1. Bronze reconstruction of Myron’s group of Athena and Marsyas, once displayed on the Acropolis, Athens (original ca. 450 B.C.). Frankfurt am Main, Städtische Galerie Liebighaus.
THE MYTH OF MARSYS IN ANCIENT GREEK ART: 
MUSICAL AND MYTHOLOGICAL ICONOGRAPHY

ELLEN VAN KEER

Centre Leo Apostel, Vrije Universiteit Brussel

This paper considers the (few) textual and (many) visual sources of the ancient Greek myth of Marsyas from a combined musicological and mythological point of view. Its general aim is twofold: (a) to demonstrate the relative autonomy and mutual complementarity of textual and visual sources in the research of musical and religious history; and (b) to establish the reciprocity of the disciplines involved in studying visual representations of musical myths, notably of musical and mythological iconography. I will substantiate the complementarity of the approaches that researchers take to study the representations of the myth of Marsyas and the music of the aulos in ancient Greek culture and art. One researcher who dedicated much of his time and effort to examining the curse of the aulos and the blessing of mythological iconography in music history was the late and great Emanuel Winternitz, to whom this paper is dedicated.¹

THE MYTH OF MARSYS. According to ancient mythological tradition, the goddess Athena invented the aulos, the ‘double flutes’.² Finding that blowing the instrument impaired her facial beauty, however, she threw it away. Marsyas, a satyr from Phrygia,³ found the flute and was quick to learn and play it, displaying an unusual talent. His great accomplishment enticed him to take up the challenge of a musical contest with Apollo, master of the lyre and ancient Greece’s pre-eminent musician-god.⁴ The winner was to decide on the fate of the loser. This was literally to cost Marsyas his skin. Following the Muses’ inevitable judgment against Marsyas, Apollo elected to have the presumptuous satyr flayed alive. His skin was transformed into an askos (flask, pouch) and hung up as a trophy in a cavern near Celaenae in Phrygia, where from his blood or the tears of the attendants of the contest sprang the river Marsyas, a tributary of the river Meander, which still flows through what we now know as Turkey.⁵

Like the majority of myths, the myth of Marsyas has come down to us in multiple variants and from heterogeneous sources. Literary texts, sculptures, and vases, show numerous and varying aspects and approaches of the myth in Greek antiquity. It also occurs time and again, and in many different ways, in Hellenic, Roman, Renaissance, Baroque and modern art forms, including literature, visual arts, music, and dance.⁶ Greek representations of the myth of Marsyas are mostly to be found in the visual arts, particularly in Attic and South Italian vase painting from the classical era (fifth to third centuries B.C.). However, the most influential representations are those provided in ancient literature, i.e. throughout the Greco-Roman period. Our knowledge of the myth derives largely from the lengthy but late descriptions given by writers such as Ovid (Fast. 6,969; Metam. 6,384), Apuleius (Flor. 3), Apollodorus (Bibl. 1,4,2) or Hyginus (Fab. 165). Texts have traditionally constituted our main source of information about classical myths. Mythology as a field of study is primarily text-oriented, just like classical studies and historical sciences in general.⁷

MYTHOLOGY. Mythological research is dominated by two major currents: historical approach and symbolic interpretation. The former, also called the ‘historico-genetic’ approach, focuses on the origin and evolution of myths and their relationship with historical facts and circumstances. The myth of Marsyas made its appearance in the city of Athens about the middle of the fifth century B.C. Its breakthrough can be ascribed
to the correlation between the controversial status of the flute in the myth and the real-life dispute arising about the instrument in the city at the time. The causes of the differing viewpoints included the Greek’s hostility towards the ‘barbarian’ East, kindled by the Persian wars; rivalry between Athens and Thebes, which sided with Sparta and posed a threat to Athens’ hegemony; the clash within Athens society between the established aristocracy and the nouveaux riches (under the influence of democracy and sophistry); and the musical and religious symbolism of the opposition between stringed and wind instruments (under the influence of Pythagorism). Greek scholars and philosophers related the classical harmony of the heptachord lyre to the cosmic order, opposing the celestial spirituality of stringed music to the worldly effectiveness of wind music. This opposition gained momentum when in Athens the sophisticated concert kithara became the instrument of preference in aristocratic circles, whilst the emerging bourgeoisie had a penchant for the more popular flute music. And not only was the flute the national instrument of the Thebans (Boeotia) but it also originated from the Near East. In Greek religion and mythology, stringed instruments had of old been associated with Apollo, the most ‘Greek’ of the gods, and wind instruments with Dionysos, a ‘strange’ and a ‘foreign’ god. The original Eastern flute, however, was the elymos, one of whose two pipes ended in a horn. The aulos was its Hellenised variant.8 The Theban poet Pindarus (ca. 480 B.C.) ascribed the invention of the aulos to the Greek goddess Athena (Pind. Pyth. 12,6-30). The Athenian texts, by contrast, have her discard the instrument in disgust (cf. Athen. Deip. 14,161e), and the flute picked up by Marsyas (cf. Plut. De coh. Ira 456b). Marsyas was therefore allegedly introduced into Greek mythology to account for Athena’s rejection of the flute and as an expression of the Athenians’ aversion of this instrument, which in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. was stronger than ever. An eminent statesman Alcibiades (ca. 450–404 B.C.) expresses the Athenian’s disdainful view of the flute splendidly. According to Plutarch: ‘he refused to play the flute, holding it to be an ignoble and illiberal thing ... “Flutes, then”, he said, “are for the sons of Thebes; they know not how to converse. We Athenians, as our fathers say, have Athena for foundress and Apollo for patron, one of whom cast the flute away in disgust, and the other flayed the presumptuous flute player’’ (Alc. 2,4–6).9 The Athenians’ aversion of the flute and preference of the lyre was to find its supreme confirmation in the myth of Marsyas and Apollo, which soon enjoyed unprecedented popularity.10

For Herodotus (ca. 480–425 B.C.) and Xenophon (ca. 430–355 B.C.) this myth was not yet more than a local legend from Asia Minor. Herodotus (Hist. 7,26,3) refers to the ‘Phrygian story’ (Phrygoon logos) about Apollo pulling the satyr Marsyas’ skin over his ears at Celaenae. Xenophon (Anab. 1,2,8) refers to the local ‘narrative’ (legetai) of Apollo skinning Marsyas at Celaenae, near the source of the river that was subsequently named after the unfortunate satyr. The old age and the geographic specificity of these extracts suggest a degree of historicity. The Marsyas-Apollo myth may originally have been a local legend from Celaenae, Phrygia, telling the story of a local cult figure. We do not know to what extent the Greek variant of the myth of Marsyas went back to a cult celebrated outside Greece in earlier times, nor are we aware of the original meaning of such an indigenous cult. The reason for this is that there are no indigenous contemporary sources of information on the Phrygian Marsyas cult, but only Greek and, particularly, Roman sources from later dates. Such sources naturally present Greek and Roman interpretations rather than faithful descriptions of the original Phrygian figure of Marsyas.11 Even distinctly Eastern elements in the myth of Marsyas cannot be said to be pre-Hellenic by definition. King Midas’ judgment in favour of Marsyas and the latter’s privileged relationship with the goddess Cybele are absent in the earliest Greek sources and therefore seem to be late Hellenistic associations (for reasons that include their common geographical origin). By analogy, Marsyas’ consanguinity with the Phrygian flutists Hyagnis or Olympos and even his great musical skill itself may be Greek adaptations, inspired, for instance, by Phrygia’s legendary fame as the cradle of the flute and flute music. There is nothing to confirm that these elements were taken directly and entirely from ancient Phrygian cult rituals.12

The second major current is that of interpreting the myth in symbolic terms. Marsyas’ foreign ancestry (Phrygia), capacity (satyr), and other characteristics can also be seen as the intrinsically Greek expressions of his being ‘different’ and even ‘opposite’: ‘non-Greek’, ‘non-divine’, ‘non-civilised’, ‘presumptuous’, ‘ugly’. According to this so-called ‘symbolic-structural’ approach, the myth of Marsyas is not traced back to some tangible historical reality but rather taken to be a symbolic locus communis of a series of fundamental oppositions serving the Greeks to structure and give meaning to their material and immaterial existence: the
West versus the East, gods versus humans, punishment (*nemesis*) versus presumption (*hybris*), the Apollonian versus the Dionysian, celestial lyre music versus passionate flute music. All myths are polysemic and the story of Marsyas is no exception. Its musical references allegedly constitute the ultimate expression of the idea that flute playing is improper and string playing is laudable. On the one hand, this idea is reduced to a historical reality based on a number of political, social, cultural and musical circumstances. On the other, it is interpreted in symbolic terms according to a series of truths in the spheres of ethics, philosophy and religion. These two extreme positions, that of the so-called ‘reflectors’ and that of the ‘constructors’, are, of course, not mutually exclusive but complementary.
MYTHOLOGICAL ICONOGRAPHY. Images and texts are complementary too. In spite of this, researchers have traditionally taken pictorial representations of mythological events to be mere illustrations accompanying the textual versions of myths, and even today the bias is towards relating developments in mythology primarily to literary history. The Athena-Marsyas myth may serve to illustrate this phenomenon. Towards the middle of the fifth century B.C., the myth enjoyed a sudden increase in popularity. The specific reason for this is said to have been the success of the dithyramb Marsyas, composed by Melanippides of Melos (ca. 480 B.C.). According to Athenaeus ‘Melanippides had ridiculed aulos-playing splendidly in his Marsyas, when he said of Athena: “Athena threw the instruments from her holy hand and said: ‘Away, shameful things, defilers of my body! I do not give myself to ugliness’” (Deip. 14.616e–f).15 This is in line with a sculpture we know from Plinius and Pausanias, in terms of both content and chronology. Pausanias (1,24,1), in describing the Acropolis of Athens, refers to a statue representing Athena in the act of striking Marsyas the silen for taking up the flute that the goddess wished to be cast away for good. Plinius (N.H. 34,57), in his summary description of the major works of the famous Greek sculptor Myron of Eleutherai (ca. 480–445 B.C.), refers to a satyr marvelling at the flute and an Athena. The connection between both extracts has led researchers to conclude that at some moment halfway the fifth century B.C. Myron created an Athena and Marsyas group that remained on the Acropolis of Athens for a long stretch of time. The group reoccurs in Roman copies [fig. 1]16 and possibly also in several fifth-century Attic red figure vase representations.17 They all show Athena casting away the flute and Marsyas shrinking from her. In the traditional hierarchy of historical sources, texts come before sculptures, which in turn come before vases. Thus, Myron’s group is usually taken to honour Melanippides’ play, with the vase representations being regarded as inspired by the statue group.18 More
than one approach can of course be followed to explain the occurrence of common themes in works of literary and plastic art. Of the two positions at both ends of the scale, the first upholds that there is a direct link, for instance, in a sculpture commemorating a stage performance or a vase painting representing a scene from a play. According to the opposite view, there is no direct link and any common themes between textual and pictorial representations must necessarily be ascribed to a unique historical coincidence or a more universal symbolism, for instance in the case of musical representations with ecstatic accents. In theory, either of these options can always be postulated but rarely refuted. Another viewpoint, which we share, maintains that texts and images autonomously derive from a common tradition and are indirectly linked to each other. They express, each in their own language, the many different aspects of the same socio-historical realities, including myths. Text and image require a proper methodology and represent autonomous, equivalent and mutually complementary historical and mythological sources.

The surviving texts contain the first instance of Athena being associated with the flute through the degrading context of the Marsyas myth, i.e. when in Melanippides’ dithyramb she horrified casts away the instrument. However, an earlier Attic black-figure vase shows the goddess playing the flute (fig. 2). This suggests that Athena’s notorious aversion of the flute should be qualified. She discards an instrument for which she felt a strong liking. Outside Athens, Athena maintained good relations with the flute. The Theban texts in particular praise her as the inventor of flute music on the occasion of Perseus’ victory over the Medusa (Pind. Pyth. 12, 6–30). They tell us how she provided the instrument to the humans by making it a gift at the wedding of Kadmos – Thebes’ founder – and Harmonia (Alcman ap. Ps.-Plut. De mus. 14, 1336a). They even have her teach the art of flute playing to Apollo (Corinna ap. Ps-Plut. De mus. 14, 1336b). However, the texts can differ substantially from the images. Athena is never shown playing the flute in any Beotian imagery, although she is on an Attic vase (fig. 2), and beyond that also in Apulian ceramics (fig. 3). Hence, Athena’s exceptional love of the flute in Thebes also calls for qualifying.

**Music History.** Approached from a music historical perspective, the widely known incongruence in Athena’s attitudes towards the flute in Athens and Thebes, respectively, in fact seems to point to strongly contested musical developments that took place throughout the Greek world from the classical period onwards, impelled by the great Theban schools of music and led by flute music. Unlike mythologists’ usual assumptions, the subject of Pindar’s 12th Pythian ode, praising the flute, is not the aulos in general but more in particular the fact that the great degree of technical perfection and extensive harmony range of this instrument achieved in his city in his days were such that flute playing (auletics) was now capable of invoking all kinds of sounds and affections and apt for widely differing situations. The Theban poet ascribes these innovations to the goddess Athena, whom he does not praise as the inventor of the flute, the aulos, per se, but rather as the patroness of the art of flute playing and flute music, i.e. auletics. It was under her protection that the Thebans placed their technical-organological innovations of the flute, their new scales and rhythms for flute music, and their flute virtuosi. This new style of flute music triggered a major controversy, which seriously compromised the status of the flute throughout Greek society and left its mark on mythology.

The agonistic and ambivalent myth of Marsyas epitomises this controversy in all respects. For example, in Athenian literature Marsyas is reprehended for his ugliness but also extolled for his invention of the phorbeia (cf. Plut. De coh. ira 456b). The mouthpiece was one of the major improvements of the aulos, both technically and aesthetically. It ensured less distortion of the flute player’s jaws, greater blowing ease and hence made the instrument more suitable for public performances (the flutist could play louder and longer). It was the very Melanippides, the composer of the earliest verses on Marsyas in the form of a dithyramb aimed to ridicule the flute, who introduced instrumental flute solos into this musical genre. Melanippides was one of the founders of the new (flute) music and a much disputed musician. “For before until the time of Melanippides the dithyrambic poet it was the custom of the flute players to be paid by the poets, because evidently the poetry was the more important part, and the flute players served the producers. Later this custom too was corrupted”, complained his contemporary fellow-townsmen Pherecrates (ca. 430 B.C.) in a tone of reproach about him in his Cheiron (ap. Ps.-Plut. De mus. 1141c–d). As we can see, we should seriously qualify even Melanippides’ hostility and the Athenian’s overall aversion of flute music. They go hand in hand with an enormous expansion of the use and role of the flute in the Athenian and Greek societies.
The Thebans had raised the number of flute holes and introduced metal rings for complete or partial closure. In this way, a single instrument allowed for various harmonies. Until then, tuning had been fixed, with a different type of flute for each of the three great modes (Dorian, Lydian and Phrygian). To play a different scale, the flutist had to change instruments, but now, in the new system, he needed only one instrument. Additionally, it enabled the player to make diatonic, chromatic and enharmonic music. There was a fusion of scales and musical genres. In the traditional forms of music, the harmonies and modes were fixed: Dorian harmony and diatonic mode for hymns, Phrygian harmony and enharmonic keys for dithyrambs, and so on. The composers had to strictly abide by the nomoi of tradition. Traditional compositions were largely homophonic, without harmony or counterpoint, developing along a single melodic line that was tightly followed by the accompanying instruments. Traditional music, championed by string music, was linear, simple and sober. The new style of music, spurred on by flute music, was quite different. Complex compositions were now written for polyphonic instruments, requiring great technical skill. Moreover, the widened range of musical possibilities of the flute and the markedly increased technical difficulty of flute playing placed the virtuoso in the limelight. The instrumentalist now relegated the vocal element to the background, whereas traditionally the vocal line and lyrics had outweighed the instrumental accompaniment. This could not but arouse strong resistance, which was to find a symbolic expression in the winged words of the other-
wise obscure comedy poet Pratinas of Phlius (fifth century B.C.). Displeased by the way in which vocals and chorus had been made subservient to the instruments, particularly to the flute, he called for a rehabilitation of the traditional Dorian choral lyrics, in which both content and form of the songs are superior to the instrumental accompaniment of the *kithara*: “It is song that the Muse made queen. Let the *aulos* dance after it, since it is a servant” (Ap. Athen. Deip. 14.617d).31

Also this issue reappears in the Marsyas myth.32 Diodorus Siculus, an Hellenistic author, tells us that Apollo was defeated by Marsyas in the first round of the contest, but in the second round managed to overcome his opponent by singing to the music of his lyre, something that is impossible with the flute (Cyb. 3, 58–59). In addition to – or maybe rather than – the eternal antagonism between wind and string instruments, the contest between Marsyas and Apollo also represents the strife between the competing currents in Greek music. Actually we come across this idea in as early a writer as Xenophon, the first Greek author to mention the contest, describing it as a duel peri sophias, i.e. a competition in skills and arts (Anab. I.2.8).33 For the ancient Greeks Marsyas was a gifted musician and the importance of the art of flute playing was waxing. However, in traditional music, which was intended to please Apollo, the *aulos* and auletics were supposed to be subservient to the chorus (song). In its own words, the myth of Marsyas warns against the temptations and dangers of the innovating polyphony of flute playing, as opposed to traditional string music, contrasting the two principal styles in the music history of ancient Greece.34

**Musical Iconography.** Myths are of course not the main focus of historians of Greek music. From the outset, their emphasis has been on the tools (partitions, instruments) and reconstruction of ancient Greek music. The actual sound of music has not survived. But we do have texts and material remains which inform us about fundamental aspects such as its rhythm and instrumentation.35 Especially in connection with the music of prehistorical Greece, visual representations are a long time established source category in music history. They also represent an important source of information about the music history of the later periods. Music historians have all kinds of representations of music in art at their disposal. As myths are very common subject in Greek art, they generally also study mythological representations of music.36 A first and obvious approach is organological, according to which musical representations are objective visualisations allowing the first-hand study of formal and technical aspects of musical instruments.37 A representation of a disappointed Marsyas listening to Apollo is particularly interesting because on the flute in Marsyas’ hands are depicted the holes. The few existing ancient Greek pictorial representations of flute holes do not allow for many conclusions about the developments in their position, size or number, but this particular visualisation does show that the holes were arranged in staggered rows, presumably for practical reasons, and that either pipe typically had four holes, to allow for pentatonic music.38 In another representation of the contest, in which Marsyas is playing the flute while Apollo is already tuning his instrument, we can see that the god, in doing so, rests his right hand on the yoke while holding his left hand between the strings to avoid vibrations.39 A further vase painting that shows among the audience two Muses holding a similar stringed instrument confirms that two different fixation systems were used side by side [fig. 4].40

The more recent perceptual approach considers the visual representations of music to be indicative of sound and rhythm and of their subjective effects. Thus, dynamic scenes represent up-tempo and relatively tempestuous music, as opposed to calm tableaux.41 It appears from the representations that the lyre is usually associated with serenity, whereas the flute is more often shown to arouse feelings of elation.42 In particularly buoyant scenes, the *aulos* is always present, while the *kithara* is a typical instrument in subdued situations. The *aulos* and the *kithara* therefore do not merely represent two subsequent styles in Greek music history but also two simultaneously existing musical genres evoking opposite moods among the audience. The concrete opposition of the two instruments that we can see from the scenes depicted on an uncommon Attic vase may well have been chosen on purpose [fig. 4]. The neck of the vase shows Marsyas playing the *aulos* to Apollo and a dancing satyr in high spirits. In the scene on the body, Marsyas, by way of exception, plays the *kithara* to Athena and Apollo, who quietly listen to the music. In other words, even though we can no longer actually hear Greek music, we can still sense it from the movements of the subjects of musical representations in ancient Greek art. It confirms the (mimetic) theory, which maintains that the listener imitates and partakes of the music through physical movements. This insight opens an important new perspective of musical iconography and Greek music history.43
Musical representations have traditionally been a main source of information about the role of music in Greek society. According to the most traditional “historical” approach, musical representations are objective visualisations of musical practices and customs illustrating the function of music in the fields of education (musical lessons), combat (battle scenes), entertainment (symposia), and religious practices (processions). From this point of view, scenes of Athena playing the flute are interesting because they refer to the presence of flute music in this goddess’ cult throughout the Greek world (fig. 1 is from Apulia; fig. 2 is from Athens). Moreover, the depiction of flute-playing Athena on a panathenaic vase [fig. 2] bears a direct relation to the musical contests performed in her cult. Panathenaic vases (and their contents) were the awards for the winners of contests during games held in Athens in honour of Athena. It makes perfect sense that the flute-playing goddess on this vase is depicted facing Heracles, the athletic hero and epitome of the Greek competitor, who is playing the lyre. At panathenaic festivities there were both gymnastic competitions and musical contests for flute and for lyre. That is why on panathenaic vases serving as awards Athena can sometimes be seen playing the kithara and Heracles occasionally even playing the flute.

The last but not the least important is the ‘cognitive’ approach, in which musical representations are regarded as visualisations of ancient Greek musical thought and beliefs as they are expressed in associations of musical instruments with religious behaviour, mythological figures or symbolic significance. This is where the major discrepancies between text and image become clear. In connection with the special ethical qualities that fifth-century scholars ascribed to the heptachord, for example, some are keen to suggest a linear increase of the number of lyre strings to the classical number of seven. However, eleven-string lyres were
depicted as early as the fifth century, while we have fourth-century pictorial representations of five-string lyres.\textsuperscript{47} Literary sources also induce us to strictly oppose Apollonian to Dionysian music and to associate strings and string music with Apollo and wind instruments with Dionysos. Nevertheless, Greek visual arts do show strings in Dionysian contexts as well. The barbitos even proves to be a predominantly Dionysian instrument used to accompany symposiums, songs at banquets, or komos dances.\textsuperscript{48} On vases, the kithara, in literature presented as the Apollonian instrument par excellence, can also be seen in Dionysian contexts. Even Dionysos could play it, just like the Muses could play the aulos to Apollo.\textsuperscript{49} It is clearly not only the kind of instrument that determines the Apollonian or Dionysian nature of musical representations. Many stringed instruments and wind instruments occur in both contexts.\textsuperscript{50}

In music, the Dionysian-Apollonian distinction is not a fixed feature of instruments as a mere material fact. However, it does manifest itself in the context of music as a complex performative phenomenon. Dionysian music often turns out to be purely instrumental and it is invariably highly rhythmic, prompting the audience to move and dance. Apollonian music, by contrast, rather invites to listen. It often involves singing (and lyrics).\textsuperscript{51} Yet Dionysos too liked instrumentally accompanied singing, while Apollo’s music could be danced to.\textsuperscript{52} Not at any moment did the mousikè technè – the arts under the protection of the Muses – imply exclusively instrumental play for the Greeks, but rather the combination of poetry (lyrics), music (sound) and dance (movement). These three elements were inextricably intertwined.\textsuperscript{53} In other words, Apollo’s music (lyrics and sound) and Dionysos’ music (sound and movement) were not only each other’s contrasts but also, and particularly, each other’s necessary complement. The flute and the lyre are at both ends of the gamut of Greek music, and together they evoke numerous aspects of what ‘music’ meant to the ancient Greeks. The synthesis of flute and lyre sums up Greek music as a whole. Such an interpretation leads us to Winternitz’ concept of musical iconology, according to which musical instruments and scenes are invested with symbolic meanings, beyond their physical qualities and immediate musical significance. This is obviously the case in mythological representations.\textsuperscript{54}

\textbf{Musical Iconology.} It goes without saying that any adequate study of mythological representations of music must necessarily account for mythology. Musical iconology requires that musicology and mythology meet and this is at the benefit of both disciplines as well as of our understanding of the mythological images of music in ancient Greek art. To give an example: if we were to take a one-sided music historical approach, it would be impossible to recognize that the representation of Athena from Apulia, which at first glance suggests her love of the instrument, in fact points to all the controversy about the aulos in Greek music and society of those days [fig. 3]. One youth stands in front of Athena, holding up a mirror for her to see her facial distortions, which will cause her to cast away the flute in Athens before Marsyas’ feet. A satyr, far right, responds to Marsyas’ Attic iconography in the context of the Athena-Marsyas myth [fig. 1]. On the other hand, Athena lacks her typical military paraphernalia (helmet, lance). She looks quite affable and her only distinction is her shield, the aegis, bearing the head of the Gorgon Medusa with a hundred snakes for her hair. It refers to the Theban myth telling us of Athena’s invention of auletics on the occasion of Perseus’ victory over the Medusa through the composition of the nomos polycephalos, the song of the many heads, a piece played in Athena’s cult (Pind. Pyth. 12). In a language and modality of its own, this Apulian mythological representation depicts a complex controversy in Greek (music) history.\textsuperscript{55}

Inversely, a one-sided approach of mythology would fail to grasp the full meaning of the unusual Attic representation of Marsyas playing the flute and Olympos playing the lyre [fig. 5].\textsuperscript{56} Despite the name inscriptions these identifications are disputed for a variety of reasons. One such reason is that the mythological joint staging of Marsyas and Olympos, as two eminent Eastern musicians, in Athens occurs only very rarely on its own. Another is that Marsyas (inscr. Marsusas) and Olympos (inscr. Olympos) are surrounded by Dionysian figures only, while Athenian scenes of Marsyas usually show him in less respectable, Apollonian contexts. Moreover, the instrument Olympos is holding is a lyre and not, as we would expect, a flute. For all these reasons, many mythologists think that in fact Apollo is represented here, with the name inscription referring to Mount Olympos as the site of the god’s musical contest with Marsyas. However, this runs counter to all well-known mythographical traditions. What we do know from literary sources is Olympos playing the lyre and associated with Apollo (cf. Ps.-Plut. De mus 1137b). In this representation, the two are contaminated, much in the same way the maenads here bear the names of Muses: Thalia, Calliope and Urania.\textsuperscript{57} And that
is not all, for the entire representation is highly ambivalent. The young man with the lyre, for instance, is wearing a laurel wreath on his head, a typically Apollonian attribute. But he is accompanied by a swan, usually associated with Olympos. The swan may serve to emphasise the god’s rural origin, in Phrygia, which is necessary because the figure of a naked youth with a lyre gives Olympos a definitely Greek appearance. It might also serve to add erotic connotations to Olympos’ behaviour, and possibly the lyre can be taken to be a love gift to Marsyas, for the relationship between Olympos and Marsyas would acquire erotic overtones. However, this happened only in a few isolated cases, at a late stage, and initially only in Southern Italy. On the other hand, their relationship is never antagonistic or comparable to that between Marsyas and Apollo. In spite of this, the scene on the vase is usually assumed to represent an opposition of the two central figures. Firstly, because of the fundamental antithesis between strings and winds and their more universal symbolism. And secondly, more in particular, because of the panathenaic character of this vase. It was awarded to the winner of a contest held at the panathenaic festivities. The winning piece, in form or in content, staged the rivalry between competing musical genres and styles in Athens: Calliope is the Muse of epic lyricism, her attribute is the lyre; Thalia is the Muse of the comedy and dithyramb, her attribute is the flute. Together, they represent the old versus the innovating musical genres, just like Marsyas and Olympos. Marsyas’ career was in its heyday in Athens in the fifth century B.C., moving on the wings of the new (flute) music. Olympos was a mythological and semi-historical flutist associated with an early stage and early style in Greek music.
He was supposed to be the author of musical pieces and harmonies for flute that with time would also be played using other instruments. Olympos was the legendary inventor of enharmonics and his name became synonymous with tragic music. In mythology, he was the son or beloved disciple of Marsyas, who was a tragic musician-hero par excellence. Olympos preferring the flute to the lyre is therefore a particularly far-reaching and comprehensive personification of Marsyas’ tragedy. Yet this scene cannot be regarded as a downright disqualification of flute music or a partial tribute to lyre music. The lyre is with Olympos, not with Apollo, even though the former was a follower of Marsyas and an Eastern musician of renown. It reminds us of the fact that also the lyre originated from the East and was transformed by the major musical innovations that took place during the classical period. As musical hero with the lyre, Olympos is the highly tragic harbinger of the ill-fated destiny of Marsyas and flute music, indicating a similar ending awaited string music and the heroes of the lyre. Many of these died a ghastly death: Orpheus was torn limb from limb by the maenads, or Linos was killed by his disciple Heracles. In mythology, Apollo, the god of the lyre, is allowed to overcome Marsyas, the hero of the flute. In real life, developments in the art of flute playing overtake the evolution of string music. Although the two instruments represent different genres and styles of music, they coincide in origin (the East) and fate (new music).²⁶

This interpretation is in line with the actual situation in Athens in classical times, as far as the history of music is concerned. There were two dominant currents: Olympos’ (by then) traditional music and Marsyas’
(at the time still) progressive music. It also links up with the more universal antithesis between stringed and wind instruments, between Apollonian music and Dionysian music. Moreover, these sharp musical contrasts imply numberless subtle mythological ambivalences and complex religious realities, which were visualised in greater detail in Greek pictorial art. Stringed instruments are usually in the hands of Apollo or related characters, such as the Muses or Athena [fig. 6]. The scenes represented on the amphora in figure 5 are an exception to this rule. On the body, it is Marsyas who is playing the *kithara*, while on the neck Apollo appears in an unusually lighthearted scene, with satyr dancing to Marsyas’ flute playing. Apollo is normally found in serene tableaux, with the characters depicted listening intently to musical performances on stringed instruments. Dynamic scenes, by contrast, are peopled with flute playing and dancing satyrs and mainly Dionysian characters. Most of the time, it is only Marsyas who appears playing the flute in quiet scenes, in the presence of Apollonian figures, as in figure 7. It will be clear that the terms ‘Apollonian’ and ‘Dionysian’ are quite ambiguous and cover multifarious and multivalent musical and religious realities and symbolisms that are not at any point wholly mutually exclusive. Neither musical instruments nor mythological and religious characters pertain exclusively to either sphere but instead appear in differing contexts. The *aulos* is associated with the most widely varying religious and mythological characters, including Marsyas, Athena, the maenads and the Muses. These associations originate from and give expression to the various aspects of this highly multivalent instrument. Marsyas is also associated with different musical instruments: *aulos*, *syrinx*, *lyra*, *kithara*. All these instruments were considered suitable for ‘his’ music. This music not only moved its maker into a position that was diametrically opposed to Apollo’s, but it also made Marsyas the leader of Dionysos’ retinue, the *thiasos*, even in Athens.

The visual representations make explicit the implicitly omnipresent tension and ambivalence of Greek myths. Indeed, ambivalence is one of the main characteristics of ancient Greek mythological and religious thinking. The curse of the *aulos* is highly ambivalent too. Auletics is not merely doomed, improper, inferior or the complete opposite of the superior art of the *kithara*, in the way that Marsyas is not just the complete counterpart of Apollo. Nor is the latter merely the god of reason, harmony, music, medicine and justice. He gives and takes, cures and kills, is both merciful and vengeful, makes music and war, plays the *kithara* and listens to the *aulos*. Apollo with the *kithara* and Marsyas with the *aulos* are not mutually exclusive – quite the contrary, they are interdependent. It is the very acuteness of their antithesis that make them a balanced, harmonious and complete whole. Their synthesis moreover encompasses the various aspects of ancient Greek music and music history (origin, evolution, styles), both historically (words, movement, sound) and symbolically (aesthetics, ethics, religion, mythology). The famous Praxitelian representation of the Marsyas-Apollo contest thus visualises, in a language and modality of its own, the gamut of Greek music, from its material to its symbolic aspects, from its musicological to its mythological dimensions. Consequently, only an integrated approach to its study will offer perspectives for revealing their intertwinenment and the multi-layeredness of this representation [fig. 7].

**CONCLUSION.** Literary works have traditionally constituted the principal sources of information about Greek mythology. However, myths have come down to us not only in the form of texts but also, and above all, in visual arts. Iconography offers promising new perspectives for the study of the Greek Marsyas myth. The Athena-Marsyas myth is usually studied for its strong political content (historical). The Marsyas-Apollo myth is known above all as one of the main Greek *agon* and *hybris* myths (symbolic). Only rarely do mythologists focus on the musical aspects of the Marsyas myth. They are studied quite exclusively in terms of music history. The integration of these perspectives would open the door to a more comprehensive understanding of the mythological representation of music. Integrated study of the visual representations of the myth of Marsyas helps us to leave behind the conventional interpretation of this myth and gain a better insight into the rich variety that is so characteristic of Greek mythology. Indeed, this study of the representations of the myth of Marsyas and the music of the *aulos* in ancient Greek culture and art shows that not only iconography and philology, but also musicology and mythology, and even Dionysos en Apollo, are intrinsically complementary. Certain antagonisms have become almost proverbial characteristics of ancient Greek culture: logos and mythos, Apollonian and Dionysian, *kithara* and *aulos*. The myth of Marsyas refers to many of them. These opposites however do not appear as strict polarities. Many variations are indeed possible.

2 The word aulos is difficult to translate since in our times there is no identical instrument. ‘Flute’ or ‘flutes’, the terms commonly used to refer to aulos, are inaccurate because, unlike the modern flute and like the oboe and the bassoon, the aulos had a reed mouthpiece. On the other hand, there are significant differences between the aulos and our reed instruments. It was possibly played using circular breathing and it typically consisted of two pipes (which is why it was often referred to in its plural form auloi). The monaulos was a single-stemmed variant and the plagaulos, also consisting of one pipe, was played way of our transverse flute. The Greeks used several other wind instruments, such as the syrinx (panpipes) and the salpinx (trumpet), but they played only a minor role. That is why we continue to translate aulos by ‘flute’. After all, flute music was mainly aulos music. Cf. Frieder Zaminer, “Musikinstrumente: V. Griechenland”, Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike (Stuttgart; Weimar: Metzler, 2000), vol. VIII.1, 543-551.

3 In Greek mythology, satyrs or silens — their distinction is unclear — are half man half beast (horse or goat), sprites or vegetation demons roaming the woods and mountains. They were Dionysos’ high-spirited attendants, making music, dancing and drinking to honour their god. The maenads were their female counterparts. Cf. Erika Simon, “Silenoi”, Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae (Zürich: Artemis, 1997), vol. VIII.1, 1108-1133 for sources and recent bibliography.

4 The word ‘lyre’ is the generic term for stringed instruments, including chelys, phorminx, barbitos, kithara and lyra alike. The chelys was the most rudimentary instrument in ancient Greece. It originally consisted of the shell of a tortoise covered with animal skin. This sound-body had two necks mounted to it, which were interlinked by a cross-piece. The strings were attached between the cross-piece and the body. The phorminx was the instrument of the bards, and was much bigger, heavier and sophisticated than the chelys. The kithara was a more elaborated form of the phorminx. It was a grand instrument often used in public performances. The lyra was a further elaboration of the chelys and hence not quite as big, heavy, and sophisticated as the kithara. The barbitos was a bass whose strings were larger-sized, longer and lower-pitched. Cf. Reginald P. Winnington-Ingram, “Greece. Ancient”, The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Ed. by Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001), vol. X, 348-372.


7 Cf. just recently Robin Hard, The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology (London: Routledge, 2004), 1-20; “Source for Greek Myths” only provides an alphabetical list of the most important classical authors (and works) in the study of ancient Greek myth.


10 Water and music appear to be Marsyas principal characteristics in Celaenae in Roman days (Apamea Kibotos) as he appears on its coins with the full horn (cornucopia) and the flute (aulos): A. Weis, Marsyas, 368, nos. 2 and 7 (illustrated). Water could be Marsyas’ oldest aspect. Several rivers flowing through Pthia, Lydia or Caria carried this etymologically obscure name. The natural allegorist Max Müller, “Marsyas”, OLZ 1913, 433-436 already connected the name with water and streams and explained the myth of Marsyas on the basis of recurring natural phenomena. The music historian Martin Vogel, “Der Schlau der Marsyas”, RKMus 107 (1994), 49-56, on the other hand, links the name and myth to an indigenous ass cult and to the origin and evolution of the bagpipes. Everyone does agree on the fact that the name and the satyr Marsyas are non-native Greek and have eastern origins. For the origins, content, significance and many interpretations of the myth of Marsyas cf. Maria Rilke Miaties, “Marsyas Agonistes”, Current Musicology 69 (2000), 118-162.

11 King Midas adjudged in favour of Marsyas, for which Apol- lo punished him by giving him ass’s ears. This theme may have been a late addition to the Greek Marsyas or Midas myth. The historical King Midas of Pthia lived ca. 700 B.C. In Greek mythology, he was known above all for his capture of Silenos.
He took her back to Dionysos, who awarded Midas with the gift that everything he touched was turned to gold. From the fourth century, he was given ass’s ears by way of punishment. The narrative link with Apollo’s response to Mida’s misjudgment in the contest with Pan or Marsyas is of an even later date. Possibly, it was not until the Hellenistic or Roman period that the story of Midas was integrated with the Marsyas myth. In this period, Greco-Roman and Eastern cultures were in close contact, resulting in substantial exchange. This means that numerous Eastern elements from the ancient Marsyas mythology may well be from a very late date. Cf. Margaret C. Miller, “Midas”, LIMC VIII.1 (1997), 846-851. A first blend of Greek and Eastern religions and music occurred in the orientalising period (seventh century B.C.). It was already at this stage that the legendary Phrygian flutist Olympos entered the Greek world. By contrast, Marsyas’ influence was not felt until well into the classical period. The rise of the two figures in Phrygia seems to have been mutually independent. Cf. Anne H. Weis, “Olympos” LIMC VIII.1 (1997), 38-45. The flute could also have originated independently. It is not even sure that it actually originated in Phrygia. Its historical roots are unclear and already a matter of debate in ancient times. For Pausanias it took roots in Troizen (2,31,3) but also Thbes made a claim for it (Pind. Pyth. 12). Cf. Martin L. West, Ancient Greek Music (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), esp. 80-84 and 330-332, ut infra.


As commonly suggested when scenic objects are depicted, such as a column with a tripod (a tripod was dedicated after a performance), or when subjects are of an highly unusual or exactly identical theme as in the texts. Cf. an Apulian calyx-krater, Napoli, Museo Nazionale, F.3370, first half of the fourth century B.C., where Marsyas appears with the kithara. This highly unusual theme is explained by the fact that this is a ‘Phlyax vase’, a type of vases that is linked to local performances in South Italy. Marsyas and Apollo wear theatrical costumes and a mask. A tripod stand between them: Arthur D. Trendall, Phlyax Vases, BICS Suppl. 19. (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1967), 40, no. 49. Pl. 4b; Heide Froning, Dithyrambs and Vasenmalerei in Athen. Beitrag zur Archäologie 2 (Würzburg: Tritsch, 1971), 43, no. 3 with further sources, discussion and bibliography.


It was Horatii’s remark “ut pictura poesis” (as is painting, so is poetry) that unintentionally triggered the debate on the relationship between literary and pictorial representations. The dispute gathered momentum when Leonardo da Vinci, in Para- gone, ranked the art of painting first, and Lessing, in Laokoon, gave preference to the art of poetry. The battle continues until this very day. As far as the visual arts of ancient Greece are concerned, the issue has polarised the community of researchers. Carl Robert was the first to make out a case, in his Bild und Lied (1881), for abandoning the idea that vase painters did their jobs holding a papyrus roll in one hand and a brush in the other. Louis Sechan, however, in his Études sur la tragédie grecque dans ses rapports avec la céramique (1926), demonstrated that certain vase scenes were undeniably text-bound. The non-philological approach at presently prevails. Cf. Oliver Taplin, Comic Angels and Other Approaches to Greek Drama through Vase-Painting (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), esp. 21-23 with bibliography.


Attic black-figured neck-amphora, Basel, private collect-


25 Also literature indicates that Athena was not unfavourable to the flute in South Italy. The dithyrambic poet Telestes of Selinus (fourth century B.C.) could not believe that the clever goddess Athena, frightened by her ugliness, disposed of the flute, so that it could become the glory of Marsyas. How could beauty have been of any concern to Athena? Telestes considers this story as a jealous imputation of stupid barns against a clever art (ap. Athen. XIV, 616f-617a).


30 Nomoi were precisely defined melodic structures with a proper program that served a specific use. The Greeks knew four kinds of nomoi: the nomos kitharodikos, a musical piece for kithara and voice, the nomos aulodikos, for aulos and voice, the nomos auletikos, only for the aulos and the nomos kitharistikos, just for the kithara. Cf. Solon Michaelides, The Music of Ancient Greece: An Encyclopedia (London: Faber, 1978), s.v. "nomos", 222. The same term was used for denoting laws. Plato, to violate the musical 'laws' would also subvert the social and political order (Resp. 4.424b-c).

31 τὰν αὐτὶν κατέστησε Πιερῆς βασιλεῖαν ὣς ἀλὸς ὀστερὸν χρυσετῶ, καὶ γὰρ ἐνὶ ὑμερίες, English translation from A. Barker, AGMV VI, 273. This quotation has long been connected with the rather puzzling lyre playing and singing procession of satyrs on an Attic red-figured bell-krater with the inscription 'singers at the Panathenaiak', New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 25.78.66, ca. 425–420 B.C., Pollon: ARV² 117, no. 8; E. Simon, op. cit.: 1119, no. 97. For many scholars they present, as does the myth of Marsyas, a conscious allegory of the victor of the new lyre music over the flute music. T.B.L. Webster, The Greek Chorus (London: Methuen: 1970), 133 fig. 9.

32 The antagonism between the aulos and the word (logos) is also present in the critique of Alcibiades who considers the flute not worthy to be played by a free man, but only suitable for Thelians who are not able to communicate (ap. Plut. Alc. 2,5-6). According to Aristoteles it is plausible that Athena, being a goddess of wisdom, discards of the flute because it has nothing to do with the mind, rather than out of horrorification with her ugly face while playing the instrument (Pol. 6, 8, 1341b).

33 This idea also occurs in Plato's writings, when he compa-


36 As does Max Wegner, Musik und Tanz. Archéologica Homerica. Die Donkermáler und das Frühgriechische Epos. Ed. by Friedrich Matz & Hans-Günther Buchholz. vol. III:U (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968). The other way around, however, as sound is not preserved in the historical record, music is frequently overlooked by non-musicalological scholarship. Although it was all around in Greek culture, music has become a prerogative of music historians. These are traditionally primar-

Ellen Van Keer, *The Myth of Marsyas in Ancient Greek Art: Musical and Mythological Iconography*


40 Attic red-FIGured volute-krauter, Rusv. Jatta, 1093, ca. 410 B.C., Painter of Kadmos: ARV², 1184, no. 1; D. Paquette, *op. cit.*, 158, no. L21 (partly illustrated); A. Weis, “Marsyas”, 373, no. 43 (fully illustrated).


42 In images of dance or symposia the aulos is typical, while the kithara is strikingly absent. In ancient Greece, the aulos is originally the most typical musical instrument of satyrs, being played in their exalted processions. On the contrary, in processions of gods typically only the kithara is present, in particular to characterize Apollo. Cf. Anemone Zschätzsch, Verweckung und Bedeutung griechischer Musikinstrumente im Mythos und Kult (Raden: Leidorf, 2002), 88-89 (satyrs) en 35-38 (Apollo).


45 In the thiasos (the retinue of Dionysos) the horned typically dances on the tones of the aulos (often played by satyrs) and to the rhythm of the krotala (characteristic instrument of the maenads), cf. an Attic black-FIGured kylix Mississippi University, 1977.3.105, ca. 480 B.C., Makron: ARV², 462, no. 42, Carlo Gasparri, “Dionysos”, LIMC 463-464 no. 469 (illustrated) with further sources and discussion. The musicians accompanying Apollo as kitharode typically consists of the Muses, who might sing to the God’s music, as is indicated by the presence of a scroll cf. an Attic lekythos Hannover, Kestner-museum, 1961.24, ca. 440-430 B.C., Phiale Painter: ARV¹ 1021, no. 107bis, G. Kokorou-Alewras, *op. cit.*, 269, no. 690a (illustrated) with further sources and discussion. Also when poets sing their poetry to their stringed instrument in mythological contexts, they are typically listened to by Apollo and the Muses. This is always the case when mythological poets such as Musaios or Thamyris perform. The latter, for that matter, even engaged in a singing contest with the Muses, which of course he lost.

46 Dionysos sings to his music on a famous Attic black-FIGured kylix, Paris, Cabinet des Medailles, 576, ca. 500-480 B.C., Byrgos Painter: *ARV², 371, no. 14; C. Gasparri, *op. cit.*, 463, no. 465 (illustrated); A. Zschätzsch, *op. cit.*, 79, no. 4; all with further sources and discussion. Apollo dances to his music on an early Attic black-FIGured kylix, Allard Pierson Museum, 13.367, sixth century B.C., Taras Painter, Gerda Jurriaans-Helle e.a., *Mythen, mensen en muziek: Een expositie over muziek in de oudheid* (Amsterdam: Allard
Pierson Museum, 1999), 34, no. 5, 24 fig. 64.

53 As such the word ‘music’ only turns up in the course of the fifth century B.C. (Pind. Ol. 1, 14-15). Many words related to music of course already existed much longer, such as the names of musical instruments, of particular songs, and so on. Cf. S. Michaelides, op. cit., 213-216 for the sources, a discussion and further bibliography.

54 E. Winternitz, op. cit, esp. 37.


56 Attic red-figured panathenaic amphora, Napoli, Museo Archeologico, 81401, end of the fifth century B.C., Medias Painter: ARV², 1316, no. 1; A. Weis, “Olympos”, 39, no. 5 (illustrated).

57 This integration, which is made explicit here, is also implicitly present in many other representations. In fact in the course of the fifth century B.C. the maenads and the Muses become in general less distinguishable because they get to share more and more characteristics. They both play lyra and the krotala, with which they often appear in the presence of Apollo the musician. Because of this assimilation also the same iconographical schemes get to be used in Apollonian as well as Dionysian contexts cf. Anne Queyrel, “Scènes apolliniennes et dionysiaques du peintre de Pothos”, BCH 108 (1984), 123-159.


59 For the purely music historical aspects of the mythology of the aulos cf. Hanelore Thiemer, Der Einfluss der Phryger auf die altgriechische Musik (Bonn: Verlag für systematische Musikwissenschaft, 1963); Peter Wilson, “The Aulos in Athens”, Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy. Ed. by Simon Goldhill & Robin Osborne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 58-95. In particular Alexandra Goulaki-Voutira, “Observations on Domestic Music Making in Vase Paintings of the Fifth Century B.C.”, Imago musicae VIII (1991), 73-94 observes that the only invariable fact is that the flute and the lyre are never played simultaneously, also in mythological representations. Even scrolls (indicating words and songs) appear with lyre players as well as with flute players. Muses with scrolls even show up in representations of Marsyas playing the flute, and thus indicating that he engaged in an aulodic contest, not just an instrumental aulodic contest [fig. 6].


61 Note that the aulos had been contested long before the appearance of the new music. Pausanias tells us that during the first Pythian games which were organised in Olympia at the beginning of the sixth century B.C. the flute player Saccadas had been able to take away the resentment against the flute since Marsyas (2,22,8-9). Yet the purely instrumental musical contests for the flutes (auletikos) were dropped as soon as the next games because this music was perceived of as to sad (10,7,3-5).

62 In fact from the beginning of the fifth century B.C., the sophisticated kithara became the preferred instrument of the professional musicians to demonstrate their virtuosity in musical contests held at religious festivals. These contests between kithara players reached their zenith in the course of the fifth century B.C. and their rising popularity was simultaneous with a declining number of ceramic representations of the instrument, and particularly in association with Apollo, who was increasingly depicted playing the smaller lyre. Like the aulos, the kithara fell victim to the new music, and hence from Apollo’s grace into Marsyas’ hands. Cf. Susanna Sarti, “La kithara greca nei documenti archeologici”, RBPhH 81 (2003), 47-68.

63 Marsyas leads the thiasos playing with his flute music on an Attic bell-krater, Paris, Louvre G 421, ca. 440–430 B.C., Peleus or Hector Painter: ABV², 1073, no. 1, Brinna Otto, “Marsys ins Thiasos”, JbBadWürtt 12 (1975), 21-38 with further sources and discussion; E. Simon, op. cit., 1115, no. 46 (illustrated).


65 Precisely as Dionysos does. Dionysos himself never plays the aulos, although it was the accompanying instrument for his main cult song, the dithyramb. Apollo neither plays the aulos. Nevertheless this instrument was used to accompany his principal cult song as well, the pepan. A. Zschätsch, op.cit, 29-62 (Apollo) and 79-98 (Dionysos).

66 Marble sculptured basis found in Mantinea (1888), now in Athens, National Museum, 215, ca. 335 B.C., Praxitelian: A. Weis, “Marsyas”, 370, no. 24 (illustrated). Between Marsyas and Apollo stands the Skyth who will skin the satyr by order from the god. (Hyg. Fab. 165). The bibliography on this work of art is enormous. The reliefs are studied from many different scientific angles: art history (as it is a highly valued sculpture from the circle of Praxiteles), cultural history (as the representations contain information about the Greek attitudes towards Phrygians and Skythians), history of religions (as indicating the importance of musical contests in the cult of Apollo in the Greek world), mythology (as a representation relating to the mythological musical contest between Marsyas and Apollo), musicology (as varying many musical instruments are depicted). I hope to have shown that the musical significance of this representation on itself is also very complex and that a one-sided reductionist ‘anti-Marsyas’ or ‘anti-flute’ approach does injustice to it.