

## Research News



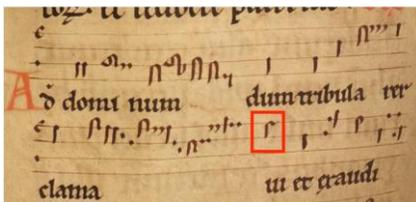
Woman playing the harp.  
Vase painting (detail).  
Southern Italy, c. 340 BC.  
Amsterdam, Allard Pierson  
Museum, inv. 14.396.

### THE STUDY OF THE ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL HARP

The harp is considered to be one of the oldest string instruments in the world. During the last two centuries, the instrument received considerable attention from music historians, instrument makers and musicians. Nevertheless, until a few decades ago, the history of the harp during the periods of Antiquity and the Middle Ages was still a fairly unexplored and opaque area. Researchers are often faced with published information that is widely dispersed, often in rather rare journals and books, and it can take decades to reach a satisfactory overview in any given cultural/historical area. Fortunately a number of

scholars, concentrating on specific topics since the 1980s and 1990s, have compiled bibliographical surveys. This is the case, for instance, with the sources of the ancient and medieval harp: *The Study of the Ancient and Medieval Harp: A Bibliography of Books and Articles from 1800 to 2015*, compiled and selected by Dr Martin van Schaik (see also p. 4). The idea of publishing an inventory originated from the response to a question that the author had been asked many times during congresses and symposia of (International) Harp Societies: Does a compilation of studies of the historical harp exist? As a reference work, it should support future scholars and interest-

ed parties, so they need not re-invent the wheel first at the start of a new project. The new series 'Bibliographies of Ancient Musical Instruments and Music Cultures' by Ekho Verlag in Berlin, of which the present compilation will be the first volume, provides a long-expected research tool for the study of archaeological and historical musical instruments, and related music cultures. The purpose of the present series is to make this valuable information more widely available. Publisher, Dr Arnd Adje Both, hopes "to present in this series the most important works, that are otherwise easily overlooked".  
Info: [Ekho-Verlag](http://Ekho-Verlag)



Ad dominum dum.  
Microtones in ABM, h62, fol. 62r

### THE CONTEXTS OF MICROTONES IN MEDIEVAL GREGORIAN CHANT

Microtones, intervals shorter than the shortest interval in current Western mainstream music, were part of the liturgical performance tradition in major parts of Europe up until the fifteenth century. Nowadays, microtones sound 'oriental' to Western ears. In the last century, Ike de Loos and Manuel Pedro Ferreira, in their respective doctoral dissertations, refuted Jacques Froger's authoritative denial (1978) of the phenomenon. Froger had unsuccessfully tried to find an alternative explanation for the special signs in the [Manuscript Montpellier H 159](http://Manuscript Montpellier H 159), which

according to most palaeographers indicate microtones. By expanding his functional approach with four additional twelfth- and thirteenth century manuscripts written between Cluny and Utrecht, and the confirmative insights about microtonality gained by Ferreira, my PhD analysis (work in progress) will shed new light on the phenomenon. The preliminary findings of my research seem to unravel a connotative system that, through its 'deviant' (for musicologists: Greek enharmonic) pitches, invited participants in the sung liturgy to meditate on the words 'underlined' by microtones. In Mass, the microtones seem to point to the *meanings* of words. The underlying pat-

tern of the signals is based on the rhetorical principles *movere et docere*, swaying the audience through emotion and arguments. Emotions come to the fore in microtones, pointing towards respect, horror, grief and the like. Arguments are highlighted by the use of microtones in grammatical constructions and in words/expressions with an exegetical background. Exegetical microtonal connotations occur frequently in figures like metaphors, synecdoches and metonyms. It looks like a treasure trove for musicologists and other cultural historians in the field.  
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