

Preface

The primary purpose of the meeting on which this volume is based was the discussion of the possibilities of “performing ancient Greek music today”. Professional performers met scholars specialised in ancient music, some of whom are themselves engaged in auditory representation of their subject. While everyone was careful to emphasize the immense amount of unknown that remains, the general spirit was quite optimistic. We agreed that what is extant of ancient compositions doubtlessly deserves to be presented to the – increasingly interested – public, and that any kind of efforts is welcome, as long as it is made entirely clear which features of a specific performance rest on evidence, and which are definitely modern or added due to scholarly necessity or artistic inclination.

The papers assembled in this volume, some considerably extended from their original form, approach the ‘practical’ focus in various ways. Organological questions of tuning and playing techniques are addressed as well as ancient and modern performance contexts and expectations, and the notorious topic of ethos: the psychology of music styles.

The practical aspect of the symposium culminated in an evening of public performances in front of the packed theatre hall of the Academy of Sciences. Here the audience had the unique opportunity to compare several widely differing approaches, ranging from unaccompanied enactment of the vocal line (as preserved in the sources) up to entirely new compositions, based on the rhythms of the ancient text and transmitted musical scales, and to recreations based on fragments of ancient melodies. Reconstructed instruments, as well as choral and solo dance, were also part of the display. A live recording of this concert accompanies the present book; we ask the readers to take it also as a substitute for the discussions, which we have not printed.

The editors wish to express their thanks to Tomasz Rodowicz and his Orkiestra Antyczna who compelled us to organize the symposium as part of the Culture2000 project “Unknown Sources of European Music – Ancient Greece”; to the Austrian Academy of Sciences, who hosted it; and to Ellen Hickmann, without whose International Study Group for Music Archaeology it would not have been possible.

Stefan Hagel

Christine Harrauer