

Musicology and Egyptology. A new perspective in Veneto district (Italy)

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The project

This poster is a short overview of a research dedicated to investigate the presence of Egyptian musical instruments in several collections and museums of the Veneto District. It was born by several researches conducted by the EgittoVeneto team and the TeMA project.

The project EgittoVeneto, coordinated by the University of Padua (prof. Paola Zanovello) and Ca' Foscari – Venice (prof. Emanuele Ciampini) has worked since 2008 to collect the entire Egyptian and Egyptianizing heritage preserved in over 30 museums of the Veneto district in Italy.

The research has involved several institutions such as museums, the superintendences, several cultural foundations and associations of the Italian district. In addition, this year the team has started a collaboration with the TeMA project, directed by prof. Paola Dessì, dedicated to reconstructing the Musical evidence of Antiquity in Triveneto.

The musicological evidence is just a small part of the over 2.000 Egyptian and Egyptianizing artifacts collected in a database by the project. However, it is fundamental to understand the strict relation between music and the study of the past, since it was a particular theme studied by XVIII century's explorers as Giovanni Miani, who devoted himself to the analysis of ancient music, or explored by researchers as Carlo Anti, director of Italian Archaeologic Mission in Egypt since 1928 to 1936.

Through the analysis of ancient Egyptian artifacts connected to music we are also able to analyse the arrival of Egyptianizing cults in Roman "Decima Regio", as happened in Altino or Verona.

It is also possible to reconstruct how the ancient Egyptian imaginary and objects have influenced Contemporary music, as shown by Verdi's *Aida*, performed every year in the the great amphitheater of Arena in Verona.

The EgittoVeneto project: methods and practises

The EgittoVeneto project was born in 2008 from a very fruitful cooperation between Egyptologists, Classical Archaeologists, Engineers, Digital Heritage archaeologists, Curators, the Superintendencies and the technical professionals of the Veneto District. It is coordinated by the two universities of Venice and Padua – and funded by the CaRiPaRo foundation, the Veneto District and several others public and private institutions.

The aim is to identify Egyptian and Egyptizing materials preserved in over 30 Museums of the Veneto District: this research has acquired greater strength and consistency over time, reaching the cataloging of over 2000 objects, involving museums of the most varied typology, from the small Antiquarium of Costabissara (VI) to Civic and National Museums such as the ones in Venice, Verona, Este, Padua, Adria, Altino and Rovigo.

The project has worked to study this huge heritage and its connection with Padua and Venice, while it has also promoted Italian and International exhibitions, congresses, conferences, lectures, events to make this huge Egyptian heritage visible to the public and well known to scholars.

The TeMA project: Musical Evidence of Antiquity in Triveneto

The TeMA project (Testimonianze Musicali dell'Antichità in Triveneto), which was set up by the Department of Cultural Heritage of the University of Padua in October 2020 aims at valuing the musical evidence of the Antiquity by mapping, taking a census, and cataloguing the musical instruments located in the museums of the Triveneto (Veneto, Trentino, Friuli-Venezia Giulia), in Northern Italy, investigating the contaminations between the different musical cultures and traditions of this area in antiquity.

TeMA is an innovative multi- and interdisciplinary project that was born from the dialogue and the meeting of the skills of musicologists, archaeologists, physicists and engineers within the Department of Cultural Heritage of Padua with the involvement and collaboration of national and international colleagues from other University and Research Institutions. The project aims to map and enhance the material musical evidence of Egyptian, Greek, Pre-Roman and Roman cultural traditions preserved in the museums and collections of the Veneto, Trentino and Friuli-Venezia Giulia regions. In particular, the aim is to recognise the status of material and immaterial musical heritage for this underestimated cultural legacy, which is widely disseminated in numerous archaeological museums and other institutions in Italy and Europe. The project dialogues and collaborates with the French-Italian project RIMAnt (Repertorium Instrumentorum Musicorum Antiquorum).

Musical Records in Veneto

From 2008 to 2014 several campaigns were realized to catalogue Egyptian and Egyptizing finds preserved in over 30 museums located in Veneto in the District online database. The focus was to create a great repository to be used to improve selected researches in the various fields of knowledge. During this work the team found:

- Musical instruments (mainly sistra, directly coming from Egypt or possibly linked to Roman-Egyptian cults);
- Iconographic elements referred to music or musical instruments (such as the image of a Bes dancing with a tambourine);
- Written sources recalling musicians (such as inscriptions, formulae on shabtis...).

EgittoVeneto and the TeMA project are currently studying these records: the aim is to improve knowledge about the Egyptian and Egyptizing ancient music and its legacy in the present culture.

Silence, as the starting point for every sound. Egyptian music in the Roman world

Most part of musical artifacts referred to the excavations fields in Pre-Roman and Roman sites in Veneto are from Verona and Altino: both places were connected with the presence of Isis' cults and its Roman temples for the Egyptian deities. In Altino it is possible to see an image of Isis shaking the sistrum, together with Serapis, Anubis and Harpocrates. An image of Isis standing with the sistrum is present in a relief, currently preserved in Venice, coming from the Roman Iseum in Campo Marzio (Rome). It is important to point out that even the image of Harpocrates, recalling people to silence, is everywhere present in temples and small votive objects referred to Roman private cult inside the houses: even silence is a part of music to be performed in a chosen place, such as a small shrine in the house, or on the depicted or carved images in the temples.

Explorers and music. Giovanni Miani's story in his anniversary

Moreover, the passion for Egyptian music is well expressed in his proper journals by Giovanni Miani, an explorer from Rovigo who died in 1872 along the Nile River searching for the river's springs. This is year his anniversary was celebrated with dedicated researches and exhibitions between Rovigo and Venice. He started his experience writing a treatise dedicated to ancient music seen as a universal musical history: Miani studied at the conservatories of Bologna, Milan, Naples, Paris and Spain, then composing a hymn and the piece "A tournament in Tolemeide", which was published in Venice in 1843. He travelled for 20 years to reconstruct the strict relation between musical instruments and traditions. After this experience, he became an explorer, leaving all this work uncompleted and going to Egypt, where he reported his discoveries about local music in his journal, keeping his passion connected with his explorations in the field.

Researches about music in Graeco-Roman Egypt. Carlo Anti and the Egyptian Pan flute at the University of Padua

In the Museum of Archaeological Sciences and Arts' collection is preserved a fragile Pan flute, made by 14 pipes, found by Carlo Anti's team in Egypt. It is probably coming from Tebtynis, as recorded by Evaristo Breccia to Anti in a letter, preserved in Anti's archive. It has been dated back to the Bizantine period thanks to a set of non-invasive analyses, which are based on 3D scanning and materials chemistry, realized during the project "Archaeology and Virtual Acoustics", led by Paola Zanovello and Giovanni De Poli.

Carlo Anti was professor of Archaeology at the University of Padua since 1922. He became Director of the Italian Archeological Mission in Egypt since 1928 to 1936. This object came to Padua probably with the crates dedicated to papyri of the 1935 expedition. With a virtual reconstruction led by Giuseppe Salemi and implemented by the engineers of De Poli and Canazza's team, it is possible to make it play again. Moreover, thanks to dr. Alessandra Menegazzi, the museum curator, it is possible to look at the flute in an innovative display realized by the project to recreate perception and sound of this unique Pan flute.

The Music legacy. Influences on the Italian music and scenography

Egypt has always been a place to draw inspiration, to let oneself be transported through monuments, landscape, perfumes and music in a context different from the European one. The reconstruction of the Egyptian musical landscape is an element of research for Pino Casarini, born in 1897 and died in 1972 in Verona. He collaborated with the Opera Arena of Verona in the creation of sketches for the set designs of Verdi's *Aida*: it is the main opera in the summer opera season. In these sketches, sound and silence are both present in an exotic and mysterious environment, full of past memories, colors and present life.

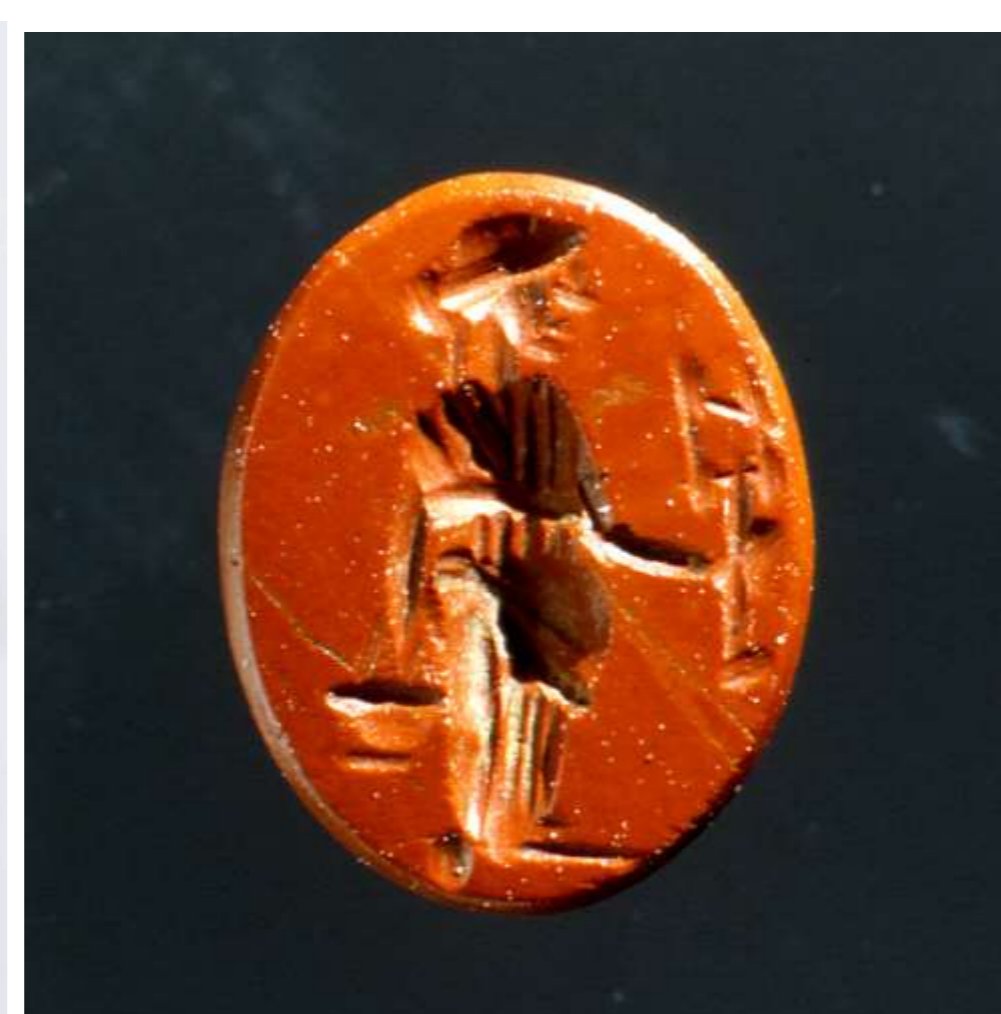


Fig. 1 – A sistrum from the Accademia dei Concordi Collection – Rovigo, Late period, n. inv. ACCE00478 (courtesy of the Veneto District and the Accademia dei Concordi) – EgittoVeneto cataloguing

Fig. 2 – The image of Isis with a sistrum on a jewel (courtesy of the Veneto District and the Archaeological Museum in the Roman theatre, Verona), II century AD – EgittoVeneto cataloguing

Fig. 3 – The image of Bes with feather crown, caudate shaking a tambourine (courtesy of the Veneto District and the Civic Museums of Padua), Ptolemaic period – EgittoVeneto cataloguing

Fig. 4 – The image of a chantress (courtesy of the Veneto District and the Civic Museums of Padua), IIIrd intermediate period – XXI Dynasty – EgittoVeneto cataloguing

Fig. 5 – The website from the Veneto District dedicated to Egypt with Pino Casarini's webpage (courtesy of the Veneto District). Here a set design dated back to 1964. <http://egittoveneto.veneto.it/mimisi/EgittoVeneto/>