophers wrote texts in which they comment on how they saw the world of musical culture. For example, Herodotus (?484 BC-420s) and Athenaeus of Naucratis (fl. c.AD 200), drew up reports on the customs of the people they encountered. Such reports may be considered ethnographic with the added value that these authors were closer in time, at times indeed contemporary, to the people about whom they were writing. Herodotus (Book II.48), for instance, informs us that like the Greeks,

¹⁷ Nettl 2015: 239.

¹⁸ See Plato *Respublica* Book III 397-401b; Klavan 2021: 71-84.

¹⁹ Cultural difference involves the integrated and maintained system of socially acquired values, beliefs, and rules of conduct which impact the range of accepted behaviours distinguishable from one societal group to another (see Jackson and Guerra 2011).