

ARISTOXENUS  
OF  
TARENTUM

**Rutgers University Studies  
in Classical Humanities**

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# ARISTOXENUS OF TARENTUM

DISCUSSION

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY STUDIES  
IN CLASSICAL HUMANITIES

VOLUME XVII

EDITED BY

CARL A. HUFFMAN



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## Contents

Preface	vii
Contributors	ix
Remembering Robert William Sharples	xiii
1 Did Aristoxenus Write Musical History? <i>Andrew Barker</i>	1
2 Instruments and Empiricism in Aristoxenus' <i>Elementa Harmonica</i> <i>David Creese</i>	29
3 Aristoxenus and Musical <i>Ēthos</i> <i>Eleonora Rocconi</i>	65
4 Aristoxenus and Music Therapy: Fr. 26 Wehrli within the Tradition on Music and Catharsis <i>Antonietta Provenza</i>	91
5 Aristoxenus and the "Neoclassicists" <i>Timothy Power</i>	129

vi    **Contents**

6	Apollonius on Theophrastus on Aristoxenus <i>William W. Fortenbaugh</i>	155
7	Aristoxenus' Biographical Method <i>Stefan Schorn</i>	177
8	Aristoxenus and the Pythagoreans <i>Leonid Zhmud</i>	223
9	Aristoxenus' <i>Life of Socrates</i> <i>Carl Huffman</i>	251
10	Aristoxenus' <i>Life of Plato</i> <i>John Dillon</i>	283
11	Aristoxenus and the Early Academy <i>Andrew Barker</i>	297
	Frequently Used Abbreviations	325
	Works Cited	327
	Index of Ancient Sources	351
	General Index	371

## Aristoxenus and Music Therapy

*Fr. 26 Wehrli within the Tradition on Music and Catharsis*

*Antonietta Provenza*

### 1. Introduction

The importance of music for the ancient Pythagoreans,<sup>1</sup> together with recognition of its therapeutic function, already attested at the

<sup>1</sup> My heartfelt thanks to Professor Carl Huffman and all the participants in the Aristoxenus Conference for their interest in my paper and comments. I will always remember those days at DePauw University as wonderful and happy. I wish also to thank Professor Salvatore Nicosia, my research tutor, for having read and discussed with me this essay at different times. Translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>1</sup> Still indispensable for a general overview of early Pythagoreanism and the questions concerning it is Burkert (1972). Among Burkert's main emphases are the Platonic contamination of sources on Pythagoreanism since the 4th century BCE and the representation of Pythagoras as a "wise man" with shamanistic features (although the unsuitability of the notion of shamanism for ancient Greek culture has been since highlighted in Bremmer [1983] 29–48 and [2002] 27–40; cf. also Minar [1971]), rather than as a "scientist," since "scientific Pythagoreanism" is not clearly attested until Philolaus. Most important among the studies opposing Burkert's "shamanistic" Pythagoras and giving prominence to the "scientific" side of early Pythagoreanism and to its relationship with Near-eastern science are Kahn (1974), van der Waerden (1979) and Zhmud (1997). Also see on Pythagoreanism and its sources: Centrone

musical *ēthos* was prominent, it traces back to the Pythagoreans, as influential and authoritative representatives of the traditional use of music therapy based on experience, the conception of therapy of the soul as complementary to that of the body.