

Online Conference - Levi Study Group *Psaltike*

Title: The Reception of Ancient Music Theory in Byzantine and Western Traditions

Date: October 25 2024, from 2.30 p.m.

- 2:30 Welcome (Christian Troelsgård, chairman of the study group)
- 2:35 Massimo Raffa (Università del Salento): *The Byzantine Reception of Ptolemy's Harmonics and Porphyry's Commentary: Textual Tradition, Ecdotics, Epitomization.*
- 3:00 Gerda Wolfram (University of Vienna): *Byzantine Music and Ancient Musical Writings.*
- 3:25 Christian Troelsgård (University of Copenhagen): *Between Practice and Theory. Formal Patterns from Ancient Greek Technical Literature Reflected in Byzantine Music Treatises.*
- 3:50 Sandra Martani (University of Pavia, Conservatory of Mantova): *The Echoi in Poetry. The 'Modal' Epigrams in the Heirmologia.*
- 4:15 Silvia Tessari (University of Padova): *Decapentasyllabic Poetry by Germanos II in the Eight Modes and its Connection with Ancient Greek and Byzantine Modal Terminology.*
- 4:40 Giuseppe Sanfratello (University of Catania): *Ancient Greek Music Theory in the Interpretation of the Chromatic Genus in the New Method.*
- 5:05 Charles Atkinson (The Ohio State University / Universität Würzburg): *Boethius, Ptolemy, the Tóvoi and the Modes*
- 5:30 Paola Dessì (University of Padova), *Boethian Musical Tradition in Eugenius Vulgarius' Poem 37*
- 5:55 Michael Eberle (M.A.) (Ludwig Maximilians-Universität München), *Just an echo from the past? Michael Psellos' treatment of his ancient sources*
- 6:20 Discussion and concluding remarks

Massimo Raffa, Department of Cultural Heritage, University of Salento, Lecce, Italy

Title of Presentation: *La ricezione bizantina degli Harmonica di Tolemeo e del Commentario di Porfirio: tradizione, ecdotica, epitomazione / The Byzantine Reception of Ptolemy's Harmonics and Porphyry's Commentary: Textual Tradition, Ecdotics, Epitomization.*

Abstract: Ptolemy's *Harmonics* (II cent.) and Porphyry's *Commentary* (III cent.) are among the most valuable sources for our understanding of ancient harmonic science and its relationships to philosophy, mathematics and acoustics. This presentation will try to outline the Byzantine stage of these two works' manuscript tradition, especially from the latter half of XIII cent. onwards. Special attention will be paid to the ways in which Ptolemy's text was emendated by such scholars as Nicephoros Gregoras, to whom we owe a significant reorganization of the last three chapters of Book III, and his pupil Isaac Argyros, who rewrote a considerable batch of lost text in Book II based on the surviving diagrams. As for Porphyry's *Commentary*, which is much longer than the *Harmonics* although covering only a part of it (namely up to Book II, 7), its 100-chapter anonymous Byzantine epitome will be analysed in order to understand what its author or authors deemed interesting and what they did not.

Gerda Wolfram, University of Vienna

Title of Presentation: *Byzantine Music and Ancient Musical Writings.*

Abstract: Byzantine liturgical music demanded through all the centuries a fundamental education of the chanters. For the first time the late and post Byzantine theoretical writers refer to different vocal executions of the chants. Akakios Chalkeopoulos, in the first half of the 16th century gave an enumeration of all organs which move the voice. This knowledge seems to go back to the Greek physician Galen (2nd c.). This hint to the different organs of the chanters arose the demand to explore

the influence of ancient musical writings on Byzantine chant techniques. How were the human organs used by different talented chanters, how did the Byzantine writers refer to the old texts?

Christian Troelsgård, University of Copenhagen, Faculty of Theology, Section for Church History

Title of Presentation: *Between Practice and Theory. Formal Patterns from Ancient Greek Technical Literature Reflected in Byzantine Music Treatises.*

Abstract: Manfred Furrman pointed in *Das systematische Lehrbuch: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Wissenschaften in der Antike* (1960) to a series of common, formal traits in the layout of different late antique *technai*. I shall in this contribution invite for discussion of some examples from the corpus of Byzantine chant treatises, where ancient treatises on music and other subjects (trivial, in particular grammar, and quadrivial, in particular arithmetic) seem to have influenced the verbal codification of various aspects of Byzantine chant practice. Such formal patterns include general structure, distinctions, definitions, listings, exemptions, and diagrams, as well as linguistic formulas common to pedagogical and technical literature written in Ancient Greek.

It seems that some of the Byzantine treatises aim at a 'higher' and more 'academic' register with many such reflections from Ancient Greek textbooks, while other treatises or compilations represent a more 'low-key' rendition of practical chant education by a given teacher in a given place (and have even traces of the vernacular). Yet other reflect mixtures of the two.

The main point is that it is important to be conscious of the style and scholarly-pedagogical register when interpreting and evaluating the contents of the Byzantine musical treatises.

Sandra Martani, University of Pavia - Department of Musicology; Mantua – Conservatory of Music “Lucio Campiani”

Title of Presentation: *The Echoi in Poetry. The 'Modal' Epigrams in the Heirmologia.*

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to provide a preliminary survey of the short poetic compositions preceding each modal section of the Heirmologion and describing in some way the musical characteristics and the ethos of the different *echoi*. My attention will focus on the analysis of the tradition of these epigrams, identifying the Heirmologia that contain them, and comparing the heirmological tradition with that of the book of the Oktoechos. Some of the terms will be investigated in the light of the theoretical musical treatises to try to sketch possible connections or suggestions between ancient Greek and Byzantine modal theory.

Silvia Tessari, Università di Padova, Department of Cultural Heritage

Title of Presentation: *Decapentasyllabic Poetry by Germanos II in the Eight Modes and its Connection with Ancient Greek and Byzantine Modal Terminology.*

Abstract: Germanos II, patriarch of Constantinople between 1222 and 1240, is the author of a number of poetic compositions handed down both in liturgical-musical books and in manuscripts containing profane Byzantine poetry. Among these compositions, a series of eight decapentasyllabic pentekostaria in the eight Byzantine musical modes that retrace the history of Salvation with a high-brow lexicon is of musicological interest. This paper examines their manuscript tradition, their presence in neumatized manuscripts, and their textual meaning. In particular, I will analyze the very first words that open the compositions in the plagal modes and that have, as I will try to demonstrate, specific musical connotations (they define the modal characteristics). These words, each connected with a specific semantic field (e.g., the first plagal mode is associated with order and the second one with a beautiful resonance/echos), do not find immediate parallels in ancient Greek and Byzantine treatises. Still, stimulating connections can be identified within Byzantine and post-Byzantine sources (*marginalia* and musical treatises) from the 10th to the 17th century, in which the Byzantine modes are associated with their 'proper name' derived from the ancient Greek *tonoi*.

Giuseppe Sanfratello, University of Catania

Title of Presentation: *Ancient Greek Music Theory in the Interpretation of the Chromatic Genus in the New Method.*

Abstract: This paper moves from the review of some older and newer literature on Chrysanthos of Madytos and the interpretation and terminology of ‘Deuterios modes’ in the New Method as formulated by him, together with Gregorios Protopsaltis and Chourmouziou Chartophylax. As Katy Romanou reported, Chrysanthos covers the subject of ancient Greek music in a broad and comprehensive manner (e.g. from Aristoxenos, Pseudo-Euclid, Nicomachus of Gerasa, Aristides Quintilianus, as well as Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, etc., cfr. Romanou 2010, p. 19). Basing his Reform on the ancient theories and terminology, Chrysanthos mentions, for instance, that according to Euclid «the *chroma* is sung at descent with a trisemitone, a semitone and a semitone again [...]. At the ascent, it is sung reversely: semitone, semitone and trisemitone» (*Ivi*, § 242). Talking about the ‘Deuterios modes’, it seems that Chrysanthos derived the ‘chromatic’ idea of scale from the Pythagorean one «with the introduction of (chromatic) ‘three-quarter tones’» (Morgan 1971, p. 97). All these elements, together with other pieces of information given in the treatise, show the input and the legacy of ancient Greek music theory in the New Method, since one of Chrysanthos’s intention was indeed to convey the idea of a strong continuity of Greek music culture in the ecclesiastical music of the Greek church transmitted until the early Nineteenth century (cfr. also, Morgan 1971, p. 86). In partial support of this theory, lies the fact that the introduction of chromaticism is not just a post-Byzantine development, nor a ‘decay’ caused by the influence of Ottoman music (cfr. Makris 2005, p. 10). Lastly, this preliminary study could also lead to the effort of examining all the references to what Chrysanthos intended as *κατὰ τοὺς παλαιούς*, by clarifying what terms he employed, as well as specifying from which works/editions he borrowed them.

Charles Atkinson, The Ohio State University / Universität Würzburg

Title of Presentation: *Boethius, Ptolemy, the Τόνοι and the Modes.*

Abstract: *De Institutione musica*, by Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, has fascinated musicians and music theorists from the Middle Ages to the present day. As we know, its theory of modes became the foundation for the medieval and Renaissance theory of the church modes Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian and their plagals. As we also know, however, the mature system of the church modes was founded in part upon a misunderstanding of Boethius’s presentation of the ancient Greek τόνοι by the principal author of the treatise *Alia musica*. But was it? Boethius begins his treatment of the *modi* in Book IV, chapter 15, with the famous statement "Out of the species of the consonance of the diapason arise what are called *modi*, which they also name *tropi* or *toni*." This refers back to the theory of the τόνοι presented by Klaudios Ptolemaios in Book 2 of his *Harmoniká*. After describing the transpositions of the tone-system that yield the τόνοι, Ptolemy sets out an octave segment of that tone-system extending from the *thetic* (stationary) *hypate meson* to the *thetic nete diezeugmenon*. Within this fixed range he identifies the transpositions of the τόνοι by means of the shifting position of the dynamic (movable) μέση of each τόνοϛ within it, thus the species of octave that each τόνοϛ displays in relation to it. For his part, Boethius clearly presents the modes as transpositions of the tone-system. What he does not present, however, is a means of identifying the mode of each transposition via octave species, despite the opening sentence of IV:15. In order for the reader to discern the differences between modes, s/he would have to know that the species for each of them are those displayed between the *thetic nete hyperboleon* and the *thetic mese*, but the crucial distinction between *thesis* and *dynamis* is lacking.

Paola Dessì, Università degli Studi di Padova

Title of Presentation: *Boethian Musical Tradition in Eugenius Vulgarius' Poem 37.*

Abstract: At the beginning of the tenth century, Eugenius Vulgarius wrote some poems for Pope Sergius III. One of these, Poem 37, is set out in the shape of a psaltery and is followed by a short explanatory essay. This paper reconstructs the Boethian musical tradition of this pattern poem. Indeed, the content of the explanatory essay clarifies the Boethian musical proportions on which the entire construction of the pattern poem is based.

Michael Eberle (M.A.), Ludwig Maximilians-Universität München

Title of Presentation: *Just an echo from the past?* Michael Psellos' treatment of his ancient sources

Abstract: Michael Psellos is known not only as one of the most productive and striking byzantine philosophers of his time, but also for his intensive treatment of philosophical accounts from classic and late antiquity. However, scholarship did not agree in its evaluation. In the field of music, Psellos as well referred to several accounts and motives from antiquity. In his treatise *Περὶ μουσικῆς* (Moore nr. 885), he even speaks of his contemporary music as being an echo of that from ancient times. Therefore, some scholars concluded that Psellos lamented over the vanish of ancient music. Others, like Christian Hannick, treated the passage more carefully. In my presentation, I would like to re-evaluate Psellos' disposition towards his ancient sources. It is part of my ongoing PhD-project to analyse how Psellos treats accounts and motives from antiquity concerning music. I would like to suggest that his collection of references is neither arbitrary nor written out of nostalgia, but instead serve a particular purpose within the framework of his general music theory and philosophy.