



ARCHAEOLOGY OF MUSIC AND DANCE PERFORMANCES IN CAVE SHRINES: TERRACOTTA FIGURINES AS VOTIVE GIFTS

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DOI : [10.26512/dramaturgias29.59422](https://doi.org/10.26512/dramaturgias29.59422)



Abstract

This paper examines terracotta figurines depicting musical and choral performances, discovered in sanctuaries associated with springs and water sources in Magna Graecia and Sicily, where caves have been utilized for ritual purposes since prehistory. Notably, the Classical and Hellenistic periods witnessed a surge in the use of caves as shrines dedicated to the cult of the Nymphs, chthonic deities linked to female rites of passage. As evidenced by finds from sites such as the Grotta Caruso in Locri, these sanctuaries, characterized by their liminality and access to water sources, were intrinsically connected to music and dance. The terracotta figurines from these sites illuminate the integral role of music and sound in rites of initiation, nuptial ceremonies, and social transformation rituals. It is proposed that these figurines served not only as votive offerings but also as ritual objects, embodying and demonstrating appropriate ceremonial actions. Through an analysis of the architectural features of these cave sanctuaries and the iconography of the figurines, this study reconstructs the key phases and settings of these sonorous rituals, highlighting the sensory and performative dimensions of ancient musical and choral practices.

Keywords: Coroplastics; Grottoes; Sound; Rituals; Music and Dance.

Introduction

As a virtually universal human activity, music playing is an essential social and cultural behavior, providing an indispensable function in rituals and sacred manifestations in almost every ancient society (PASALODOS, TILL, AND HOWELL 2013:17-23; GARCIA-VENTURA, TAVOLIERI, AND VERDERAME 2018:2-4; BELLIA 2018:89-91). While musical practice in the sacred sphere should be considered as an aspect of the actions that contribute to the effectiveness of the ritual, it is also necessary to consider it as more than a mere accompaniment or means of filling various phases of the ceremony with sound: Musical practice is an important aspect of rituals through which musical messages are transmitted to an audience within a precise context and sonic event. Indeed, the musical performance should not only be considered according to the instruments involved or what the musicians, dancers, or singers are accomplishing, but also with attention to the relationships between space, performance, and environment. Furthermore, consideration of the interaction with the audience and the behavior of the audience itself is important to fully understand the role of music and dance in rituals and ceremonies, which have religious and social implications. As a material presence within the lived acoustic experience of cult and as ritualized sound, music (alongside other non-musical sounds) evokes certain sensorial and behavioral responses in both the worshippers who perform and those who listen (POWER 2019:15).

As Catherine Bell has argued, performance communicates on multiple sensory levels, usually involving highly visual imagery, dramatic sounds, and other tactile, olfactory, and gustatory stimuli (BELL 1997:159-164). Music and dance, two components that are inseparable in the sacred sphere, strengthen the power of performances. Through mediation of certain people who are appointed to carry out the ritual, musical and choral performance in cult itself acted as an offering to the gods in the ceremony. Furthermore, music, sound, and voices, as well as natural sounds and sound objects, could improve sensory experience and could enhance social interaction through the construction of a sacred environment and sacred soundscape (MILES 2016:185).

From this perspective, terracotta figurines could provide strong visual evidence of various acts of worship and rituals involving musical and dance performances. Ritual activity took place in a special location, the sanctuary, which was deemed closer to the Otherworld and distant from this world (MARCONI 2007:28); this setting elicited a sensorial and behavioral response from worshippers and a feeling of connectedness. The figural decoration of sacred architecture, along with all the images related to cult (including terracotta figurines, *pinakes*, and friezes), may have contributed to achieving the goal of ritual performances through the use of music, dance, sacred verbal formulas, and the offerings of material gifts to the gods to induce in the participants a sense of the numinous. The terracotta figurines representing musicians and dancers made perfect religious offerings. Indeed, people who dedicated personal objects to divinities customarily took part in musical and dance performances (ANGLIKER 2018:32). In many cases, the figurines are the only visual documentation of musical and choral performances in cults and rituals (BELLIA 2016:191-192).

Within this context, terracotta figurines of musical and choral subjects found in cave shrines connected with springs and water sources in the Western Greek world (where archaeological research has verified the ritual use of grottoes from the prehistoric period) offer important information about the association between performances and nature deities (BURKERT 2003:95-98; LARSON 2001:8-11; LARSON 2010:56-64). Furthermore, these figurines allow us to understand which musical instruments and dances were best suited to different ritual acts.

The presence of springs and water sources, their small entrances, and liminality made caves and grottoes particularly attractive as sanctuaries of deities, such as Artemis and Persephone, and of the Nymphs, who were connected with the female rites of passage (BURKERT 2003:337-339; USTINOVA 2009:55-58).

Divine Presence: Sonic Epiphanies in the Grottoes.

In Magna Graecia and Sicily, cities celebrated, in the spring, Nymphs as emblems of the community (LARSON 2001:211-225). They were worshipped with rituals and offerings deposited into water sources and in caves during festivals celebrated in their honor. Particularly in the Classical and Hellenistic periods, there was an increase in the number of grottoes which provided evidence for the establishment of shrines devoted to the cult of the Nymphs and Pan: As in Attica and the rest of the Greek mainland and the islands, in Magna Graecia and Sicily their cult was linked with dance and music (BORGEAUD 1979:115-135; AMANDRY 1984:395-425). The historian Timaeus (*FGrHist* 566 F 32, Athenaeus, VI, 250a) stated that it was customary throughout Sicily for worshippers

to go from house to house and offer sacrifices to the Nymphs, spending the night in a drunken condition and dancing around statues of the goddesses.

The Caruso cave at Locri (**fig. 1**) was consecrated to an important cult of the Nymphs (COSTABILE 1996:22-25; COSTABILE 1991:95-114; PIZZI 2012:221-234; PARISI 2017:300). The *polis* of Locri was one of the most important Greek settlements in the West during the Archaic and Classical periods.



Fig. 1. Locri Epizefirii.

Excavated by Paolo Enrico Arias in 1940, the shrine was located outside the walls of the city (**fig. 2**), indicating that the sacred place had a rural and agrarian character (**fig. 3**) (ARIAS 1941:177-180; ARIAS 1946:138-161). As Jennifer Larson (2001:251) highlighted, the earliest votive objects found at the site, terracotta figurines of a seated female, date back to the end of the 6th c. BCE (**fig. 4**) (COSTABILE 1991:94, FIGS. 161-164). During this period, the shrine was also probably used as a water source by the locals for daily life activities (ARIAS 1977:507-512; SABBIONE AND SCHENAL 1996:78; LEONE 1998:76-77; BARRA BAGNASCO 2001:29-32).

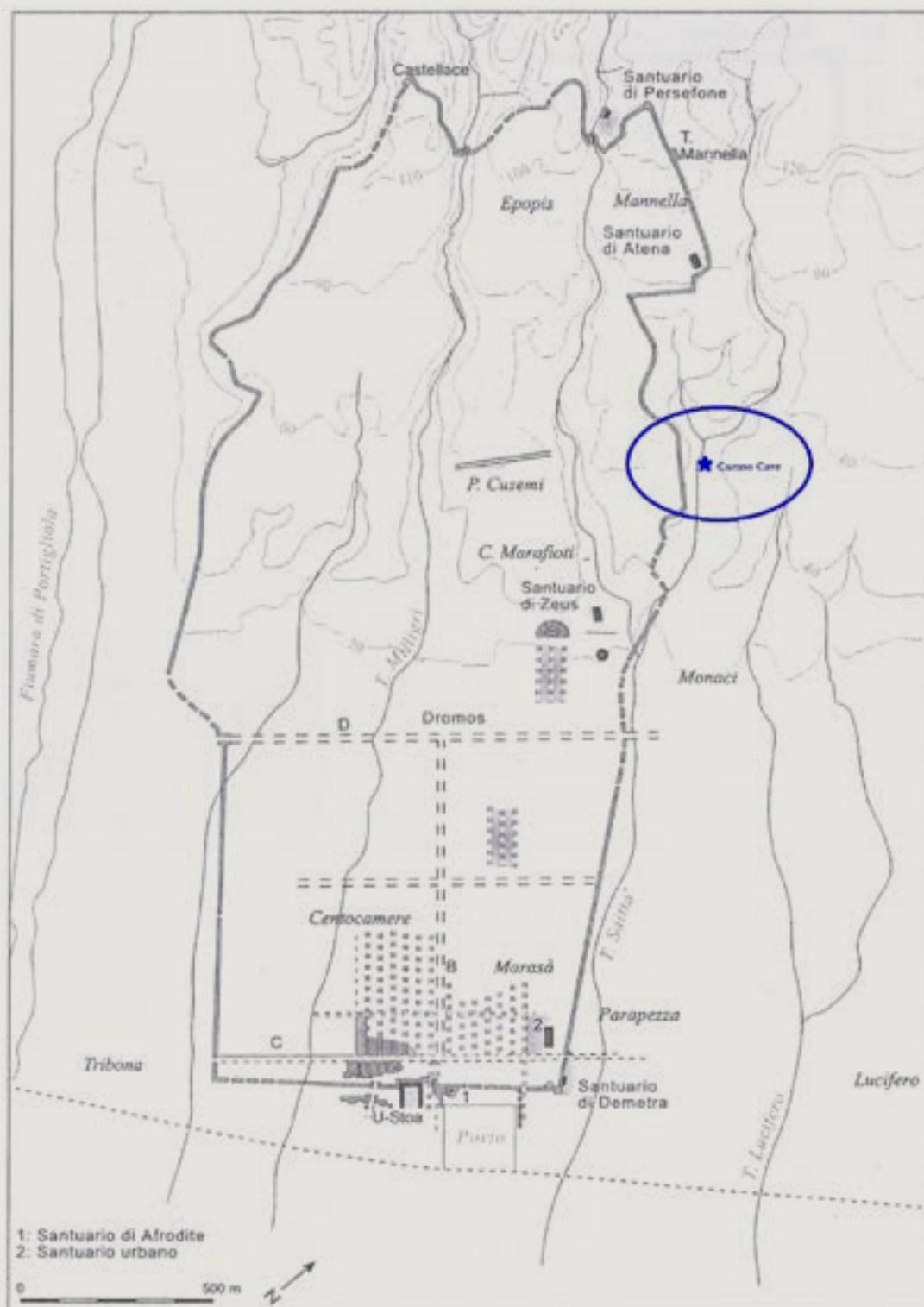


Fig. 2. The Caruso cave at Locri outside the walls of the city.



Fig. 3. Locri. The rural and agrarian character of the sanctuary.



Fig. 4. Terracotta figurines representing a seated female figurine. 6th c. BCE (Costabile 1991:94, fig. 161-164).

It might have begun as a small natural grotto, but it received extensive artificial embellishment (**fig. 5a-b**): first an ornamental façade; then improvements to facilitate the supply of water; and, finally, a large semi-circular basin with steps leading into the water (**fig. 6**). It is probable that in the center of the large *loutron nymphikon* the statues of the divinities were collocated, and it was around these statues and their altar that the celebrations took place (**fig. 7**) (PIZZI 2012:228).

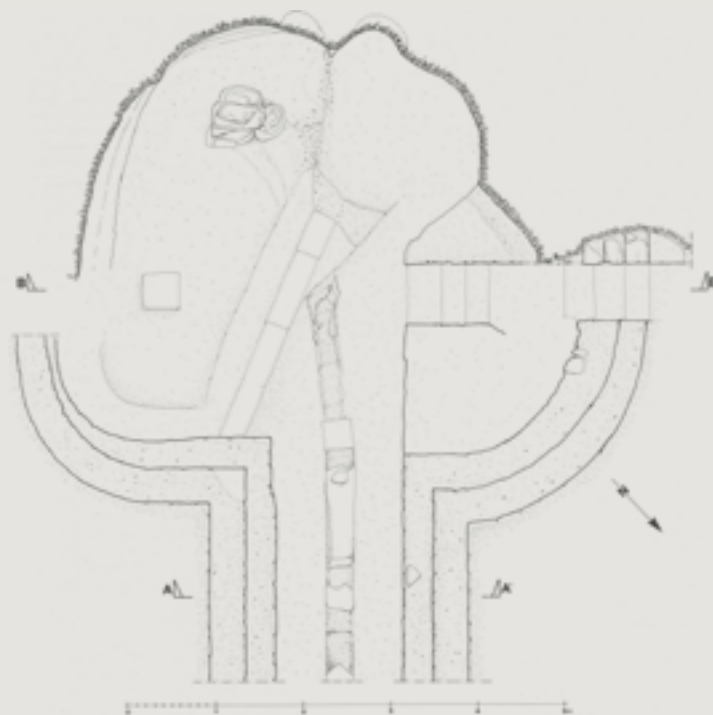


Fig. 5a. The extensive artificial embellishment in the natural grotto (Costabile 1991:8, fig. 6).

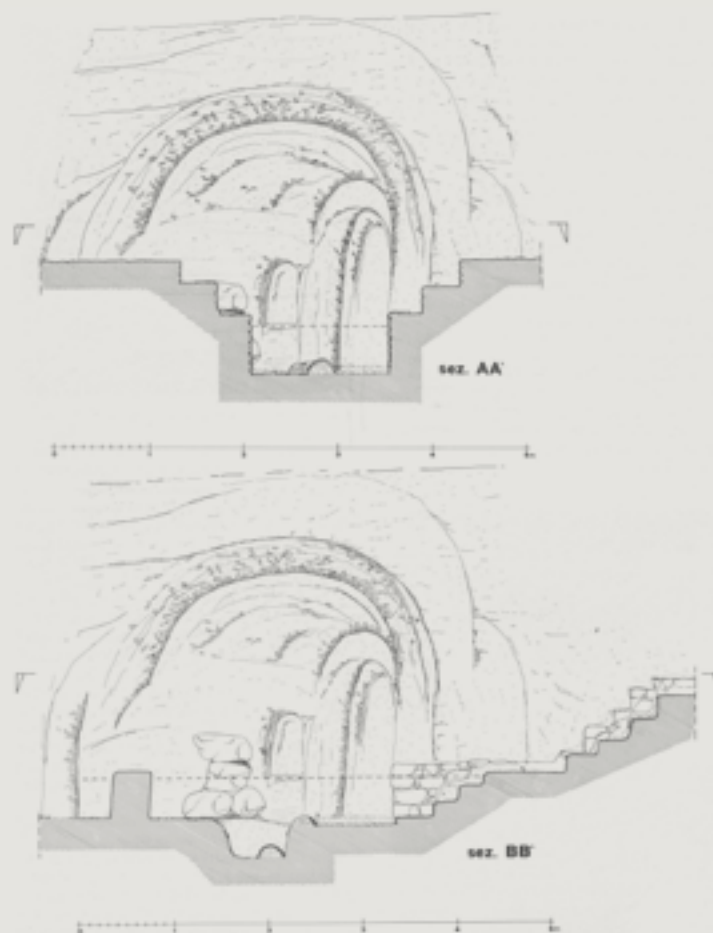


Fig. 5b. The extensive artificial embellishment in the natural grotto (Costabile 1991:10, figs. 9a-b).

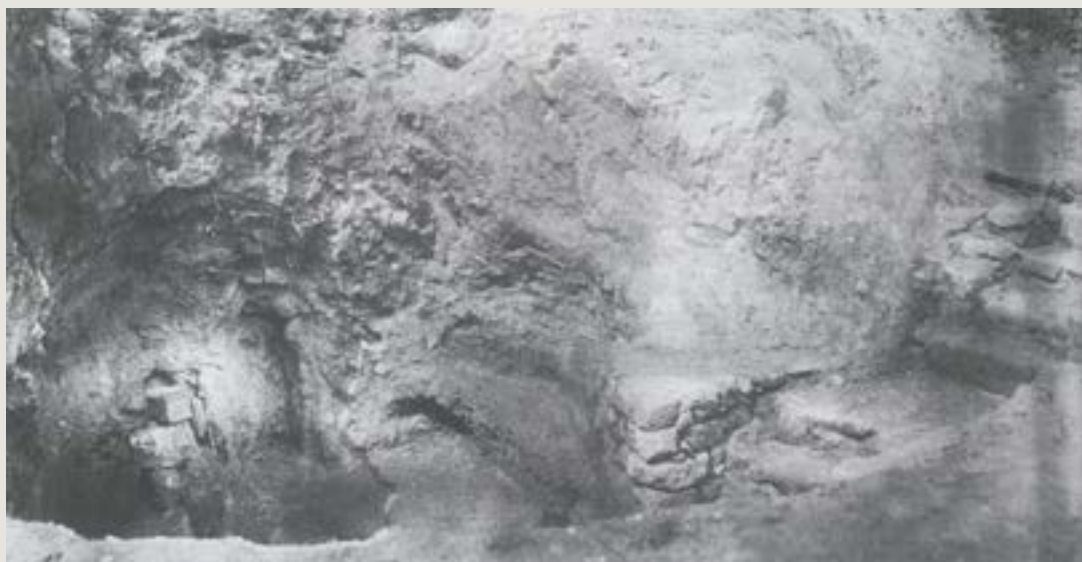


Fig. 6. A large semicircular basin with steps leading into the water (Costabile 1991:11, fig. 12).



Fig. 7. Drawing of the sanctuary of Caruso Cave (Costabile 1991:93, tav. II).

The terracotta models of the grotto, dating from the 4th to the 2nd c. BCE, are very interesting (**fig. 8a-c**) (COSTABILE 1991:45-56), since we can infer that terracotta artisans wished to convey the essence of the place and to evoke its charm and scenic shape. Intentions for them to fulfil ritual purposes probably also played a role in the design,

since several of the examples were designed as working models with reservoirs for liquid, possibly for libations (Larson 2001:251-257).

During the excavation, a large collection of terracotta figurines was recovered at the Caruso cave. A distinctive terracotta style is the triple herm, of which about 200 examples dating to the 5th c. BCE were found (SABBIONE-SCHENAL 1996:78). This consists of a broad pillar or base at the top of which are three female heads wearing low *poloi* (ARIAS 1941:177-180). We can interpret the three figures as representations of the cult images housed in the Caruso grotto, where they were connected to the female rituals of purification and fertility, apparently in conjunction with the cults of Persephone and Aphrodite (TORELLI 1979:91; PIZZI 2012:230).



Fig. 8a-c. Terracotta models of a grotto (Costabile 1991:72-75, figs. 122a-b; fig. 126).

Besides the triple herm receiving offerings (fig. 9), there are also some terracotta figures representing a female figure playing the aulos near a *trapeza* with three bowls (fig. 10) (BELLIA 2012:96, fig. 4). As with the other dedications found in the shrine, such as drinking vessels, miniature *hydriai*, and *pyxides* to be used as incense burners, these figurines seem to evoke the ritual acts in the grotto, where the Locrian maidens took part in the sacrifices and offerings, as well as the banquets that would take place in honour of the Caruso cave divinities. The depiction of a female *aulos* player on the terracotta is perhaps meant to serve as the visual representation of the sacred performance that occurred in celebration of the Nymphs, and also as an evocation of the ritual song and the sounds that accompanied their epiphany in the caves (BÉRARD 1974:75-87; CALAME 2001:110). The fixity of the Nymphs is in contrast to the lively movement of the instrument players and dancers, some of whom were masked and positioned near the triple herm or under their heads (BURKERT 2003:226). Indeed, other variations on the triple herm show an ancillary scene on their base: often a symbolic grotto is represented. Inside the grotto, a female *tympanon* player and lively dancer are depicted as if performing on a stage (fig. 11a-b) (COSTABILE 1991:99, figs. 174; 175 (s.i.); BELLIA 2012:98-99, figs. 6-8).



Fig. 9. Triple heads receiving offerings (Costabile 1991:94, figs. 158; 160).



Fig. 10. Female figure playing the aulos, near to a trapeza with three bowls (Bellia 2012:96, fig. 4)

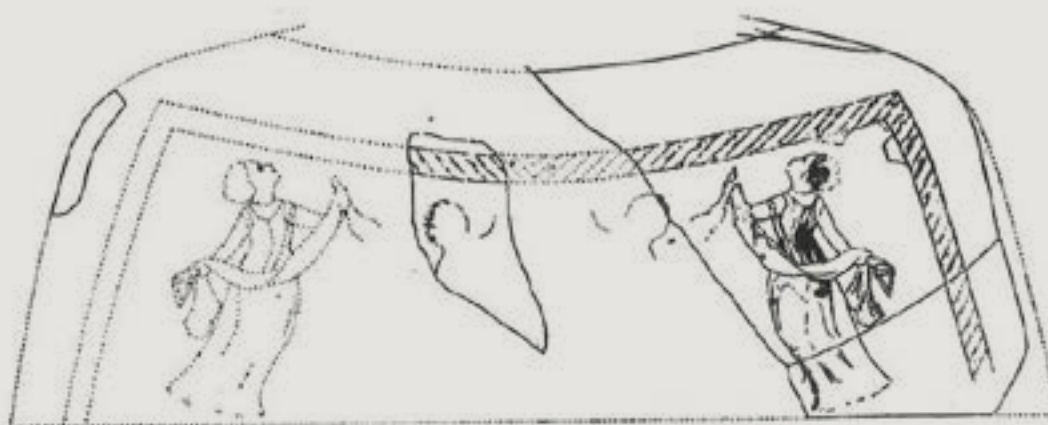


Fig. 11a-b. A tympanon female player and lively dancer in a grotto (Bellia 2012:98, fig. 7).

The triple herm of the Nymphs is not unique to the Caruso cave. Despite there being little evidence of cult images depicting the Nymphs, the few clear examples come from Magna Graecia and Sicily. One of the most important examples comes from Syracuse: a votive relief that provides some idea of how the cult images once appeared. On the relief (dating to the 4th-3th c. BCE) three carved Nymphs are shown standing in an identical frontal pose, wearing *poloi* and grasping the borders of their *himatia* in their hands (fig. 12) (BELLIA 2009:141, n. 348). They are flanked on each side by a smaller figure representing Pan playing the *syrinx*. The frontal positioning of the three figures suggests that the votive relief is a reproduction/depiction of a group of cult images around which a musical performance took place. Since a votive relief such as this can be considered as a cult figure, it might have served as a focal point for the celebration and for evoking the epiphany of the Nymphs in a sacred space. Furthermore, the visual representation of the performances that took place around the cult images of the Nymphs can be recognized in the terracotta busts of these goddesses, which were found at Morgantina (fig. 13a-b) (BELL 1981:140-141, n. 106, tabs. XXVII-XXVIII. See also PAUTASSO 2007:216, n. 5; GRECO 2013:62-63, fig. 33) and Syracuse in Sicily (PORTALE 2012:234, tab. XII.6, fig. 10): dances and musical performances are depicted during a sacrifice near an altar. In addition, a coin dating back to the 4th c. BCE, thought to be Sicilian, shows the busts of three Nymphs standing on an ornamented base, before which Pan plays his *syrinx* (fig. 14) (PORTALE 2012:228, figs. 3a-b).



*Fig.12. Nymphs flanked by two small representations of Pan, each playing the syrinx.
From Syracuse (Bellia 2009:141, n. 348).*



*Fig.13a-b. Dance depicted on the terracotta bust of a goddess.
From Morgantina (Greco 2013:62-63, fig. 33).*



Fig. 14. Sicilian coin. Busts representing Nymphs and Pan playing the syrinx (Portale 2012:228, figs. 3a-b).

It is interesting to note that in the Caruso cave there are other interesting variations of the Locrian triple heads especially regarding the configuration of the base of the herm: Inside the symbolic grotto, Pan is playing the syrinx (**fig. 15**) (COSTABILE 1991:100, fig. 176; 156, figs. 253-254; BELLIA 2012:101-102, figs. 11-13); the god is standing or sitting on a rock. Other statuettes representing Pan playing the *syrinx* or the *kymbala* have also been found in the rural Locrian cave shrine (**fig. 16**) (COSTABILE 1991:153, figs. 250, 245; 155, fig. 251; 162, fig. 261; 163, fig. 264; 165, fig. 263; 168, fig. 271; BELLIA 2012:102-109, figs. 14-24). Pan is a deity connected to natural sounds, echoes, and loud noise; the sound is an important component of his cult. Echoes and natural sounds (Homeric Hymn, *Pan*, XIX, 22) belong only to Pan, resonating with the wind and the percussion instruments – musical instruments connected to the Dionysiac religious sphere – in the cave with the Nymphs. Other figures related to the Dionysiac sphere were also found in the Caruso cave. They include Silenus playing the *aulos*, dancing maenads, comic actors, and grotesque musicians (BELLIA 2012:92-120). The ritual assemblage comprising these figurines and their variations imply the noise and fuss produced during the ritual performances, and also that these performances included re-enactments staged by costumed and masked actors. Possibly, this implies that clay figures acted as participants in dynamic motion and as media of expression and communication in order to enhance theatricality in the sacred space and the ritual setting (MACLACHLAN 2009:212-213). For women to leave behind theatrical votives representing musicians suggests strongly that their activities were connected with performances that took place in the Locrian rituals at the Grotta and in the theatre built in the center of the city, not too far from the cave shrine (MACLACHLAN 2009:212-213).



Fig. 15. Pan playing the syrinx in a grotto (Bellia 2012:102, fig. 12).



Fig. 16. Statuette of Pan playing the kymbala (Bellia 2012:106, fig. 18).

In homage to Pan and his love for noise, a ritual performance dedicated to Pan and the Nymphs involved various sounds and probably needed a particular sacred soundscape for their enhancement. It is likely that the aural qualities of the cave would have enabled the production of specific sound signals and that their effect would not have passed unnoticed by the worshippers. In order to approach this specific god, the ritual demanded noise, and the resulting resonating and echoing effects of the caves would have been regarded as signs of his divine presence. Furthermore, during a ritual dedicated to Pan, the participants, through noise-making, dancing, playing music, feasting, drinking and simply having fun, formed a system of ritual actions which intended to invite the god and to transform participants into agents of the god's epiphany (PLATT 2011:55-56; SABETAI 2019)

In addition, as Rebecca Ammerman pointed out, the association of Pan with the *syrinx* and the bridal sphere is underscored by artistic and textual evidence from the Archaic and Classical periods. This evidence indicates that the *syrinx* could have been played to accompany the singing and dancing that animated nuptial celebrations for both gods and mortals (AMMERMAN 2016:120-123). It is worth noting that, in the Locrian cave, the cult of Pan and the Nymphs appears to be connected with wedding rituals. These rituals had an erotic character and were celebrated by the maidens before marriage. Considering the large quantity of nude or semi-nude figurines found in the Caruso cave (fig. 17) (COSTABILE 1991:103-105; 114-121, fig. 190), some scholars have suggested that the maidens offered their youth to Pan (HERBIG 1949:47; BORGEAUD 1979:228; COSTABILE 1991:178-179) as a sort of *ius primae noctis*.



Fig. 17. Terracotta figurines representing nude female women. From the Caruso Cave (Costabile 1991:115, fig. 190).

Music and Dance in the Cave Shrine

Numerous votive offerings – especially reliefs, clay *pinakes*, and terracotta figurines – discovered in ancient cave shrines and open-air sanctuaries on the Greek mainland and the islands depict the circular dance of the Nymphs, either around the musician or inside a cave and around an altar, while they listen to the music played by Pan. These offerings are the evidence of a ritual practice (tradition) that was widespread across geographical space and covered a broad chronological spectrum in the ancient Greek world (BELLIA 2016:191-195; KOPENSTONSKY 2009:3; LAFERRIÈRE 2019:190-196).

In the Locrian grotto, several single female *aulos* players (fig. 18a-c) (COSTABILE 1991:185-187, figs. 296-298; BELLIA 2012:114-116, figs. 31-35) and terracotta plaques depicting the Nymphs as girls performing music and dance have been found (fig. 19a-d) (COSTABILE 1991:180-195, FIGS. 286-294; BELLIA 2012:111-113, FIGS. 25-30). According to the types of the depictions, the *choroi* depicted on the plaques were formed variously by three, four or five maidens who dance and play wind, percussion, and string instruments, and are dressed in jewelry and transparent clothes (LARSON 2001:114-115). These two-dimensional representations, which impart a general impression of a choral movement, seem to be the replacement for the clay circular models of dancers (LIVERI 2008:2-6; ALBERTOCCHI 2015:13-15). These figurines help us to understand the different roles of the female musicians and dancers depicted in the terracotta *choroi* (BELLIA 2012:115-119).



Fig. 18a-c. Terracotta figurine of aulos players.
From the Caruso Cave (Bellia 2012:114, fig. 31).



Fig. 19a-d. Terracotta plaques representing Nymphs as musicians.
From the Caruso Cave (Bellia 2012:111-113, figs. 25-30).

The female lyra player has the major role (**fig. 20**) (BELLIA 2012:118, fig. 36): she is taller than the other figures. Furthermore, she has a particular hairstyle corresponding to the *parthenos*: two long braids falling upon her chest (**fig. 21**) (BELLIA 2012:118, fig. 37). Considering that, before marriage, the maidens offered their braids and objects of childhood to the goddesses (BRUIT ZAIDEMAN 2009:403-404), it seems likely that the *lyra* player depicts the bride before marriage, offering her braids together with this figurative representation of herself as a *parthenos*. Also, stringed instruments associated with female figurines were emblems of the prenuptial status of marriageable girls. In this context, the musical string instrument is a symbol of beauty and *charis*: the girl may arouse erotic desire by performing music (CALAME 2001:72 and 159-160). Conversely, the *auletris* is shorter than the other figures playing instruments; her role therefore seems secondary in the representations. The female figures without any musical instruments probably represent singers; the dancers are most often depicted playing percussion instruments, *tympanon* or *kymbala*, for accompanying bodily movements.



*Fig. 20. Group of female dancers, female lyra player and female aulos player.
From the Caruso Cave (Bellia 2012:118, fig. 36).*



*Fig. 21. Female lyra player.
From the Caruso Cave (Bellia 2012:118, fig. 37).*

In addition, detailed identification of the terracotta figurines representing musicians provides important information about the kind of instruments that were used in the particular rituals celebrated in Caruso cave. Whilst percussion instruments were chosen to represent the exciting noise accompanying the rhythmic gestures made by the dancers, the musicians were predominantly depicted playing the *aulos*, since this was the instrument most likely to have accompanied the processions and dances in the sacred place. On the other hand, the *aulos* was played during rituals performed at ceremonies that required a large number of performers.

On the basis of the archaeological evidence, the exact nature of the dance itself remains unknown, as no amount of inference will ever recreate the dance exactly as it was practised. However, it is worth mentioning that the circular dance embodies two fundamental moments in the maidens' lives (SMITH 2011:88-93): rituals of initiation into puberty and marriage, encompassing all the stages from the maiden's first encounter with her prospective groom to the wedding celebration. It seems that the circular dance in a collective performance was considered an ideal moment to display the qualities of girls who were preparing to leave their family home to join the groom's *oikos*. Indeed, as Alan Shapiro pointed out (SHAPIRO 2004:310-311), dance was an integral part of ritual performances that marked stages and transitional phases of life, such as the initiation of girls into adult maturity and marriage, and that enabled girls and young women to be seen in public at a time when they were most graceful and attractive.

As Malcom Bell has argued (BELL 1981:92-93), the dancing Nymphs provide music and sounds for the wedding of the archetypical bride, perhaps recalling local marriage customs in Magna Graecia and in Sicily: During these wedding celebrations, almost every element could be accompanied by dance performances and sonic events (LARSON 2001:220; BELLIA 2012:150-152). The Locrian terracotta plaques exhibit close parallels to examples from the sanctuaries near the water sources of San Biagio at Agrigento (**fig. 22**) (BELLIA 2009:32-33, n. 28); Fontana Calda at Butera, near Gela (**fig. 23**) (ADAMESTEANU 1958:639, fig. 260; BELLIA 2009:126-127, nos. 315-319); the Hellenistic Fountain at Morgantina (BELL 1987:117, tav. XXXVIII, fig. 2); and those at Reggio Calabria (**fig. 24**) (BELLIA 2014:25, fig. 6) and Lipari (**fig. 25**) (BELLIA 2009:70-86, nos. 100-166). These parallels seem also to have nuptial connotations and a connection with female divinities and water sources. Overall, these terracotta representations highlight how sounds and rhythmical movement were closely allied with ceremonies involving rites of passage and initiations, as well as nuptial rites and overall rituals of social transformation.

As at Locri, the cults of Persephone and Aphrodite were closely intertwined in these sanctuaries. Aphrodite's cult begins to be well attested at caves in Magna Graecia and Sicily around the time that the nude 'nuptial' terracotta figures appear (COSTABILE 1991:114-127; MACLACHLAN 2009:204-207). In many cases, these terracotta figures incorporate the same nuptial gesture of *anakalypsis* with the one depicted on the figures dancing in the *choros* (**fig. 22**) (BELLIA 2009:45-47). It is a ritual act during which the bride unveils her face in front of her husband. Through this gesture, performed during the nuptial rites, the maidens showed their readiness for sexual maturity and welcomed the new status of the bride (PAUTASSO 2008:285-291).



*Fig. 22. Group of female dancers, and female aulos player.
From the sanctuary of San Biagio at Agrigento (Bellia 2009:32-33, n. 28).*



*Fig. 23. Group of female dancers with two female figures playing the aulos and the tympanon.
From the sanctuary of Fontana Calda at Butera near Gela (Bellia 2009:126, n. 315).*



*Fig. 24. Fragment of a triad of female figures, one of which playing the aulos.
From the sanctuary at Reggio Calabria (Bellia 2014:25, fig. 6).*



*Fig. 25. Group of female dancers with two female figures playing the aulos and the tympanon.
From the sanctuary of Lipari (Bellia 2009:85, n. 165).*

Sound Experience in Ritual Performances

The Nymphs who presided over the Caruso cave were the 'nymphs' par excellence: They safeguarded mortal brides and their waters were essential in the performance of rites such as the prenuptial bath. There is archaeological evidence of the various acts of worship that took place in the rural shrine where the Locrian maidens celebrated their

nuptial rites, perhaps during the night. It makes sense that ritual acts included carriage of sacrifices, vessels of wine, offerings, and torches to the cave. An interesting example of these ritual acts is found in the *Dyskolus* (the Grouch) (vv. 419-423), the only 4th c. BCE play by this author to survive almost in its entirety. These actions are celebrated in the sacred cavern of Pan and the Nymphs in Attica, where numerous festivities in honor of these deities were performed. While a musical procession advanced, producing sonic elements, the ceremony culminated in musical and dance performances (CONNELLY 2011:345-346; BELLIA 2020:91-92).

On the basis of the architectural characteristics of the Caruso cave, we are now able to form a hypothesis detailing specific moments of the celebrations. First, a procession of girls went into the cave while playing, dancing, and singing. Then, the girls gave offerings to the divinities; positioned around their cult images or statues, the maidens awaited their epiphany (PLATT 2011:42). Music announced the presence of the divinities in the grotto, who were perhaps personified by masked and costumed actors in the sacred setting (BURKERT 2003:225-229). Finally, the maidens bathed in the large semi-circular basin of the grotto for purification before marriage. This was a rite of passage with a strong symbolic significance: After that moment they were ready for sexual maturity and to assume the role of *gyne* in the community (SMITH 2011:88-93).

The ritual performed in the Locrian sanctuary would have been an exciting, multi-sensory experience for celebrants: the peculiar acoustics deriving from a mixture of natural and human-made sounds echoing; the alternation of silence and sound (GAUTIER 2015:183-192); the interplay between darkness and light; the energetic output of dances and music played around the cult images; the varying effects of water moistening, leaking, flowing or dripping; the mild temperatures; the smell of burning incense; and the taste of wine (YOUTSOS 2014:70).

Conclusion

Among the various acts of worship, the rituals performed in the Caruso cave included the consecration of figurines to the Nymphs. The maidens might leave figurines in the niches of the Grotta Caruso as offerings that illustrated appropriate behavior during the rituals. For this reason, the notion that the figurines from the grotto might 'participate' in these ceremonies cannot be discounted. Furthermore, the act of dedicating these special offerings would be a way for the community to remember the importance of the events and rituals performed in the Locrian cave and would have involved musical and dance performances associated with the cult activities at the shrine. From this perspective, these dedications not only reflected devotion by worshippers, musicians, and dancers to carrying out the specific ritual and experiencing the performance in the cave, but they also formed the material media for the preservation of their memory (BELLIA 2018:95).

The representations of musical and dance scenes in the terracotta figures and on votive reliefs related to the Nymphs and Pan in the Locrian cave confirm the use of wind instruments in combination with percussion, and possibly clapping, to accompany circular dances or dancing processions. The most frequent musical instruments in such a ritual performance in the cave were the *aulos* and the *syrinx*; these two instruments were probably accompanied by percussive sounds performed on *tympana* and *kymbala* held by dancers, or by the clapping of the audience. The sound produced by wind instruments

in conjunction with the percussive noise would have formed an auditory arena with peculiar sonic qualities in the underground chambers. Music and clapping combined with the sound made by the dancers' feet on the ground would have probably been distorted inside the hollow cave walls, resonating across the interior and producing a sonorous noise suitable for rituals in the cave (i.e., that would enhance the effect of the rituals in the cave).

Musical and choral performances that took place during these rituals are key to revealing the symbolic engagements of figurative art and their representations, and the rich presence of terracotta figurines found in the springs and water sources. Figurines are strong visual evidence of various acts of worship involving music and dance. These terracottas are not only simply dedications and material objects but are dynamic and expressive products of human behavior in worship: figurines highlight the way music, sound, and ritualized movements were closely allied with ceremonies involving rites of passage and initiation, nuptial rites, and rituals of social transformation. These sacred occasions were privileged moments for the consecration and dedication of the statuettes to the divinities that ensured these passages.

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