

Porphyry's Commentary on Ptolemy's Harmonics: A Greek Text and Annotated Translation

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Porphyry's Commentary, the only surviving ancient commentary on a technical text, is not merely a study of Ptolemy's Harmonics. It includes virtually free-standing philosophical essays on epistemology, metaphysics, scientific methodology, aspects of the Aristotelian categories and the relations between Aristotle's views and Plato's, and a host of briefer comments on other matters of wide philosophical interest. For musicologists it is widely recognised as a treasury of quotations from earlier treatises, many of them otherwise unknown; but Porphyry's own reflections on musical concepts (for instance notes, intervals and their relation to ratios, quantitative and qualitative conceptions of pitch, the continuous and discontinuous forms of vocal movement, and so on) and his snapshots of contemporary music-making have been undeservedly neglected. This volume presents the first English translation and a revised Greek text of the Commentary, with an introduction and notes designed to assist readers in engaging with this important and intricate work.

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About the Author
Andrew Barker is Emeritus Professor of Classics at the University of Birmingham. He has been researching in the field of ancient Greek music and musical theory since the 1970s, and has published six books (including The Science of Harmonics in Classical Greece (Cambridge University Press, 2007) and a great many articles on these topics. He is the Founding President of the International Society for the Study of Greek and Roman Music (Moisa), and Editor of the journal Greek and Roman Musical Studies.

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