

Song in the Greek Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Song can be an effective tool in the teaching of ancient Greek at any level. Several of the melodies preserved in Egert Pöhlmann and M.L. West's *Documents of Ancient Greek Music* are sufficiently accessible that instructors can teach students to sing them. These songs bring the joy of singing to the classroom, and they provide a direct connection with ancient Greek experience. They also prove useful in the teaching of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary; and they encourage discussion of both ancient music and other aspects of Greek culture, including the transmission of texts, theater, epigraphy, attitudes to death, and history. Another way of bringing song to the Greek classroom is through the singing of ancient verse with melodies made up by the instructor or students. Because of the close correspondence between meter and rhythm in Greece, singing Greek verses with long syllables as quarter notes and short syllables as eighth notes captures something of the way much verse was performed in ancient times; and singing of verses provides both valuable mnemonic help and an enjoyable way to introduce discussion of literary history and other elements of culture.

KEYWORDS

Ancient Greek language, song, ancient melodies, meter, pedagogy, music, ancient Greek poetry

In 2009 Georgia L. Irby-Massie published in this journal a persuasive case for the value of song in the teaching of ancient Greek. After a review of scholarship on the contributions song can make to language learning in general (see also Sposet), Irby–Massie noted that song is especially good as a mnemonic aid in the learning of vocabulary and grammar, that it contributes significantly to the teaching of culture and history, that it brings pleasure to the classroom experience, and that it is an effective way of reaching students with different learning styles. She then recorded her own experiences, in which she and her students translated popular contemporary songs into Greek.

I would like in this article to supplement Irby-Massie's observations with two other ways I have successfully incorporated song into the teaching of Greek: the singing of actual ancient Greek melodies and the singing to my own tunes of verses from Greek poetry. Although they lack the direct connection to the world outside the classroom provided by Irby-Massie's popular songs, these two methods are equally effective as mnemonic aids, and, like those songs, they bring pleasure and help instructors reach students with various learning styles. They also have an advantage over the translation of songs from English, in that they provide a direct link to Greek culture, introduce students to authentic texts, and offer an incomparable opportunity for students to recreate important elements of actual ancient Greek performance. These songs are also much easier to implement than modern songs, as they do not require composition in Greek. They can thus be incorporated into the earliest stages of language training, so they give a valuable opportunity for even novice students to use, and not just learn about, the language. The extant melodies and sung verses encourage in students an appreciation both of what is familiar and what is profoundly different in Greek culture: students see that for the Greeks, as for us, song was an important part of life. But at the same time students experience the strangeness of the melodies and recognize the basic foreignness of Greek

culture. Work with actual Greek songs and sung verse also reinforces students' feel for the inherent rhythms of the Greek language. Nor are these songs difficult to learn: they are valuable tools even for instructors who lack both vocal talent and musical training.

SINGING EXTANT GREEK MELODIES

Until relatively recently ancient Greek music was almost exclusively the domain of the specialist, and pedagogical use of extant melodies would have been very difficult. Numerous publications in the last thirty years, however, most significantly the works of Andrew Barker (*Greek Musical Writings* I-II) and M.L. West (*Ancient Greek Music*), have made it much easier for non-specialists to understand how Greek music worked. Furthermore, all the extant melodies discovered through about 2000 are now gathered conveniently into Egert Pöhlmann and M.L. West's *Documents of Ancient Greek Music* (hereafter *DAGM*; for a brief introduction to ancient music, see Moore, "Music, Greek and Roman").

Many of the melodies preserved in *DAGM* present considerable difficulties: they are exceptionally fragmentary, with texts that are quite uncertain and sometimes with nearly insurmountable problems of interpretation (for analysis of the melodies, see especially West, *Ancient Greek Music*, 283-326 and Hagel, *Ancient Greek Music*, 256-326). Those melodies are probably best left out of all but the most advanced and specialized Greek classes. Some of the melodies, however, raise far fewer difficulties and lend themselves well to pedagogical purposes at any level. Still other melodies, while presenting great challenges in their entirety, have sections that can be used with profit in the classroom. I offer here three melodies that I have used in teaching the first semester of Beginning Greek.

The most easily accessible of the surviving melodies is the so-called "Song of Seikilos," a song written for an epitaph by a certain Seikilos some time in the first or second century CE (*DAGM* #23). Here is the text of the song with the ancient musical notation (*DAGM* p. 88):

6 C Z̄ Z̄̇ KIZ İ
6 ο σον ζη σφαινου

7 K̄ I Z̄ İK̄ O
7 μη δενο λω ccυ

8 C̄ ŌΦ̄ C K Z
8 λυ που προ σο λι-

9 I K̄I K C̄ ŌΦ̄
9 γονε στι το ζην

10 C K O I Z̄
10 το τε λο σο χρο-

11 K̄ C C̄ X̄
11 νο σα πα ι τει

Here is the text with the notes transcribed into modern notation (*DAGM* p. 89):

The image shows four lines of musical notation in treble clef, G-clef, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are transcribed from ancient Greek notation. Below each line is the corresponding Greek text with syllables aligned under the notes.

Line 1: Ὁ - κον ζῆς, φαί - νου,
 Line 2: μη - δὲν ὀ - λωσ εὐ - λυ - ποῦ,
 Line 3: πρὸς ὀ - λί - γου ἐς - τί τὸ ζῆν.
 Line 4: τὸ τέ - λος ὁ χρό - νος ἀπ - αι - τεῖ.

Here I sing the song (for ease of singing, I sing the melody about a third lower than Pöhlmann and West's transcription).



1

I begin the first day of Beginning Greek by teaching this song to my students. Students thus do something fun with the Greek language instantly. I then begin each class for the first two weeks of the semester with the song, and we sing it occasionally (alternating with the songs discussed below) throughout the rest of the semester. I present the song, in a handout and projected with the document camera, with Pöhlmann and West's transcription into modern notation and with a transliteration and translation, as below (all translations are my own; for handouts containing each song discussed, see appendix):

hoson zays fīnou,
 mayden holos su lupou,
 pros oligon esti to zayn,
 to telos ho chronos apītay.²

As long as you live, shine.
 Do not grieve at all.
 Life is for a short time.
 Time demands an end.

Students thus do not at this point deal with the ancient musical notation. The song does, however, provide a rich variety of jumping-off points for discussion of both language and culture.

First, pronunciation. Because on the page I project and hand out the transliteration and translation are at the bottom of the page rather than interspersed with the lines of music, students

¹ The performances in this article are licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 United States license \(CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 US\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).

² Rather than use a standard system of transliteration, I use what I think would be the least ambiguous reproduction of the Erasmian pronunciation for students who do not yet know Greek.

are encouraged to follow the Greek letters as they sing. The song thus reinforces effectively the lesson of the first day: the alphabet, as students begin pronouncing letters even before they have officially learned them. Students immediately have an exercise they can repeat with pleasure as they practice pronunciation, and I can refer back to the song as I review the sounds of various letters and letter combinations in the first days of class.

Second, grammar. I do not explain any of the song's grammar when we first sing it. Later in the course, as grammatical features present in the song come up, I refer back to the grammatical feature in the song. As a result, students become familiar with certain grammatical features even before they officially encounter them. Some of these features, like the second declension noun ὁ χρόνος and the preposition πρὸς with the accusative, occur very early on in Crosby and Schaeffer, the textbook I have most recently used for Beginning Greek. Others, such as the middle imperatives of contract verbs, occur much later. But since we sing the song regularly, it is always available as an inductive reinforcement of my generally deductive approach to the teaching of grammar.

Third, vocabulary. I do not insist that students know the meaning of each word in the song, but we can begin early discussing English derivatives of some of the words such as ὀλίγος and χρόνος; and the song helps get students ready to learn features of vocabulary such as the articular infinitive (τὸ ζῆν) and compound verbs (ἀπαιτεῖ).

Finally: history and culture. By singing we are recreating an essential element of Greek culture; and incorporation of songs like this one makes it easy to keep culture continually on the forefront, mingled with the learning of grammar and vocabulary, rather than relegating it to a few special occasions. Most conspicuously, one need not have a great knowledge of ancient music to use the song profitably as an introduction to Greek music. The melody itself, with its modal nature, reveals to students that Greek music worked differently from our own, even without any technical discussion of how the melody works. From there the instructor can go as far as he or she wishes, discussing, perhaps, the importance of song in Greek culture and its various contexts,³ or, for the more technically inclined, some of the logistics of how Greek melody worked. One might note, for example, that after the initial jump of a fifth, most of the song's intervals are small, as they often are in Greek melodies, and that the song moves towards lower pitches at its end, a feature typical of the extant melodies. The song also gives an opportunity for discussion of the tonic accent, whether or not the instructor is teaching pitch accents throughout the course. Without any discussion of the controversial technicalities of exactly how the accent worked, instructor and students can observe that with the exception of the attention-getting opening word, accented syllables are consistently on higher pitches than unaccented syllables in the same word, reflecting the tonic nature of those accents (cf. Cosgrove and Meyer).

Music is just one of many areas of Greek history and life, however, for which the song makes a good jumping-off point. Its content leads easily into a discussion of the importance of the *carpe diem* motif in Greek poetry, and from there into beliefs about death and the afterlife. Because the song dates from the Roman era, it provides an opportunity to discuss the importance of Greek and the liveliness of Greek culture well after the classical period on which our textbooks tend to concentrate. One would certainly want to show an image of the inscription (available [here](#)

³ One might mention, for example, the centrality of song and lyre playing in upper-class Athenian education, the key role of singing and instrumental music in the symposium, the use of song to accompany all sorts of work from weaving to tending sheep to baking, and the use of the *aulos* to accompany some athletic competitions. For a good review of music in Greek life, see West, *Ancient Greek Music*, 13-38.

or *DAGM* p. 214, pl. 2). With it, instructors can introduce many features of Greek epigraphy, including the desire to have a conspicuous and memorable funerary epitaph: Seikilos provided extra insurance that passersby would remember his words by giving them a tune to which they could sing them.

A little later in the semester I teach the students a song by Mesomedes, the official court musician of the emperor Hadrian (*DAGM* #24). Here is the song's text with the ancient musical notation (*DAGM* p. 92):

C Z Z Φ Φ Φ C C
1 ἄειδε Μοῦσά μοι φίλη,

I Φ M M
2 μολπῆς δ' ἐμῆς κατάρχου,

Z- Z Z EZ N N I I-
3 αὔρη δὲ σῶν ἀπ' ἀλκέων

M ZN I Φ C P M Φ C
4 ἐμὰς φρένας δονεῖτω.

Here is the text with the notes transcribed into modern notation (*DAGM* p. 93; I would read the third note from the end as a quarter note rather than an eighth note):

1 ἄ - ει - δε Μοῦ - κά μοι φί - λη,

2 μολ - πῆς δ' ἐ - μῆς κατ - άρ - χου,

3 αὔ - ρη δὲ σῶν ἀπ' ἀλ - cé - ων

4 ἐ - μάς φρέ - νας δο - νεί - τω.

Here I sing the song (again lower than Pöhlmann and West's transcription):

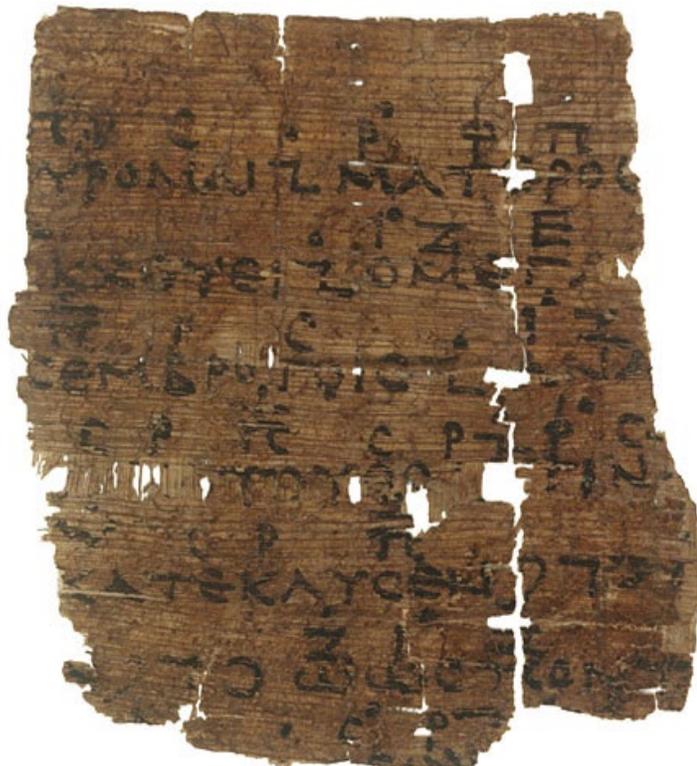


The grammatical rewards of this song are especially notable. I introduce the song right about the time students learn the various forms of alpha-stem nouns, the personal pronouns, the possessive adjectives, and consonant-stem nouns, so the phrases μουσά μοι φίλη, μολπῆς δ' ἐμῆς, σῶν ἅπ' ἄλσέων, and ἐμὰς φρένας all give immediate payback. Meanwhile, students get some preparation for three different forms of the imperative, which come later in Crosby and Schaeffer's text. The song also reinforces some familiar vocabulary and introduces some new words.

But again the song's greatest value is as a gateway to culture. As I teach this song I project only the text with the Greek notation, along with the translation below:

Dear Muse, sing for me.
Begin my song.
Let the breeze from your groves
move my soul.

The students thus do not see the modern transcribed notes at all. They can feel with a sense of accomplishment that they themselves are reading ancient Greek musical notation. I do not explain the intricacies of the notation, but even without training in either ancient or modern music one can see the repeated notes and perceive which notes are higher than others. The song sounds even odder to our modern ears than the Song of Seikilos, so students get more of a feel for how Greek musical sensibilities were different from ours. The song can also lead to profitable discussions of such matters as the philhellenism of Hadrian, who promoted his Greek freedman Mesomedes to such a high post (on Mesomedes, see Pöhlmann); the Muses; poetic inspiration (compare the invocations to Muses that begin so many Greek poems from the *Iliad* [1] and *Odyssey* [1] on); and, for those more technically inclined, the iambic meter. The missing notes (which I fill in in my recording with guesswork) can help students become aware of the vicissitudes in the transmission of classical texts and the importance of textual criticism.



Later in the first semester of Beginning Greek I introduce a final ancient melody: a fragment of Euripides' *Orestes* preserved on papyrus ([source](#)):

Here we stick to just the first two lines of the song; that gives us plenty to sing and talk about, and the students do not become bogged down in the intricate complications of the song as a whole.

Here are the first two lines with the ancient musical notation (*DAGM* p. 12, lines 338-339):

[κατολοφυρομαι]

] Π Ρ Σ Ρ Φ Π [

1 [κατολο]φυρομαι ῥματερος[αιμασας]

] Ζ

2 [οσαναβ]ακχευει

Here are the lines with the notes transcribed into modern notation (*DAGM* p. 13), and a translation (the first κατολοφύρομαι is not on the papyrus).

κα - το - λο - φύ - ρο - μαι μα - τέ - ρος αἰ - μα σᾶς,

ὄ σ' ἄ - να - βακ - χεύ - ει.

I lament, I lament, the blood of your mother, which drives you mad.

Here I sing the lines, doing some guesswork on the missing notes (again lower than Pöhlmann and West's transcription).



Besides some useful vocabulary, this fragment offers a nice review of deponent verbs, the relative and personal pronouns, and the possessive adjective. And here the potential rewards in terms of culture are immense. Musically, the fragment offers students one of the earliest (perhaps the earliest) extant Greek melody, possibly by Euripides himself. Most interestingly, it includes a quartertone interval, a feature of Greek music not found in modern Western music. The notation also offers what appear to be notes for the accompanying instrumentalist, separate from the vocalists. This provides an excellent lead-in to a discussion of the *aulos* and its role in Greek theater (for an image of a reconstructed *aulos* and sound files of the instrument being played, see Hagel,

“[The Aulos](#)”). As the words are those of a chorus, the song encourages discussion of that aspect of Greek theater as well. But, of course, one would not want to stop there: the song leads well into discussion of tragedy and its performance, Euripides himself, and the myth of Orestes and the house of Atreus. The word ἀναβάκχουει offers the chance to talk about Dionysian ritual and the frenzy that often accompanied it.

The song also offers the perfect opportunity to discuss the importance of papyrus for the preservation of Greek texts, and the challenges of deciphering papyri. One could discuss here the intriguing fact that the order of verses in the papyrus is different from that in the manuscript tradition, where ματέρος αἶμα σᾶς ὁ σ' ἀναβακχεύει comes before κατολοφύρομαι κατολοφύρομαι (338-339). Together the three songs introduce students to all three ways ancient Greek texts have been transmitted: through inscriptions (the Song of Seikilos), the manuscript tradition (the Mesomedes fragment) and papyri (the Euripides fragment).



An aulos. Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#).

SINGING ANCIENT VERSE WITH MADE-UP MELODIES

The number of extant melodies that lend themselves to presentation in the Beginning Greek classroom is limited. Another source of song, however, is boundless: Greek verse sung with the rhythms provided by the meter, using melodies of the instructor’s and students’ own making. Many, if not most, ancient Greek verses outside of the iambic trimeters of drama were written to be sung. While the pitches sung are in almost all cases lost, a close proximity of the rhythm is preserved in the meter. There was not exact correspondence between meter and rhythm, but the two were closely enough intertwined that an awareness of the meter gives us a good clue as to the nature of the rhythm (cf. Dale 161). Even without the melodies, therefore, we can preserve some part of actual ancient performance if we sing Greek verses to the rhythm suggested by the meter, singing long syllables as quarter notes and short syllables as eighth notes (cf. Moore, “Don’t Skip the Meter!” on singing Latin verse). The singing of Greek verse also provides another fun way both to reinforce students’ learning of vocabulary and grammar and to introduce important features of Greek culture. It should also be noted that singing is one of the most effective ways of helping students appreciate quantitative meter; for the distinction between long and short syllables is clearer when one pitch is sustained through the length of each syllable. I offer here three passages I have sung to my own melodies in the first semester of Beginning Greek.

An exceptionally good candidate for this kind of singing is a portion of the frogs’ chorus from Aristophanes’ *Frogs* (209-214). In class I project the text as follows, marking long and short syllables:

υ υ υ - υ - υ -
 βρεκεκεκεξ κοὰξ κοὰξ,
 υ υ υ - υ - υ -
 βρεκεκεκεξ κοὰξ κοὰξ·
 - - υ - - υ υ
 λιμναῖα κρηνῶν τέκνα,
 υ - υ - - υ -
 ζύναυλον ὕμνων βοὰν
 - - υ - - υ υ -
 φθεγζώμεθ', εὐγηρυν ἐμὰν
 υ - - υ - υ -
 ἀοιδάν, κοὰξ κοὰξ

Brekekekex koax koax
 Brekekekex koax koax
 Let us, the marshy children of the springs,
 sing a shout of hymns along with the *aulos*,
 my sweet-sounding song,
 koax koax.

Here is the passage with a melody of my own making but with the rhythm suggested by the meter:



This song is, of course, immensely fun. It is also an excellent way of demonstrating apposition, a feature of language with which students often have trouble, as well as the hortatory subjunctive. And it makes a superb gateway into discussion of Old Comedy, Greek attitudes toward death and the underworld, and the nature of Greek dramatic choruses. Further discussion of the first lines' onetime use in a Yale football cheer would also not be out of place (cf. Branch).

Another Aristophanic passage I have had students sing is *Clouds* 985-986:

- - - - υ υ - υ
 ἀλλ' οὖν ταῦτ' ἐστὶν ἐκεῖνα,
 - - - - υ υ - υ - - - - υ υ - υ
 ἐξ ὧν ἄνδρας Μαραθωνομάχας ἡμὴ παιδευσὶς ἔθρεψεν

But those are the customs,
 from which my method of education nourished the men who fought at Marathon.



I teach this song right after Crosby and Schaeffer have introduced the Battle of Marathon. The passage lets students see the significance of that battle in the Athenian mind. It also gives some useful practice on demonstrative pronouns and the aorist, which have recently been introduced in the textbook when we first sing the song. Furthermore, the introduction here of the argument between Ὁ Κρείττων Λόγος and his opponent provides an excellent opportunity to discuss the cultural changes and controversies of fifth-century Athens. Furthermore, the passage provides a stress-free way into Greek meter, with some easily comprehended anapests.

Finally, the Homeric epics lend themselves very well to singing in class. Near the end of the first semester of Beginning Greek I have students sing the following verse from the *Odyssey* (9.408):

— ◡ ◡ — — — — — ◡ ◡ — ◡ — —
 ὦ φίλοι, Οὐτίς με κτείνει δόλῳ οὐδὲ βίηφι.

Oh my friends, Nobody is killing me, with guile, not with violence (understood as, “O my friends, nobody is killing me with guile or violence”).



This line offers a useful review of the vocative, the dative of instrument, and οὐτίς (introduced in Crosby and Schaeffer just before I teach this song); and it provides an excellent foundation for discussion of the double negative, which students often find confusing. Furthermore, it inspires discussion of the plot of the *Odyssey*, Homeric epic, and Greek ideas about civilization and hospitality.

In the case of Homer, we have some guidelines as to what pitches to sing. The Homeric epics were almost certainly sung originally in unison with the accompanying four-string *phorminx* (West, “The Singing of Homer”; Danek and Hagel, “Homer-Singen” and “[Homeric Singing](#)” [including an image of a *phorminx* and sound files following the principles outlined below]). Four notes were therefore available. M.L. West has made a strong case that the *phorminx*’s notes would have been the equivalent of our e f a d’ in relative pitch. Not in absolute pitch—the strings would have been tuned to match the range of each individual singer—but the *phorminx* was tuned to a scale with the second lowest string tuned ½ step above the lowest, the next string a third above that, and the highest string a fourth above that (West, “The Singing of Homer,” 119-121). Drawing evidence from the extant melodies, other languages with tonic accents, and statistical patterns of accents and units of sense and verse, Georg Danek and Stefan Hagel propose various ways in which sentence structure and accents worked together to determine which of the four pitches were used when. Among their proposals are the following:

- In Greek melodies there is a tendency for pitches to fall at the end of sense units; these usually correspond with verse ends and caesurae in Homeric verse.
- There is inevitably a lowering of pitch after a syllable with an acute accent, but not always a rise in pitch on the accented syllable.

- A grave accent is higher in pitch than the previous syllables of the same word, but not necessarily higher than the accented syllable of the next word.
- A circumflex accent can involve a lowering of pitch on the same syllable.

I have tried to follow Danek and Hagel's principles in the melody to which I sing *Odyssey* 9.408. One need not explain all of these details to a first-year Greek class, but even a brief reference to them will give students a fascinating glimpse into how the oldest Greek singing might have worked.

QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES

Using song in the Greek classroom raises a number of questions. First, how much song is appropriate? Time is, of course, always one of the great challenges in the teaching of Greek, especially at the college level; and engaging in an activity that takes too much time away from the teaching and practice of the language without sufficient rewards would be an error. As I hope will be clear from the above, songs do bring great rewards, and they reinforce rather than distract from the teaching of grammar and vocabulary. At the same time, they need not take great amounts of class time. All the songs are short, and students need only sing along, so only a very limited amount of class time needs to be spent in teaching them. I found that six songs worked well in a single semester of Beginning Greek. With a song sung each day, six songs give sufficient variety to keep students from growing weary of any one song, but there are not so many that significant time is taken away from other material. Because I begin each class with a song, the singing becomes a warm-up exercise rather than a distraction. But it is by no means necessary to include this many songs: the inclusion of even one or two songs, with fewer class days begun with song, would be a useful addition to any Greek class.

A greater potential challenge is the amount of material in the songs that moves well beyond what students have learned so far. I have found, however, that this has not been a problem. Students are not tested on the songs, so they need not be responsible for each word or grammatical form in them. As I present the songs, I explain briefly the unfamiliar forms, such as the epic form βίηφι in the Homeric passage. Some students may remember these much later when they first meet these forms officially. But I concentrate on the grammar and vocabulary with which the students are already familiar.

Another potential problem is the non-singing student. We live in a society where (sadly) singing in public is not encouraged, and some students simply don't like to sing or are shy about singing. This has in fact proved much less of a problem than I thought it might when I first started singing with my Greek students. Because I start the course with a song, singing is presented as an inherent part of the course, not something "extra" that is forced upon the students. All singing is done as a group, so no one is ever put on the spot. Most students in fact seem to enjoy the singing and join in enthusiastically. Though some sing with less gusto, no one has out-and-out refused to sing.⁴

A more serious potential problem is the non-singing instructor. Many teachers of Greek lack vocal training and confidence in their voices. Such teachers should keep several things in mind. First, the extant melodies presented here are quite simple. Once one gets accustomed to the

⁴ Even in a much larger class—a Greek Mythology class of 120 at Washington University in St. Louis—I have successfully led students in singing Mesomedes' "Hymn to the Muse."

(to us) unusual nature of the tunes, they are easy to learn and sing. In the case of the made-up melodies, instructors should remember that they don't even need to match any pitches but can just sing whatever pitches come to mind. Those who are not comfortable singing on their own can teach the melodies by singing along with the recordings linked to this article or, in the case of the extant melodies, various other recordings (e.g., Neuman, Neuman, and Gavin; note also the variation on the Song of Seikilos by Miklós Rózsa sung by Peter Ustinov as Nero in the 1951 film *Quo Vadis?*). Even for those who find singing in front of a class intimidating, extant Greek melodies and verses sung to made-up melodies can be an exceedingly welcome addition to any Greek class.⁵

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⁵ My thanks to the editor and referees of *Teaching Classical Languages* for much good advice.

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APPENDIX. HANDOUTS OF EACH OF THE SONGS

The Song of Seikilos (1st-2nd cent. CE)


Ὁ - σὸν ζῆς, φαί - νου,
 μη - δὲν ὀ - λῶς σὺ λυ - ποῦ,
 πρὸς ὀ - λί - γον ἐς - τί τὸ ζῆν.
 τὸ τέ - λος ὁ χρό - νος ἀπ - αι - τεῖ.

hoson zays fīnou,
 mayden holos su lupou,
 pros oligon esti to zayn,
 to telos ho chronos apītay.

As long as you live, shine.
 Do not grieve at all.
 Life is for a short time.
 Time demands an end.



Mesomedes' "Hymn to the Muse" (2nd cent. CE) (Ancient Transcription)

1 C Z Z Φ Φ Φ C C
 Ἄειδε Μοῦσά μοι φίλη,

 2 I Φ M M
 μολπῆς δ' ἐμῆς κατάρχου,

 3 Z- Z Z E Z N N I I-
 αὔρη δὲ σῶν ἀπ' ἀλσέων

 4 M Z N I Φ C P M Φ C
 ἐμὰς φρένας δονεῖτω.

Dear Muse, sing for me.

Begin my song.

Let the breeze from your groves

move my soul.



Mesomedes' "Hymn to the Muse" (2nd cent. CE) (Modern Transcription)


1 Ἄ - ει - δε Μοῦ - κά μοι φί - λη,

2 μολ - πῆς δ' ἐ - μῆς κατ - άρ - χου,

3 αὐ - ρῆ δὲ κῶν ἀπ' ἀλ - cé - ων

4 ἐ - μάς φρέ - νας δο - νεί - τω.

Dear Muse, sing for me.

Begin my song.

Let the breeze from your groves

move my soul.



Euripides, *Orestes*, 338-339

[κατολοφυρομαι]

1 [κατολο]φυρομαι] Π Ρ Σ Ρ Φ Π [ματερος] αιμασας]

2 [οσαναβ]] ζ ακχευει



κα - το - λο - φύ - ρο - μαι μα - τέ - ρος αι - μα σās,

ὄ σ' ἀ - να - βακ - χεύ - ει.

I lament, I lament, the blood of your mother, which drives you mad.



Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 209-214

υ υ υ – υ – υ –
 βρεκεκεκεξ κοὰξ κοὰξ,

υ υ υ – υ – υ –
 βρεκεκεκεξ κοὰξ κοὰξ·

– – υ – – υ υ
 λιμναῖα κρηνῶν τέκνα,

υ – υ – – υ –
 ξύναυλον ὕμνων βοὰν

– – υ – – υ υ –
 φθεγξώμεθ', εὐγερυν ἐμὰν

υ – – υ – υ –
 αἰοιδάν, κοὰξ κοὰξ

Brekekekex koax koax

Brekekekex koax koax

Let us, the marshy children of the springs,
 sing a shout of hymns along with the *aulos*,
 my sweet-sounding song,
 koax koax.



Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 985-986

— — — — —
 ἀλλ' οὖν ταῦτ' ἐστὶν ἐκεῖνα,

— — — — —
 ἐξ ὧν ἄνδρας Μαραθωνομάχας ἡμὴ παιδευσὶς ἔθρεψεν

But those are the customs,

from which my method of education nourished the men who fought at Marathon.



Homer, *Odyssey* 9.408

— ◡ ◡ — — — — — ◡ ◡ — ◡ ◡ — —
ὦ φίλοι, Οὐτίς με κτείνει δόλῳ οὐδὲ βίηφιν.

Oh my friends, Nobody is killing me, with guile, not with violence.

