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MUSIC AND THE ROMANS¹

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THERE is no aspect of Roman life and civilization about which less has been written than the musical. The *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, like the *Cambridge Companion to Latin Studies*, deals with Roman music only by the way and in the briefest terms; the specifically musical dictionaries such as Riemann and Grove ignore it entirely; and only sixteen pages are devoted to it in the *New Oxford History of Music*. We know well enough that there was no dearth of music at Rome; it was a prominent ingredient at convivial gatherings, it is frequently referred to in connection with performances in the theatre, it was the concomitant of many religious observances, and the *tubicen* and *bucinator* were on the payroll of the army. But about the nature of that music itself the Romans have said singularly little. In particular, they never mention any differences or make any comparisons between their own music and that of the Greeks; and it is therefore generally assumed that Roman music was indistinguishable from that of the Hellenistic world as a whole. There is indeed no reason for challenging that assumption; and there is no evidence to suggest that Rome contributed much that was vital to the history of musical development. Nevertheless the theme of this lecture is not wholly unworthy of some consideration.

The view once held that Rome was an important intermediary between the music of Greece and the Gregorian modes of the Roman church. This opinion was based on the fact that ethnic names, such as Dorian, Phrygian and Lydian, by which certain of the ancient Greek scales were differentiated, were used also in the nomenclature of the ecclesiastical scales. But apart from the awkward fact that the two nomenclatures do not correspond as they ought on this theory of Rome as an intermediary,² the work

¹ A lecture delivered in the Library series of public lectures.

² E.g. the Dorian "octave species" of the Greek system could be represented by the white notes of a piano from *e'* to *e'*, whereas the church Dorian would be represented by the white notes from *d'* to *d'*.

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of Dr. Egon Wellesz has shown conclusively that we must seek the origins of medieval ecclesiastical music in the Jewish synagogue and in the Eastern Church, rather than in Rome itself.¹

In bringing together in this lecture what information we can glean about the musical activities of the Romans, I think it is appropriate to begin by contrasting the attitude toward music of two of the greatest of the Greeks with that of the Romans. You will recall that in Book III of the *Republic* Plato discusses the training of the citizens of the ideal state. His doctrine was that education was not to be the acquiring of mere "accomplishments", not even a merely intellectual process, but primarily a moral one; and with this end in view he included music as one of the studies of a young person. By a suitable training in music of the best and most fitting kinds the child would be assisted towards the attaining of virtue and his soul would be led in the right path. In a perfect world good music was to be no less important than moral literature. Plato's point is presented through the mouth of Socrates: "See that you leave me that musical scale (*ἁρμονία*) which would suitably represent (*μιμήσαιο*) the tones of a brave man engaged in a feat of arms who, even if he is not successful or suffers wounds or death or falls into any other calamity, in all such circumstances parries the blows of fortune with unflinching endurance. Leave me also another scale expressive of the feelings of a man who is engaged in peaceful occupations, persuading, entreating, addressing a prayer to a god or offering instruction or advice; or it may be of a man submitting himself to the advice or persuasion of another, not behaving arrogantly but with sobriety and moderation" (*Rep.*, 339 a-c).

This passage immediately follows the famous discussion of poetry in which morals and aesthetics provide the touchstone. The same ethical criterion is applied to music; and the point is made even more emphatically many years later when Plato came to write his *Laws*. In that work he says: "The singers of Dionysus ought to become eminently sensitive to rhythms and the composition of scales; in order that having a thorough knowledge of musical imitations of the affections of the soul, one may be able to select the imitations (*δμουώματα*) of the good soul and

¹ See *New Oxford History of Music*, vol. II, chaps. i and ii.

the bad soul, rejecting the latter and bringing into prominence the former. These imitations such a man will sing and with them he will enchant the souls of the young; and while the pupils follow him on account of his musical imitations, he will be inviting them to follow him in the possession of virtue" (*Leges*, 812 b - c).

This doctrine that music in itself is the representation or reproduction in another medium of goodness or badness in the soul and therefore educationally important, is not peculiar to Plato. Aristotle has this to say: "It is a question worthy of consideration whether music is not in itself of a nature more honourable than merely to supply the need of recreation. One ought not merely to enjoy the universal pleasure music affords, but one ought to reflect whether it has any tendency to form the character and influence the soul (*πρὸς τὸ ἦθος συντείνει καὶ πρὸς τὴν ψυχὴν*). Nor will there be any room for doubt about the matter if it can be shown that music produces in us certain conditions of character (*ποιοῖ τινες τὰ ἦθη γινόμεθα*). This effect of music is proved by various instances and especially by the musical compositions of Olympus; for it is admitted that they make our souls enthusiastic. And further, when we listen to imitations we all acquire sympathy with the feelings imitated. . . . It is in rhythms and melodies that we have the most realistic imitations of anger and mildness as well as of courage and temperance and all their opposites and of moral qualities generally. This we can see from actual experience, as it is in listening to such imitations that we suffer a change within our soul. But to acquire the habit of feeling pleasure or pain upon the occurrence of resemblances is clearly allied to having the same feelings in the presence of the originals" (*Pol.*, VIII, 5, 4 - 6).

Modern psychology would doubtless draw a much firmer distinction than Plato and Aristotle did between transient emotional responses and permanent influences on attitudes and character. We have also to bear in mind that much of what these two Greek philosophers said can be judged in true perspective only if we take into account the underlying doctrine of "imitation" (*μίμησις*) which coloured their thinking. Furthermore, we must remember that in the century before Plato, Pythagoras and his

school had discovered the basic numerical relationships which connect the lengths of lyre strings with the concordant intervals of music, and so had given a kind of metaphysical *imprimatur* to the study and pursuit of music. Nevertheless, when all these factors are taken into account, it is evident, not only from Plato and Aristotle, but from many passing references in the lyric poets, tragedians, and writers of comedy, that the Greeks were very sensitive to music and very conscious of the effect it had upon them. In particular, it is a theme recurring countless times in Greek literature, that each of their scales was felt to have an ethos of its own: the Dorian was solemn and stately, the Phrygian exciting (*ἐνθουσιαστικός*) and the Lydian relaxing. So clear was this differentiation that, as Aristotle tells us (*Pol.*, VIII, 7, 9), when the composer Philoxenus set about composing his dithyramb "The Mysians" in the Dorian mode he had to abandon the attempt and reverted to the more appropriate Phrygian. Innovators like Timotheus who tried to widen the boundaries of the art or blur the distinctions of ethos were felt to be guilty of a kind of sacrilege and the common people were for destroying their instruments.¹

Among the Romans the situation is very different; and in the whole range of Latin authors before the time of Cassiodorus in the sixth century A.D. there is no treatment of music at all comparable in tone and extent with the discussions in Plato and Aristotle. The Romans accepted music as an amenity and did not think of it as having some basic educative significance, still less as a means of moulding character. Their general attitude, at least during the Republic, was perhaps summed up by the elder Cato, who when he inveighed against the senator Caecilius, called him *Fescenninus*, "a buffoon", pilloried him for dabbling in Greek literature and included singing in his reprobation: *praeterea cantat*.² So, too, Sallust indicates that it was thought immodest for a woman to play the lyre—or at least to play it well; for of Sempronia, the mistress of one of the Catilinarian conspirators, he remarks that she was *docta psallere elegantius quam necesse est probae* (*Bell. Cat.*, 25, 2).

¹ See Plut., *De Mus.*, 1125d; Athenaeus, *Deip.*, 636 e; Pausanias, III, 12, 10.

² *ap. Festum*, s.v. "spatiatorem".

I suppose the likeliest places to which we should turn for a discussion of the metaphysical, ethical and educational aspects of music would be the works of Cicero, Seneca and Quintilian. The harvest is small. In the second book of his *Leges* (II, 15) Cicero has this to say: "I agree with Plato that nothing enters tender and impressionable minds so easily as the varied sounds of music; and it is hard to say how great is the influence of music for good and for bad. For music arouses the slothful spirit and calms the excited. It was regarded in many Greek states as very important to keep intact the old style of music; and a degeneration of morals towards effeminacy was coincident with a change in music, either because, as some think, morals were depraved by the sweet corruption of music or because, when the strictness of morals had failed on account of other vices, ears and minds were ready for a change of music. Consequently Plato greatly feared this degeneracy of music; for he said that the laws of music could not be changed without an alteration of the laws of the state. For my own part, I do not think that this is to be feared so greatly, nor do I think the point should be entirely rejected." In this piece of vacillating urbanity there is no flicker of personal musical experience or conviction; and nowhere else, even in his philosophical works, does Cicero offer anything except conventional and second-hand references to music.

Seneca, as something of a moralist, is an author who might be expected to adopt or at least discuss the Platonic or Aristotelian position if he had more than a superficial appreciation of music. He is in fact as unconcerned as Cicero. He refers often enough in one way or another to music in general, but never does he comment on any effect it may have even on the emotions, to say nothing of permanent effects on character; and so far as I know, the only mildly philosophical reflection in his pages derived from a consideration of music is a trite remark that "just as the members of a large body of instrumentalists perform harmoniously, so ought the soul to be" (*Ep.*, 84, 10).

Quintilian, however, has something more to offer. He devotes a brief part of his first book to music and the place it is to have in the education of the future orator. Such musical instruction as he will receive is to be given before the pupil is handed over

to the *rhetor*; and its purpose is entirely utilitarian: without a knowledge of music the *Timaeus* of Plato will be unintelligible; the training of the voice will be useful to the orator if he is to modulate his voice in accordance with his subject matter; and since he must read the poets, music will be essential, at any rate for the proper appreciation of the lyric poets (*Inst. Orat.*, I, 10, 9-33).

Apart from this advocacy of elementary musical studies for practical purposes Quintilian has little to say in this first book; but in his ninth book when dealing with matters of style he takes a somewhat wider view. "We are adapted by nature", he writes, "to feel the pleasure of music; otherwise it would be impossible for the notes of musical instruments, which do not express words like an orator, to excite various emotions in the hearer. In the sacred games, the musicians do not excite and calm the mind with the same strains; they do not employ the same tunes when a warlike charge is to be sounded and when supplication is to be made on the bended knee; nor is there the same concert of signals when an army is going forth to battle as when notice is given to retreat. It was the custom of the Pythagoreans when they awoke in the morning to arouse their minds with the sound of the lyre that they might be more alert for action; and to soothe themselves with it before they lay down to sleep in order to allay any tumultuous thoughts that might have disturbed them. If there is such a hidden force in rhythms and melodies, then there must surely be the utmost power in polished oratory" (*Inst. Orat.*, IX, 4, 10-13). Yet even this is rather commonplace second-hand stuff, a whole world apart from the firm convictions underlying the passages of Plato and Aristotle.

I turn now to another difference between the Greeks and the Romans which may be put in the form of a question. What was the relation between poetry and music at Rome? We know that in Greece the two arts were very closely allied, indeed so closely that the composition of words and music must often have been an almost indivisible act of creation. Terpander, Sappho, Alcaeus, Simonides, the tragedians, writers of comedy and composers of dithyrambs like Timotheus and Philoxenus are spoken of as musicians as well as poets; and to some of them developments in the musical art are specifically attributed. At Rome

the connection between poetry and music was not of this kind. The Roman poets speak often enough of their poems as being sung or as suitable for the lyre. Horace describes himself as *Romanae fidicen lyrae*, "strummer on the Roman lute"; he hangs up his *barbitos* and prays Apollo that his old age shall not lack the lyre. Ovid speaks of his work in musical terms: *nos quoque per totum pariter cantabimur urbem*; Martial frequently uses the word *cantare* with reference to his epigrams: *laudat amat cantat nostros mea Roma libellos*. That some at least of the elegiac poems of Catullus were sung is definitely asserted by Aulus Gellius. The younger Pliny boasts that his hendecasyllabics were so pleasing to the Greeks that they sung them (*Epis.*, VII, 4, 9). Donatus tells us that the Eclogues of Virgil were so successful that they found a place on the Roman stage; and from his words it seems that they were not merely declaimed but chanted (*in scaena per cantores crebro pronuntiarentur*). The Roman poets, however, are not safe guides when we enquire how far they composed their works with a musical accompaniment definitely in view. They use the words *dico* and *cano* almost indiscriminately and when Horace writes *verba loquor socianda chordis* he is probably not thinking of a future setting of his poem but is merely defining his work as lyric. Indeed there is only one extant Latin poem of which we can with certainty say that it was deliberately composed with a musical performance in mind. I refer to Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*; and I throw out the suggestion that it was the prospective performance which influenced Horace to chose the Sapphic metre rather than the Alcaic on this occasion. Hitherto the Alcaic stanza had been his preferred vehicle for the expression of patriotic sentiments; and it may be that the musically simpler and less rhythmically intricate Sapphic involved fewer risks of disaster in performance for the boys and girls of his choir. In one of his short odes Horace refers to the beat of his thumb (*pollicis ictus*) in the training of the choir which sang his *Carmen Saeculare*; but I am not sure that we should read the poem so seriously as to infer that Horace was a composer and a conductor as well as a poet. Nor do we know of any Roman poet who himself wrote the music for his poems; not a single poet, so

far as I know, is referred to as if he were a musician and every scrap of Roman criticism treats the Latin poets as literary and not as musical craftsmen. We know for certain that the music for the comedies of Terence was composed not by the dramatist himself but by Flaccus, the slave of Claudius. When Pliny speaks of his devoted wife who set his hendecasyllabics to music he stresses the fact that she did it unaided: *non aliquo artifice docente sed amore* (*Epis.*, IV, 19, 4). There can be little doubt that when Latin poems were set to music the work was done generally if not invariably by a professional musician. The Roman poets appealed primarily to a reading public and music for them was not a sister art but an obsequious and not indispensable servant.

At the beginning of this lecture I said that the Romans seem to have taken over the Greek musical system in its entirety. There is no reason for doubting that for a very long time before the end of the Republic the scales used in Rome and the general structure of the melodies and the principles of composition did not differ in any essential way from those which the contemporary musicians of Greece were employing. Indeed much of the music-making must have been in the hands of Greeks resident in Rome. Yet at this point we may ask what kind of music did the Romans have before Greek influence became potent in Italy and how was it that what was presumably an alien art came to dominate and oust the earlier music of the Italian peninsula? In anything except the broadest sense, music is not a universal language. Music has evolved its own peculiar dialects in various parts of the world at different times and those dialects are mutually unintelligible. We of Western Europe, for example, find it difficult to appreciate Arabian, Hindu or Chinese music. We cannot conceive that the Romans were entirely without some kind of music before they came into contact with the Greeks; yet that early music was completely submerged.

Quintilian tells us something in a vague way of music in early times. "The old Romans", he writes, "had the custom of employing the lyre and 'tibia' in their banquets. The verses of the Salian priests also have a musical strain. And since all these were established by Numa, it is clear that those men who

seemed unpolished and warlike, as far as their own times allowed; did not lack music" (*Inst. Orat.*, I, 10, 20). And Cicero mentions several times on the authority of Cato that the early Romans sang at their feasts of the deeds of their warriors to the accompaniment of the *tibia* or pipe.

There is not a shred of tangible evidence to indicate what was the nature of this early Roman music; but there are one or two little straws to be gleaned and they may show whither the wind blows. You will remember that in his ninth book, under the date 315 B.C., Livy narrates the following incident: "The pipe-players were prohibited by the censors from feeding in the temple of Juppiter according to their ancient prerogative, and in indignation they departed in a crowd to Tivoli; with the result that there was no one in the city to provide the music for the sacrifices. The religious consequences of this constrained the Senate and they sent ambassadors to Tivoli to endeavour to get the pipe-players sent back to Rome. The people of Tivoli graciously promised their assistance and calling the fugitives into their senate-house, they beseeched them to return to Rome. When the pipe-players could not be driven forth by entreaties, the people of Tivoli assailed them by a trick. At a time of festival they gave them invitations under the pretence of holding a banquet with song, plied them with wine and lulled them to sleep. They then threw them into wagons and carried them off to Rome" (Livy, IX, 30, 5-10). We may presume that the music of these *tibicines* who performed in religious precincts was not new-fangled and it is clear from the words of Livy that their services were of long standing, since their prerogative of feeding in the temple was an ancient one. In later times these pipe-players feasted in the temple of Juppiter on 13 June every year and on that day they wore a dress which was Etruscan.¹ Indeed their connection with something Etruscan is the only thing we can say positively about them. Could it be that the music they played was in some sense Etruscan too?

If we turn to the Roman musical vocabulary we find that most of the words are of Greek origin. There are three, however, all referring to wind instruments, which were never supplanted by

¹ See W. Warde Fowler, *Roman Festivals*.

Greek terms: they are *lituus*, the curved trumpet, *tuba* the clarion of war, and *tibia*, the reed pipe. The etymology of these words is uncertain, but Ernout and Meillet suggest an Etruscan origin at least for *lituus*. In this connection it is worth mention that the Etruscans favoured wind instruments and are actually credited with the invention of one.¹ On general grounds it would fit in with what we know of the history of central Italy if in early times Etruria was the musical centre. If we could be certain that the Etruscans were of Lydian origin, it would be a little easier to understand why the music of the Greeks was adopted so easily at Rome. For in that case we might find some point of contact. The music of the Greeks was itself deeply influenced by the music of Asia Minor and several of the Greek scales, the Lydian, the Syntonolydian and the Mixolydian bore in their names an acknowledgement of that debt. If the Etruscans came from Lydia or thereabouts, as some scholars still think, their music would have some features in common with the music prevailing in Greece; and the Romans who came under Etruscan influence would later find the partly similar Greek musical idiom easy to assimilate.

But we must not pursue fanciful speculation further. Whatever be the truth about the early music of Italy and Rome, it had died out by the time Rome began to lay the foundations of her literature. Cicero refers to the music which was performed in conjunction with the plays of Livius Andronicus and Naevius; though he praises its *iucunda severitas* as compared with the growing extravagance of his own day, he gives no indication that the music of the last half of the third century B.C. was different in kind from that of the first century (*Leges*, II, 15, 39). In 168 B.C. we hear that Lucius Anicius celebrated his victories over the pirates of Illyria by sending to Greece for the most celebrated pipe-players of the time; and to show his munificence to better advantage he had them all playing on the stage at the same time (Athenaeus, *Deip.*, 615 b). There were, of course, those who saw no good in the popularity of music. Their objections were based on a feeling that artistic activities were not quite in accordance with the Roman's mission in life. Cato, as I

¹ See Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.*, I, 16.

mentioned earlier, objects to Caecilius because he sings; and Scipio Aemilianus found fault with Tiberius Gracchus because he cultivated his voice and declared roundly that such things were formerly considered shameful in a free-born man (Macrobius, *Sat.*, II, 10). But, however consorious the *laudatores temporis acti* might be, the tide was not to be stemmed. After the Asiatic campaigns at the beginning of the last century B.C., the Roman men of wealth gathered round themselves bands of musicians from all parts and introduced whole choirs of singers (*symphoniaci*) into their banquets. Chrysogonus, the henchman of Sulla, had a troupe of this kind, as did the notorious Verres; and Cicero condemns these choirs as an appendage of unprincipled luxury.¹ At the same time, music, or at least the theory of music (as part of the *quadrivium*), came to have a place as one of the subjects of the curriculum; and Varro included the theory of music as one of the topics with which he dealt in his *Libri Disciplinarum*. In the last century of the Republic there were those in Rome who were able to recognize a work after the first bar or so had been played²; and even the ordinary citizen seems to have been sufficiently cultured musically to object to wrong notes, at least if they were too frequent.³

So far as music was concerned Rome had become just like any Hellenistic city. Side by side with the simple lyre the professional cithara found favour and the *tibia* itself was improved to increase its resonance (cf. Horace, *A.P.*, 202). The water organ⁴ which had been invented in Alexandria became popular and Vitruvius gives a detailed description of it (*De Arch.*, X, 8). Asia Minor contributed novelties too. After the campaigns of Sulla and Pompey in the East, the Chaldean *sambuca* was introduced, Syrian pipes and drums were to be heard and the *utriculus*, a curious instrument of the bagpipe tribe from Babylonia, fascinated Nero and his court. Perhaps the

¹ See, e.g. Cic., *In Verrem*, II, 3, 44; 5, 13; 5, 15; *Pro Mil.*, 21, 55.

² Cic., *Acad. Pr.*, II, 7: "quam multa quae nos fugiunt in cantu exaudiunt in eo genere exercitati; qui primo inflatu tibicinis *Antipam* esse aiunt aut *Andromacham*, cum id nos ne suspiciemur quidem."

³ Cic., *De Orat.*, III, 25, 98: "in cantu flexiones et falsae voculae . . . si saepius fiunt multitudo ipsa reclamant."

⁴ The remains of one such *hydraulus* were found at Pompeii.

most extraordinary of all Roman whimsies was the *scabellum*, a rhythmic instrument consisting of two boards fastened to the feet and used as clappers. Writing in the fourth century A.D., Ammianus Marcellinus (XIV, 6, 18) remarks: "Houses which were formerly noted for their cultivation of serious studies are now full of base amusements. Instead of the philosopher the singer is summoned. Libraries are perpetually shut like sepulchres and water organs are manufactured and lyres almost as big as chariots." Influenced by Hellenistic fashions, the Romans developed a fondness for combining many instruments together. In Greece one lyre or a single pipe had generally sufficed for an accompaniment. The Alexandrians became more flamboyant and Athenaeus (*Deip.*, 201 f) tells us of an occasion (possibly exceptional) as early as the third century B.C. when three hundred citharas were massed together at a performance. Even if Seneca (*Ep.*, 84) is exaggerating when he says: "There are now more singers than there were spectators in former times: from the stage resounds every kind of pipe and organ", we can well imagine the effect of combined tibias, citharas, organs, drums, tumpets, cymbals and *scabella* with huge choirs of singers.

To provide for public performances and for the private displays of tasteless ostentation to which Petronius, for example, alludes (*Sat.*, 31-33), there were of course professional musicians. The most highly regarded accomplishment of these virtuosi was the difficult art of singing songs to their own cithara accompaniment. They underwent a severe course of training (cf. Quint., *Inst. Orat.*, XI, 3 19-22), took great care of their voices, lived temperately and travelled about from place to place and received large fees for their performances. When Vespasian restored the theatre of Marcellus the games which marked the opening were graced by the presence of the celebrated Terpnos who received 200,000 sesterces for his services. These virtuosi also competed amongst themselves for prizes which were awarded at musical festivals and competitions. But they could not have relished the intervention of the Emperor Nero who not only delighted in giving public performances but even entered the lists with the professionals (Suet., *Nero*, 20-21). Chief of all competitive

events, even outdoing the Neronia, were the Capitoline festivals, first held under the presidency of Domitian in 86 A.D. For the performances of cithara playing, pipe playing, singing, reciting and organ playing, the huge covered Odeum was built in the Campus Martius to hold as many as 12,000 people. At this festival which took place every fourth summer, poets, singers and musicians competed for the wreath of oak leaves which was presented by the emperor. The comparatively rare occurrence of the festival and the keenness of the competition gave an unparalleled importance to the winning of a prize and the successful competitor was considered the first in his art in the whole of the Roman world.

The title of this lecture was very deliberately phrased; for the scraps of information it contains throw no more than anecdotal light on the more specific topic of "Roman Music". Out of all this vast musical activity spread over several centuries not a single piece of undoubtedly genuine Roman music remains. Not a single one of the small number of surviving fragments of ancient music is a setting of Latin words. Three short hymns, however, to Nemesis, to the Sun, and to Calliope, have a marginal interest in relation to Rome. They have been well known since Vincenzo Galilei published them in 1581 from a thirteenth-century manuscript. It so happens that a line of the Hymn to Nemesis is quoted by a sixth-century writer, John the Lydian, and ascribed by him to a certain Mesodmes. Though we know of no musician of that exact name, there was a Mesomedes, a lyric poet of Crete who was a kind of court musician to the Emperor Hadrian; and it is to him that the Hymn to Nemesis is now generally attributed. Similarities of musical style have also led to the ascription of the Hymn to the Sun to the same composer. Even so, there are those, including the author of the chapter on Greek music in the *New Oxford History of Music*, who doubt whether the music itself goes back back to the second century A.D. and argue that, after all, it is no more than an erudite Byzantine pastiche.¹

As a somewhat melancholy addendum, mention must be made of the books of musical theory which were produced during

¹ At this point in the lecture a recording was played of the three Hymns as sung by Miss Arda Mandikian.

the Empire. Most of them are in Greek, but doubtless they had a circulation throughout the Roman world. Of particularly value and importance are: the three books of *Harmonica* by the great mathematician and geographer Claudius Ptolemaeus (second century A.D.); the three books *De Musica* of Aristides Quintilianus who may—or may not—have been a freedman of the famous Quintilian; the partly theoretical, partly historical treatise *De Musica* which has been handed down under the name of Plutarch (second half of first century A.D.); and the work of a certain Alypius (fourth century A.D.), whose detailed account of the ancient musical notations provides us with the indispensable key for interpreting the few fragments of music which have been preserved on stone or papyrus. In Latin we have an outline of theory in the fifth book of the *De Architectura* of Vitruvius, who was the military engineer of the Emperor Augustus; and in the ninth book of his *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, Martianus Capella (fifth century A.D.) covers similar ground. The most important work in Latin, however, are the five books of the *De Institutione Musica* of Boethius (early sixth century A.D.). This treatise, though having no claim to originality, had a great vogue in the Middle Ages and later; it exerted an influence which it did not intrinsically deserve. Boethius himself, or an intermediary source on which he relied, happens to have misunderstood a relatively elementary but crucial point in Greek musical theory as expounded by Ptolemy, who is specifically mentioned as an authority (IV, 14). The result of this misconception was that an important sequence of scales was transmitted in reverse order and the nomenclature was therefore literally turned topsy-turvy.¹ Later musical theorists, who were concerned not so much with the ancient system as with the developing music of the liturgy of the church, took Boethius, himself a Christian, as a guide for their own theoretical framework and perpetuated the mistake. That is how it came about that the modes of plainsong do not correspond with the Greek and Roman modes which bore the same names.

¹ The confusion is between the *εἶδη τοῦ διὰ πασῶν* "octave species" and the *τόνοι* "transposition scales". For details, see my article "Greek Music and its Relation to Modern Times" in *Journ. of Hellenic Studies*, xl (1920), 37-42.