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MODE IN ANCIENT GREEK MUSIC

by

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P R E F A C E

THOUGH the title of this monograph may recall Monro's *Modes of Ancient Greek Music*, it was not chosen with conscious reference thereto, but because only so could its scope be described. In fact, the two books have a similar aim: to discover the nature of the Greek modes rather than the origins or development of the scale-system. If my work will stand comparison with his in scholarliness and lucidity, I shall be well content. Monro found himself able to come to a definite conclusion, namely that mode in the true sense was absent or unimportant in Greek music. There was therefore no occasion for him to proceed to the further question: what particular modalities are there exemplified? But his conclusion has seemed to most scholars unacceptable; and there are divergent theories about the modal values of the notes in the various Greek scales. Though agreeing that Greek music was at one time certainly, probably always, modal, I cannot find that the evidence justifies us in deducing anything like a symmetrical scheme of tonalities: there are hints and suggestions, but from these we cannot proceed to dogmatism. Yet, if the conclusions of this monograph are few and indefinite, I feel that it may nevertheless be useful if it has presented the issues and the evidence clearly. I have foregone, so far as was possible, the aid of analogy and of *a priori* assumptions. In all probability Greek music was closely related to that of the contemporary Orient, and recent writers do well to stress this fact. But, before we can profitably use our knowledge of this background, we must first know what precise features of Greek music we can set against it; and nothing can tell us this except the literary evidence, supplemented by the surviving melodies. Here, then, the evidence of musical documents is examined, such as it is; but it is the literary evidence that bulks largest. It may be objected that this procedure is in the nature of things unlikely to elucidate a

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PREFACE

musical art. This may well be so. But the literary evidence provides us with data for which any satisfactory system of hypotheses must account; and a critical re-examination of it seemed to be desirable. I can at least hope that something has been achieved in matters of detail, even if no sweeping generalisations are offered.

The book is addressed primarily to students of Greek music and is of a somewhat technical nature. However, in order that it may be intelligible to other students of musical history, I have tried to limit the amount of Greek embodied in the text; and it will be found that in most cases such passages are either translated or paraphrased. Two Greek words I have used freely: ἁρμονία (harmonia) for a mode of the classical period, τόνος (tonos) for a key (or whatever it may be).

My thanks are due to the Council of Trinity College and to the Managers of the Craven Fund, who have generously assisted my researches at different times: to the former I owe a special debt, which I hope to have a further opportunity of acknowledging. Mr A. H. Fox Strangways has kindly helped me with advice and information. I have had the benefit, not for the first time, of Professor J. F. Mountford's criticisms at more than one stage in the writing of this work; and he has very kindly read it in proof. Though he is in no way responsible for the views expressed in it, the fact that it has been submitted to his judgment makes me less diffident in offering it to that of others. For I doubt if anyone has ever completed a book upon Greek music without feeling acute dissatisfaction both with his subject and with himself.

R. P. W.-I.

BIRKBECK COLLEGE
 LONDON: *January, 1936*

NOTE. The following editions have been used for references: for Aristoxenus, Meibom (1652); for Aristides Quintilianus, Jahn (1882); for Ptolemy, Düring (1930); for Cleonides, Nicomachus, Gaudentius and Bacchius, von Jan (1895); for Plutarch, Weil and Reinach (1900), though in some cases references to the pages of Wechel were more convenient.