



University of Cyprus
Department of English Studies

It is our great pleasure to invite you to the following lecture as part of our
Departmental Forum for 2020–2021:

**"Using phonological data for restoring missing musical notes in a fragmented
ancient Greek music score: the case of the second Delphic Hymn inscription
(128–105 BCE)"**

by

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Abstract

Ancient Greek was a pitch-accent language, as in almost every word there was one syllable that bore a certain lexical pitch accent, i.e. that syllable was pronounced at a pitch different from the rest of the syllables, e.g., syllables with an acute accent (*oxeîa*) were pronounced higher than the unaccented syllables. The three Ancient Greek pitch accents (namely, *oxeîa*, *bareîa*, and *perispōménē*) were usually reflected in the melody of ancient Greek musical compositions: a syllable with an *oxeîa* received a note that was never lower than the notes of unaccented syllables; a syllable with a *perispōménē* was usually sung with a melism consisting of a high note and a low note; a syllable with a *bareîa* received a low tone and the melody was allowed to drop again only after the next *oxeîa* or *perispōménē* accent. These correspondences between pitch accents and melody were followed in many extant music scores, but especially in two hymns discovered at Delphi in 1893 in several stone fragments. These fragments came from the south outer wall of the Athenian treasury at Delphi and were reassembled after various attempts. The resulting texts are two paeans to Apollo accompanied by *parasēmantiké*, i.e. the musical notation consisting of a complex set of letter-like musical symbols. We are able to transform *parasēmantiké* of a given score to modern musical notation thanks to a number of ancient musical treatises, and especially that of Alypius. In this study, I examine the second Delphic hymn by composer Limenios dated between 128 and 105 BCE. Certain parts of the hymn are missing due to stone damage, and, even though the text has been reconstructed to a good degree, the musical notation still has lacunae. In order to restore those lacunae, I derived the paeon's musical scale and assigned a numerical value to each note by ranking them by pitch. I then applied the correspondences between prosody and melody in the form of an algebraic chain of (in)equations for each lacuna. The results showed that in the case of two lacunae, the chain of (in)equations has one unique solution, which means that only a sequence of specific notes satisfies the conditions posed by the prosody–melody correspondences. This technique allowed the restoration of eight missing notes in total.

Wednesday, 9 December 2020, 17:00

Join Zoom Meeting:

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