

REVIEW

A. VINCENT, *JOUER POUR LA CITÉ: UNE HISTOIRE SOCIALE ET POLITIQUE DES MUSICIENS PROFESSIONNELS DE L'OCCIDENT ROMAIN*. Rome: École Française de Rome, 2016. Pp. viii + 464, illus. ISBN 9782728311637. €27.00.

Musicians, like many professionals in the Roman world, emerge from the literary sources as ‘un groupe radicalement polarisé’ (6). Victims of hostile stereotyping, their position in society is essentially reduced to a simple binary: ‘des stars ou des putains’ (6). The epigraphic sources, however, foreground a rather different demographic. The ‘musiciens professionnels’ whose lives are documented in this debut monograph by Alexandre Vincent are neither celebrities nor prostitutes; they are *artifices*, skilled artisans of free (or freed) status who plied their trade in the service of the city. These ‘hommes de métier’ (8), as V. labels them, were valued for their contribution to Rome’s military and civic institutions. Their careers matter not only for what they tell us about Roman musical culture, a subject that has been unduly neglected by modern scholars, but also for what they reveal about the composition of the Roman plebs, since, according to V., most musicians belonged to the social stratum identified by Paul Veyne as ‘la plèbe moyenne’.

The greatest asset of this book is its comprehensive catalogue of inscriptions (some 568 in total) pertaining to professional musicians in the Roman West. These inscriptions, assembled here for the first time, provide an excellent resource for studying the development of the musical profession from the mid-republican period onwards (although, as V. explains (10), the evidence is concentrated between the end of the first century and the beginning of the third century A.D.). Rather than publishing the catalogue as an addendum to the printed volume, the author has made the texts freely available in an online database, which can be accessed via the website of the École Française de Rome (<http://www.efrome.it/publications/ressources-en-ligne.html>). Each entry is supplied with extensive bibliographic and contextual information, as well as a helpful commentary outlining the historical significance of the text in question.

The book is divided into five chapters. V. begins by exploring the role of musicians in the Roman army (15–117). The author’s concern here is primarily with brass-players (*tubicines*, *cornicines* and *bucinatores*), whose presence in the legions is ubiquitously attested, although he notes that pipe-players (*tibicines*) also appear in military contexts (48–53). After describing the use of musical signals in camp and in battle (54–63), V. conducts a prosopographic survey of the instrumentalists themselves (69–118). He shows that, although musicians fulfilled specialist (and thus privileged) functions within the army, they were organised like other soldiers into formal hierarchical units. Opportunities for advancement beyond the ranks of musician were limited, but those who served the legion loyally were rewarded with salary bonuses and the hope of internal promotion within one’s own troop.

Ch. 2 focuses on the city. V. examines the evidence for musicians’ participation in political assemblies (121–9), judicial ceremonies (129–41), sacrifices (141–54), triumphs (172–82), games (182–99) and funerals (199–209). The use of music in these public rituals, V. argues, was far from merely ornamental; rather, music was central to the performative re-enactment of the rituals themselves. V. treats musicians as participants in a ‘discourse of authority’ (‘dispositif d’autorité’), in that they effectively ‘rendait concret’ the power of the magistrates who employed their services (128). In this way, the aural stimuli they produced acted as a means of constructing and reinforcing power dynamics within the civic community.

Chs 3 and 4 consider what it was like to serve as a musician. Drawing on the recent work of Nicolas Tran, V. gives a wide-ranging and nuanced account of the musical ‘métier’ which locates the musician within a complex socioeconomic milieu. The status of musicians, like any other artisans, varied according to their level of expertise or seniority; the musician’s craft needed to be mastered over time (264–74). V. also stresses links between the various musical *collegia* and the Roman political authorities which supported them (229–46, 296–302).

The final chapter ('Le temps des musiciens') is perhaps the most ambitious of the five. Here V. attempts to sketch a diachronic history of the musical profession. Particular emphasis is placed on the Augustan Principate as a 'golden age' for musicians (318–43). Epigraphic material from the Meta Sudans in Rome and elsewhere suggests that the *princeps* actively incorporated the *aenatores* and *tibicines* into the official channels of public life (346–51). This is an attractive hypothesis, which will no doubt pique the interest of scholars investigating the impact of imperial politics on social organisation.

One wonders exactly how the respectable *artifices* examined in this book relate to the professional entertainers whose contribution to Roman musical culture has been amply demonstrated elsewhere (see, most notably, A. Baudot, *Musiciens romains de l'antiquité* (1973) and A. Bélis, *Les musiciens dans l'antiquité* (1999)). Theatrical musicians are noticeably absent from V.'s discussion, and would perhaps have benefited from fuller treatment. Surely not *all* of these performers were 'des stars ou des putains'? Where exactly do military and civic musicians fit within the broader spectrum of Roman music-making? Can we draw a clear-cut line between music as entertainment and music as an expression of *imperium*? Such considerations aside, V. has produced a fine study of a misrepresented category of Roman professionals. In doing so, he has opened up new perspectives on the social and political world of the urban 'middle classes' (imprecise though this term may be). His book deserves to be read widely by Roman historians as well as by specialists of ancient music.

Somerville College, Oxford
harry.morgan@some.ox.ac.uk
doi:10.1017/S007543581900025X

HARRY MORGAN