Tribute to Andrew Barker (1943–2021)

Andrew Barker made an outstanding contribution to the advancement and establishment of the discipline of Ancient Greek Music, which can hardly be overestimated. Retracing the stages of his extraordinary career is not an easy task, given the vast breadth and high quality of his seminal work. But the importance of his mastery in the field goes far beyond his extensive academic production, consisting of 8 books (two of which are in Italian) and more than 80 articles. His research and teaching activities, which had even intensified after his retirement thanks to the numerous lectures and seminars he gave world-wide, trained and inspired more than one generation of scholars and students, paving the way for the flowering of the discipline we see today.

The main focus of his teaching career was Ancient Philosophy, which he taught in the Philosophy Department at the University of Warwick (1970–1975, 1978–1992) and in the Classics Departments of the Universities of Cambridge (1976–1978), Otago (1992–1995) and Birmingham (1996–2008). He became a Fellow of the British Academy in 2005 and Professor Emeritus on his retirement in 2008. His interest in music began to emerge in the mid-1970s in some articles that already showed what would become the most innovative and authoritative trait of his scholarly approach: that of locating ancient

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2 Only a few of these articles are listed in the bibliography here. For a complete list, the reader may consult the bibliographic database on the MOISA website (https://www.moisasociety.org/bibliography/).
Theoretical knowledge about music (even in its most technical aspects) in the broader context of ancient Greek culture and scientific thought.3

The publications that have had the greatest impact on the scholarly fields of both Classics and Musicology since their appearance were the two volumes titled *Greek Musical Writings* (1984 and 1989), which finally made available – in elegant translations accompanied by detailed and relevant commentary – sources that, until then, had been the prerogative and interest of only a few initiates. The first of these two volumes collects the most important passages in Greek literature (including epic and lyric poetry, drama, philosophical, historical, and antiquarian texts) describing musical activities and the contexts of their performance, as well as the sources relating to the ethical, educational and aesthetic value of *mousikē* in ancient society. The second volume offers the most complete collection of writings on harmonic and acoustic theory ever translated into English – some of them for the first time – from the Pythagorean fragments of Philolaus and Archytas to late Imperial authors such as Aristides Quintilianus, each of them prefaced by an introductory essay. This evidence proved essential for anyone wishing to get a broader comprehension of ancient scientific approaches to music and sound, or to gain a better understanding of Medieval and Renaissance music theory: they are therefore crucial for scholars in the fields of Classics, Ancient Philosophy and Ancient Science, and Musicology. These two volumes were enthusiastically welcomed by contemporary scholars as an “impressive achievement”4 and have remained unsurpassed as an essential reference point for anyone approaching this field of study.

In the following years, his major publications focused on harmonic science, the most important branch of Greek musical theory, which he handled superbly not only per se (always providing all the technical information needed by a non-specialist to follow his arguments), but also in connection with the wider contexts of ancient history and the philosophy of science. Three of his books are devoted to this topic.5 In *Scientific Method in Ptolemy’s Harmonics* (2000), he explores the complex relationship between reason and perception as criteria of knowledge in Ptolemy’s work on harmonics and considers the role of empiricism and experiment as parts of his scientific method.6 The masterly volume *The Science of Harmonics in Classical Greece* (2007) offers

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3 See especially Barker 1977, 1978a, b and c, 1981a and b, 1982a and b.
4 West 1991, 46 (cf. also West 1985).
6 This topic was further explored in the work of one of his PhD students, David Creese (now Lecturer at Newcastle University, UK), who later published a book titled *The Monochord in Ancient Greek Harmonic Science* (see Creese 2010).
the most complete and effective synthesis of Barker’s decades-long work on
this subject, enriching our understanding of the intricacies of this fascinating
discipline in the period of its birth and peak (i.e., the Classical period) and
placing its authors in the broader context of the Greek intellectual climate. In
his most recent book, *Porphyry’s Commentary on Ptolemy’s Harmonics* (2015),
Barker completed the task begun in *Greek Musical Writings*, where he had
brought attention to this much neglected text by translating the most impor-
tant excerpts contained there by the musical writers of the Hellenistic period
(of which nothing survives entirely). This book offers a new edition of the
entire Greek text and the first complete translation into English of Porphyry’s
work, accompanied by an extensive commentary that presents a lucid and illu-
minating discussion of this difficult and variegated material.7

The interests developed by Barker towards ancient Greek music, however,
were not confined to its theoretical aspects, as is evident in some books, pub-
lished since 2000 (when his teaching and research collaborations with Italy
became more intense), where Barker disseminated the results of a series of lec-
tures delivered at the Universities of Urbino, Salerno and Calabria. In *Euterpe.
Ricerche sulla musica greca e romana* (2002), most of the chapters are concerned
with aspects of the history of the music of the Greek *auloi* and the Roman *tibiae*,
the principal wind-instruments of the ancient world (whose Muse, Euterpe,
was often portrayed with an *aulos* and provides the title for this collection of
essays).8 In *Psicomusicologia nella Grecia antica* (2005),9 anticipating a schol-
arly trend that has taken off in recent years,10 he addresses the issue of the
psychagogic power of music in Greek antiquity, focusing on philosophical
and medical sources which attempted to explain, in an original (and surpris-
ingly modern) way, how human beings are influenced by and react to music.
Finally, *Ancient Greek Writers on their Musical Past* (2014) makes a fascinat-
ing journey through some historical sources of Greek antiquity, highlighting

7 Shortly afterward, another complete translation in Italian and a new critical edition of
the text were published by Massimo Raffa (Raffa 2016a and 2016b), who in that period
worked closely with Barker on Porphyry’s text.
8 The original title of this set of lectures (given in Urbino in the Spring of 2000) was
*Explorations in Ancient Greek and Roman Music*. To this material Barker then added some
essays, originally delivered on other occasions, in Urbino and at the Faculty of Musicology
of the University of Pavia (in Cremona, Italy), which offer a formally non-technical but
rigorous and musically illuminating examination of some important musical scores.
9 The material included in this book will be published in its original English version in
Barker 2022.
10 Publications on the power of music on emotions in Greek and Roman antiquity have
enormously increased in the last ten years, especially thanks to the extraordinary atten-
tion of neuroscience to these issues: see, e.g., Peponi 2012, Rocconi 2019, Pelosi 2020.
the problems (especially methodological) related to their reconstruction and interpretation, and paving the way for a profound rethinking of the ways in which modern scholars have so far approached the ancient testimonies in the field of music. These three books, although different in content, share the same approach (present, in fact, in all of Barker’s scholarly work, but here much more evident, given the didactic origin of the material), which is perhaps the most remarkable aspect of his contribution to academia: he always took into account the different backgrounds of his likely readership, be they beginners or experienced scholars, and did what he could to make his work accessible to them without losing scientific depth and accuracy.

But Andrew Barker was not only a great intellectual authority: his most important legacy is probably the cooperative network of students and scholars that he was able to create and promote. As early as the ’90s, when he was working in New Zealand and felt the need to keep in touch with scholars who shared his interest in ancient music, he had the pioneering idea of bringing together people interested in the subject by founding the first international society in the field, also publishing its first newsletter (which he named Skutala Moisan). This association became, then, fully operational only in 2006 (when we entered the age of the internet) thanks to the formal establishment of MOISA: The International Society for the Study of Greek and Roman Music and its Cultural Heritage, which he ran until 2012 and in which he subsequently served as Founding President. Finally, it is thanks to his willingness and efforts that in 2013 the Society founded this journal, confirming the recognition of the discipline of Ancient Greek and Roman Music by the international community of scholars.

The last email I received from Andrew reached me on 3 July 2021, a few weeks before his death. In his usual friendly and affectionate manner, he wished success to all participants of the 15th MOISA Research Seminar on Ancient Greek and Roman Music (adding that he had prepared a fairly convincing mimesis of a Greek salad for his lunch “in memory of happy days in Corfu”, where the tradition of the seminars had started in 2004, see Figure 1). This was Andrew

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11 Some of this material reworks the reflections dedicated by Barker to the pseudo-Plutarchan De musica during the Ancient Greek and Roman Music Seminars (which would later become the MOISA Seminars, cf. Pöhlmann 2019 and below), held at the Ionian University in Corfu in July 2005.

12 Among whose founding members were many of the colleagues who now collaborate with me in this journal: Alan C. Bowen (Institute for Research in Classical Philosophy and Science), David Creese (University of British Columbia, Vancouver, now University of Newcastle), Donatella Restani (University of Bologna) and myself.

13 On the history of these seminars see Pöhlmann 2019.
Barker: an outstanding scholar who was always ready to encourage and support young people, generously sharing his wisdom and creating a wonderful climate of collaboration. Over the years, he helped the network of people who had the good fortune to study and collaborate with him become a family: now, as a family, we are all deeply saddened by his loss. We will do our best to carry on his legacy.

Eleonora Rocconi (Cremona, Italy)

In 2004, Prof. Charis Xanthoudakis, Pro-Rector of the Ionian University in Corfu (Greece) and Chair of the Department of Music, following a proposal of Prof. Panagiotis Vlagopoulos, decided to add the topic of Ancient Music to the syllabus of the 2nd International Summer Academy, which the Ionian University had inaugurated in 2003. Therefore, he invited Prof. Andrew Barker, to arrange a seminar about Ps.-Aristotle's *Problems*, and myself, to give lectures about the more general themes of Ancient Greek Music. This occasion gave me the chance to meet Andrew Barker in person.
Before starting my evening lectures in the rooms of the Academy in Corfu, I went to the neoclassical Villa in the picturesque parc of the hill Mon Repos, which was first built by George Whitmore as a summer residence for the British governor of Corfu, Sir Frederick Adam. The Villa has been a splendid Museum since 2001: the attic meeting room at the top of this building was used for the morning seminars, where everyone could sit around a table. Here I met Andrew Barker: he was surrounded by scholars and students from Greece and abroad, patiently responding to each of them with his proverbial kindness and affability. After we introduced ourselves, we started the seminar. In an informal and at the same time scholarly way, Andrew introduced the topic and illuminated the ancient text in question. The source of his extraordinary faculties as teacher was his incredible command of ancient Greek texts concerning musical matters, which he had accumulated during his career and demonstrated in his two most influential books, which contained translations of and commentaries on nearly all Greek texts relevant to music (Greek Musical Writings I and II, 1984 and 1989). In this fruitful and friendly atmosphere, the week-long Corfu Seminar on Ancient Greek and Roman Music became an annual event, which every year brought together the most important experts in ancient music and contributed to the formation of younger generations of researchers in the field (see Figure 1). We dealt with several texts and topics: Pseudo-Plutarch (2005), Music in Comedy (2006), The Role of Women in Ancient Greek Music (2007), Aristides Quintilianus De Musica Book 2 (2008), Ps.-Aristotle’s De Audibilibus (2009), Music in Plato’s Laws (2010) and Aristotle’s Politics Book 8 (2011). After the morning seminars and evening lectures, the discussions with Andrew Barker usually went on in the traditional Corfiotic cafes and restaurants, where the students were invited by the local organizers and took part in an informal but extremely compelling and formative approach to music in antiquity.

After two successful seminars, some scholars in the field took up an idea that Andrew Barker had had in the nineties: establishing a society for promoting the preservation, interpretation and valorisation of Ancient Greek and Roman Music. During a meeting in Ravenna (30–31.10.2006), The International Society for the Study of Greek and Roman Music and its Cultural Heritage (shortly afterwards called MOISA) was established and Andrew Barker was elected its President, continuing in office until 2012. In 2013 he inaugurated the journal Greek and Roman Musical Studies, serving as its Editor-in-chief until 2017. Again he was always at the centre of scholars and students during the MOISA

14 See Pöhlmann 2019, Fig. 2.
15 Cf. the tribute by Eleonora Rocconi above.
16 See n. 12.
Annual Meetings which, for ten years, were held throughout Europe: Cremona (2008), Ravenna (2009), Lecce (2010), Salerno (2012), Agrigento (2013), Urbino (2014), Newcastle (2015), Athens (2016) and Oxford (2017), the last event he attended in person.

Because of his manifold obligations, Andrew Barker had to economize his time. During the MOISA meetings, you could find him early at the breakfast table with some Oxford Texts, in silent conversation with a Greek author and not inclined to be disturbed by small talk. At the same time, he was always available to share his expertise with colleagues and students. Most of the papers I published in GRMS were first read by Andrew Barker, who not only improved my English, but also helped me to better understand some tricky passages in ancient texts. In this way, we became friends, his wife Jill Barker included, who, during Corfu seminars, got to know my wife on many sightseeing expeditions. We were very glad that the couple accepted our invitation to visit us in Erlangen (see Figures 2 and 3). This was possible when we were returning from the Corfu seminar in 2010. We were able to let Andrew and Jill hear two preserved organs from the 18th century in Erlangen and show them the remarkable architecture of the Residence of the Margraves in Ansbach, the fascinating Basilica in Vierzehnheiligen and the picturesque Franconian countryside. We still remember our amicable conversations at the evening table,

**Figure 2** Eva and Egert Pöhlmann with Jill Barker in Erlangen, Germany

*Photo taken by Andrew Barker*
during which we found out that Andrew also had a vein as musician: he had a beautiful voice and, when he was a PhD student in the Australian National University in Canberra, he sang as tenor and countertenor in small a cappella groups. We were pleased to hear that he also enjoyed building his own replicas of ancient Greek stringed instruments to explore how they worked: his home-made monochord was both a useful didactic piece and an object of entertainment. He would turn his hand to any instrument, drawing musical notes from blades of grass and empty bottles, up to recorders, a rebec and a cello, not to mention the inevitable collection of pianos and a harpsichord (see Figure 4).

Unfortunately, the economic crisis reached Corfu in 2011. Despite a plan for a Seminar in 2012 (which would have dealt with the relevance of music in some Greek texts of the Second Sophistic, from Philodemus to Philostratus), the Seminar was cancelled after failed attempts to find financial support. This was regretted by many scholars and students, who had found in these occasions...
a venue to present new ideas in an incomparably cordial environment to an audience of international experts, so generously assembled by Andrew Barker. These Seminars were revived some years later in Riva del Garda, Italy, thanks to the support of the Arion Society. In 2014 the 9th MOISA Seminar dealt again with Ps.-Aristotle’s Problems Book 19, and then with Aristoxenus (2015), Athenaeus (2016), the Aristoxenian Musical Handbooks (2017) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (2018). In 2014 and 2015, the Riva Seminars were also preceded by the MOISA International Summer School in Ancient Greek Music, held at the University of Trento (Italy). In those years, MOISA activities reached the peak of international resonance and this happened thanks to the commitment and dedication of Andrew Barker, who was the real soul of all these events. In 2019, the MOISA Seminar (Music in Pausanias’ Periegesis) was held in Bressanone (Italy). After a break because of the pandemic, the Seminars resumed in 2021 with a Zoom webinar on Music in Vitruvius’ De Architectura.
The 2017 MOISA Seminar in Riva del Garda was the last one which Andrew Barker attended in person. We were pleased to spend our time with him in the medieval “Osteria Il Gallo”, enjoying wonderful fresh trout from Lake Garda. At this occasion he astonished us with the sad news that, because of a serious illness, his ability to engage with academic topics was more and more hampered, and travelling had become too tiring for him. Therefore, he had to think about curbing his obligations related to MOISA activities. We began to understand that Andrew was not only taking leave of musicology, but also bidding farewell to us.

Andrew’s farewell to MOISA soon followed. On 12 February 2018 he informed his friends that, because of his bad health, writing academic papers had become a tiring and unappealing business, and he was no longer keen to travel. Despite this, he continued as much as possible the scholarly activity he loved so much, participating in two conferences and publishing a few articles that testify to his energy and to the excellence of his scholarly production. Meanwhile, he had already stepped back from the formal duties related to MOISA: in 2012 he promoted Angelo Meriani (University of Salerno, Italy) as his successor as MOISA President, and in 2017 he handed over the task of Editor-in-chief of *Greek and Roman Musical Studies* to Eleonora Rocconi (University of Pavia, Italy). Therefore, he could leave his lifelong duties with confidence in a successful future for his Society and his journal and hope for some years of leisure with his family, his grandchildren, with dogs and other less public things which he had neglected for so long, at home and in his beloved barn in France.

His hope to meet us one last time in Riva was not fulfilled: at the 13th MOISA seminar (2–7 July 2018) his contribution (titled *Dionysius of Halicarnassus on Rome’s Greek Musical Heritage*) was read by Tosca Lynch (University of Oxford, UK), organizer of the events in Riva del Garda. Sadly, the 14th MOISA Seminar in Bressanone (2–6 July 2019) and the 12th Annual MOISA Meeting in Thessaloniki (8–10 July 2019) had to take place without the Founding President of the Society who, however, was always supportive and keen to provide advice to the organizers. The participants at the 15th MOISA Seminar (2–9 July 2021) received Andrew Barker’s final greetings and good wishes by e-mail on 03 July 2021.

18 Barker 2020a; Barker 2020b; Barker forthcoming.
Three weeks later, on 24 July 2021 we both received the saddening message from Jill Barker that our dear friend Andrew, after four days in the hospital, had died of pneumonia on 22 July 2021. As soon as this news had become public, an overwhelming wave of condolence filled the internet, celebrating his memory with touching messages that showed how much he was loved by everyone. His friends, colleagues and students will never forget the inspiring and outstanding researcher and teacher he was and they will continue to cultivate his impressive legacy. Requiescat in pace!

_Eva and Egert Pöhlmann_ (Erlangen, Germany)

**Bibliography**


