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Mapping Roman Sounds: A Methodological Approach to Reconstructing Roman Soundscapes

Florian Leitmeir ORCID: 0000-0003-2000-9902
University of Würzburg
florian.leitmeir@uni-wuerzburg.de

Jutta Günther
University of Göttingen
guenther.at.work@gmail.com

Abstract

The great relevance of music and sounds in antiquity is contrasted by the fact that sounds have faded away and cannot be reproduced; only the echoes in archaeological, iconographic and literary sources have been preserved. The sources on ancient music are thus the result of a remarkable medial transformation process from sound to images and texts. This medial transformation has to be revealed through a critical examination of contexts and genres to open up new perspectives on the meaning of sounds in Roman antiquity. Through our concept of "Klang-Raum" (Soundspace), the corresponding analysis of the sources enables the reconstruction of manifold urban soundspaces. Taking the funeral procession, the *pompa funebris*, as an example, we demonstrate how the synopsis of different source genres reveals a complex picture of the significance of sound and music in the Roman funerary ritual.

Keywords

Soundscapes – Pompa funebris – Funeral procession – Nenia

> "Beshrew me if I think anything more requisite than silence for a man who secludes himself in order to study! Imagine what a variety of noises reverberates about my ears! I have lodgings right over a bathing establishment. So picture to yourself the assortment of sounds, which are strong enough to make me hate my very powers of hearing! When your strenuous gentleman, for example, is exercising himself by flourishing leaden weights; when he is working hard, or else pretends to be working hard, I can hear him grunt; and whenever he releases his imprisoned breath, I can hear him panting in wheezy and high-pitched tones. Or perhaps I notice some lazy fellow, content with a cheap rub-down, and hear the crack of the pummeling hand on his shoulder, varying in sound according as the hand is laid on flat or hollow. Then, perhaps, a professional comes along, shouting out the score; that is the finishing touch. Add to this the arresting of an occasional roysterer or pickpocket, the racket of the man who always likes to hear his own voice in the bathroom, or the enthusiast who plunges into the swimming-tank with unconscionable noise and splashing. Besides all those whose voices, if nothing else, are good, imagine the hair-plucker with his penetrating, shrill voice,—for purposes of advertisement,—continually giving it vent and never holding his tongue except when he is plucking the armpits and making his victim yell instead. Then the cake-seller with his varied cries, the sausageman, the confectioner, and all the vendors of food hawking their wares, each with his own distinctive intonation."[1]

In this passage from a letter to his friend Lucilius, the Stoic philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 BCE–65 CE) complains about the variety of sounds and noises in Baiae, the famous recreational spot for wealthy Romans in the Gulf of Naples.[2] He describes a typical bathing situation comparable to a modern outdoor pool or beach in the summer holidays: exercising, panting men, massage slaps, the splashing sounds of pool fun, the seller of food and entertainment on the beach. This variety of sounds, noises, and music creates the impressive and unique soundscape of the bath. These sounds give us a vivid impression of a day out at a Roman recreational hotspot.[3] This passage presents a specific reception and judgment of these sounds, referring to Seneca as a noble man who – necessarily – strongly dislikes to be disturbed during his study time, his *otium*. To a Roman man of his noble status, the sounds of daily life at the summer spot seem to be inappropriate, even trivial. By underlining the importance of a search for *otium* as the appropriate reason for his summer stay, the social distinction between the noble and the simple-minded is clearly intentionally expressed within the description of the soundscape, comparable to the frivolity of modern popular summer vacation locations.

[1] Seneca, *Epist.* 56.1–2 (trans. R. M. Gummere, Loeb Classical Library 75).

[2] The collection of the *Epistulae morales* contains 124 letters in 20 books, all written in the years 62–64 CE.

[3] On the interpretation of this specific soundscape in Seneca see Bouton-Touboulic 2021 (esp. 86–90), Vincent 2016; Hartnett 2016: 159–62; Vincent 2015b.

This rich description brings up the question of what kinds of sounds were present in ancient daily life and how they were perceived. In another passage in the letter, Seneca introduces the sounds and noises of the city of Rome by stressing the different reception of noises and words:

> "Words seem to distract me more than noises; for words demand attention, but noises merely fill the ears and beat upon them. Among the sounds that din round me without distracting, I include passing carriages, a machinist in the same block, a saw-sharpener nearby, or some fellow who is demonstrating with little pipes and flutes at the Trickling Fountain (*ad Metam Sudantem tubulas experitur et tibias*), shouting than singing."[4]

In addition to the recreational soundscape, Seneca refers to carriages, workers, and handymen as well as to a musician, adding to the acoustic atmosphere of the city. Even though there are countless sounds and noises in a city, there are places or events that had a specific soundscape to the ancient listener.[5] But how is it possible to get a clearer impression of music and sound in such a specific soundscape? As the concept of "soundscape" is controversial in historical disciplines,[6] we will present a new methodological approach to the iconographic and textual sources, aiming to understand, define, and reconstruct Roman soundscapes. After a theoretical explanation of our method, we will apply it to the case study of the *pompa funebris*.

1 Mapping Roman Sounds – A Methodological Approach to the Reconstruction of Roman Soundscapes

Sound is – as an acoustic phenomenon – physically described as the propagation of acoustic waves through a medium like air, therefore it is coupled with the criteria of time and space. Any sound is produced at a certain moment in time to be received by a listener. Thus, the act of the production of sound might happen intentionally or unintentionally, whereas the reception can take place actively or passively. This also refers to noises which often are, unlike the produced, intended signals, unintentionally in nature or elsewhere, for example the wind moving the leaves, rushing cars on the streets, doors slamming, and so on. With the differentiation of the intention of the listener or producer, we can classify sound as *played* music or *unintentional* noise.[7] Beside that identification there is also the criteria of defined space for the acoustic propagation and the producer or listener of the sound. This environment creates a specific soundscape that is strongly connected with the recipient's expectations. Imagine, for example, a European train station when a train arrives at a platform: in our subconscious inner ear, we might be hearing the train arriving with a whoosh, the

[4] Seneca, *Epist.* 56.4–5. (Transl. R. M. Gummere. Loeb Classical Library 75). The term *tubulus* might also be understood as a little (water) pipe. Obviously, Seneca plays with the double meaning of the word *tubulus*. For the meaning of that passage in the context of the Meta Sudans, see Leitmeir (forthcoming).

[5] Cf. recent research of the multisensory approach of ancient cities, especially the aural sense: Betts 2011; Hartnett 2011; Quatember 2016; Hartnett 2016; Laurence 2017.

[6] For a recent discussion of the term and the historical soundscape, see Vincent 2015b; Vendries 2015.

[7] For the definition of sound, cf. Altenmüller 2018: 83–103; Morat and Ziemer 2018: VII-IX (with further literature).

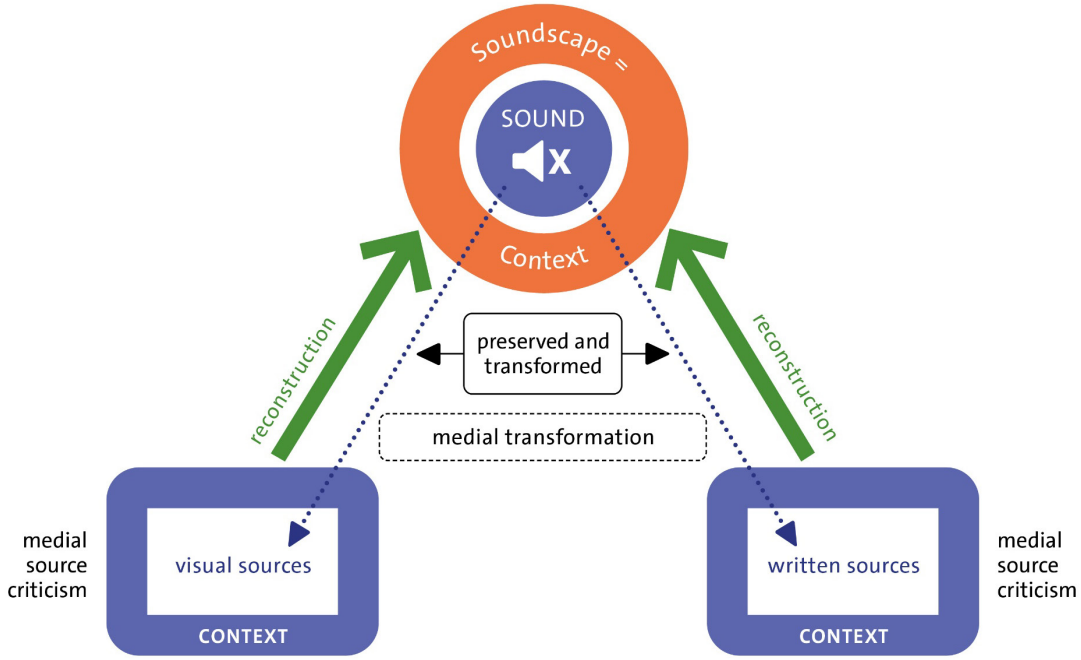

Figure 1: Methodological scheme of the reconstruction of the soundscape (Authors; design: C. Kiefer).

brakes of the train squeaking intensely, the doors opening with a high signalling sound, people rushing on the pavement to get to the doors, the noise of the luggage being drawn on the pavement together with footsteps, children crying or shouting in excitement, information being conveyed over speakers with a signalling melody, people descending and boarding the train, scenes of hello and goodbye. At the same time, we might imagine the hustle and bustle of the train station as part of the general soundscape that plays into our expectations of this specific situation, whereas our auditive imagination changes if the same situation is pictured in another country. If, in the course of our imagination, we add other sounds not specific to our expectation of this soundscape, such as wolves howling, an opera singer rehearsing at the platform, a bomb crashing down, honking of cars and so on, we might be able to integrate these sounds and noises into the soundscape, but they do not enhance our immersion into the imagined soundscape; to the contrary, they counteract the soundscape in a distorted way.

This modern impression of different categories of sounds that we are confronted with is obviously not easily transferred to historical periods, since our knowledge of how sounds were perceived is restricted to a few selected sources. In contrast, the importance of sound in the Roman Period is prominent in texts, images, and archaeological relics of sound tools, even if the real and original sound has vanished. By evaluating the sources under the lens of the critical-historical analysis of the preserved genera and the situational setting, we can identify and reconstruct specific soundscapes in the Roman Period as shown in Figure 1.

In order to evaluate our sources, we can understand them as communication media, and therefore categories like producer (artist/author) and receiver (viewer/reader) are useful. When interpreting the sources as relics of sound we have to be aware of the medial transformation of sound into other media and the specific context of this media. For example, the images of musi-

cians in the amphitheatre at gladiatorial combats generally come from villas (mosaic) or graves (reliefs).[8] The same applies to poetic texts, using the full score of musical metaphors and *topoi* from a wide range of literary settings and traditions. This critical view on the sonic sources allows us a perspective through a single lens of the material or text from antiquity, preserved at a moment in time, created and/or judged by the ancient author. The detailed critical consideration of the sources needs to be at the base of our soundscape analysis: we must deconstruct the medial transformation in order to then reconstruct a specific soundscape. To return to the modern example of the train station soundscape, for a distant future music archaeologist who neglected to properly value medial transformation, an opera singer could become a central aspect of the soundscape.

In this way, "soundscape" could be understood rather as a performative setting than a specific place. Thus, our aim of reconstructing the specific soundscape lies in representing the impressions and expectations of the ancient listener in contrast to reconstructing a specific ancient sound or music.[9] In the following section, we choose the *pompa funebris* as an example of a specific soundscape in Roman times.

2 The *pompa funebris* as a soundscape

The *pompa funebris*, the funeral procession from the house of the deceased to the cemetery, is one of the central rituals in Roman culture, starting in the early Republican period, and even finds its way into the Christian culture in Late Antiquity. It was an important medium of public communication and commemoration within the social structure of the city.[10]

Despite its importance, the sources for the ritual are very scarce. The main written references are the histories of the Greek historian Polybios (*Histories* 6.53f). According to him, the *pompa* itself took place in the inner urban space of Rome, passing along a defined sacred route consisting of places of great importance for the *res publica* and the family of the deceased. Its route expressed the family's achievements, as manifested in donated buildings and other places of importance for the noble family. The idea of the perpetuation of the deceased through the representation and remembrance of his great deeds publicly stands out in Polybius' description. Lined up at the front of the procession are the ancestors, embodied by actors, wearing wax masks of the ancestors' faces. These are the impressive men of the family who gained importance because of their great achievements. The observer does not see all the family's history, but only those persons who were successful and therefore worth remembering. Following the long line of ancestors, the dead body is carried

[8] E.g. Mosaic: Zliten, Villa Bar duc Amméra, Tripolis Mus. Aurigemma 1960: Taf. 137.143. Relief: tomb of C. Lucius Storax, Chieti, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 4421 a–c; Flecker 2015: 205–9 A27.

[9] For the importance of the listener, cf. Breitsameter 2018: 94.

[10] We are well informed about the three main types of processions: the *pompa triumphalis*, the *pompa circensis*, and the *pompa funebris*. Significant research on the three types of *pompae* has been carried out over the years. A good overview with further literature is provided by Boschung 2015: 15–166. On the *pompa triumphalis*, see Brilliant 1999. On the *pompa circensis*, see Latham 2016: 67–101. On the *pompa funebris*, see Bodel 1999: 259–81 and Toynbee 1982: 46–8. On the *pompa funebris* in Late Antiquity, see Günther 2019: 93–7. On the specific use of music in the procession, see Vincent 2016: 199–205.

Figure 2: Amiternum, relief with a *pompa funebris* (https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/6577581, photo: B. Malter).

along, probably by the undertaker's slaves. On site are all the other noble families, who watch the procession, as well as the plebs of Rome. To this end, Polybius underlined the importance of the ancestors' parade as a moral exemplum for the noble youth. In sum, the *pompa funebris* demonstrated the wealth and power of the family and its status within the society.[11] Were Polybios our only source for the ritual of the *pompa funebris*, the music and sounds specific to the occasion would have been lost, since he only names the funeral speech and does not explicitly refer to the impact of sounds of the procession on the observers or participants. Other sources, however, allow us to gain at least some impression of the different sounds (vocal mourning[12], musical instruments) produced during the *pompa funebris*. According to the medial qualities of the sources, we will first take a look at the visual evidence and thereafter at the written sources.

2.1 The visual evidence

Whenever the Roman *pompa funebris* is discussed, a relief from Amiternum of the late Republican period must be examined as the main, and possibly only, surviving visual evidence for the organisation of a *pompa funebris* (Figure 2).[13] Nevertheless, what the relief shows is a procession led by a group of musicians: a *lituus*-player[14], two *cornicines* and four *tibicen*, divided into two registers. Behind the *cornicen* stand two women facing the person on the *lectus*. They can be identified as

[11] Cf. Flaig 2015: 108–13.

[12] Cf. Hope 2019.

[13] L'Aquila, Mus. Nazionale d'Abruzzo, height: 65 cm, width: 164 cm, depth: 40 cm. Franchi 1966; Bodel 1999; Schrumpf 2006: 35–59, 256–81; Vincent 2016: 200–9; Coarelli 2013. The dating of the relief is still in discussion. The first half of 1st century BCE is generally accepted, although cf. Hughes 2005 and Flecker 2015: 109, where 100 BCE is proposed. – It should be stressed here that we must be aware that this singularity complicates the general reconstruction of a *pompa funebris* since we cannot decide how realistic or stylised the depiction is.

[14] Franchi 1966: 24–6; with discussion of earlier research, which also saw it as a *tuba*. Cf. Vincent 2016: 209; Castaldo 2019: 71f.; Alexandrescu 2008; Alexandrescu 2010. Despite these efforts, however, the attribution remains unclear; Franchi (1966: 25) spoke of a "'longa tuba' in forma dei lituus", Alexandrescu (2010: 34) also equates the Etruscan *lituus* with the Tyrrhenian *tuba*. In this context, the Italic-Etruscan influence on an instrument used on a Late Republican–Early Augustan monument needs to be examined.

praeficae, or lamenting women. They are followed by the *dissignator*, the responsible person for the organisation of the funeral, and eight men carrying a *ferculum* with the *lectus funebris*, a kind of couch, for the deceased person. Upon the *lectus* is the recumbent figure of the person. Whether this is the corpse itself, or a puppet, or an actor is disputed vividly in research; if the latter, the corpse would then be in the box under the *lectus*.[15] Behind the figure of the person is stretched a cloth with stars and a crescent moon. Following the men carrying the *lectus* are the *familia*: a lamenting woman, possibly the mother of the dead, supported by two female servants, three lamenting women and two further persons, one of them holding a fan. At the tail of the procession walks a young servant.[16] As nearly one third (9 of 28) of the members of the *pompa funebris* are actively producing sound, the musical iconography of the relief is striking.

In the following, we will attempt to define the visual sound space of the *pompa funebris* by approaching the meaning of the sounds on the relief in different ways. Regarding the formal composition of the relief, we can draw a formal dividing line between the left and right groups of persons, whereby the instrumentalists are clearly separated. In the case of the left group, the turning of both sides towards the *lectus funebris* is noteworthy, because the sound is directed towards the deceased and hence supports the visual spotlight. This visual and sonic reading of the image is seen also on the right side: if we follow here the direction of the sound, a 'sound cloud' of the brass is created. The sound of the *tibiae* mixes with that of the first *tibia*. It is also worth noting that both musicians on the right are shown frontally. This underlines their importance from a contentual standpoint, but the frontal depiction may also be understood in purely formal terms in that the two delimit the scene to the right and thus the group of instrumentalists. As regards the sound producing characters, it is remarkable that they are all represented in action. They play their instruments with cheeks inflated or articulate their voices with open mouths. Further differentiation of the sounds created during the procession is possible through the analysis of the different sound tools depicted, which can be divided into brass and woodwind instruments, as well as the human voice.

The *tibia*, consisting of two tubes and played with a double reed, has a sonorous and penetrating sound, amplified due to the number depicted in the procession. The elongated brass instrument with its curved and wider bell should depict a *lituus*. As for the perceived tone of this instrument, however, we should be careful. Although the shrill sound of the *lituus* is mentioned in Ennius, the longer *lituus* on the Amiternum relief could have had a deeper tone.[17] The tonal spectrum of the curved *cornu* was perceived as rough.[18] In addition to these instrumental sounds, the human

[15] Cf. Schrumpf 2006: 51–6.

[16] Franchi (1966: 26) thought of the depiction of the *pollictor*, the slave who washes and rubs the corpse with ointment. He seems to be carrying a *situla*, so we should identify him better as one of the slaves or servants of the *libitinarius.*

[17] Ennius, *Ann.* 530 (cf. Wille 1967: 83). Schrumpf (2006: 40, fn. 100) discussed the *Klangfarbe* of the *tuba* and *lituus*, coming to the conclusion that: "...doch auch wenn es sich um einen *lituus* handelte, änderte dies an der Grundaussage nichts – mit seinen wenigen, aber dafür schrillen Tönen war er lediglich das helle Gegenstück zur tiefen *tuba*, erfüllte also denselben Zweck."

[18] Verg. *Aen.* 8.1f.; Coripp. *Ioh.* 5.32; Lucan. 1.236–8. Cf. Wille 1967: 84.

voice is present in the lamentations of the *praeficae* and the woeful cries of the relatives. It remains unclear if the *praeficae* responded somehow to the intonation of the instrumentalists, however, and composition of the relief does not imply this. The group is formally separated from the instrumentalists, and the gestures of the right *praefica* and the female relative (raised right arm, head) are quite similar. Because of this visual similarity, it is safer to assume that the lamentation of the *praeficae* differed only slightly from the spontaneous sounds of the relatives.

Although it is certainly not clear from the relief which sounds or even melodies were produced, we can possibly make some statements about the qualities of the sounds based on the social status of the procession members. In the same way that the professional lamentations of the *praeficae* can be contrasted with the spontaneous calls of the female relatives of the deceased, the playing on the *tibia* generally implies more intensive musical training than that required for the signalling brass instruments. Schrumpf (2006: 278–81) points out that the latter could be simple employees or slaves (*operae*) of the undertaker, whereas the *praeficae* and *tibicien* are to be regarded as hired freelancers who were engaged to supplement and enhance the procession.[19]

The archaeological context of the relief belonged to a sepulchral area. Together with another relief, it once adorned a burial structure that, based on the inscriptions found, was associated with the *gens Pedaucaea* and the *gens Aspisia*.[20] The presumed placement of the relief on the outer façade of the burial structure granted it a higher visibility and underlined its representative character.[21] Taking this into consideration, it can be surmised that the message of the relief was to praise not only the overwhelming and sonorous atmosphere of the spectacle, but also its high costs. A similar function can be found in funeral inscriptions where the sum paid for the funeral is mentioned (cf. Campbell 2021: 152–55).[22]

To define the function of the sounds, we can categorise a triad of signalling (brass), ritual lamenting (*tibicines* and *praeficae*), and spontaneous lamenting (relatives) functions. The "acoustic maximum" (Wille 1967: 71) achieved by the relief thus represents not just a sonic mishmash, but a multi-layered and balanced visual composition of the sound space of a *pompa funebris.* It remains unclear if the number of musicians depicted unveils a correlation to the volume. Besides the emotional lamentations and the calls to attention of the signalling instruments, this sound space thus also included the ritual-lamentive sounds of the *praeficae* and *tibicines*. Since mourning women

[19] For hiring musicians, cf. Vincent 2016: 247–55.

[20] Nothing of the tomb itself has survived, but another relief with similar dimensions and stylistic similarities, showing a gladiatorial fight, probably also belonged to it. Cf. Flecker 2015: 189–90, A 5. However, Hughes (2005: 79) proposes to recognize Publius Aspisius as the deceased person in the relief.

[21] On the so-called *arte plebeia*, cf. Hölscher 2012. In terms of research history, this question is relevant in view of the classification of 'Italic' pictorial elements, e.g., the *lituus*.

[22] One could also imagine that the relief adorned the tomb of a *libitinarius* representing his services by depicting the acoustic maximum for the *pompa funebris*. For similar representations on the tomb of another professional, cf. Zimmer 1982. Although this interpretation cannot be discussed here in detail, it must be stressed that it is not contradicted by the possible connection of the relief of the *pompa funebris* with the gladiatorial relief from the same tomb. The foundation of a *munus* could also be used for the burial since a *libitinarius* could either act as a sponsor organization of a *munus* himself, or could also organise a gladiatorial fight within the framework of the burials.

more often only appear on sarcophagi bearing scenes of the death of Meleagros,[23] the combination of *tibia* with *praeficae* is very rare, and is only observed elsewhere in the *collocatio* (lying-in-state of the corpse) scene from the tomb of the Haterii at the Via Appia (early 2nd century CE).[24]

2.2 The written sources

In contrast to the lack of sound in Polybios, other authors of earlier and later imperial times are more forthcoming in providing information on music in the processional context. For example, Suetonius (late 1st century CE), one of our main historical sources for the early imperial era, wrote about the discussion in the Senate on how to deal with the first emperor's death and memorial. As part of this, he also referred to musical elements of the ritual:

> "In their desire to give him a splendid funeral and honor his memory the senators so vied with one another that among many other suggestions some proposed that his cortege pass through the triumphal gate, preceded by the statue of Victory which stands in the House, while a dirge (*nenia*) was sung by children of both sexes belonging to the leading families."[25]

Those so-called *neniae* were poetic compositions to be sung before or after the *laudatio funebris*, the funeral speech, as we learn from Horace (65–8 BCE) in three short passages of his *Carmina*, as well as from the later author Festus (2nd century CE) in a short notice.[26] In contrast to Horace and Festus, the singing of the dirge by both boys and girls of the leading families of Rome, as well as the suggestion to take the route of a *pompa triumphalis* instead, demonstrates the general uncertainty as for how to deal with the first emperor's death. Obviously, in contrast to the ritual in republican times, the senators were searching for a more splendid version to honour the first emperor, and this social difference was to be emphasized through music as well. The *laudatio funebris* which was delivered by an important male member of the family, often successor or son, also plays into the soundscape of the *pompa funebris*, since it is delivered in the forum where the processional train stopped for giving praise to the deceased.[27] The speech, or the speeches, depending on the family and importance of the deceased, was commonly performed following specific poetical meters of praise and grief, and thus evoked a certain atmosphere and aural setting.[28]

Next to the vocal character of sound in the singing of the dirge and the performed speeches on the forum, other written sources report on instrumental music during the procession. Suetonius again refers in a passage of *The Deified Julius*, the first book of his biographies of the emperors,

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[23] Koch 1975: 38–47.

[24] https://arachne.dainst.org/entity/1081228 [Accessed 4 December 2024].

[25] Suet. *Aug.* 100.2 (trans. J.C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library 31).

[26] On the *nenia* as funeral songs see Horace, *Carmina* 2.1.37, 2.20.21 and 3.28.16, and Festus 155. Cf. Wille 1967: 65–9; Günther 2022: 161–3. In contrast to the *neniae*, the professional lamenting women (*praeficae*) are rarely mentioned in the written sources referring to funeral processions. Cf. TLL s.v. *praefica.*

[27] On the acoustics of the *laudatio funebris* on the Forum Romanum, see the inspiring article by Favro and Johanson 2010.

[28] Kierdorf (1980) collects many funeral speeches from republican to late ancient times and gives a profound overview of the structure, meter, and circumstances of these speeches.

how *tibia*-players together with actors ripped and burned their clothes to honour Caesar after his *pompa funebris*.[29] Indeed, the *tibia*, the double-reed instrument commonly consisting of two pipes and nowadays often mistaken as a flute, is at the heart of every religious cult in Roman times and therefore to be expected in the setting of the *pompa funebris* as well. In the oldest inscription on legal affairs, the so-called *Law of the Twelve Tables*, table ten informs us about the number of *tibicines* allowed in a funeral procession, as Cicero (106–43 BCE) testifies in *De legibus* 2.23.59.[30] Ovid (43 BCE–17 CE) also refers to this law when he points out in his *Fasti* 6.13.663–666[31] that these laws had been given in early times, after Greek freedom was curtailed by the ascendancy of the Romans, in order to stop the tradition of the funerary becoming more and more luxurious.

Pliny the Elder (died 79 CE) and Ovid both report on the meaning of the instrumental music in the context of funeral scenes of birds. Whereas Pliny describes in book ten of his great *Natural History* a *tibicen* at the funeral of a raven,[32] Ovid, in a wonderful love poem dedicated to a dead parrot (*psittacus*), underlines the use of trumpet players instead of *tibicenes* to accompany the bird's funeral procession.[33] In the transformation of the ritual to the animal world it becomes clear just how central the playing of the wind instruments *tibiae* and *tubae* was for Roman funeral rites.

In his satirical work *Pumpkinification*, Seneca provides information on the burial of the emperor Claudius (41–54 CE). Since Seneca had been exiled by Claudius in the years 41–49 CE, he deals with the emperor's death, apotheosis, and his attempt to enter heaven in a deeply satirical manner. In this short passage, he describes Claudius' funeral:

> "While they were going down by way of the Via Sacra, Mercury inquired about the meaning of the great crowd: was it Claudius' funeral? And it was the most gorgeous spectacle, with no expense spared, so that you clearly knew that a god was being buried. There was such a mob of trumpet players (*tubicinum*) and horn players (*cornicinum*) and every kind of brass instrumentalist (*omnis generis aeneatorum*) that even Claudius could hear (*audire*) it. Everyone was happy and full of joy. The people of Rome were walking around as if they were free men. Agatho and a few advocates were weeping (*plorabant*), but clearly with sincerity. Legal authorities were emerging from the shadows, pale, thin, and barely breathing, as if men just at the point of coming back to life. One of these, when he had seen the advocates putting their heads together and crying over their bad luck, went up and said: 'I kept telling you that Carnival Time would not last forever.' When Claudius saw his own funeral, he realized that he was dead. For with a great song and dance (*μεγάλωι χορικῶι*) a dirge was being sung (*nenia … anapaestis cantabatur*)."[34]

[29] Cf. Suet. *Iul.* 84.4.

[30] Cf. Cic. *Leg.* 2.23.59.

[31] Cf. Ov. *Fast.* 6.13.663–66. On the passage and the *tibicenes* in the *Law of the Twelve Tables* in Ovid and Cicero, see Vincent 2016: 199–210.

[32] Cf. Plin. *Nat.* 10.40.122.

[33] Cf. Ov. *Am.* 2.6.

[34] Sen. *Apocol.* 12.1.3 (trans. G. Schmeling, Loeb Classical Library 15). Instead of 'chorus', Schmeling translates 'dance', referring to the ideal of χορός, a dance performed by a chorus from early Greek times.

In this passage, especially the brass instruments play a significant role in the described soundscape. Seneca names trumpets (*tubae*), horns (*cornua*) and then to distort the funeral setting satirically states that there are so many playing so loudly that Claudius, already watching from above, was able to hear these sounds. The combination of instruments and their sounds are obviously portrayed as suitable to the funeral context – indeed, appropriate to burial of a god – even though the volume is satirically emphasized.[35] Furthermore, this passage combines the instrumental soundscape with the vocal one, since the dirge, sung in *anapaest*, was included in the funeral setting, obviously helping to evince a certain aural atmosphere for his readers appropriate to that of a funeral. He of course distorts the setting in a cynical way, so typical for his style, by using a bilingual tautology of a massive choir (μεγάλωι χορικῶι). In contrast to this satirical description of Seneca, Suetonius states of Claudius' burial only that he received a burial befitting the role of an emperor.[36]

Another passage revealing the character of the funeral procession soundscape comes from Petronius (died 66 CE). His *Satyricon liber* is a novel based on the main character Encolpius' brilliant report of his travels in Southern Italy with the wealthy freedman Trimalchio. The satirical nature of the text is demonstrated very well in the following passage, which revolves on the excessive volume of a horn player:

> "The whole thing was absolutely sickening, when Trimalchio, now deep in repulsive drunkenness, ordered fresh entertainment, horn players (*cornicines*), to be brought into the dining room. And propping himself up on a heap of pillows, he stretched out along the edge of the couch and said: 'Imagine I'm dead. Play something pretty.' The horn players all together blasted out a funeral march (*funebri*). One of the horn players, a slave of the undertaker, who was the most respectable man among them, blew his horn so loudly that he roused the whole neighborhood. So the night sentinels who were patrolling the area round about, thinking that the house of Trimalchio was on fire, suddenly broke down the door, and with water and axes began to create a disturbance to the full extent of their rights."[37]

In this passage, Petronius reports about a banquet hosted by Trimalchio, a former slave who became a rich *homo novus*. To entertain his guests, Trimalchio pretends to be dead and asks the musicians, a group of horn players, to play at his funeral. He himself lies down in the specific pose typical for a funeral procession (stretched out on cushions) and the horn players play funeral music (*funebri*). Petronius states satirically that the undertaker was the most respectable of the guests,

[35] This aspect is misinterpreted in Schrumpf 2006: 39–40, who takes loudness and noise as the typical soundscape for funeral processions.

[36] Cf. Suet. *Claud.* 45: "He was buried with regal pomp and enrolled among the gods" (trans. J.C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library 31).

[37] Petron. 78.6 (trans. G. Schmeling, Loeb Classical Library 15). Very commonly, Schmeling mistranslates the instrument here: instead of a horn he names a trumpet since the signalling function of the trumpet obviously came to his mind rather than the horn. The same applies to the "funeral march": this demonstrates excellently the concept of an imagined soundscape from nowadays, like the one we introduced in the picture of the European train station, inadvertently superimposed on ancient sources.

yet his slave is the one of the musicians overdoing his job. Usually the undertaker (*libitinarius*) has musical slaves to be rented for the funerals.[38] In the passage shown, the duality of sound reception for the sound "horn" becomes clear: the instrument's sound might be appropriate to the context of funeral, but it can also be a sound of signal. Obviously to underline the comic element of the passage, the musician overdoes his efforts so much that the fire brigade could misinterpret the immoderate blows of his horn as a signal of danger.[39] If we "clean" this description from the humoresque element, it becomes clear that the funeral music was to be played in a rather serious, decorous manner.

A final sonic element present at Roman funerals comes from the *Lex Libitinae* from Puteoli which dates to Augustan time. It refers to a ritual needed to be performed to dispel the negative influence of pollution (*miasma*), which went so strongly together with death and burial in Roman ideas, from around the corpse. The ritual refers to the *tintinnabula*, little bells, that were to be played constantly when the corpse is laid out to keep evil spirits away.[40]

To summarize the information on music and sounds presented in miscellany of texts dated to the early imperial period, which extended from historiography to satirical novels to inscriptions, the *pompa funebris* was accompanied by funeral music played on wind instruments such as *tibiae*, *tubae* and *cornua*. *Tintinnabula* escorted the body musically to the forum in order to dispel the death-pollution. Before or after the *laudatio funebris*, the *neniae* are sung by a variety of voices, depending on the setting and the social status of the deceased person. Although we have a distinction between the moving portions, which were accompanied by instruments, and the stationary portions, defined by vocal performances, of the procession, it must be imagined that both musical parts defined the soundscape for the ancient listener. Since the texts do not always highlight both, often only one part – the funeral music or the dirge – still the aural imagination of single musical elements defines the soundscape *pompa funebris*.

3 Conclusion

In the foregoing investigation of the soundscape of the *pompa funebris*, the literary and iconographical sources of the late republican/early imperial period contributed different but complementary results for this particular context of sound. Information from three main categories were recovered: First, the sound categories of the procession, second, the sonority of the sounds at the procession, and third, the function of the sounds within the specific genre and funerary soundscape.

In terms of sound categories, the source materials differentiate between a mixture of voices and brass/wind instruments. The relief of Amiternum clearly depicts female mourners, whereas these do not play a central role in the literary texts describing the procession. Conversely, the sing-

[38] Wickert 1926: 114 (*libitinarii*). On musicians-for-hire and contract musicians, see Vincent 2016: 247–54.

[39] Cf. Schrumpf (2006: 40) interprets this passage towards the differences in musical quality within the musical slaves.

[40] *Lex Libitiniae Puteolana* col. II, 14: *cadavera erunt cum tintinnabulo extrahere debebit* (Hinard and Dumont 2003: 122). Cf. Bodel 2000: 146–7 (on the corpse-dragger's bell and the apotropaic function of bells).

ers of the *neniae* only appear in the texts, and here only in reference to the burials of noble Romans and the emperors. Interestingly, the *neniae* can be sung by both boys and girls, depending on the family status as well as the social status of the deceased. Both text and image portray brass instruments, such as trumpets and horn, as part of the procession. These obviously played a central role in defining the soundscape of the *pompa funebris*. The *tibiae* were well-known instruments at the *pompa funebris*, most notably when their number is restricted to ten per funeral in the *Law of the Twelve Tables*. For the sonority of the soundscape of the *pompa funebris*, this is reflected in the number of players depicted and the testimonies of volume. The Amiternum relief shows numerous *tibicines* in contrast to the horn players and trumpeters. Interestingly, the *lituus*, a specific local instrument of Central Italy and mainly Etruria, is depicted. Within the literary texts, volume can become a factor for transformative, even satirical, misunderstanding: If the horn players play too loud, the funerary soundscape can be distorted to another one, and the horn-playing assumes the function 'signal' instead of 'funeral music'. Finally, the function of the sounds of the *pompa funebris* is also reflected in both the iconographical and the literary tradition. The expression of dirge is central not only to the female mourners and female professional lamenters, but also in the singing of the *neniae*. Furthermore, the expression of honour for the deceased and his family is a central function. It is reflected in the solemnity and reverence that was expected of funerary music. Another central function of the sound must be seen in contrast to the audience: by taking a central route through urban Rome, the procession creates publicity which is mainly sustained through music. The music functions as an announcement, a signal of the arriving procession, and represents thus an act of communication central to the ritual. Especially the *neniae*, being sung at a certain stop at the forum, create a soundscape specific to the occasion. Here, we can detect a mixture of brass instruments, playing solemnly while marching, and the voices of the choir of children or adults who sing the composed *neniae* as hymns of the deeds of the deceased person to frame and support the laudation speech. Through the public remembrance of the family's achievements, a deep dismay is evoked in the audience in order to provoke collective lament. To sum up, male and female voices – the former only singing sweetly, the latter both singing sweetly and also lamenting – complemented by trumpeters and horn players playing solemnly, defined the soundscape of the Roman funeral procession. Thus, the *pompa funebris* was defined by musical instruments and human voices, and was clearly audible for the ancient listener as a central ritual in Rome and further Roman cities.

The methods proposed in this article, especially the medial transformation within the preserved genera, open up a broader perspective on the soundscape preserved in the texts and the relief itself. By combining a detailed analysis of the presented sources, we could demonstrate how the complementary evidence from the visual as well as in the literary sources combine to form a picture of the *pompa funebris* as it was expected by the ancient listener of late republican and early imperial times. By bringing together the variety of music, noises, and sounds that clearly defined the *pompa funebris* for the ancient ear, we were able to unmute this specific musical ritual just a little bit more for our modern ears.

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