

The best that Western art and thought has been able to produce has roots and trunks deeply implanted in Greek culture. A culture that, despite receiving oriental influences in its initial formation, was able to delineate in such an unusual and masterful way that its lights are still visible and its echoes audible, as well as the background radiation that, left from the beginning of time, remains scattered across the universe. But this banal observation regarding literature, theater, visual arts or philosophy (including mathematics) has left the most ineffable human expression in the shadows: music.

And yet it was a practical and frequent reality in the events of Hellenic life: in everyday life and in the eventual, public and family. It was a companion, therefore, of births and burials, symposiums, religious rituals, civic celebrations, the march of war, the effort of rowers, the object of annual contests and theatrical representation. Here it is enough to remember Euripides, who, in verses 673-678 of his *Hercules* (Ἡρακλῆς), states: "I will not cease to unite the Graces of the Muses in an alliance of delights. Without music, there is no life". And from the fact that, from the sixth century B.C., it was the purpose of education to reach the citizen musician, that is, the one who should know and could appreciate the creations and charms of all the Muses (Μοῦσας), and not only the art of Euterpe.

¹ Text published as a preface to the translation of the book "The Greek Music", by Theodor Reinach, Editora Perspectiva.

Both religious rituals and our long artistic tradition - poetic genres, dances, theatrical genres - have evolved (and perhaps could only have occurred this way) closely linked to music or, in other terms, to sound organization, to the game between writing and the metric forms, rhythms, intervals, voices and instruments that make it intone in a certain way, transmitting to the collectivity its own myths and, to the audience, the subjective passions of an author.

It was the hymns, whose origins are lost in time, the first literary-musical forms of Greece. To them are linked the mythological names of Orpheus, Museum, Linus, priest-singers of sacred liturgies. Also the bards, who frequented the Mycenaean court centuries before Homer, were poet-singers, like Demodocus, quoted in the *Odyssey* (VIII, 266-366) creators of various metrics from long (-) and short (U) syllables. Among them, the preferred verse of the epic, the dactylic hexameter (six feet of four times).

Under the name of "homeric hymns", given by a late tradition, the songs addressed to gods, goddesses and heroes refer to quite diverse works in their dimensions and apart in time. Some, like the hymns to Hermes, Demeter or Aphrodite, exceed 400 verses, while one of them, in honor of Zeus, contains only 4. Some date from the 7th and 6th centuries before our era, while others belong to the Alexandrian era. The longest ones comment on or report peripeteias of mythical or legendary characters of a secondary order, such as Anchises or Eneas (Hymn to Aphrodite), or more reserved religious rituals (the Eulesinian Mysteries in the Hymn to Demeter).

Of the religious chants, two have become the most common: the ditrambo and the paeon (this name is also applied to the 3/2 rhythm). The ditrambo was the song sung in honor of Dionysius. Having come from popular festivals, it was adopted from the 6th century BC by

already consecrated poets. As for the paeon, it prevailed in certain festivities, such as the Panathenaicas, in honor of Palas Athena, but it was also dedicated to Apollo.

Nor was a contractual wedding ceremony conceived (εγγυησις, *engyesis*), usually lasting three days, without music, songs and dances. Starting with the *loutroforia*, the transport of water from a sacred fountain to the bride's bath. On the Iliad (chant XVIII, 490), we find a first account of wedding feasts and joy in Troy: "Brides came out of their rooms and led through the city by the light of torches, and repeated hymns of Hymenaeus were heard; young dancers formed wheels, and around them sounded the aulos and the sitars, and the matrons admired what was seen before their doors".

In the painful moments of death and burial, music was worth it as a lenitive or anodyne to the pains of family members and friends during the three stages of the ceremony: the exhibition of the body (*prothesis*), the procession (*ekphora*) and the final burial.

From the seventh century BC, the epic genre and didactic poetry, such as that of Hesiod, gave way and importance to intimate and emotional poetry, both monodic (soloist) and choral. It will be, at first, the time of Alcman, Semonides, Mimnermo, Arquiloco, Calinos and Safo. Then, that of Theogenis, Ibiic, Anacreon, Baquillides and Pindar. These new literates dedicate themselves to different poetic forms, composing sometimes dithyrambs, sometimes epinicions, elegies or iambics.

From the choral odes we will have not only exemplary works like this Victory Odes (Epinikia I) - "Golden lyre, just belonging to Apollo and the Muses / with violet braids! One hears the initial dancing step of the splendid feast; / and the singers obey your signs, / when vibrating you make the initial chords sound / of the preludes

conducting the choirs" (Pindar, translation Frederico Lourenço). From them will also come the chorus of tragedies, in fact a series of odes choruses interspersed with dialogues and accounts.

If today we can read Safo in silence, or, at most, listen to it in the form of a declamation - "Immortal Aphrodite of the variegated throne, / daughter of Zeus, weaver of deceit, I beg you: / with sufferings and anguish do not subdue, / O queen, my heart" - we must remember that her contemporaries only heard her under the accompaniment of a lyre (that of seven strings) and that, therefore, one was in the presence of a song and a harmony, and not only of a literary play. Hence the name of lyrical poetry, in all its integrity, or even melic, because it is indissolubly linked to singing.

This is how all poetic genres - the lyric, the elegiac (verse of five feet), the iambic (usually used for satire), the epinician and the bucolic - fit into one of the three musical genres: the diatonic, the chromatic or the enarmonic. Unfortunately, of both registers little remained, much less the musical one. No more than 61 fragments of scores (σημειογράφοι, semeiographoi) or of *parasemantiké* (the term is from Aristoxene), although some important treatises on musical theory, harmonization, metrics or acoustics have survived, such as those of Aristoxene, Aristides Quintilian and Plutarch.

The book by the great Hellenist Reinach - *Greek Music* - explains to us with admirable subtlety the main theoretical characteristics of Hellenistic music, not allowing us to erase the enormous contribution that was also bequeathed to us in this field, fruit of feeling, creativity and extraordinary rational attributes.