

Editorial

Scoop or fake new?

On 22nd October, BBC News presented the work of Armand d'Angour, a tutor at Oxford University, who claimed to have succeeded in re-creating the music of ancient Greece as well as re-playing it on the instruments of the time, "with results 100% similar to those of 1800 years ago". "It is absolutely certain that we can reconstruct the original sound of this music", he said. And on this basis, another tutor, David Creese from Newcastle University, offered us on social networks, "a song from ancient Greece revealed in an inscription on a stone slab, and was attributed to Seikilos".

It is not within our competence to discuss here who discovered what about the music of ancient Greece, but all the same let's just mention that the slab in question was discovered in 1883, and has been on display at the National Museum in Copenhagen since 1966. The "song" itself was deciphered more than a century ago and has often been recorded by different ensembles in the last 35 years. We easily found close to 15 different versions of this one... which does not testify to its newness!

This prompts us to reflect on the perverse effects of the Internet, where unverified information can be transmitted, but is still able to arouse a general interest. This will, however inevitably be re-stated on a multitude of websites again and again, until it finishes up by appearing to be the truth.

René Kauffmann



AnticoPédie wishes a great year 2014 to all its readers!

Listen to the music of Ancient Greece!



The music of ancient Greece is not completely unknown to us. Researchers have studied this field for a long time. Others have patiently reconstructed musical instruments according to the ancient sources (using descriptions by various authors, frequent representation on vases, statuettes of musicians, bas-reliefs and frescoes) and various musical ensembles can thus be able to perform in concerts and record CDs of ancient Greek music.

In France, we are fortunate to be home to the Kerylos Ensemble, whose interpretations are based on the high level scientific works carried out by Annie Belis, director of research at CNRS (UMR 8546). Thus, even if the information mentioned in our editorial, which has been taken over by drum-beating on the internet, does not seem to be a scoop, it at least has the merit of highlighting once more the problem of reconstructing ancient music, for which we have only fragmentary samples.

Compared to the ancient Greek theatre, which itself is relatively well known to us, only a few dozen musical documents from ancient Greece have survived : they are marked with annotations that prove the existence of musical notation systems dating from about 450 BC

On the basis of available documents, researchers have been able to establish the way (or rather the ways, because the notation differed according to whether a text that was sung and or played on an instrument) Greek musicians wrote down musical accompaniments. Furthermore, the researches performed by the Greek scientists in the field of musical harmony are also known from different transcripts that have survived the centuries.



Thus, by analyzing the description of the instruments (which determines the quality of sound); knowing the work of Pythagoras and Ptolemy on the principles of musical harmony; taking into account the musical theories discovered and extensively described by Aristoxenus of Tarantum, Aristotle and Nicomachus of Gerasa, it was possible for some informed researchers to reconstruct the melodies.

The true or false news widely spread recently inspired us to set up a review of the ancient musical pieces available today. We gathered them in a new file which can be freely [downloaded](#) on our website. We have accompanied it with some references describing the theoretical works of the ancient creators of musical harmony, ancient musical instruments and the musical notation methods extracted from the ancient documents. And above all, we listed the links that will allow you to hear and to discover the sounds which charmed the ancient Greeks 2000 years ago. An experience not to be missed!

Do you know Inp?



The "[Institut National du Patrimoine](#)" (The French Institute of National Heritage) otherwise known as Inp, is a department of higher education in the Ministry of Culture and Communication, which aims to recruit and train heritage curators and conservators qualified to work on public collections. Each year, Inp hosts between 40 and 50 students of conservation in this way, and about a score of students in restoration of works of art.

But the Inp also offers a wide selection of on-going training together with conferences and symposiums which provide so many opportunities for meetings. In addition, the new Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations (MuCEM) located in Marseille and Inp have joined to create together, in Marseille, the Mediterranean Institute of Heritage Skills (I2MP), dedicated to professional training and facing the challenges and needs of the Mediterranean heritage. **The Training Catalog 2014 is available online.**

Look at it, even if only to discover the diversity of skills of all these specialists who protect our most valuable historical treasures, and who are at the pinnacle of artistic skill and technology.

New this month:

Download here our report on ancient Greek music!

(a 17-page pdf document)

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The Roman barge or Arles is now on show!



This Roman barge named "Arles Rhone 3", discovered in 2004, has been on display to the public since October 5 in a specially built new wing of 800m² at the Department of Arles' Museum of Antiquities. An exceptional find, this 31m long Gallo-Roman barge is almost complete, and is displayed together with 450 artifacts from recent excavations, the museum's stocks and from redeployment of other collections in order to understand their context.

With its towing mast and steering rudder replaced, the crew's chattels on board and a part of its load (reproductions), this collection is a precious witness of ancient inland water-transport in the middle of the first century AD. The exhibition is divided into three parts: the role of the River Rhone in ancient history, the navigation and water-borne commerce and the port and its trades.

More information...

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And as usual...

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Any comment and suggestion are welcome!



Write us!