
Professor Barker’s *Greek Musical Writings* (Cambridge 1984-9) has become for many scholars an essential gateway to the major theoretical texts and crucial non-technical passages concerning ancient Greek music. With its detailed commentaries and cross-references (including to works not in the collection itself: Porphyry on Ptolemy, Aristoxenian handbooks, Boethius, lexicographers) *GMW* unified the corpus more tightly than ever before, and finally made it accessible to non-specialist scholars. Without it mastery of the primary sources and past scholarship would take much longer than it already does. Consequently, by virtue of which texts and issues he favored, B. has substantially determined the current exploration of Greek music by the philological mainstream. Who ever read Aristides Quintilianus before 1989? Moreover so many younger scholars have gone to study with him that a real school has grown up around him (*hoi peri Barker*).

The same determination is at work in *The Science of Harmonics in Classical Greece*, which will be comfortably familiar territory—at least initially—for those who have worked carefully through *GMW*. B.’s earlier commentaries now appear as seed to tree, something already seen in *Scientific Method in Ptolemy’s Harmonics* (2000). The present study gives comparably detailed treatment to fifth- and fourth-century sources and problems (take title strictly). Favorite topics are expanded in B.’s friendly, conversational style, enlivened with enough witty reflections on Academia to leave one wanting a separate book on the topic. But this is no mere rehash of older conclusions. B. consistently pushes his boundaries, and lengthy dissections of minutiae are almost always rewarded with the revelation of some new facet to an old problem. Any scholar who wishes to cite a position from *GMW* must now check for its modification or abandonment here (*no index locorum, but a thorough general index*). Since the book assumes familiarity with the basic issues of Greek musicology, it is not an ideal introduction to the subject, though handy introductory studies are always signaled. Rather a series of focused investigations, constantly interrelated, gradually develops larger images of the period and its processes.

B. is especially concerned to blur the boundary between early rationalism and empiricism, against the facile dichotomies of later doxographers, both ancient and modern (B. confesses himself here). The book’s two major sections, “Empirical Harmonics” and “Mathematical Harmonics”, exemplify the same dualism. But this ergonomical decision does nothing to hinder B.’s detailed demonstration that Philolaus, Archytas, Plato, Aristotle, Aristoxenus, ps.-Euclid, and Theophrastus alike, despite startlingly different outcomes in their respective ‘systems’,
were united in a single complex musicological discourse co-evolved over two centuries by *mousikoi* and *sophistai*. In fact such labels emerge as counterproductive (cf. the early use of *sophos* for ‘poet’). The surviving authors constitute a few—admittedly important—samples of this tradition. Much was now committed to papyrus, from Lasus of Hermione’s treatise (?) to the spare jottings of Eratocles and the lost diagram of Stratonicus, with many points in between. All the Classical *harmonikoi*, using the term broadly, had regular recourse to what came before them, and lost positions may sometimes be teased from the extant sources by making them speak to each other. B. is a proven master of this approach in numerous books and articles, especially where musical concerns intersect with philosophical systems.

After an introductory essay on the predecessors of Aristoxenus (see below), *ho mousikos* naturally dominates the first half of the book, a series of chapters building steadily to a powerful conclusion. Here is the book’s most important contribution: partial recovery of the larger philosophical and aesthetic position within which Aristoxenus framed his *Elementa Harmonica*—dominated, in its surviving form, by the unglamorous, even tedious exposition of harmonic data. B. draws on isolated statements both here and in the fragments (including clearly Aristoxenian passages of the Plutarchean *De musica* not included in Wehrli’s *Die Schule des Aristoteles*) to expose what was arguably antiquity’s most subtle and incisive attempt to organize purely aesthetic *phainomena* into a rigorously scientific system. This was a semi-crazed pipe-dream worthy of Philolaean numerology (see below); but Barker shows that Aristoxenus really pulled it off (one senses the residue of Aristoxenus’ early Pythagorean education). B. makes strong advances by his detailed reading of Aristoxenus against Aristotle, sparring occasionally with A. Bélis (*Aristoxène de Tarante et Aristote*, 1986): his renewed defense of the *Elementa Harmonica* as being the remains of two separate treatises, not one (so Bélis), is perfectly convincing, and his explication of the relationship between the two works, within the framework of Aristoxenus’ developing thought, is compelling. But Aristoxenus was anything but slavish. In particular B. shows how the organizing theory behind the narrowly technical works served a higher ‘ethical’ position which is largely unmentioned in the *Elementa Harmonica* (briefly Book 2), but evident in the fragments/ps.-Plutarch. This leads to our most satisfactory and integrated reading of the Aristoxenian corpus yet.

B. argues that Aristoxenus was the victim of his own cleverness: later *mousikoi* reduced and reproduced his harmonic precepts mechanically, omitting formidable theoretical discussions which they did not understand, and/or which were not of immediate interest to more simple-minded musicians, whence Bacchius, Gaudentius, Cleonides and others (I confess myself here). It is tempting to suppose, in