

Terpandros of Lesbos in Medieval and Renaissance Music Theory Reconsidered*

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All ancient writers who mention the progressive state of music in Greece praise the talents of Terpandros (Τέρπανδρος). Born in ancient Antissa on the Greek island of Lesbos, Terpandros (c.712-c.645 BC) was the son of Derdenis (Δέρδενις). He seems to be the most famous musician of the 7th century BC. Noted Greek writers, such as Pindar (1st half 5th century BC), Strabo (1st century BC), Plutarch (1st-2nd century AD), and Nicomachus (2nd century AD) state that Terpandros' most remarkable achievement was the addition of three extra strings to the lyre, which before his time had only four.¹ Further he was credited with having introduced a new type of composition, the lyric *nomos* or *nome*²; and as the story goes, he had been summoned by command of the Delphian oracle to neutralize the differences which had arisen between different classes in Sparta in order to bring peace during the Second Messenian War (685-668 BC). Here he gained the prize in the musical contests at the 26th Olympiad at Carneia (676-672 BC). This important Spartan festival included musical contests as well as military, athletic and agricultural activities.³

* A brief version of this text was read at the international conference *Terpandros: His Role in the Development of the Ancient Greek Music*, Skala Eressou, Lesbos 2000. After the first version of the article (Schaik 2004: 313-328) new aspects have come to light in particular regarding the mythologized reports of Terpandros. Those aspects are part of this article. I would like to thank Dr. John C. Franklin (University of Vermont, USA) for his most useful comments to the first edition of the text. Special thanks goes also to Dr. Stelios Psaroudakēs (University of Athens) for thought-provoking discussions of some of the topics considered here, and to Ms. Heleen van Schaik for correcting the Greek translations.

¹ Pindar, *Eulogies*, 125-6; Strabo, *Geography*, 13, 2.4 (C 618); Plutarch, *Moralia*, 238C; Nicomachus, *Harmonikon Encheiridion*, 244, 14ff. For other references to the fame of Terpander see: Timotheus, *Persae*, fragment 15, 237ff. (Poetae Melici Graeci 791). With regard to the seven stringed lyre see also Deubner 1930: 1566-1567; Wegner 1949: 125-126, 141ff., with a reference to older literature on p. 227; Michaelides 1978: 326-327 'Terpandrus'.

² Pollux, *Onomastikon*, IV.65; *Suidae Lexicon*: 'Terpandros'; Pseudo-Plutarch, *On music*, 1132C-D. See also Jüthner, 1892: 8-12; Grieser 1937: 50ff.

³ The epigrammatist and philosopher Philodemus of Gadara (1st century BC) seems to be one of the earliest writers who mentions this legend (see Gadara's writings 18.31-35, 85.49-86.19). Other references are found in Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, 635E; Plinius, *Naturalis historiae*, VII, LVI, 13; Plutarch, *Moralia*, 238C; Pseudo-Plutarch, *On music*, 1146B-C. See also Barker 1984: 144 and 296, footnote 184.

Terpandros' main importance, however, consists in having been a musical innovator.⁴ Undoubtedly he was the earliest important figure in the early history of Greek music and, moreover, the first actual human musician in Greek and in Western music history we know. In addition to this the significance of his presumed innovations did not stop with the decline of the Hellenistic period, but persisted in writings on music theory even up to at least the sixteenth century AD – a continuous period of more than 2,000 years. However, in contrast to the descriptions of his merits in ancient sources almost nothing is known about Terpandros' heritage in works of music theory in medieval and modern times. To give a basis to this statement: the item contribution on Terpandros in the 2001 edition of the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* ends with a final reference to Pseudo-Plutarch, a Greek writer on music from the second century AD.⁵ Therefore, in this essay it is my intention to bring together the significant elements concerning Terpandros in sources on medieval and renaissance music theory. These elements are discussed and illustrated by the most interesting passages of its sort. Following on from this rather uncorrelated gathering of data, it is also necessary to discuss the issue whether medieval and renaissance writers dealt with the information concerning Terpandros in the same way as ancient writers did.

INVENTOR OF THE SEVENTH STRING

In ancient Greek writings it was widely and persistently held that Terpandros added three strings to the lyre and altered in some way the form of the scale to which strings were tuned as well.⁶ Recent research by John Curtis Franklin (2002) has shown that the legend that Terpandros rejected the 'four voiced song' in favor of new songs on the seven-stringed lyre epitomizes a confrontation between two musical traditions during the Greek Orientalizing period (c. 750-650 BC), catalyzed by the westward expansion of the Assyrian empire.⁷ The seven-stringed lyre answers clearly to the heptatony which was widely practiced in the ancient Near East, as known from the diatonic tuning system documented in the cuneiform musical tablets. The 'four voiced song' must be understood as describing the inherited melodic practice of the Greek epic singer. It is striking that the legend is absent in writings on music theory from the Christian Era. In Latin medieval and renaissance sources, Terpandros is presented as the one who invented *only the seventh* string.

⁴ According to Pseudo-Plutarch's *On music*, 1140F, Terpandros is also the originator of the *skolia* ('convivial drinking songs') and the one who introduced the Dorian *nete*, as well as the inventor of the Myxolydian *tonos*. For general information concerning Terpandros see: Groningen 1955: 177-191; Anderson 1966: 44ff., 56; Wegner 1966: cols. 242-243; Klein 1975: col. 609.

⁵ Anderson 2001: 300-301. The dating is uncertain. In Siamakis 2005: 162 the text *On music* of Pseudo-Plutarch is attributed to Plutarch the Athenian (350-433 AD) who was the president and manager of the academy of Platon in Athens.

⁶ See footnote 1.

⁷ See Franklin 2002b and 2002c. Cf. Gombosi 1939: 77.

In western music theory, it was primarily the Roman statesman, philosopher, and scholar Boethius – in full Anicius Manlius Torquatus Severinus Boethius (born *c.* 480 and died 524/525 AD) who passed on to the Latin writers of the Middle Ages the Greek items of information regarding Terpandros. He was convinced, as so many after him that the only true learning came from ancient Greece and Rome. In his voluminous treatise *De institutione musica* ('Fundamentals of Music') Boethius, like most medieval writers, discusses the addition of strings to the *kithara*, not the *lyra*.⁸ With reference to an essay by the Greek music theorist Nicomachus, which dates from the last half of the second century AD and is now lost for the most part, Boethius gives a description of the invention of these strings. It is within this context that Terpandros is credited with the addition of the seventh string, the Dorian *nete* to the tone-system (i.e. 'the lowest string with regard to the instrument'). Probably this specific knowledge is not based on Nicomachus at all but possibly derived from the Pseudo-Plutarchian treatise *On music* (1140F), dated in the second century AD or later.⁹ In the words of Boethius:

Nicomachus said that in the beginning there was a simple music, since it was performed on four strings; and music remained in this state up to the time of Orpheus. [...] Thus there was nothing unconsonant in these strings. As you can plainly see, it was an imitation of the universal harmony, which consists of the four elements. The inventor of these four strings is said to have been Mercury. Later Toroebus, the son of Atyes, King of the Lydians added the fifth string. Hyagnis the Phrygian added the sixth string to these. Terpandros of Lesbos added a seventh string. Obviously this was an image of the seven planets. [...] The seventh is called *nete*, since it is low like *neate* (*De institutione musica*, Lib. I, Cap. XX).¹⁰

It is difficult to relate the passage of Boethius to his Greek sources. According to the first of the so-called Nicomachean Excerpta Hermes invented the lyre and equipped it with seven strings instead of four.¹¹ The instrument was given as such to Orpheus. As the story goes Thracian women, after having killed Orpheus, cast the lyre into the sea, from whence it was washed ashore near ancient Antissa, a former trading town, in Lesbos (*Fig. 1*). Fishermen found the instrument and gave it to Terpandros who, after having improved it, claimed to have invented it himself.

⁸ Boethius, *De institutione musica*, Lib. I, Cap. XIX: *His igitur ita dispositis paulisper de nervis citharae* ('These things being said, we will discuss for a while the strings of the *kithara*').

⁹ Pseudo-Plutarch, *On music*, 1140F. Concerning the dating see footnote 5.

¹⁰ Friedlein *R*/1966: 205-206. Translation based on Bower 1966: 72-75; Bower & Palisca 1989: 30-32.

¹¹ *Excerpta ex Nicomacho*, fragment 1. See Jan 1895: 266.

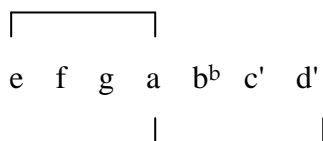


Fig. 1. The rocky beach near the remnants of the town wall of the ancient trading town Antissa (on the northwest of Lesbos). According to the legend this is the site where fishermen found Orpheus' lyre. Antissa was destroyed by the Romans after the conquest of Perseus, king of Macedonia (168 BC). – Photo by the author (2003).

Boethius, however, does not cite this widespread ancient legend. He mentions only the addition of the seventh string by Terpandros, the 'Dorian *nete*' (i.e. *nete synemmenon*, see *Fig. 2 d'*). As Terpandros' scale had only seven notes and, according to Pseudo-Aristotle (an anonymous Greek writer from the 4th century BC) a system of tuning that spanned an octave, Terpandros also must have altered the organisation of the strings so that the seven strings would span an octave.

The simplest hypothesis is that the note series is thought of as two conjunct tetrachords. This, of course, does not span an octave (*Fig. 2*):

Fig. 2. Conjunct heptachord-scale:

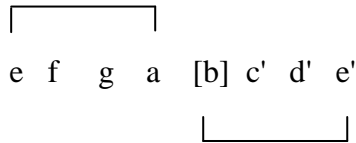


But Terpandros also took away *trite* (b^b) and added *nete* (i.e. *nete diezeugmenon*, the higher e), creating a system of tuning that spanned an octave.¹² It is a fair inference that e' in this new disjunct diatonic octave-

¹² His view is followed by Johannes Ciconia (c. 1340-1411), *Nova musica*, cap. 44: *Terpander vero Lesbios nete diezeugmenon apposuit* ('Terpander from Lesbos contributed *nete diezeugmenon*').

scale e, f, g, a, [b], c', d', e' might be called *nete*, instead of d' (i.e. *nete synemmenon*) in the conjunct diatonic heptachord-scale (cf. Fig 2).¹³

Fig. 3. Disjunct octave-scale:



The addition of an eighth string permitted the completion of the upper tetrachord with the note *paramese* [b], generating the familiar octave system of two tetrachords disjoined by the interval of a tone (Fig. 3). Boethius, however, does not state Terpandros' removal of the *trite* (b^b), as for instance Pseudo-Aristotle does in an Aristotelian vein.¹⁴ And finally, contrary to Boethius, Nichomachus didn't make mention of Toroebus (the son of Atyes, probably the legendary progenitor of the Lydians to whom Plutarch ascribes the invention of the Lydian harmony) or of Hyagnis (the mythical aulete from Kelaenai in Phrygia credited with the invention of the Phrygian harmony), nor does he attribute the addition of the seventh string to Terpandros.

In spite of the wide-spread circulation and reputation of *De institutione musica* it took quite a long time before other statements concerning Terpandros were made – as far as we know and to the extent that it has come down to us. At the end of the thirteenth century or in the beginning of the fourteenth, the Spanish theorist and tutor to the son of the Spanish King Alfonso the Wise, named Johannes Aegidius of Zamora, borrowed some lines from the section of Boethius in his treatise *Ars musica* ('The art of music'); a traditional work which was dedicated to the Minister General of the Franciscan Order at Zamorra:

We have heard from Pythagoras that music consisted of one tetrachord, this is of four strings. [...] To these four strings other strings were added. Toroebus, King of the Lydians added the fifth string. Hyagnis the Phrygian added the sixth string. Terpandros from Lesbos added the seventh. The eighth string was added by Lycaon from Samos. The ninth by Prophrastus Periotes, the tenth by Histiaeus Colophonius, the eleventh by Timotheus Milesius, the twelfth by Nicomachus, the thirteenth by Philolaus, the fourteenth by Architas Tarentius und the fifteenth by Aristoxenos (*Ars musica*, Cap. 9,14).¹⁵

¹³ See Barker 1984: 198, footnote 62 and p. 233, footnote 177; also Bower 1966: 424-426. Cf. Vogel 1963: 55-63. See also Thurn 1998, 424, footnote 27: "Ferner findet sich in den Damonskalen im Mixolydischen [...] der erste Tetrachord (e-a) ebenfalls als enharmonisch-diatonische Leiter konzipiert. Man könnte ihn mit der dorischen Nete in Zusammenhang bringen, die von Terpander 'erfunden' wurde."

¹⁴ Pseudo-Aristotle, *Problems*, XIX 47.

¹⁵ Translation based on Robert-Tissot 1974: 79-80.

At variance with Boethius' text, this passage deals with the disposition of the notes on the *monochord*, rather a scientific instrument than a musical one, such as the *kithara*. Also contrary to Boethius, Aegidius does not mention Nicomachus as his source, but he uses the phrase 'heard from Pythagoras'. And what Boethius had called 'simple music' had been replaced by 'music that consisted of one tetrachord, this is of four strings'. Here the differences end, as Aegidius also mentions the names of famous persons who added strings to these four. Toroebus, Hyagnis and Terpandros from Lesbos are connected with the addition of the fifth, the sixth and the seventh string respectively. In addition to the 'inventors' Toroebus, Hyagnis and Terpandros the author mentions other well-known Greeks who extended the number of strings, such as Nicomachus, Philolaus (Pythagorean philosopher, 5th century BC), Architas Tarentius (Pythagorean philosopher, first half 4th century BC) and Aristoxenos (music theorist and scholar, c. 300 BC).

Though Aegidius' explanation is undoubtedly based on Boethius, the text seems to have been adapted either by Aegidius himself or by an earlier copyist in order to legitimise an extension of the tone system to fifteen tones. Obviously even around 1300 AD it was still necessary to mention famous 'historical authorities' such as Terpandros, in order to justify such an innovation.

Also according to the anonymous writer of a late fourteenth-century French compendium on music theory, called the Berkeley Manuscript (now in the Music Library of the University of California at Berkeley, USA, MS 744 [*olim* Phillipps 4450]) it was still *nete* that was added by Terpandros, though the author clearly seemed to have in mind the addition of *nete synemmenon* (d') instead of *nete diezeugmenon* (e').¹⁶ In the explanation of *Tractatus* IV dealing with tetrachords we read: *Terpander Lesbios septimam cordam apposuit, ut ad 7 planetarum similitudinem musicam comprobaret* ('Terpandros of Lesbos added the seventh string in order to establish a musical likeness to the seven planets'). The representation of this heptachord linked to the idea of cosmic harmony given by the author, is more or less conventional¹⁷, though Jupiter and Saturn changed position:

- [e] hypate "more honourable attributed to Jupiter"
- [f] parhypate "next to it, for Saturn, it has a slow, low sound"
- [g] lichanos "for Mars since it is adapted to the index finger"
- [a] mese "for the Sun since it is in the middle of the seven"
- [b] paramese "for Venus as it were placed next to the middle"
- [c'] paranete "for Mercury as it were placed between nete and paramese"
- [d'] nete "for the Moon since it is the lowest" (added by Terpandros of Lesbos)¹⁸
- [] = current tone option

¹⁶ See Ellsworth 1984: 201.

¹⁷ Cf. Vetter 2000: 160-172.

¹⁸ Translation based on Ellsworth 1984: 201.

The connection with the seven planets was also referred to by the Italian theorist Franchino Gaffurio (1451-1522) in his *Theoretica musicae* ('The Theory of Music'), which was first published in Milan in 1492. His treatise was enormously influential. Because of this, his view on ancient writers and the inherited knowledge regarding Terpandros, was put in the hands of numerous renaissance musicians and scholars. In Gaffurio's explanation on the invention and the arrangement of the tones we read:

It was Terpandros from Lesbos who added the seventh step. He was led by the order of the seven planets and, with nature as his guide, he decided that the seven varied and dissimilar tones would be produced by these seven steps one after the other; and they are dissimilar, because one cannot be compared with another by any sort of similitude (*Theoretica musicae*, Lib. V, Cap. 1).¹⁹

In the view of Gaffurio, the phrase "seven different tones" is used as a metaphor of the seven planets producing 'the music of the spheres' and 'the seven days of the week'.

However, not every medieval scholar up to Gaffurio took the view that Terpandros invented the seventh string. A music theorist who deviated from the fixed number of seven in connection with Terpandros' number of strings is Manuel (or Manolis) Bryennius. Bryennius, who lived in Constantinople around 1300 AD, is chiefly known as a mathematician and an astronomer. Unfortunately no works by Bryennius on these subjects survive. The only work attributed to him that came down to us is an extensive handbook on the theory of music, entitled *APMONIKA* ('The Harmonics'). It was compiled in order to prevent the music theory of antiquity falling into oblivion. The book is based on Greek tradition. The content varies between the Pythagorean and Aristoxenian points of view, though the author treats his material in a more independent and contemporary way. This is also the case with regard to Terpandros. Explaining the four authentic and plagal keys, Bryennius ascribes the invention of the eighth string to Terpandros instead of the traditional seventh:

The composers who lived before Pythagoras' and Terpandros' days and who employed a musical scale of seven notes only, assumed the species of melody to be equal in number to the notes of this scale. And as they employed each note as a starting point of a melodic series and gave each series a name of its own, they gave the seventh one a special name, *deep*, because it requires deep and excessive breathing. This species was situated two fourths lower than the one, which in contrast they called *high*. In later times Pythagoras and Terpandros, having added an eighth string to the ancient seven-stringed lyre for reasons previously discussed, similarly to their predecessors used to call the seventh species *deep*, because they rightly assumed the species to be equal in number not to the notes of the scale, as their predecessors did, but to its intervals (*APMONIKA*, Book III, 484).²⁰

¹⁹ See Gaffurio *R/1934*: 144.

²⁰ Translation after Jonker 1970: 319-321.

This account raises several questions. As we know from Plutarch's (c. 47?-c.120 AD) *Moralia* – an anthology on ethical, religious, physical, political, and literary topics – if anyone in the seventh century BC presumed to transgress in any way the rules of the good old music, the authorities would not permit this.²¹ According to this important Greek philosophical writer, this even applied to Terpandros, the oldest and best *kithara*-player of his time: the Ephors in Sparta carried away his instrument and nailed it to a wall, because he had put in just one extra string for the sake of the variety in the notes.²² Obviously the Ephors approved only of traditional and possibly simpler melodies, and watched over the true use of music and instruments.

Although there is no evidence that Bryennius himself knew Plutarch's *Moralia* or the writings of Boethius, he must have read about Terpandros somewhere. Unfortunately, the source is neither mentioned in the manuscript nor is it listed in the 'Index of Parallel Passages' in the critical edition of the *APMONIKA*.²³ Was it Bryennius' unknown Greek authority, maybe Pseudo-Aristotle, who took the view that Terpandros added an eighth string to the ancient seven-stringed lyre, thus creating an diatonic octave-scale? Or were the achievements of Terpandros perhaps adapted by Bryennius himself in order to justify the octave-scale or Byzantine *Oktoechos* ('eight species of melody') by a historical authority in a way such as Aegidius of Zamorra did? Questions like these, however, are difficult to answer, as in music theory Bryennius is the only exponent of this reading so far.

INVENTOR OF THE LYRE AND OTHER STRINGED INSTRUMENTS

One issue medieval and renaissance music theorists seldom dealt with when referring to Terpandros, was his assumed invention of a certain type of instrument. This is a striking difference from the ancient point of view. According to the documents by several ancient Greek authors such as Pindar, Plutarch and Strabo, Terpandros is considered to be the 'inventor' of the *barbitos*, the seven-stringed lyre.²⁴ The *barbitos* may be conceived of as an elongated and reshaped *lyra*: its tortoise-shell sound-box remained small, but its much longer arms gave it a deeper pitch and fuller sound. The Greek vase painters from the late sixth up to the late fifth century BC showed a considerable passion for this instrument (*Fig. 4*). The enthusiasm is understandable when we consider its relationship to revelries dedicated to the Thracian god Dionysos, the Athenian *kosmos* (a disorderly procession of partygoers) and the *symposium* (a drinking party).

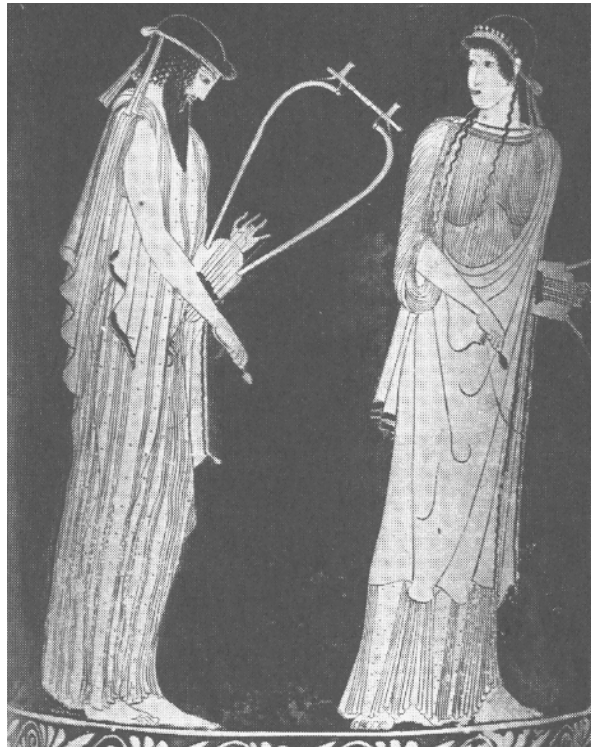
²¹ Plutarch, *Moralia*, 238C.

²² See Babbitt: 437.

²³ See Jonker 1970: 404-409: Index Locorum Parallelorum.

²⁴ Pindar, *Eulogies*, 125-126 (91-92); Plutarch, *Moralia*, 827A; Theocritus, *Idylls*, 16, 45; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, 635D; Strabo, *Geography*, 13, 2,4.

Fig. 4. The sixth-century Lesbian poets Sappho and Alcaeus (the latter playing the seven-stringed *barbitos* ‘invented’ by Terpandros). Detail of an Attic red-figured kalathoid. Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlung und Glyptothek, Inv. No. 2416 (early 5th century BC). Photo: Staatliche Antikensammlung und Glyptothek.



But from the beginning of the Christian Era the idea about Terpandros’ invention of this famous stringed instrument seems to have changed. In the first century AD the Roman historian Pliny states in his discussion of the development of arts and sciences, that Terpandros was an excellent *kithara* player whose most important contribution was the extension of the four strings.²⁵ However, his introduction of a certain type of instrument is not mentioned at all.

The Greek medieval music theorist Manuel Bryennius is of the same opinion. Bryennius – as so many other medieval and renaissance authors – borrowed extensively from the *Eisagoge* (‘Harmonic Introduction’) by Cleonides, an unknown Greek music theorist who lived before the first century AD. As a result of this, it became common practice as a supplement to the topic of the extension of strings to attach the well-known words indirectly cited from a verse attributed to Terpandros:

To thee we will play new hymns upon a lyre of seven tones and will love the four-voiced lay no more (*APMONIKA*, Book I, 389).²⁶

However, a striking exception to the tendency not to refer to Terpandros’ invention of musical instruments comes from Hieronymus Cardanus (1501-1576). Cardanus was a respected sixteenth-century Italian scholar in physics, medicine, philosophy and music. In his treatise *De musica* (‘On music’), dating from 1574, the author provides an elaborate

²⁵ Pliny, *Naturalis historiae*, Lib. VII, LVI [204].

²⁶ Translation after Jonker 1970: 117. Also Cleonides, *Eisagoge*, 12: ‘To thee we will play new hymns upon a seven-toned *phorminx* and will no longer love the four-voiced ode’; translation after Mathiesen 1998: 44. Cf. Strabo, *Geography*, 13, 2,4.

discussion of ‘the nature of music and its order’.²⁷ Within this context several ancient musical instruments are listed:

But now I will come back to ancient instruments. Two of them were the *pectis* or *magadis* and the *sambuca*; they were considered to be types of pipes and lyres. Sophocles says in the *Mysias* [one of his lost dramas]: ‘The triangular Phrygian [harp] is often sounded, and the harmonious tones of the *pectis* sing in answer.’ It is clear that the most ancient instrument was the *magadis*, which was invented before Pindar’s time by Terpandros of Lesbos (*De musica*, 21).²⁸

This text, probably based on the extensive ‘table talk’ *Deipnosophistae* (‘The Sophists at Dinner’) of the Egyptian rhetorician Athenaeus (c. 200 AD), refers to the discussion of Aristoxenus concerning the *magadis* and *pectis* being the same musical instrument.²⁹ But a real solution in this matter is not found by Cardanus either, probably because there is no clear and unambiguous description of either instrument in ancient sources; we only know for certain that they were ‘many-stringed’ instruments. It is remarkable, however, that a renaissance music theorist like Cardanus who knew ancient Greek sources quite well, quotes Terpandros’ presumed invention of the *magadis* instead of his innovation of the seven-stringed *kithara*, which would have been most obvious.

ORDERING THE MICROCOSMOS

Another important topic connected with Terpandros is the ancient idea concerning the ‘order of the microcosmos’ – that is the influence of music to ennoble or to debase one’s state of mind. In music theory, such passages are usually a broad reiteration of the text in the Old Testament about David’s string-playing before King Saul (I Samuel 16:18).³⁰ This text is frequently connected with others, I will call them ‘historical examples’, commonly taken from Greek mythology. For example, the taming effect on wild animals of Orpheus’ lyre-playing, or the testimony as to how Doctor Asclepiades (a renowned Roman doctor who lived about 50 BC) cured a madman by playing a melody. The purpose of these citations is clear: they serve as evidence of the beneficial influence of music on the human spirit.

²⁷ The text of *De musica* has remained in manuscript in Rome, Biblioteca Vaticana Latina, MS 5850. This text should not be confused with Cardanus’ other work on music theory which dates from c. 1546 and is also called *De musica*. The latter text was first published by Sponsius 1668: Vol. X, 105ff. A comparison of the preceding manuscript of the five books on music with the printed short edition of *De musica* reveals that the contents of the latter form only a small part of the original treatise. Though the Sponsius edition includes most of Cardanus’ extant works it does not contain the extended *De musica* from 1574.

²⁸ Translation after Millar 1973: 112.

²⁹ Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, 635E.

³⁰ See Schaik 2005: 39-43.

In the Middle Ages, the importance of this statement should not be underestimated, as Boethius devotes a substantial part of the first chapter of his *De institutione musica* to this issue too, emphasising that music is an appropriate remedy to restore the harmony between body and spirit. It is within this context that Boethius quotes the healing effect of Terpandros' song on the citizens of Lesbos and Ionia (the coastal region of West Turkey):

It is common knowledge that song has calmed rages many times, and that it has often worked wonders on affections of either body and spirit. Who does not know that Pythagoras calmed a drunk adolescent of Taormine who had become incited under the influence of the Phrygian mode, and that Pythagoras further restored this boy to his rightful senses, all by performing of a spondaic melody? [...] But to cite some similar examples briefly, Terpandros and Arion of Mithymna rescued the citizens of Lesbos and Ionia from very serious illnesses through the assistance of song (*De institutione musica*, Lib. I, Cap.1).³¹

In this passage Terpandros is bracketed together with Arion of Mithymna (a place on the north of Lesbos, which currently is also called Molyvos). According to ancient writers Arion, who was about 50 years younger than Terpandros, was another gifted artist from Lesbos. He was reputed to have been a prominent singer and lyric poet, who spent most of his life at the court of Periander, tyrant of Corinth (c. 625-585 BC). Arion was especially credited with the dithyramb, a circular choral dance and song associated with the widespread cult of the god Dionysus. Although none of his works has survived it would seem likely that Arion gave the dithyramb its initial shape as a force in Greek poetry and music. For that reason he too remained a major figure in music history for ages. But in comparison with Terpandros, Arion's merits are less frequently quoted in sources of music theory. Accordingly, it seems safe to conclude that his fame didn't exceed the reputation of Terpandros.

A final reference with regard to the healing effects of Terpandros' music was made by Hieronymus Cardanus in the late sixteenth century. In his *De musica* Cardanus reveals that 'by means of the music Terpandros quelled the dissension that harassed the Lacedaemonians [Spartans]' (*De musica*, 18).³² According to Pseudo-Plutarch 'Terpandros resolved the civil war that broke out at one time in Sparta' (*On music*, 1146B).³³ Here we come across another proof of the beneficial influence of music on the human spirit, though it is doubtful if this 'historic' event has ever really happened. Perhaps the legend simply originated in the idea that Terpandros put an end to musical chaos in Sparta.

³¹ Friedlein R/1966: 185. Translation based on Bower 1966: 39-40; Bower & Palisca 1989: 5-6.

³² Translation based on Miller 1973: 106.

³³ Translation based on Barker 1984: 247.

TWO UNIQUE ASCRIBINGS

It is remarkable that two music theorists refer to an invention and event of Terpandros that had not been mentioned previously by earlier theorists.

With the exception of his role in ordering the microcosmos, medieval and renaissance music theorists show less interest in the spectacular deeds of Terpandros than ancient writers such as Pindar, Strabo and Plutarch do. A clear exception to this rule, however, comes again from Michael Bryennius. In his first book of ‘The Harmonics’, in which he describes a harmonic tone system of fifteen tones, he informs us who among the Ancients was the first to build up the tone-system:

Well then, it should be known that Pythagoras of Samos was the first to build up this tone-system; as he had found in the sanctuaries of the Egyptian gods the ancient seven-stringed lyre of Orpheus, which Terpandros of Lesbos had left there as a votive gift when visiting Egypt (*APMONIKA*, Book I, 361).³⁴

The text of Bryennius is of special interest as it seems to add another detail to the mythologized version of Terpandros’ visit to Egypt. The Nicomachean Excerptum reads:

[After Orpheus’ lyre] was tossed back out at Antissa, on Lesbos, fishermen found it, and brought it to Terpandros, who carried it to Egypt. Having mastered the instrument, he displayed it to the Egyptian priests, as though he himself had been its original inventor. And so Terpandros is said to have discovered the lyre, though the Achaeans received it in the time of Cadmus, the son of Agenor. So much they say. (*Excerpta ex Nicomacho*, fragment 1).³⁵

Thus the *APMONIKA* probably preserves a further bit of the original text from which the *Excerptum* also comes. This may or may not be from the lost work of Nicomachus.³⁶

Another unique attribution is found in *De musica* by Hieronymus Cardanus. In chapter 42, which deals with the *lyra*, the *kithara* and the kitharodic *nomoi* Cardanus refers to some inventions of Terpandros which had not been mentioned before:

Terpandros developed six kinds of harmonics, of which the three principal harmonies are Dorian, Ionian, Aeolian, and the three subsequent ones are Phrygian, Lydian and Locrian. There were eight divisions in each: prelude, beginning, metarcha, movement, deflection, middle, seal and epilogue. He

³⁴ Translation after Jonker 1970: 55.

³⁵ See Jan 1895: 266.

³⁶ Jan (1895) has some doubts about the authorship of the excerpts. Mathiesen (1999) makes the plausible theory that they are scholastic comments on the *Encheiridion* of Nicomachus, in which case the excerpts may be written by any author. Franklin assumes (not published yet) that this particular excerpt may come from the lost work ‘On the Heptachord’ by Thrasyllus († 36 AD), astrologer and musicologist to Tiberius.

[Terpandros] also established the names for citharists, as did the poet Clonas for elegies and Epicus for pipers (*De musica*, 42).³⁷

The word ‘prelude’, must translate ‘prooimion’, which many ancient sources credit Terpander with inventing. It was the ‘citharodic prelude’, i.e. hymns to the gods, which preceded epic recitations.³⁸

Though Cardanus’s source is not clear, at least the first part of the quotation, about the harmonies, seems to be based on the *Onomastikon* (IV, 66), a lexicographical thesaurus by the Greek scholar and rhetorician Julius Pollux (2nd century AD).³⁹ This ten-volume work, which has survived incomplete, contains rhetorical material and technical terms relating to a wide variety of subjects, as well as citations from literature. The work is particularly interesting in its discussion of music and theatre. But it remains a mystery on what Cardanus bases his information on concerning the eight divisions of the *nomoi*.

CONCLUSION

These statements of Cardanus seem to bring the afterlife of Terpandros to an end. The motive for this point in time is not quite clear, but it appears plausible that the necessity for later music theorists to deal with the concepts of ancient Greeks and Romans was not required anymore, or perhaps went out of fashion. In spite of this, if we summarize Terpandros’ confined heritage in the music theory of the medieval and modern times, we obtain a fascinating picture. Contrary to the ancient Greeks, medieval and renaissance theorists did not simply copy the information they read about Terpandros, they were also critical in using it. Some of them ascribed details to Terpandros in order to make these suit their own theoretical explanations and innovations. But at the same time, efforts were made to increase his authority. This method may partly be the result of a prevailing tradition, as medieval theorists may have used it to persuade the church authorities, which had a controlling role on music, in order to justify practical and theoretical renewals in music.

Furthermore, it is remarkable that Terpandros’ main achievement referred to in ancient sources, viz. the introduction of the seven-stringed lyre, seems to be of less importance in the medieval and renaissance tradition. Instead of this, he became known as the one who added the seventh string to the lyre. But most of the music theorists who dealt with this topic didn’t seem aware of the fact that Terpandros’ extension of the seventh string originally was linked with an alteration of the tuning system as well. Instead of this his achievement was regarded as an important act to bring harmony to the macrocosm; and as a result Terpandros, just like Pythagoras, was incorporated into the ruling concept of cosmic harmony.

Finally, Terpandros was mentioned because his music was deemed capable of healing the human spirit. To rate this merit at its true value it

³⁷ Translation after Miller.

³⁸ For example Pseudo-Plutarch, *De musica*, 1132C. See also Franklin 2002a: 699.

³⁹ Pollux 1900-1937.

is important to realize that in this respect he is put on the same level with legendary figures as Pythagoras, Orpheus and the biblical King David.⁴⁰ Being capable to order the microcosm emphasizes his authority to a great extent.

Born in ancient Antissa on the island of Lesbos, c. 712 BC, Terpandros' fame has crossed many borders since then, in distance as well as in time. Although the truth of Terpandros' attributions and deeds is hard to verify after so many years, it can be said with certainty that he ensured the island of Lesbos with an everlasting place in the history of music. Even after circa 2,700 years modest parts of his legacy as a poet, as an innovator in music and as a musician are still present if we take the trouble to search for them. In this respect writings on music theory are valuable sources of historical knowledge; especially since neither archaeological nor iconographic evidence about Terpandros is left.

* * *

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⁴⁰ See Schaik, 2005: 40-41.

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