

The Children of Orpheus: How Composers Receive Ancient Texts

The musical qualities of classical poetry, from the epic and lyric of Homer and Sappho to the hymns of Venantius Fortunatus, and the affective power of music described by ancient theorists, have inspired adaptations and innovations since the Renaissance. In Florence, Caccini and Peri invented operas with the poetry of Rinuccini on the subject of Orpheus. Monteverdi wrote madrigals on sonnets adapted from Ovidian elegy, and Henry Purcell composed incidental music for Dryden's *Amphitryon*.

Art songs such as Brahms' *Sapphische Ode* and Schubert's *Lied des Orpheus* set texts inspired by ancient literature and mythology, Orff's cantatas *Catulli Carmina* and *Trionfo di Aphrodite* set the texts of Catullus and Sappho, and Xenakis' *Oresteia* employs Aeschylus' Greek. Stephen Sondheim composed the scores for adaptations of Aristophanes and Plautus. In popular music, Led Zeppelin's "Achilles' Last Stand" and Bob Dylan's "Temporary Like Achilles" reference the heroes of epic.

The American Philological Association's Outreach Panel for the 2011 Annual Meeting in San Antonio invites papers that discuss texts set to music from 1400 to the present that are based on, or influenced by, ancient Greek or Latin literature, and analyze how their creators engaged with these texts through direct setting, adaptation, translation, or alteration. Subjects might include, but are not limited to, song-cycles, operas, oratorios, cantatas, hymns, film scores, or popular music.

This panel, organized by Professor Robert Ketterer of the University of Iowa and Professor Andrew Simpson of the Catholic University of America, particularly encourages papers that discuss the structure or style of musical scores and texts in relation to their ancient sources, with the social, historical, or political conditions surrounding the creation of these works as secondary considerations.

Papers might productively ask such questions as:

To what extent--and with what significance--has the adaptation of the ancient work been altered to meet the requirements of its contemporary audience?

How do contemporary motivations--artistic, political, or otherwise--influence the musical works' structure and content as they interpret the ancient work?

Has the translation of a classical text into modern language and music impacted our interpretation of the ancient source?

Papers are to be no more than 20 minutes in length; presentations with strong aural and visual components are encouraged.

Anonymous abstracts of 500 words or less, should be submitted, by no later than January 26, 2010 to Judith P.Hallett, jeph@umd.edu. Please do not indicate your name on the abstract itself.

NOTE: the panel on Phi Beta Kappa and Classics originally announced as the 2011 APA Outreach panel will be taking place later in 2011, at another academic venue. If you are interested in taking part, please contact Professor Hallett at jeph@umd.edu before February 1, 2010.