

GREEK AND ROMAN ACTORS

Aspects of an Ancient Profession

EDITED BY

PAT EASTERLING

Regius Professor of Greek Emeritus, University of Cambridge

AND

EDITH HALL

Leverhulme Professor of Greek Cultural History, University of Durham



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Cambridge University Press 2002

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2002

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeface Baskerville Monotype 11/12.5 pt. *System* L^AT_EX 2_ε [TB]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 0 521 65140 9 hardback

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	page vii
<i>List of contributors</i>	xii
<i>Preface</i>	xvii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xxiii
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xxiv
<i>Maps</i>	xxviii

PART ONE THE ART OF THE ACTOR

1	The singing actors of antiquity <i>Edith Hall</i>	3
2	The musicians among the actors <i>Peter Wilson</i>	39
3	The use of the body by actors in tragedy and satyr-play <i>Kostas Valakas</i>	69
4	Towards a reconstruction of performance style <i>Richard Green</i>	93
5	Kallippides on the floor-sweepings: the limits of realism in classical acting and performance styles <i>Eric Csapo</i>	127
6	Looking for the actor's art in Aristotle <i>G. M. Sifakis</i>	148
7	Acting, action and words in New Comedy <i>Eric Handley</i>	165
8	'Acting down': the ideology of Hellenistic performance <i>Richard Hunter</i>	189

PART TWO THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD

- 9 Nothing to do with the *technitai* of Dionysus? 209
Jane L. Lightfoot
- 10 Actors and actor–managers at Rome in the time
of Plautus and Terence 225
Peter G. McC. Brown
- 11 The masks on the propylon of the Sebasteion
at Aphrodisias 238
John Jory
- 12 Images of performance: new evidence from Ephesus 254
Charlotte Roueché
- 13 Female entertainers in late antiquity 282
Ruth Webb
- 14 Acting in the Byzantine theatre: evidence and problems 304
Walter Puchner

PART THREE THE IDEA OF THE ACTOR

- 15 Actor as icon 327
Pat Easterling
- 16 Scholars versus actors: text and performance in the
Greek tragic scholia 342
Thomas Falkner
- 17 Orator and/et actor 362
Elaine Fantham
- 18 Acting and self-actualisation in imperial Rome:
some death scenes 377
Catharine Edwards
- 19 The subjectivity of Greek performance 395
Ismene Lada-Richards
- 20 The ancient actor’s presence since the Renaissance 419
Edith Hall
- Glossary* 435
List of works cited 441
Index of major ancient passages cited 479
General Index 484

Illustrations

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| <p>Cover Bell krater with Dionysiac scene. Apulia, early fourth century BC, <i>c.</i> 400–390 BC. Earthenware with slip decoration, 37.8 × 40.3 cm. © The Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund, 1989.73.</p> | <p>page 10</p> |
| <p>1 Thamyras and his mother Argiope: played by Sophocles(?) and Aeschylus' son Euaion. Attic hydria, <i>c.</i> 430 BC. Vatican, Museo Etrusco Gregoriano. Photo: J. R. Green.</p> | <p>11</p> |
| <p>2 The blinded Polymestor in Euripides' <i>Hecuba</i>. Apulian vase (Loutrophoros) from the workshop of the Darius Painter, third quarter of the fourth century BC. © The British Museum, inv. 1900.5–19.1.</p> | <p>14</p> |
| <p>3 The 'Oslo' papyrus showing words and melodies for a recital of songs about Neoptolemus. <i>P. Oslo</i> 1413. Universitetsbibliotek in Oslo. Photo: Adam Bülow-Jacobsen/AIP Archive.</p> | <p>16</p> |
| <p>4 Mask of singing actor of tragedy. Ivory miniature, Caerleon. By permission of the National Museum of Wales.</p> | <p>17</p> |
| <p>5 Mask of singing actor of tragedy. Glass oinochoe found near the Stazione di S. Rossore, Pisa. Soprintendenza Archeologica per la Toscana – Firenze, neg. 61471/21.</p> | <p>40</p> |
| <p>6 The famous piper Pronomos of Thebes, seated with his satyr chorusmen. Attic red-figure volute-krater, late fifth century BC (<i>ARV</i>² 1336, 1). Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 81673 (H 3240). Drawing reproduced from FR, III. 143–4.</p> | <p>43</p> |
| <p>7 Piper with double pipes. Attic red-figure krater, <i>c.</i> 480 BC (<i>ARV</i>² 240, 44). Paris, Louvre, inv. CA 1947. Photo: M. and P. Chuzeville.</p> | <p>50</p> |
| <p>8 Potamon of Thebes with his father Olympichos. Relief carving from near Phaleron: funerary stele with epigram. Athens, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 1962. © DAI Athens, neg. no. NM 4986.</p> | <p></p> |

- 9 *Aulētēs* in performance. Attic red-figure volute-krater attributed to the Pronomos Painter, late fifth century BC (*ARV²* 1336, 1). Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 81673 (H 3240). Reproduced from Stephanis (1988), fig. 11. 52
- 10 Chorus performing as satyrs with piper and a standing figure. Attic red-figure hydria attributed to the Leningrad Painter, c. 470–460 BC. © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. All rights reserved.) 57
- 11 Chorus performing as satyrs with piper and standing figure (far right) who may be a *chorēgos*. Attic volute-krater, c. 450 BC (*ARV²* 612, 1). Ferrara, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Spina, inv. 3031. Photo: Hirmer Verlag. 58
- 12 Contrasts in physical attitudes: actors of the Comédie Française in the 1890s and the Greek vase paintings they used as models. Reproduced from Barba and Saverese (1991), 166. 90
- 13 Detail from the Pronomos Vase depicting Heracles and other members of the cast of a satyr-play. Attic red-figure volute-krater, late fifth century BC (*ARV²* 1336, 1). Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 81673 (H 3240). Photo: J. R. Green after FR. 94
- 14 The Choregos Vase, showing a tragic actor with three comic actors. Tarentine red-figure bell krater, early fourth century BC. Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum, inv. 96.AE.29 (ex coll. Fleischman, F 93). Photo: Museum. 96
- 15 Two tragic chorusmen preparing for performance. Attic red-figure pelike attributed to the Phiale Painter, c. 440 BC. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 98.883. Photo: Museum. 98
- 16 Tragic actor holding his mask. Tarentine Gnathia bell-krater fragment attributed to the Konnakis Painter, c. 340 BC. Würzburg, Martin von Wagner Museum der Universität, inv. H 4600 (L832). Photo: Museum. 100
- 17 Tragic messenger witnessing the death of Hippolytus. Tarentine red-figure volute-krater attributed to the Darius Painter, third quarter of the fourth century BC. London, British Museum, inv. 1856.12–26.1 (F 279). Photo: Museum. 101
- 18 Tragic actor in the role of a young man. (Athenian?) terracotta figurine, perhaps c. 300 BC. Nicosia, Cyprus Museum, inv. CS 1661/16. Photo: Museum. 103
- 19 A messenger bringing news. Scene of a tragedy in

- performance: *Oedipus Tyrannus*? Sicilian (Syracusan?) red-figure calyx-krater, third quarter of the fourth century BC. Syracuse, Museo Archeologico, inv. 66557. Photo: E. W. Handley. 108
- 20 Three women responding to a messenger's news. Scene of a tragedy in performance. Sicilian (Syracusan?) red-figure calyx-krater, third quarter of the fourth century BC. Caltanissetta, Museo Civico. Reproduced from *IGD*, III, 6, 1. 110
- 21 Comic performance: naked male pursued by pretend Heracles. Tarentine red-figure bell-krater attributed to the Lecce Painter, towards the middle of the fourth century BC. Nicholson Museum, Sydney University, inv. 88.02. Photo: Museum. 112
- 22 Comic performance: hetaira, old man, slave carrying chest. Tarentine red-figure bell-krater attributed to the Jason Painter, towards the middle of the fourth century BC. Copenhagen, National Museet, inv. 15032. Photo: Museum. 113
- 23 Comic performance: woman, youth, slave in disguise as young woman, old man with stick. Sicilian (Syracusan?) red-figure calyx-krater attributed to the Manfria Painter, third quarter of the fourth century BC. Museo Regionale, Messina. Photo courtesy Professor Umberto Spigo. 114
- 24 Comic actor playing young woman. Athenian terracotta figurine, early fourth century BC. The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, inv. BB 166. Photo: Museum. 116
- 25 Comic actor playing young woman. Athenian terracotta figurine, perhaps second quarter of the fourth century BC. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, inv. 1922.207. Photo: Museum. 116
- 26 Comic actor playing young woman. Athenian terracotta figurine, beginning of the fourth century BC. New York, Metropolitan Museum, inv. 13.225.21. Photo: J. R. Green after Bieber. 117
- 27 Comic actor playing young woman. Terracotta figurine, Corinthian copy of an Athenian original, near the middle of the fourth century BC. London, British Museum, inv. 1951.7-31.1. Photo: J. R. Green. 117
- 28 Comic actor playing young woman. Athenian terracotta figurine, near the middle of the fourth century BC. Athens,

- National Archaeological Museum, inv. 6068. Photo:
J. R. Green. 118
- 29 Comic actor playing young woman. Athenian terracotta
figurine, third quarter of the fourth century BC. London,
British Museum, inv. 1865.7–20.43 (C 5). Photo: J. R. Green. 120
- 30 Three mime actors performing *Mother-in-Law*. Athenian
terracotta group, probably end of the third century BC. Athens,
National Archaeological Museum, inv. 12424. Photo:
B. Köhlen, M. Gladbach. 198
- 31 Two tragic masks and one pantomime mask. Dedication on
cinerary urn, Rome, early second century AD. Paris, Louvre,
neg. Ma 2148. Photo: M. and P. Chuzeville. 242
- 32 Four masks for performances in tragedy, pantomime and
comedy. Fragment of lid of sarcophagus (?), Rome, second
half of third century AD. Vatican Museum, inv. 31504. Photo:
J. R. Green. 242
- 33 View of Sebasteion at Aphrodisias. Photo: J. Jory. 245
- 34 Part of Sebasteion frieze. Aphrodisias. Photo: J. Jory. 245
- 35 Part of Sebasteion frieze. Aphrodisias. Photo: J. Jory. 246
- 36 Part of Sebasteion frieze. Aphrodisias. Photo: J. Jory. 246
- 37 Part of Sebasteion frieze. Aphrodisias. Photo: J. Jory. 247
- 38 Mask of young female, perhaps a maenad. Aphrodisias. Photo:
J. Jory. 250
- 39 Mask of young female and two young males. Aphrodisias.
Photo: J. Jory. 251
- 40 Ephesus, Theatre graffito 1, i–iii. Photo: Charlotte Roueché. 258
- 41 Ephesus, Theatre graffito 1, iv–v. Photo: Charlotte Roueché. 259
- 42 Ephesus, Theatre graffito 2.i. Photo: Stefan Karwiese. 260
- 43 Ephesus, Theatre graffito 2.ii. Photo: Stefan Karwiese. 262
- 44 Ephesus: Theatre graffito 2.iii. Photo: Charlotte Roueché. 263
- 45 Ephesus, Theatre graffito 4a. Photo: Österreichisches
Archäologisches Institut. 264
- 46 Ephesus, Theatre graffito 4b. Photo: Denis Feissel. 265
- 47 Ephesus, Theatre graffito 4c. Photo: Österreichisches
Archäologisches Institut. 267
- 48 Ephesus, Theatre graffito 4d. Drawing courtesy of the
Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut. 268
- 49 Ephesus, Theatre graffito 5. Drawing courtesy of the
Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut. 269

- 50 Ephesus, Theatre graffito 6. Drawing courtesy of the Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut. 270
- 51 Ephesus, Theatre graffito 7. Drawing courtesy of the Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut. 272
- 52 Aphrodisias, Odeion graffito. Photo: Mehmet Ali Dögençi, Aphrodisias Excavations, New York University. 278
- 53 Aphrodisias, Odeion graffito. Photo: Mehmet Ali Dögençi, Aphrodisias Excavations, New York University. 279
- 54 Aphrodisias, Odeion graffito. Photo: Mehmet Ali Dögençi, Aphrodisias Excavations, New York University. 280
- 55 Memorial stèle of the mime actress Bassilla. Third century AD. Trieste, Museo Archeologico di Aquileia, inv. 260. Reproduced from Scrinari (1973), fig. 344. 302
- 56 Diptych relief of Anastasios, consul in AD 517, showing scenes with actors (Delbrueck N 18). The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg. 315
- 57 Actor in the role of *paidagōgos*. Gnathia calyx-krater, mid-fourth century BC. New York, private collection. Photo courtesy W. Puhze. 329
- 58 Prize-winning actor in tragic costume dedicating his mask. Wall-painting from Herculaneum. Copy of Greek model, c. 300 BC. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale. Photo (Anderson no. 23415) courtesy of the Mansell Collection. 330
- 59 Tragic actors in the roles of Orestes and Electra in Euripides' *Orestes*. Wall-painting, Ephesus, 'Hanghaus 2', later second century AD. Reproduced from Strocka (1977), 48, no. 65 (ill.), by permission of the Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut. 357
- 60 Acting and rhetoric: Andronikos and Demosthenes balanced by Roscius and Cicero. Frontispiece of John Bulwer's *Chironomia*, 1644. By permission of the British Library. 422
- 61 First performance of *Thespis*. *Illustrated London News*. Drawing courtesy of the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama, University of Oxford. 427

CHAPTER ONE

The singing actors of antiquity

Edith Hall

INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the fifth century AD Augustine confesses to having sometimes neglected the spiritual content of the psalms of David because he has been distracted – even moved to tears – by the beauty of the voices he has heard singing them. Augustine therefore approves of the Alexandrian bishop Athanasius, who attempted to protect his congregation’s spiritual purity by instructing ‘the reader of the psalm to sound it forth with such slight vocal modulation (*flexu vocis*) that it was nearer to speaking than to singing’ (*Conf.* 10.33).

Augustine’s supposedly shameful passion for vocal music had been fed by his successful participation, as a young pagan, in theatrical singing competitions (*Conf.* 4.2). He recalls a solo he used to sing entitled *The Flying Medea* (*Medea volans*, 3.6). The tragic theme implies that Augustine performed in costume and with gestures as a *tragoedus* or *tragicus cantor* (a ‘tragic singer’).¹ We do not know whether this aria was composed in the first person, requiring the singer to impersonate Medea as she flew, but it was certainly much performed (4.3). Augustine’s testimony opens a fascinating window on the late Roman theatre, where famous songs on mythical themes were still being sung by expert singers, more than eight centuries since the first actor to impersonate Euripides’ Medea had flown off to Athens in the chariot borrowed from the Sun. In antiquity, when our modern genres of musical theatre, opera and the musical, had not yet been invented, but which relished expert singing to a degree unsurpassed by music lovers today, the relationship of the art of acting to the art of singing was often inextricable. This chapter leads into the book’s reappraisal of the profession of the ancient player via an unorthodox but illuminating route, which traces the history

¹ If he could play the cithara *Medea volans* just might have been a ‘citharoedic’ performance (Kelly (1979) 27–8).

of the singing actor from democratic Athens to beyond Augustine's day.

This story is co-extensive with ancient theatrical activity, which can still be documented at Epidaurus and Athens in the late fourth century AD, and at Aphrodisias as late as the seventh.² Theatrical singers are attested from tragedies of Thespis in the sixth century BC to the Byzantine theatres in which Theodora performed in the sixth century AD, when the word 'tragedy' gave rise to what is still the word for 'song' in the Greek language (*tragoudi*, see Puchner, this volume). Vocal performances thrilled audiences not only across many centuries but also across a huge geographical area, for the Roman empire saw theatres built from Britain and western Portugal to North Africa and the far east of modern Turkey. Even some small cities had an Odeion in addition to one or more theatres (on the fascinating graffiti depicting performers drawn on the Odeion at Aphrodisias see further Roueché, this volume). It is revealing that in the second century AD Pausanias says that one reason Panopeus scarcely deserves to be called a city is because it had no theatre at all (10.4.1); two centuries later, when Eunapius wants to illustrate the primitivism of some Spanish barbarians, he portrays their astonishment at the singing of a travelling tragic actor (see below, 'Conclusion').

Although it is fashionable to stress that the ancient Greek and Latin words for a theatrical audience (*theatai*, *spectatores*) prioritised the act of watching, many ancient authors acknowledge the importance of the aural impact of drama on the 'spectator'. The discussion of tragedy in Aristophanes' *Frogs* focuses extensively on music and rhythm, Plato disapprovingly refers to spectators' sympathy with heroes 'delivering long speeches or singing (*aidontas*) and beating themselves' (*Rep.* 10.605c10–e2), Aristotle regards songwriting (*melopoia*) as a more significant source of tragic pleasure than the visual dimension (*Poet.* 1450b15–18, see Sifakis, this volume), and Plutarch describes the experience of watching tragedy as 'a wonderful *aural* and visual experience'.³

The solo singing voice was particularly associated with Greek tragedy. Early tragic actors' roles may have consisted almost entirely of singing;⁴ by Hellenistic times the Athenian guild of actors worshipped Dionysus under the title 'Melpomenos' (see Lightfoot, this volume), and

² See Green (1994a) 161–2.

³ θαυμαστόν ἀκρόαμα καὶ θέαμα (*On the Renown of the Athenians* 5 = *Mor.* 348c). By the end of the fourth century AD, when tragic songs had become dissociated from staged production, it is natural to Jerome to refer in his commentary on Ezechiel to the pleasure of people 'who *listen* to either tragic or comic actors' (*vel tragoedos audiunt vel comoedos*, 10. 33, 23–33, Migne, *PL* vol. 25 (1845) col. 326).

⁴ In the earliest extant tragedy, Aeschylus' *Persians*, King Xerxes' entire role is in song or recitative (Hall (1996a) 169), and it is just possible that some truth lies behind the statement in Philostratus

Melpomene, the muse who represented tragedy, derived her name from the same basic verb meaning ‘sing’.⁵ But the singing voice was heard in all the other types of ancient drama and their adaptations – satyr play, Old Comedy, Greek and Roman New Comedy, Atellan farce,⁶ Roman tragedy, virtuoso recitals of excerpts from old dramas, pantomime, mime,⁷ and such curiosities as Philoxenus’ *Cyclops*, a light-hearted work on a mythical theme for two solo singers and an aulete, which has been compared with a chamber opera.⁸ There were also innumerable sub-theatrical entertainers whose acts involved singing, including jugglers (Theophr. *Char.* 27.7), the hilarodes and Simodes who sang risqué parodies of highbrow musical compositions, and the magodes who banged cymbals and drums while impersonating such figures as a drunk singing a serenade.⁹ Nor did theatrical singers confine their art to theatres: *tragōidoi*, for example, are found performing on board Alcibiades’ trireme when he returned from exile in 408 BC (Duris, *FGrH* 76 F 70), at the five-day wedding celebrations of Alexander the Great at Susa (Chares, *FGrH* 125 F 4), and at symposia throughout antiquity from Macedonia to Mauretania.¹⁰

TRAGEDY IN CLASSICAL ATHENS

Tragedy developed in what Herington stressed was ‘a song culture’.¹¹ Many fifth-century spectators of drama will themselves have sung at one of the several Athenian festivals where fifty-strong choruses of men and

that it was Aeschylus who invented spoken dialogue (*antilexeis*) for the actors, ‘discarding the long monodies of the earlier time’ (*Life of Apollonius* 6.11).

⁵ It probably has implications for the way tragedy was being performed by late antiquity that on artefacts Melpomene represents tragedy in contrast to Pol(h)ymnia, the new muse of pantomime (see further below). On a third-century Roman mosaic at Elis there are images symbolising all nine muses, including Melpomene, Thalia and Polymnia, who are represented by theatrical masks: see Yalouris (1992). On a fourth-century silver casket found on the Esquiline these theatrical muses are depicted holding their masks (Jory (1996) 12–13 and figs. 7 and 9).

⁶ In Petronius, *Sat.* 53 Trimalchio says he had bought a troupe of professional (Greek) comic actors but compelled them to perform Atellan farces and his *choraules* (see below n. 69) to sing in Latin: *malui illos Atellaniam facere, et choraulem meum iussi Latine cantare.*

⁷ See e.g. the canticum from the mime *The Sulphium Gatherer* (*Laserpicarius Mimus*), sung in a foul voice (*taeterrima voce*) by Trimalchio at his dinner party (Petronius *Sat.* 35, Bonaria (1965) 81). Although it has been argued that Greek mime did not involve much use of music (Cunningham (1971) 5), it is difficult to see what other genre the so-called ‘Charition mime’ might belong to, and it is preserved on a papyrus (*P Oxy.* 413, edited in Grenfell and Hunt (1903)) which may well have been a musician’s copy: it contains signs at several points which are almost certainly instructions to play percussion instruments and probably *auloi* (see *GLP* 338–9).

⁸ *PMG* fr. 815–24. See Arist. *Poet.* 1448a14–16, West (1992a) 366.

⁹ See Maas (1927) and Hunter, this volume.

¹⁰ See Easterling (1997d) and Easterling, this volume.

¹¹ Herington (1985) 3–10.

boys competed.¹² The Athenians knew many songs by heart – hymns, songs to congratulate athletes and military victors, processional songs, drinking songs, work songs, lullabies, medical and magical incantations, and songs to mark courtship, marriage, birth, and death. They sang them more often than modern individuals whose personal repertoire scarcely extends beyond *Happy Birthday* and *Auld Lang Syne* can possibly imagine. Many songs in tragedy (and comedy, see below) are derived from one of these pre-existing genres of ‘ritual’ or ‘activity’ song and are in the lyric metres appropriate to them. But tragedy’s material was mostly drawn from the world of myth, inherited, rather, from epics and from choral lyrics, especially those of Stesichorus.

Tragic poetry is ‘adorned with various rhythms and includes a wealth of metres’, observed the Byzantine scholar Psellus.¹³ Tragedy’s innovation was to *integrate* genres into a complicated artistic pattern: spoken verse alternated with various types of sung poetry, performed to the accompaniment of *auloi* by both a chorus and individual actors. The tragic actor made use of a metre long associated with marching armies, the ‘recitative’ anapaest, whose basic unit is repeated pairs of ∪ – . Anapaests predominate at times of physical movement, especially entrances and exits such as the airborne departure of Euripides’ Medea. The anapaestic metre there indicates that Medea and Jason performed their interchange to *aulos* accompaniment in a rhythmical, semi-musical type of vocal delivery, in antiquity designated by the verb *katalegein*, and perhaps comparable with the intermediate form of enunciation later recommended to Christian psalmists by Bishop Athanasius. Like rhapsodes and citharodes, the tragic actor also needed mastery over the dactylic hexameter, at least when impersonating mythical bards such as Thamyras or Amphion (see further Wilson, this volume). But in addition he had to perform new sung metres, especially the excited dochmiac (based on ∪ – – ∪ –). Dochmiacs make no appearance prior to tragedy and virtually disappear after it, but often characterise the genre’s most emotionally lacerating moments.¹⁴

The actor of fifth-century tragedy had to sing in a variety of metres in rapid succession,¹⁵ and to negotiate the delicate transitions between

¹² A thousand citizens will have performed every year at the City Dionysia in dithyrambic choruses alone, even before the tragic and comic choruses are taken into account (West (1992a) 17).

¹³ ἡ τραγικὴ ποιήσις διαφόροις τε ῥυθμοῖς κοσμουμένη καὶ μέτρα ποικίλα λαμβάνουσα (Dyck (1986) 21–4).

¹⁴ West (1992a) 142.

¹⁵ See e.g. Soph. *Philoctetes* 1169–1217 and the comments of West (1992a) 153. This skill would have been considered remarkable by Aristoxenus’ day, when the emphasis on rhythmical intricacy had been superseded by a love of melody ([Plut.] *On Music* 1138B–C).

them: the shift between recitative and lyrics was regarded as particularly emotive ([Arist.] *Probl.* 19.6). Anapaestic and lyric verses repeatedly alternated with iambic trimeters, and these were spoken. Besides some important external evidence,¹⁶ tragic poetry offers internal clues to the way in which the voice was being used; in iambics people constantly use such verbs as *legein* and *phrazein* in reference to their own speech and that of their interlocutors, whereas the semantic range referring to lyric utterance, which includes *melpein* and *aidein*, is quite different.¹⁷

Tragedy thus offered the dramatist a palette of vocal techniques with which to paint his sound pictures, and certain patterns can be discerned in the way that he handled them. Gods and slaves, for example, rarely sing lyrics in tragedy, but they do recite anapaests. Sophoclean leads all sing at moments of great emotion, female characters frequently sing, but middle-aged men in Aeschylus and Euripides (with the exception of distressed barbarians) prefer spoken rhetoric to extended lyrics.¹⁸ This complex metrical and vocal prosopography was unprecedented. Athens invented tragedy at a time when it was staking claim to be the cultural leader of the Greek world, and it is possible, from a sociological angle, to view tragedy's appropriation of metres associated with other places as Athenian cultural imperialism manifested on the level of form.¹⁹ But it is equally important to stress the *aesthetic* achievement represented by tragedy's elaborate design.

Expert singers, rhapsodes and citharodes, had been singing Greek myths long before the emergence of the specialist *tragōidos*: the *Iliad*, after all, opens 'Muse, sing (*aeide*) of the wrath of Achilles'. But the term *aeidein* demonstrates how close an affinity was perceived between the performances of the epic and the tragic singer, for together with its cognates *aeidein* provided many of the basic words for 'singing' both epic and drama in Greek literature, and formed the second half of the compounds denoting almost all specialist singers, including *kitharōidos*, *tragōidos* and *kōmōidos*. Etymologically related to *aeidein* are both *audē* (the human voice, endowed with speech), and *aēdōn*, 'nightingale', a bird whose plaintive song brought it into association with lachrymose women from Penelope of the *Odyssey* onwards (19.518–23). But it was with female

¹⁶ Two important passages in Aristotle associate the iambic metre with speech (*Poet.* 1449a19–28, *Rhet.* 3.1408b24–6); in Lucian's caricatures of *tragōidoi*, he complains that the performers contemporary with him 'even' sing their iambics, implying that this practice is a decadent modern development (see below).

¹⁷ Although Barner (1971) 292 collects some of the Greek tragic terms designating song, much work remains to be done on the numerous different words used in tragedy to describe vocal performance, and on how they might illuminate actors' techniques of singing and speaking.

¹⁸ See Hall (1999a) 108–20 and Csapo, this volume.

¹⁹ Hall (1997a) 100, 111; Hall (1999a) 120–2.

singing in tragedy that the nightingale, formerly Procne, the infanticidal mother, became most closely connected.

The story of Procne's murder of her son Itys was staged in Sophocles' famous *Tereus* (the music of which seems to have been memorable, see below) and by the Roman tragedians Livius Andronicus and Accius. Elsewhere tragedy alludes to this myth when describing women's singing. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, for example, Cassandra's dochmiac singing is likened by the chorus (also using dochmiacs) to the song of the nightingale (1140–9):

CHORUS You are crazed, possessed by a god, and singing a tuneless tune about your own fate, like some shrill nightingale, insatiable in lament – alas! – who in the misery of her heart mourns 'Itys, Itys', whose death was full of evil for both his parents.

CASSANDRA Ah, ah, for the life of the clear-voiced nightingale! The gods clothed her in winged form, and gave her a sweet life with nothing to cry about, whereas for me there awaits the blow of a two-edged weapon.

The comparison was presumably reinforced by the lost melody, and certainly by the 'twittering' effect produced by the high proportion of short syllables in the resolved dochmiacs of this particular interchange; the chorus' description of Cassandra's melody as a 'tuneless tune' (*nomon anomon*) itself scans as five short syllables consecutively. Cassandra, however, shifts the focus from the bird's voice to her winged body, reminding us that the singing actor playing her is engaged in an emphatically physical activity.²⁰

The actor playing Cassandra needed skill in antiphonal singing, which requires a solo voice with a timbre distinct from that of the choral group but minutely adjusted to its tonality and pace of delivery. Cassandra's sung dialogue with the chorus consists of serial pairs of metrical units of similar length, which respond strophically. The structured rhythmical character of Aeschylus' music is suggested by Dionysus' description in *Frogs* of his melodies as appropriate for 'someone drawing water from a well' (1297). But tragic music evolved alongside that of citharody and dithyrambic choruses, which had already been composed without strophic responson by the middle of the fifth century (Arist. *Rhet.* 3.1409b).

In Euripides' dateable plays actors' songs increasingly replace strophic responson with asymmetric, 'freeform' metrical structures,

²⁰ Segal (1995) 68. See Valakas, this volume. See also Aeschylus' Danaids, who compare their own singing with the voice of the nightingale, the wife of Tereus (*Supp.* 58–67), and the comments below on Sophocles' *Electra*.

characterised by repetition of individual words.²¹ Euripides' astrophic monodists are mostly self-absorbed women, who use song to express intimate and passionate emotions.²² Astrophic song is much harder to learn than song in a repeated metre, which is one reason why it was associated with the solo voice rather than with choruses ([Arist.] *Probl.* 19.15). But it also increased the ornamentation and mimetic element (see Csapo, this volume) and affected the vocal timbre. Timotheus, the citharode most closely associated with the 'New Music' influencing Euripides, differentiated his own relaxed, beguiling sound from that of older, out-of-date singers, 'the maulers' of songs 'who strain and yell with the far-ringing voices of heralds' (κηρύκων λιγυμακροφώνων τείνοντας ἰυγᾶς, *Persians PMG* 791, 218–20).

A plausible tradition held that the earliest tragedians were star actors and took the principal roles in their own plays. Sophocles is said to have played the lead in his own *Thamyras*, in which this mythical bard performed hexameters and played the cithara (*Life* 5; fr. 242 *TrGF*, see also Wilson, this volume). Sophocles' *Thamyras* is probably illustrated on a hydria from the middle of the century (fig. 1). It has the words 'Euaion is beautiful' inscribed over the figure of an agitated woman, probably Thamyras' mother Argiope, dancing under the influence of his music. Since we know that Aeschylus' son Euaion was a tragic actor, we may be looking at a picture of characters played in the original production by a singing, strumming Sophocles and by Aeschylus' dancing son.²³

Sophocles is supposed to have given up performing in his own plays because of his weak voice (*Life* 4), a tradition which functioned as an aetiological narrative for the emergence of the specialist tragic singer. Sophocles is also said to have taken the talents of his actors into account when composing their roles (*Life* 6), and the vocal skills of the available lead actors (for example, the Tlepolemos who often acted for Sophocles (schol. on Ar. *Clouds* 1266)) must have influenced all the tragedians;²⁴ any competent singer, for example, knew the exact range of his own voice and

²¹ E.g. *IA* 1289–90, Ἰδοῖος / Ἰδοῖος ἐλέγετ' ἐλέγετ', on which England (1891) 130 comments: 'probably it was the music which was mainly responsible for this double repetition'. On this kind of diction and repetition in Euripidean monodies see Barlow (1986b). But Euripides was not the only tragedian to experiment with the new, freer form of actor's song. Io in the Aeschylean *PV* (566–73) is an interesting early example of an astrophic monodist.

²² Damen (1990) 134–5. In Electra's monody at *Orestes* 960–1012, for example, Euripides moves his actor from strophic to astrophic form at the point where Electra's grief moves beyond control to hysteria (982, see Collard (1975) vol. II, 359).

²³ Rome, Vatican 16549 (*IGD* 69, no. III. 2.9). On the vase and on Euaion see further Green, this volume and Kaimio (1993) 22.

²⁴ Owen (1936) 150, 153.



Fig. 1 Thamyras and his mother Argiope: played by Sophocles(?) and Aeschylus' son Euaion (Photo: J. R. Green)

needed to have his singing pitched accordingly.²⁵ Actors who performed alongside star protagonists also had to be able to sing. In Euripides' *Orestes* the deuteragonist who originally played Electra and Helen's Phrygian servant, in support of the protagonist Hegelochos' Orestes, must have possessed a remarkable singing voice with a high tessitura.²⁶ Aeschines had to sing an antiphonal lament as Sophocles' Creon in *Antigone* (probably a tritagonist's role, see Easterling, this volume), but also a striking monody as the blinded Polymestor in Euripides' *Hecuba* (Dem. 18.267, see fig. 2).²⁷

²⁵ Callicratidas in Thesleff (1961) 106.21.

²⁶ See further Falkner, this volume. Information from several sources tells us more than usual about the music to Euripides' *Orestes*, an exceptionally popular play on the ancient stage. An important papyrus of the third or second century BC (Vienna G 2315, see Pöhlmann (1970) 78–82) preserves the sung melody and accompaniment to seven lines delivered by the chorus (338–44), and there is no reason to suppose that this music was not composed by Euripides himself. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, writing in the Augustan era about the relationship of words to music, seems to have been able to make a detailed consultation of a 'score' of Euripides' *Orestes* (*On Composition of Words* 5.11.63, see Pöhlmann (1960) 19–24). And a scholiast happens to have recorded the information that the actor playing Electra sang at a very high pitch (*oxeiaí phōnēi*), appropriate to a dirge, when asking the entering chorus to be quiet (schol. on *Or.* 176). See also Damen (1990) 141–2.

²⁷ Stephanis (1988) no. 90.3a.



Fig. 2 The blinded Polymestor in Euripides' *Hecuba* (©The British Museum)

VIRTUOSO TRAGŌIDOI

Actors were becoming famous for their virtuoso specialisms by the fourth century – Nikostratos for his recital of tetrameters to the *auloi* and his messenger speeches,²⁸ and Theodoros for his ‘natural’ delivery and female roles, which included several with important lyrics, such as Sophocles’ Electra and Antigone.²⁹ But it is in the third century that inscriptions recording the constitution of theatrical companies at festivals such as the Delphic Soteria, combined with the Hellenistic *Problems* attributed to Aristotle, begin to present a clear picture of a new kind of travelling professional actor whose special expertise was in singing.³⁰ He was to remain a feature of cultural life in the Mediterranean region for eight hundred years.³¹

Travelling professional *tragōidoi*, if successful in competitions, could enjoy huge earnings and fame, and be honoured by statues and civic rights in the cities where they performed.³² Their only rivals were rhapsodes, and, later, star dancers of pantomime (see below). It is not surprising that a skilled singer might participate in several different types of event at festivals, for example the Athenian Xenophantos of the first century BC, a rhapsode, tragic actor, and singer of paeans and choruses.³³ The

²⁸ Xen. *Symp.* 6.3; it was proverbial to ‘tell everything like Nikostratos’ (*Paroemiogr.* 1.395). See also Csapo, this volume.

²⁹ Plut. *Sympotic Questions-Moralia* 737B, Dem. 19.246 (Stephanis (1988) no. 1157). Theodoros was also famous for his performances of female roles in Euripidean tragedy (see Lada-Richards, this volume). On the enormous importance of the public opinion of an actor’s vocal skills, see Easterling (1999). On actors’ specialisms see also Green, this volume, Dihle (1981) 29–30, Ghiron-Bistagne (1976) 157. Other actors may have specialised in male roles: see, for example, the enterprising third-century boxer/actor whose documented (all male) winning roles included heroes renowned for the physical prowess, such as Heracles and Antaeus (Stephanis (1988) no. 3003). This impressive person may have been an Arcadian named Apollonogenes (see Stephanis (1988) no. 239).

³⁰ Gentili (1979) 22; Sifakis (1967) 156–65.

³¹ By the late Roman period the theatres came to be dominated by pantomimes and mimes, but a certain diversity of entertainment was maintained, and there are still references to ‘tragic actors’ in the fourth century (John Chrysostom, *Homily on the Acts of the Apostles* 30, PG 60.226) and even as late as the sixth (Choricus *Syn. Mim.* 118, where they are listed with conjurors): see Theoharidis (1940) 50–2. At Byzantium, at any rate, excerpts from old tragedies continued to be sung by actors who wore high shoes and elaborate costumes, and took both female and male roles (Theoharidis (1940) 49–62).

³² See e.g. Stephanis (1988) nos. 1272, 2001.

³³ Stephanis (1988) no. 1913, see also nos. 2137, 822. Outside the context of competitive festivals, the distinctions between performers of tragedy and performers of epic must in practice often have been blurred. See, for example, the travelling professional actor in Achilles Tatius’ *Leucippe and Cleitophon* (3.20), of the second century AD. He gave vocal displays of passages from Homer (τις . . . τῶν τὰ Ὀμήρου τῷ στόματι δεικνύντων ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις). But the performances were theatrical enough to require props (σκευή), which the context implies consisted of armour and

singing profession was often practised by more than one member of the same family, for example the third-century brothers Ouliades and Aristippos of Miletus, or the Theban rhapsode Kraton and his son Kleon, a *tragōidos*.³⁴ Such singers may have begun as infant prodigies, perhaps specialising in sung children's roles such as that of Alcestis' son in her Euripidean name-play: a boy actor from Cyzicus in the third century AD (*pais tragōidos*) was honoured by the citizens of Ephesus.³⁵

The performances of *tragōidoi*, although masked and costumed, must often have resembled what we call concerts or recitals rather than theatrical productions. The nineteenth Aristotelian *Problem* implies that the growing popularity of the *tragōidos* as entertainer, and the increasing ascendancy of his solos over choral lyric, resulted from the greater expressive and mimetic possibilities of the solo aria. Hellenistic *tragōidoi* concentrated the pleasure their performances offered by excerpting the most delicious solo lyric highlights from tragedies. Solo recitals were first to rival and, together with pantomime, eventually to supersede the performance of whole tragic texts.³⁶

A papyrus of the third century BC shows a programme, for example, which not only consists of excerpted lyrical highlights from *Iphigenia in Aulis*, but rearranges their order.³⁷ Another possibility was to extract several scenes from different tragedies on the same mythical figure, such as the excerpts apparently linked by Achilles' son Neoptolemus in the 'Oslo papyrus', a beautiful document from which some ancient *tragōidos* learned the words and melodies for a recital (fig. 3).³⁸ A star Samian aulete named Satyros, after his victory at a Pythian festival (probably in 194 BC), demonstrated his versatility by offering his audience one song with a chorus called *Dionysus*, and another on a presumably similar theme, from Euripides' *Bacchae*, which he accompanied on the cithara.³⁹ A *tragōidos*, Kanopos, appears on a papyrus from Oxyrhynchus alongside the aulete Epagathos, who is named as the accompanist to forty 'odes' from six

weapons. They certainly included, for stage murders (πρὸς τὰς κιβδηλοὺς σφαγὰς), a trick dagger with a retractable blade, which saves the heroine's life.

³⁴ Stephanis (1988) nos. 322, 1968 (see also nos. 2810–12), 1502, 1464.

³⁵ Stephanis (1988) no. 1779.

³⁶ A practice for which there is no firm evidence after the early third century AD (Barnes (1996) 170–3, Easterling and Miles (1999) 96).

³⁷ Leiden papyrus inv. 510. Thanks to Martin West for helpful advice on the musical papyri.

³⁸ Gentili (1979) 28–30, first edited by Eitrem, Amundsen and Winnington-Ingram (1955). The text, which contains more than one version of some phrases, may have been written by the music's composer (West 1992a) 312. For further discussion of the possible links between the excerpts in this papyrus see Pöhlmann (1970) 118–19.

³⁹ Stephanis (1988) no. 2240.



Fig. 3 The 'Oslo' papyrus showing words and melodies for a recital of songs about Neoptolemus (Photo: Adam Bülow-Jacobsen/AIP Archive)

'dramas'. These seem to have been excerpts from (mostly Euripidean) plays, including *Hypsipyle*, *Medea* and *Antiope*.⁴⁰

Tragic singers appear at significant moments in the literature of the Second Sophistic. Anecdotes concerning *tragōidoi* (usually singing the songs of Euripidean heroines) demonstrate the charisma, status and authority these actors could acquire (see further Easterling, this volume). Plutarch's account of the display of the dead Crassus' head at a feast in Armenia is enlivened by a sung performance of part of Euripides' *Bacchae*, thus inviting the reader to draw a comparison between the

⁴⁰ See Cockle (1975) with plate xv. Cockle notes that one Claudius Epagathus was a member of the embassy of Dionysiac artists to the emperor Claudius in AD 42 (p. 64, with references).

slaughter of Crassus and the murder of Pentheus (the actor was Jason of Tralles, Plut. *Life of Crassus* 33.2–4); another *tragōidos* anecdote functions to underline the cultural aspirations of Juba II, a Mauretanian client king of the Roman empire in the early first century AD (Leonteus of Argos sang from Euripides' *Hypsipyle*, Athenaeus 8.343e–f).

Despite the ancients' voracious appetite for tragic singing, the most detailed description of a *tragōidos*' performance is an unflattering caricature. It is placed by Lucian in the mouth of Lykinos, an advocate of the danced versions of tragedy offered by pantomime (*On Dancing* 27):

What a repulsive and at the same time frightful spectacle is a man tricked out to disproportionate stature, mounted upon high clogs, wearing a mask that reaches above his head, with a mouth that is set in a vast yawn as if he meant to swallow up the spectators! . . . The man himself bawls out (κεκραγώς), bending backward and forward, sometimes singing even his iambic lines (ἐνίστε καὶ περιᾶδων τὰ ἰαμβεῖα) and (what is surely the height of unseemliness) melodising (μελωδῶν) his calamities, holding himself answerable for nothing but his voice, as everything else has been attended to by the poets, who lived at some time in the distant past.⁴¹

However exaggerated, some of these colourful details are illuminating. The singing actor provided a striking spectacle, wearing a mask with a distortedly gaping mouth, a view the dialogue elaborates by saying that the pantomime dancer's masks, with their closed mouths, are much more beautiful (29). This important difference between tragedy and pantomime is indeed supported by the depictions of masks on artefacts (see figs. 4 and 5 and Jory, this volume). The information that both words and music have been provided by the poets of long ago also accords with other evidence from Lucian's period, which implies that melodies were still in circulation which were by (or at least believed to be by) Euripides and Sophocles.

In the first half of the second century AD the Milesians dedicated an inscription to their fellow countryman G. Ailios Themison. They commemorated his victories at the Isthmian and other games, adding that he was the 'first and only' individual to set Euripides, Sophocles and Timotheus to music of his own.⁴² Ailios might simply have used *themes* from these famous poets in original new vocal works, but Latte was probably correct in arguing that he provided his own music to old,

⁴¹ Translation adapted from Harmon (1936).

⁴² μόνον καὶ πρῶτον Εὐριπίδην Σοφοκλέα καὶ Τιμόθεον ἑαυτῷ μελοποίησαντα. The inscription was published by Broneer (1953) = Stephanis (1988) no. 1132. See also Wilson, this volume.



Fig. 4 Ivory with mask of singing actor of tragedy (By permission of the National Museum of Wales)

famous words in the classic repertoire.⁴³ Did Ailius compose new music for the old lyric sections, for iambic trimeters, or for both? Here a problem arises. What was (or was at least believed to be) the original music to old tragedy was still familiar, but as far we know the fifth-century tragedians

⁴³ Broneer (1953); Latte (1954). Some *tragōdoi* were creative artists of another kind, victorious both as performers of 'old' tragedies from the classic repertoire and as poets of 'new' tragedy (e.g. Stephanis (1988) no. 274).

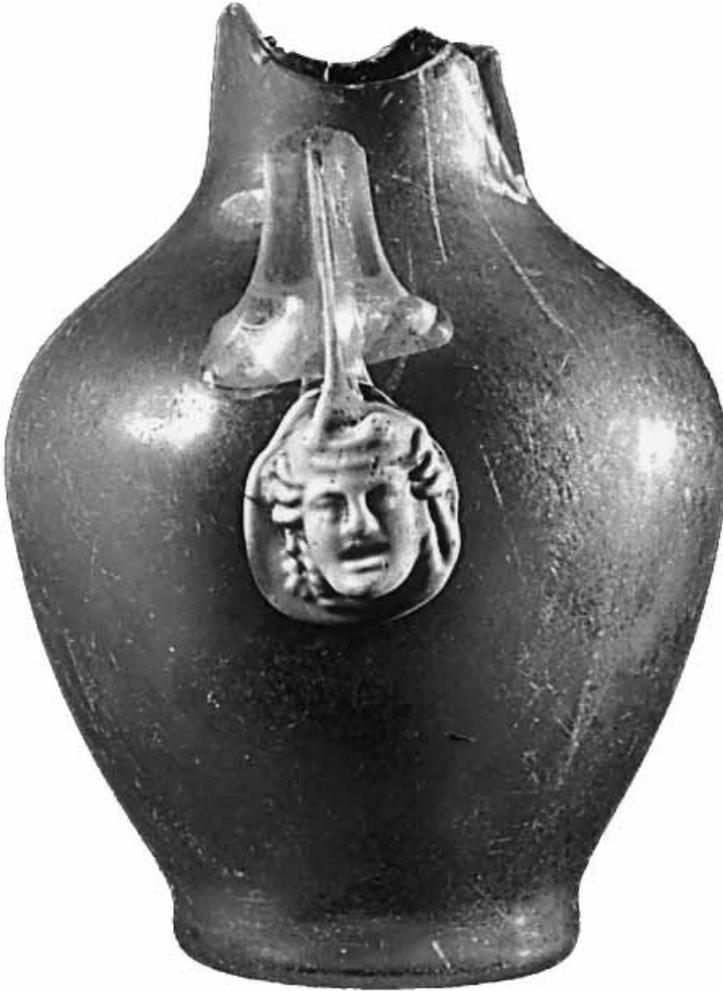


Fig. 5 Glass jug with mask of singing actor of tragedy (Soprintendenza Archeologica per la Toscana – Firenze)

had not composed the music which by this time was often accompanying ‘even’ iambic trimeters.

In an oration on his liking for music Dio Chrysostom says that he prefers listening to citharodes and actors than to orators. One reason is that orators often extemporise, whereas citharodes and actors offer poetry composed by ancient poets (*Or.* 19.5):

And the most of what they give us comes from ancient times (ἀρχαῖά ἐστι), and from much wiser men than those of the present. In the case of comedy everything is kept; in the case of tragedy only the strong parts (τὰ μὲν ἰσχυρά), it would seem, remain – I mean the iambics and portions of these that they still give (διεξίασιν) in our theatres – but the more delicate parts (τὰ δὲ μαλακώτερα) have fallen away, that is, the lyric parts.

Dio's context in this dialogue is Cyzicus, a Milesian colony in which G. Ailius Themison himself may have performed a few decades later. Dio states that only selected iambic portions of tragedy were being 'given'. The context of the dialogue, which is comparing music to oratory and is inspired by the visit of a citharode to Cyzicus, suggests that these iambic parts are being *sung*, and sung, moreover, to music believed to be the work of the original poets.

So where did singers (other than the innovative Ailius) get the music for their iambics from? Ancient tunes were repetitive and conformed to traditional melodic patterns.⁴⁴ In the current state of our evidence we must imagine that singers performing passages from 'old' tragedy used original (or at least plausibly old-sounding) and *recognisable* scales and cadences from the lyrics and recitative, somehow transferring them to the different rhythm of the iambics; Roman connoisseurs, at any rate, could tell from the notes produced by the first breath of the accompanying pipe whether a tragedy was *Antiope* or *Andromache*.⁴⁵

THE ART OF THE TRAGŌIDOS

Papyrus discoveries allow us to sketch in outline the technical demands made on tragic singers. A fragment of a scene from a post-classical tragedy on the fall of Troy implies that *tragōidoi* could be competent at musical 'improvisation'. Cassandra deliriously describes Hector's last battle against Achilles, but the papyrus includes the word 'song' (ὥδή) on seven occasions before verses probably delivered by her. These seem almost certain to be musical directions to the actor playing Cassandra to improvise sung preludes to the words he had to memorise.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Comotti (1989b) 8. The papyri of Euripidean music show repeated playing up and down within the cluster of notes close together in pitch.

⁴⁵ Cicero, *Acad.* 2.20 = fr. 31 in Jocelyn (1967), who believes, however, that Cicero is referring to theatrical displays at, for example, funerals, rather than fully staged performances of entire tragedies (pp. 253–4).

⁴⁶ *TrGF* fr. adesp. 649 = *P Oxy.* 2746, first edited by Coles (1968). Perhaps the improvised singing consisted of the type of exclamations Cassandra delivers in Aeschylus' seminal *Agamemnon*

However outlandish the lyric snatches improvised by Hellenistic actors playing Cassandra, most of the original music of fifth-century tragedy had used the ‘manly’ enharmonic scale.⁴⁷ This means that the tragic singer will have sung melodies based around the tonic and the fifth, which repeatedly contrasted tiny steps in pitch with a larger one of approximately a major third. Euripides and Agathon began using the chromatic scale, which somewhat evened out the gaps between the notes and was regarded as more effeminate than the enharmonic. Both these scales gradually gave way to the diatonic, which dominated in the Roman period, and which, since its notes were at more equal distances apart, more closely resembled the modern western scale. But the tragedians’ old enharmonic remained in use to accompany their works, even though only the most outstanding musicians could attempt it, since the tiny intervals it entailed demanded strict precision.⁴⁸

The melodies sung by tragic actors generally rose and then fell again in pitch, rather than beginning with a descent. While singing the same note repeatedly was rare, most tunes predominantly moved stepwise in the scale to an adjacent note, and thus would now seem to be continuously in motion (which perhaps illuminates the comparison with the nightingale), sinuous and writhing.⁴⁹ In the tragic melodies preserved on papyri the occasional leaps or dives of up to a ninth, on the other hand, seem designed to create an emphatic special effect. An important musical papyrus at Yale contains a dramatic Greek lyric song performed by a highly skilled baritone of the imperial era, quite possibly a *tragōidos*;

(e.g. 1214, 1256; see Gentili (1979) 71–3). Coles (1968) 116, suggests the possibility that the musical direction ‘is not contemporary with the composition of the play but a later interpolation which reflects later methods of production’. However, at *Cyclops* 487, the Laurentian manuscript’s stage direction to the actor playing Polyphemus to sing from within (ᾠδῆ ἐνδοθεν) may go back as far as Euripides (Seaford (1984) 195).

⁴⁷ It was seen as a paradox that martial peoples like the Aetolians, who used the diatonic scale, were more manly and courageous ‘than singers in tragedy, who have [always] been accustomed to singing in the enharmonic’ (so the classical polemic on music preserved in the third-century BC ‘Hibeh’ papyrus 2.1–4, edited by Grenfell and Hunt (1906), pt. 1 no. 13, pp. 45–58, col. ii, translated by Barker (1984) vol. 1, 184). The enharmonic divided the octave into two tetrachords (in modern terms, say, *e* to *a* and *b* to *e*), but within the tetrachords bunched the other available notes just above the bottom at tiny intervals of only about a quarter-tone, leaving a big gap above them: getting from *e* to *f* took two steps, but from *f* to *a* only one.

⁴⁸ Aristid. Quint., *On Music* 16.10–18, translated in Barker (1989) vol. II, 418. The difficult melodies of tragic songs were made easier to perform by the supporting *auloi*: it was believed that too many instruments obscured a voice, but *auloi* or a lyre could define a sung melody ([Arist.] *Probl.* 19.43, 19.9, see also Euripides’ *Electra* 878). In the fragment of the musical score from Euripides’ *Orestes* (see above n. 26), the instrumental notes suggest that the two pipes for the most part played the same note, but occasionally diverged to play at an interval of a fourth (West (1992a) 103–4).

⁴⁹ West (1992a) 191–2, 194.

the melody involved a sudden leap down no less than an octave and a third. The editor of the papyrus argues that the sudden descent in pitch was designed to represent the voice change caused by spirit possession, and that it marked the beginning of the first-person representation of a prophet or prophetess' utterances.⁵⁰ This florid song is most unusual in requiring its performer to cover two octaves; most melodies seem to have been composed within the compass of little more than one. Some recently published papyrus fragments, which may record the vocal music to a tragedy on Achilles by Sophocles or his homonymous grandson, reveal a striking tendency for the melody to 'oscillate' between two notes separated by an interval ranging between a semitone and a fifth.⁵¹ It is possible that such oscillation suggested the use of the verb *elēlizesthai* ('trill' or 'quiver') used in sung descriptions of the nightingale's song in both Aristophanes' *Birds* (213–14, see further below) and Euripides' *Helen* (1111).

The songs sung in these scales were in one of the musical 'modes', which entailed recognisable ways of selecting notes (probably with distinctive melodic formulae and cadences), and a particular tessitura. The exciting Phrygian mode, which Sophocles is supposed to have introduced to tragedy, required high-pitched singing. The dignified Dorian was often used in tragic laments, the emotive Mixolydian was used for many choruses, and the 'soft' Ionian, compared in Aeschylus' *Supplikes* with the nightingale's song (69), is associated by Aristophanes with the seductive songs of prostitutes (*Eccl.* 883). The active Hypophrygian and the magnificent Hypodorian, introduced by the innovative tragedian Agathon, were not used by choruses, but only by actors playing heroic roles;⁵² virtuoso *tragōidoi* thus needed to be able to sing in special (and perhaps specially difficult) modes which distinguished their solo singing from the collective choral voice.

Songs seem to have been sung at a speed similar to that at which they would have been intuitively spoken: when a Greek poet wanted his poetry to be delivered at a slower or faster pace, he used more long or short syllables respectively. These two types of syllable provided the two basic note values of Greek vocal music as they did Greek speech, one twice as long as another – in modern terms, a crotchet and a quaver.⁵³ Most

⁵⁰ Johnson (2000) 75.

⁵¹ West (1999) 49. These musical fragments are inscribed on the other side of cartonnage scraps containing tragic lyrics.

⁵² [Arist.] *Probl.* 19.48. See also the Byzantine treatise on tragedy edited by Browning (1963) par. 5.

⁵³ West (1992a) 154, 131.

Greek music did not stretch out individual words by spreading their syllables over more than one note. Euripides, however, experimented with this kind of ornamentation, a development parodied in *Frogs* where the verb *heilissō* ('twirl') becomes *heieieieieilissō* (1314, 1348). This ornament became popular for proper names, where a syllable is sometimes spread over several notes. In a papyrus scrap of a dramatic lament for Ajax, his name is sung 'Ai-ai-i-an' rather than 'Ai-an'.⁵⁴

Although Aeschylean tragedy provides occasional internal musical directions,⁵⁵ the early *tragōidos* learned his tunes by hearing other men – in theatrical families (see above) a father, brother, or uncle – sing them.⁵⁶ But as traditional melodic forms were replaced by more modern music after the fifth century BC, it became important to record the music to tragedy. From at least as early as the fourth century Greek singers had a system of musical notation based on a modification of the Attic alphabet. Significantly, the papyri containing literary texts with musical notations are almost all copies of texts of *drama*, presumably designed for use by *tragōidoi* and associated performers – instrumentalists, a chorus, or a theatrical company.⁵⁷

Tragedy sometimes makes bodily demands on its singing actors; the actor playing Hecuba, for example, had to sing some of her laments from a prone position on the ground (see Valakas, this volume). Yet in ancient visual art singers stand erect, with their heads thrown back, as if to open up the throat and windpipe. Theophrastus says that when people sing high notes they 'draw in the ribs and stretch out the windpipe, narrowing them by force'.⁵⁸ The mouth was also opened wide: in an ekphrasis the citharode Amphinon 'shows his teeth a little, just enough for a singer'.⁵⁹ The tragic actor's mask had a gaping mouth to allow the sound to emerge, and the actor's own mouth to be visible (see Green, this volume). The convention of the mask may have survived partly because it concealed the facial distortion necessary to the production of a voice big

⁵⁴ West (1992a) 203, 320.

⁵⁵ *Supplices* 69, for example, suggests the use of the Ionian mode. On the musical modes see also Wilson, this volume.

⁵⁶ Aural lessons in both song and instrumental playing appear on fifth-century vases, such as the famous kylix by Douris in Berlin (Berlin 2285, see Comotti (1989b) 8–9). Henderson (1957) n. 1, observes that a singer reads from a scroll on a vase of about 425 BC, but points out that there is no evidence that the scroll contains any notation other than words.

⁵⁷ Comotti (1989b) 11 (see e.g. this chapter, fig. 3).

⁵⁸ He adds that when singing low notes they widen the windpipe to shorten the throat (Porphyry, *Commentary on Ptolemy's Harmonics* 63, translated in Barker (1989) vol. II, 114).

⁵⁹ Philostratus, *Imagines* 1.10–25. I owe this reference to Peter Wilson.

enough to fill outdoor theatres,⁶⁰ although a good actor could exploit the mask to intensify the awesome impression he made: Prudentius compares the mendacious but potent orator with ‘a tragic singer (*tragicus cantor*) who conceals his face beneath a hollow wooden mask, but breathes some great crime through its gaping hole (*hiatus*)’, (*Contra Symmachum* 2.664–8).

The sound produced by singers was admired for its loudness, resonance, clarity, precision, and security of hold on notes (Plato, *Rep.* 8.568c3; Arist. *De aud.* 804a9–32). Voices are admired for being ‘sweet’ or ‘honey-like’; the nightingale in Aristophanes’ *Birds* is said to sing a ‘liquid’ melody in a ‘clean’ voice (213–15); the most common epithet of praise is *ligus* or *liguros*, which refers to a clear sound, free from roughness, and is also used to describe the sound made by cicadas, birds, orators, *auloi*, lyres and panpipes.⁶¹ According to Isidore of Seville in the seventh century, who drew on earlier authors, the ‘perfect’ voice is male and ‘high, to be adequate to the sublime; loud, to fill the ear; sweet, to soothe the minds of the hearers’.⁶²

Isidore says that women, like children and the sick, have ‘thin’ voices, which lack sufficient breath and sound like stringed rather than wind instruments. Such a perception of female vocal weakness may partly explain the dearth of women dramatic singers, despite the extensive evidence for ancient female instrumentalists and dancers.⁶³ The best candidate for a female *tragōidos* is the *diva* Athenion, celebrated in an epigram by Dioscorides for her stunning performance of a work entitled the *Horse* (*AP* v.137). This just might have been the Greek prototype of Livius Andronicus’ tragedy *Equus Trojanus*, in which case Athenion might have sung the role of Cassandra.⁶⁴ But other evidence implies that Athenion’s *Horse* was more likely a concert aria. The heroine of the second-century novel *Leucippe and Cleitophon* is able to perform, in private at least, both epic and lyric songs.⁶⁵ A unique musical papyrus fragment

⁶⁰ Hunningher (1956) 326–8.

⁶¹ West (1992a) 42.

⁶² *Etymologiarum sive originum libri xx* 6.20. Isidore proposes that there are ten categories of singing voice: the sweet (fine, full, loud and high), penetrating (those which can sustain a note evenly an unusually long time and continuously fill a place, like trumpets), thin, fat, sharp, hard, harsh, blind, prettily flexible (*vinola* from *vinus*, a softly curling lock of hair), and perfect.

⁶³ See Webb, this volume, and e.g. the elder Seneca’s report of women dancing on private pantomime stages all over Rome (*Q.Nat* 7.32.3). The Kleopatra listed with tragic and comic actors at Delos in 268 BC was not an actress but a specialist trick dancer (Webster (1963) 539).

⁶⁴ Rostagni (1956) vols. 2.1, 384–7 and 2.2, 3–22.

⁶⁵ 2.1; she sings part of the sixteenth book of the *Iliad* and a lyric in praise of the rose. See also Tarsia’s autobiographical monody in *The Story of Apollonius King of Tyre* (41).