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**UNIVERSITY  
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We recommend that the thesis  
prepared under our supervision by

**TRAVIS GENE SALLEY**

entitled

**THE FUNCTION OF MUSIC IN GALLIC AND ROMAN WARFARE**

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**BACHELOR OF ARTS-MUSIC MAJOR**

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May, 2013

University of Nevada, Reno

**The Function of Music in Gallic and Roman Warfare**

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by

**TRAVIS GENE SALLEY**

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## Preface

### Musicology-A State of Affairs

What is musicology? Guido Adler, a pioneer of musicology, said it was the knowledge of notations, musical forms, and the investigation of the laws of art in different periods<sup>1</sup>. While this definition is broadly accurate, musicology in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century as a field tended to celebrate a very narrow repertory. Today, scholars generally refer to musicology as the study of the history of music in western culture, and musicologists typically focus on the “canon,” which includes Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, three of its most renowned composers. Musicologists have primarily been interested in the technical characteristics associated with specific compositions and performance practices, reinforcing what scholars have deemed as worthy of study.<sup>2</sup> Music without written notation is rarely studied.

Musicologist Susan McClary argues that the technical approach to musicology excludes the interrogation of the cultural parameters of music and that when the study of music concerns itself only with “purely musical procedures,” there is no concern for, “gender, narratives, politics: just chords forms and pitch class sets.”<sup>3</sup> In essence, the primary inquiry of musicology is concerned with musical conventions over cultural implications. McClary’s frustrations are summed up by philosopher Van Meter Ames:

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<sup>1</sup> Guido Adler, “The Scope, Method, and Aim of Musicology (1885): An English Translation with a Historico-Analytical Commentary,” trans. Erica Mugglestone, *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 13, (1981): 8.

<sup>2</sup> Miriam Cihodariu, “A Rough Guide to Musical Anthropology,” *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology* 2, no. 2.1 (Spring 2011): 184.

<sup>3</sup> Susan McClary, *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 3.

“When western thinkers have found art important, they have been formalists, seeing the value of art as divorced from other and lesser values of life... They belong to a school of art for art’s sake.”<sup>4</sup>

What is the cause of this problematic approach? Musicologist Joseph Kerman argues that the study of music is often limited to scholars’ own national and religious interest. For example, Kerman argues that an English musicologist would tend to study Handel and Purcell over traditional or ancient English music because the music of Handel is believed to embody what English music “is” and is associated with English identity. Inevitably, a nationalistic approach peripheralises the study of “other” music, which creates a hierarchy of musical study within musicology. Additionally, he argues that musicologists are typically of the middle class and the study of western art music is a manifestation of middle class values. The middle class has a tendency to nurture traditions that they themselves can identify with<sup>5</sup>. Kerman’s arguments may explain why it has taken so long for there to be an interrogation of the normative practices of musicology.

Musicologist Ruth Solie argues that it is evident that composers, compositions, and critics are looked at too frequently for historical evidence, thereby missing information about lived musical experience.<sup>6</sup> She also argues that the experiences people have with music and the belief of its uses and powers should be part of musicological

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<sup>4</sup> Meter van Ames. “Aesthetic Values in the East and West,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 19, no. 1 (Autumn 1960): 3.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 36.

<sup>6</sup> Solie A. Ruth. *Music in Other Worlds* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 2.

inquiry.<sup>7</sup> Solie highlights the narrow and isolated framework of the traditional approach of musicology and calls for a more all-encompassing methodology.

Fortunately, over the last 30 years feminist discourse has led to new inquiries in music. McClary states that, “Feminist criticism has opened the field to the study of genders, sexualities, bodies, emotions, and subjectivities in . . . [Western, non-western,] ancient, and contemporary music.”<sup>8</sup> The interrogation of gender is about the interrogation of power structures. This type of discourse is fundamental to how musicologists began to rethink their methodology.

Since most music scholars (in the west) are typically products of a western mindset and are highly trained musicians in the western style, it is inevitable that some degree of musicology will be viewed through the lens of western ideology. However, only when scholars interrogate their own framework can there then be a new understanding of music and criticism. Cihodariu advocates this idea when she says “we must protect and promote the insufficiently appreciated music of the outer-western spaced, which is considered by the west inferior or a corruption of art”<sup>9</sup>. In terms of the musicological perspective, ancient music has traditionally fallen outside the realm of musicology. This paper aims to interrogate Gallic and Roman music from a musicological perspective.

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<sup>7</sup> Ruth. “Music in Other Worlds”, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Susan McClary, “Women and Music on the Verge of the New Millennium,” *Signs* 25, no. 4 (Summer, 2000): 1285.

<sup>9</sup> Cihodariu, “A Rough Guide”, 185.

## Introduction

The Gallic wars were a set of military campaigns by Julius Caesar against Gaul from 58-50BC. While Caesar said the campaigns were preemptive military action, scholars generally believe that these wars were truly launched in order to pay off his debts from the triumvirate and solidify his political force. After the military campaign, Rome earned modern day Belgium, France, British Isles, Switzerland, and solidified Caesar's position as a political force in Rome<sup>10</sup>.

On the whole, Gallic culture was not that different from place to place within the Gaul's territory, which included: modern day Belgium, France, Luxemburg, Switzerland, north Italy, and regions in Germany and Netherlands. While much of the historical accounts of the Roman-Gallic battles are far apart such as the Crossing of the Rubicon, to the Invasion of the British Isles, the warfare rituals of the Gauls seem remarkably consistent.

The Gallic Wars were important because it is virtually the only known evidence of Gaul that scholars currently have. Greek and Roman historians documented the campaign in great detail as it significantly expanded the territory of the Roman Empire. Although not likely the intent of historians to document Gallic culture (they were more concerned about documenting the success of Roman military campaigns), they are nonetheless the most important evidence that exists for Gallic culture and are critical resources for this paper.

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<sup>10</sup> Caesar, *The Conquest of Gaul*, trans. S.A. Handford (London, UK: Penguin Publishing 1951), Introduction.

According to McClary, “The power of music resides in its ability to shape the ways we experience our bodies, emotions, subjectivities, desires, and social relations.”<sup>11</sup> As stated before, the traditional approach to musicology is not able to fully contextualize these ideas. Understanding the practical and cultural parameters of music will be key to realizing the larger role of music in Roman and Gallic society and warfare.

The circumstances surrounding music in the ancient world were much bloodier than one might expect, especially during the Gallic Wars. War was a powerful driving force in the development of music in Gaul and Rome. Music was a critical communication device for the way militaries fought and moved tactically. Horns and trumpets were as important as swords and arrows when it came to victory. Additionally, music was used in rituals that preceded battle and was considered a vital mechanism in fighting the enemy, whether it was to predict the future, become blessed before battle, or to ceremoniously decapitate an opponent for the sake of intimidation. My project will examine how music facilitated violence during the Roman-Gallic Wars.

Much of what is known about the music and culture in ancient Gaul is from Roman historians, who were trying to document the success of the invasion of the Roman Empire in the Gallic region. What is striking is the interrelationship between the music of the Roman army and the music of the ancient Gauls. Of course, this relationship begs the question of how valid these observations are, as the Romans did not hold these “barbarians” in very high regard. However, Roman observations can still lend important clues to the mechanics of music on the battlefield.

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<sup>11</sup> McClary, *Conventional Wisdom* 6-7.

Chapter 1 of my thesis will deal with how music was used in a societal and ritualistic context in Rome and Gaul. These musical rituals were part of a system that helped perpetuate power of the state and musical instruments were an important part of that process. Additionally, the music that was used in these rituals was an important expression of cultural values and beliefs. Societal music practice lays the foundation to the way music was used in warfare.

In Chapter 2, I will discuss the functionality of the musical instruments before, during, and after battle. Music was used to intimidate, motivate, and coordinate the movements of soldiers on the battlefield. In other words, music was a key player in the brutality of the Roman-Gallic conflict. Understanding the role of music and violence can help scholars understand the true nature of how military conflicts were fought and won. Also, the instruments offer clues to the understanding of Gallic people as they were a direct reflection of the ideas about music. For example, the carnyx, an ancient Celtic instrument, has been recently reconstructed, creating a new space for scholarship. John Kenny, a Carnyx historian and performer believes that the instrument is performed by the way the Gauls spoke their language<sup>12</sup>.

Modern scholarship has shed new light on the psychological effects of music on soldiers who are on the battlefield today.<sup>13</sup> Understanding this analysis in the context of this paper can give scholars new insight into the psychology of our ancient predecessors.

Military music on both sides of the conflict fulfilled many functions in war. The rituals that were used speak more to the function of music in culture, rather than to

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<sup>12</sup> John Kenny, "The Reconstruction of the Deskford Carnyx," Carnyx & Co., <http://www.carnyxscotland.co.uk/about/reconstruction> (accessed December 15, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Pieslack, Interview with Colin Paterson. *BBC Radio*. BBC. July, 20 2009.

aesthetic concerns. Because of the brutality of many these rituals, what can be said about the music of this time period? The manifestation of music through violence certainly raises some questions about the nature of early Gallic culture. Examining the construction and functionality of the instruments, and the rituals used in warfare new light of the musical experience in war and a deeper understanding of ancient culture.

# Chapter 1

## Normative Musical Practice in Rome and Gaul

The role of music in Roman and Gallic society was not wholly unconnected to music on the battlefield. Because of the high value placed on soldiering and warfare, music education in Roman and Gallic societies taught music use in warfare. Both societies considered music important to their success on the battlefield. Understanding how music was used in society contextualizes musical use on the battlefield. Understanding the performance of music in a societal context lays the foundation for inquiry in a military context.

### Roman Music and Ritual

During the first Roman Invasion of England (circa 55 BC) Cicero, who was traveling with Julius Caesar, made a remark about the Island in a letter to his friend Atticus:

“The result of the British war is a source of anxiety... It is known that there isn't a pennyweight of silver on that island, nor any hope of booty except from slaves, among whom I don't suppose you can expect any instructed in literature or music.”

Cicero demonstrated that music was valued by the Romans not only in themselves, but as an admirable trait in their adversaries.

What the Romans valued in their music was often derived from Roman superstitions about their instruments. There was a fraternity of tuba players called the *Scola Tubilum* and they would perform a ceremony called the *Tubilustrium* yearly

throughout Roman History. The purpose of this ceremony was to properly prepare instruments for use in military parades and religious ceremonies. This ritual was conducted when the moon started to wane. During this time, the tubicines<sup>14</sup> would play through their instruments very loudly in order to protect themselves against bad omens. This ritualistic ceremony purified the instruments and was a necessary step to use the instruments before religious ceremonies and war parades.<sup>15</sup>

These types of rituals played a part in the state perpetuating power over the participants. Anthropologist Tom Dillenu argues, “[participants] have presumed passive acquiescence on the part of commoners and overemphasized the extent to which autonomous communities were molded by social processes to become part of a hierarchic collective.”<sup>16</sup> In essence, he is arguing that these types of rituals helped perpetuate power structures within the state.

In the case of the *Tubilustrium*, the musical instruments were considered not merely musical instruments by the Romans, but rather tools of the state that were critical to help maintain and perpetuate power. Because war parades were meant to be a celebration of the success and might of Rome, the use of musical instruments were part of a ritualistic process that was necessary to not only propagate power within the Roman people, but over their adversaries as well. War parades are meant to project power. Instruments were a critical part in projecting that power, especially when musical instruments appear to have a special relationship with the gods. This notion reinforces the idea held by Romans that they were a superior people to all outsiders.

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<sup>14</sup> Tuba players

<sup>15</sup> Pat Southern, *The Roman Army: A Social and Institutional History* (Oxford, UK: Oxford Press, 2007), 159.

<sup>16</sup> Tom Dillehay, “Social Landscape and Ritual Pause,” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 4, no.2 (June 2004): 240.

## Gallic Music and Ritual

The first documented musicians in Gaul were called bards<sup>17</sup>. The bards were considered the keepers of knowledge of Gallic culture. Bards would sing, read poetry, and moderate important religious ceremonies. Bards were selected from the aristocracy, which was mostly composed of lawyers, teachers, and priests. Bards were present throughout Gallic culture, and were considered only second in authority to the King.<sup>18</sup> Bards were frequent participants in Gallic warfare, and their chanting, poetry, and sacrifices were as much a part of their day-to-day lives as their participation on the battlefield.

Bard training is considered one of the first forms of collegiate education in Europe. Bards learned at least 300 poetic meters, 250 primary stories and 100 secondary stories by memory. They also knew the secret bardic alphabets. There are also reports of interesting tradition of satire and lampoons. A Bard could use this satire power to inflict loss of reputation, sickness, or even death. For example, There is a popular story where a famous bard, Nede, had unjustly satirized King Caier with these words:

*Evil, death and a short life to Caier  
May spears of battle slay Caier  
The rejected of the land and the earth is Caier  
Beneath the mounds and the rocks be Caier.*<sup>19</sup>

As the legend goes, Caier developed three colorful blisters on his face – a crimson one called ‘disgrace’, a green one called ‘blemish’ and a white one called ‘defect’. Because a

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<sup>17</sup> Although similar, bards from Gaul are different than the more familiar medieval bards. Gallic bards held considerable power and influence in society as opposed to commoner status associated with medieval bards.

<sup>18</sup> Ann Skea, “Ted Hughes and the British Bardic Tradition”(Symposium Paper, University of Cairo, Egypt, 1994).

<sup>19</sup> J. Matthews, *Taliesin* (London, UK: The Aquarian Press, 1991), 78-80, 120-123, 128.

Celtic King had to be blemish-free, Caier was forced into exile where he eventually died of shame.<sup>20</sup> This legend is important because it illustrates the power and influence bards had in Gallic culture and it helps contextualize why the bards were so critical to music during war, which is discussed in the next chapter.

### **Percussion and Dance**

Percussion and dance were critical forms of artistic expression to the Gauls, though it is important to address some misconceptions about the role of percussion in warfare.

Although drums are the first instrument most would associate with music and warfare, drums and percussion are by far the least discussed in Gallic warfare by Roman historians. The fact that the use of the drums by the Saracens in the 15<sup>th</sup> century are widely considered to be the introduction of battle drums to western Europe further suggests that drums were not a part of the Gallic arsenal; however, some percussion was used.

The first mention of the Bodhrán, the most iconic instrument in Celtic culture, (Gauls were the immediate ancestors to the Celts), was not until the 15th century. This is interesting because it is the most well-known Gallic percussion instrument. However, it is likely that a precursor to the Bodhrán existed. According to the historian Louis Lampre, “[Gallic] musicians played on flute-like pipes, stringed instruments, and little drums.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Louise Lamprey, *Children of Ancient Gaul* (New York, NY: Biblio and Tannen Booksellers and Publishers Inc., 1966), 146.

Percussion typically has been associated with dance, especially in Gallic culture. Gabriel Sepena, a Celtic historian, argues that the modern day dances from San Leonardo and Casajeros are remnants of an ancient Gallic war parade. Referred to as the Cetra, it is a dance where participants rhythmically strike each other's poles, symbolic of sword play. The participants also strike the floor and their small shield.<sup>22</sup> What is most striking about these examples is they used outside of an active military conflict. These examples suggests that the Gauls used a more cultural as oppose to a military perspective of drums and rhythm.

Music was part of the standard Roman education and was taught by Roman teachers; however, there is one case where the Romans used Gallic teachers for singing and dancing. During one particular Roman episode, when Rome was purging all foreigners from the city, Ammianus Marcellinus, a Roman soldier and a preeminent Roman historian, said in reference to Gallic teachers, "At last we have reached such a state business....foreigners were driven neck and crop from the city, and those who practiced liberal arts were thrust out... while three thousand dancing girls without being questioned, remained here with their choruses, and an equal number of dancing masters."<sup>23</sup>The reluctance to purge music and dance teachers illustrate a strong respect the Romans had for the Gallic teachers and their subject matter.

Music of the Romans and the Gauls was important as a way of implementing power structures over their own people. This notion of power is important because it was

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<sup>22</sup> Gabriel Sopena, "Celtiberian Ideologies and Religion," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Celtic Studies* 6, (May 2005): 347-410.

<sup>23</sup> Marcellinus Ammianus, *Rerum Gestarum*, trans. John C. Rolfe (Philadelphia, PA, 1935) 14.6.19.

also used on the battle field to exert power on not only their own soldiers, but on each other's armies through violence.

## Chapter 2

### Music and Warfare

#### Pre-Battle

Motivation for combat can be understood as “the impulse that compels the Soldier to face the enemy on the battlefield” or “the determination that induces Soldiers to fight, in spite of the adversities and the inherent dangers of war.”<sup>24</sup>

The Gauls and the Romans shared two concepts prior to engaging in battle: motivating their motivating men and intimidating the enemy. The psychological effect of music on the battle-field helped shaped the course of battle. Men used war cries to motivate and inspire their men, not unlike many sporting events today, where athletes yell and shout in order to focus their mind and to increase their motivation. But soldiers would also taunt, demoralize, and dehumanize their enemies. There is no doubt that this type of rhetorical violence would affect the psychology of soldiers on the battlefield. I argue that it is much easier to beat an enemy that is terrified, and that dehumanizing them makes the process of killing much easier. These processes were expressed musically through the Romans and Gauls and were critical to help shape the foundation for the coming battle.

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<sup>24</sup> Gal Reuvan, “The Motivation for Serving in the Israeli Defense Forces: In the Mirror of Time,” *Strategic Assessment* 2, no. 3 (December 1999): 2.

## **Roman Chanting**

Marcellinus describes the back and forth banter between the Roman army and Gauls. He said that prior to battle, the Romans would attempt to intimidate the Gauls by conducting the *barritus*, which means “the sound of an elephants cry.” This chanting “thus roused themselves to a mighty strength”.<sup>25</sup> The pitch and sound grew from very low to very high in unison. The Gauls in response would “chant the glories of their fore fathers with wild shouts”<sup>26</sup> from which the first skirmishes started. The excitement of a crescendo war cry is effective a tool for motivation for not only today’s sport players but for the ancient warriors as well.

## **Gallic Chanting**

Chanting was the most common musical occurrence in Gallic warfare. Chanting has been well-documented by Roman historians prior to and after battle. It was typical that the Gauls cry “the glories” of their forefathers. It is not clear whether it was unison or not. It is likely that they sang about their individual ancestors all at the same time. This is due to the repeated reference to this ritual as being a hoarse sound like a cacophony, or a “discordant clamor of different languages.”<sup>27</sup>

The Gallic wars with Julius Caesar left an important legacy and Roman fascination with Gallic culture. Greek and Roman historians documented Caesar’s conquest and the Gallic culture quite closely.

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<sup>25</sup> Marcellinus Ammianus, *Rerum Gestarum* 31.7.11.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

The Greek historian, Diodorus, wrote a detailed historical account of the Gallic wars in his work, *Library of History*. He says prior to battle, the Gaul's would taunt their opponents and call out the bravest men into combat<sup>28</sup>. If a challenger accepted, the Gauls broke out into song to sing and to celebrate their ancestors and their valiant deeds in battle. If the Gauls won their challenge, they would remove the heads of their opponents and place them on their horse.

Gauls signing collectively about ancestor's role in battle unified them as a single identity. Much like today's military, where army men often sing songs of their unit and their glory, these songs serve to unify them and to create an *Esprit de Corps*.

Another brutal ritual was documented by Diodorus in great detail,

“they devote to death a human being and plunge a dagger into him in the region above the diaphragm, and when the stricken victim has fallen they read the future from the manner of his fall and from the twitching of his limbs, as well as from the gushing of the blood...And it is a custom of theirs that no one should perform a sacrifice without a “philosopher”; for ...these men and their chanting poets, when two armies approach each other in battle with swords drawn and spears thrust forward, these men step forth between them and cause them to cease..., as though having cast a spell over certain kinds of wild beasts. In this way, even among the wildest barbarians, does passion give place before wisdom, and Ares stands in awe of the Muses<sup>29</sup>.”

The horrific and barbaric scene of this bloody ritual is another form of a manifestation of power that the druids had on their own people and the Roman army. It gives the allure that much like the Romans; the Gaul's had their gods on their side. The motivation and inspiration that was drawn from the brutal sacrifice of their people would have been quite a sight to behold, as it was self-motivation and intimidation of the Romans.

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<sup>28</sup> Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, trans. C.H. Oldfather (Los Angeles, CA: Harvard University Press, 1993) Book V Ch.24-32.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

These spectacles would have been performed in front of thousands of soldiers. The psychological effects were likely tremendous. The sight of comrades beaten in one-on-one battle with another would have been devastating to morale. Additionally, the use of these horrific ceremonies designed to invoke the spirits and to scare the enemy is an important tool in these wars. This is especially true for the Romans, who were highly suspect of the Gauls and continued to use the word “barbarians” to describe them. They were inherently distrustful of them and considered them to be monsters, which certainly explains why they would be, to some degree, “frightened” of the Gauls. Additionally, if Gallic warriors were willing to brutally murder their own for war, what would they do to a captured Roman soldier? Music and ritual were powerful weapons.

### **The Carnyx**

One of the iconic instruments of the early Gauls was the carnyx. The carnyx is long curved trumpet that is similar to the Roman *Littus* (a precursor to the modern trumpet).<sup>30</sup> The only difference between the two is the carnyx was usually adorned with an animal head. The carnyx’s origin is likely explained by the early trade between the British Isles and the Romans prior to the Roman Invasion. The design of the instrument is suggestive that it was used on the battlefield. It is several feet tall and the animal head that adorns the bell is quite frightening. It is often thematic which an animal’s head, usually a warthog. And the animal is dazed or in a war cry. The instrument’s height facilitated a greater capacity to project sound; there were no obstacles that would hinder its ability to project its sound. Projection was critical, especially over the clamor of battle.

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<sup>30</sup> George Coffey, *The Bronze Age in Ireland* (London, UK: Hodges, Figgis, & Co., Limited 1918), 88.

Polybius describes the use of this instrument in battle: “There were innumerable horn-blowers and trumpeters, and, as the whole army were shouting their war-cries at the same time, there was such a tumult of sound that it seemed that not only the trumpets and the soldiers but all the country round had got a voice and caught up the cry.”<sup>31</sup> It appears that this technique was successful as Polybius says that “The sight of them indeed dismayed the Romans.”<sup>32</sup>

There has been a recent attempt to reconstruct the carnyx by Dr. John Purser, John Creed Fraser, Murray Cambell, and trombonist John Keeny<sup>33</sup>. After viewing a video-demonstration of the instrument, it became apparent that the low end sounds similar to a growling electric guitar or even a dijerdoo. In its middle range it sounds similar to a Vuvuzelas buzzing timbre. On its high end, it can flutter much like a flute, but with the piercing sound of a trumpet<sup>34</sup>.

These sounds may or may not be indicative of what this instrument actually sounded like in battle. Even John Kenny admits that it is nearly impossible to know how exactly it was played because modern musicians have hundreds of years’ worth of musical knowledge and technique in modern musical practice. However, with the vast techniques employed by players, it is likely that the modern performance mimic what the ancient carnyx players were doing.

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<sup>31</sup> Polybius, *The Complete Histories of Polybius*, trans. W.R. Paton (Lawrence, KS: Digireads.com Publishing 2009), 66.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Kenny, “The Reconstruction of the Deskford Carnyx”.

<sup>34</sup> Kenny, “Carnyx,” YouTube Video, posted by “luvhousepets,” February 20, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVAWwWi0DbE>.

## **During Battle**

Music in the Roman army was as serious as the swordsmanship of the Roman infantry. The Aeneatores were the professional military music core of the Romans. They were highly regarded and were well compensated by their superiors. The Aeneatores were the same rank of senior centurions, loosely equivalent to junior to midgrade commissioned officers in a modern army<sup>35</sup>. Their strict form and discipline was responsible for the military success of the Roman legions. The only intact military treatise from ancient Rome is *de re Military* by Vegetius. In his work he makes note of how instruments were used in battle and in the day-to-day life of the Roman army. According to Vegetius, the most common instruments in the Roman Army were the tuba, cornu, and cuccinae. The tuba is a straight trumpet form that was made of bronze and is about 177 cm long. The function of the tuba is to indicate charge and retreat. Tubas were used when there were no flags on the field. The tubas were used to sound the changing of the guard and to direct soldiers to working parties.

The cornu is a natural horn that is about 3 meters long. It looked like a large “G” that was slung on the shoulder. It was used in conjunction with the motion of the Roman standard bearers to solidify orders. The sound of the cornu would give the same order as the standard so that the order could be heard as well as seen.

The cuccinae is similar to the cornu but it had a narrower and more cylindrical bore, which gave it a different sound. This instrument is particularly important because it was associated with the General. When the instrument was used, the sound produced was referred to as the “classicum.” The classicum was heard only in the presence of a General

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<sup>35</sup> Renato Meucci, "Roman Military Instruments and the Lituus," *The Galpin Society Journal* 42, (August 1989): 85-97.

or a General Order. The *classicum* was also heard when a soldier was executed because soldiers could only be executed by a General's order.

After Vegetius describes the rules and regulations for the instruments' uses, he talks specifically about their general purpose:

“These rules must be punctually observed in all exercises and reviews so that the soldiers may be ready to obey them in action without hesitation according to the general's orders either to charge or halt, to pursue the enemy or to retire. For reason will convince us that what is necessary to be performed in the heat of action should constantly be practiced in the leisure of peace.”<sup>36</sup>

Vegetius is highlighting an old but critical adage: train as you fight. It is the idea that a military ought to train as close as possible to actual combat scenarios as often as possible in order to fully prepare. He has famously said, “*Si vis pacem, para bellum*” or “To wish for peace you must prepare for war.”<sup>37</sup> This phrase requires more discipline and more physical and mental effort to simulate combat conditions and combat orders.

Additionally, the fact that instruments were used in this process illustrates how important the instruments were in battle, especially when Vegetius uses this particular idea in the section where he talks about musical instruments. The importance of musical instruments cannot be overstated.

As mentioned before, music in the Roman army was used in conjunction with the Roman Standard, also known as the flag bearers. The most likely explanation is that the clamor of battle made the instruments difficult to hear, especially if soldiers were far away. The use of flags was much easier to detect as long as they were in a position that could be seen by soldiers. Musicians coordinated preplanned movements with the Roman Standard. Different notes with different Standard movements indicated different orders.

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<sup>36</sup> Flavius Vegetius Rhenanus, *De Re Militari*, trans. John Clark (1767) 1019-1027.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

These orders include: assemble, leave camp, attack, retreat, change of the guard among other commands<sup>38</sup>. Using both visual and aural methods together drastically increased the possibility that the order was heard and understood.

The most notable example of the use of the trumpet is by Julius Caesar. One historical account is when Caesar crossed the Rubicon. He famously snatched a trumpet from of his trumpeters and sounded the advance call. He yelled out, “Let us go where the omens of the gods and the crimes of our enemies summon us! There is one concern for every century!” In another example prior to the battle of Thapsus, a trumpeter accidentally sounded the call for charge, which started the battle before Caesar had wanted.<sup>39</sup>

Caesar’s example marks an important tactical problem that is still faced by armies of today. All battles require coordination, planning, intelligence, timing, and a combat prepared force. These notions have not changed since the very first battles. A common problem that has plagued armies throughout history are men who are too impatient to take the field and to begin to fight, which is especially true for the lower ranking soldiers who do most of the fighting. Caesar’s instance on sounding the call highlights an age old problem of starting the battle too quickly. A common occurrence in war is that the lower ranking infantry are often not told of the required coordination and planning that is critical for mission success. For them, all they experience is sitting around and waiting to be told an order, a reality that has proved dire in multiple battles because the battle had started before the opponent was ready. The last thing a commander wants is to fight

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<sup>38</sup> Linda Alchin. “Roman Colosseum & Empire,” The Roman Standard. <http://www.roman-colosseum.info/roman-army/roman-standard.htm> (Accessed December 1, 2012)

<sup>39</sup> Southern, “*The Roman Army*” 287.

before his army is ready. Although militaries usually do not use musical instruments, the proper initiation of a fight is the most critical action in battle. The use of a musical instrument, especially for Caesar himself, illustrates the high importance of the trumpet in warfare.

The importance of the *Aeneatores* cannot be overstated. Of course, The Roman army was (and is) considered to be one of the greatest armies in the world. Clearly, the communication system that Romans utilized is still to be admired for its effectiveness. The Roman conception of the functionality of musical instruments was critical in creating a powerful army. The understanding that a trumpet was a tool of war as opposed to a musical instrument laid the groundwork for a largely successful endeavor to formulate a better communication strategy that led the Romans to be one of the most powerful empires in world history.

More specifically, Roman music was instrumental in conquering Gallic tribes in the English region. This led to the Britain-Romani period that marked a fundamental shift in English culture and would change English understanding of the role of music and war. There is proof that in one case, the Romans and the Gauls honored each other while they served together. Horace in his *Epodes* says that over 2,000 Gauls sang to Caesar's name.<sup>40</sup> This is one of the highest honors by the Gallic people.

Some Gauls had allegiance to the Romans, yet still utilized their music. Tacitus makes note when King Rhoemetaces and his Gallic tribe came to reinforce the Roman line. The Gauls taunted their enemies on a Roman rampart, and they engaged the enemy as "terrible as the foe, with the noise of their war songs and the clashing of their arms."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Horace, *Epode Carmen Saeculare*, trans. Clifford Herschel Moore (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1902) 9.17.

### Post-Battle

After one particular Roman defeat, the Gauls were known to cheer in festivity and with “merry songs” and “savage shouts.”<sup>42</sup> Tacitus says that it was very difficult for the Romans to sleep because of singing. He implies that the Gauls were making a concerted effort to not only gloat over their victory but also to harass and demoralize the Roman soldiers by denying them sleep.

After the Battle of Cannae, in 216 BC, the Roman Historian Silius Italicus makes note about Gallic chants, “to chant the rude songs of their native tongue, at another to stamp the ground to the dance and clash their noisy shields in time to the music. Such is the relaxation and sport of the men.”<sup>43</sup> This quote highlights a very rare documentation of soldiers who are resting and not engaging in battle while performing music. This music obviously played an important part in boosting their morale. This performance is also interesting in that the Gauls would use their shield as a manifestation of their music by keeping time. This event is powerful evidence to suggest the Gallic culture considered musical performance as much a part of war as fighting.

There is also evidence of music involved with death after battle, “In regard to Gracchus's funeral also reports vary. Some relate that he was buried in the Roman camp by his own men, others —and this is the prevalent report —that by Hannibal's order a pyre was erected directly outside the gate of the Carthaginian camp, and that the army defiled under arms, with dances by the Spanish troops and such movements of weapons

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<sup>41</sup> Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb and Sara Bryant, *Complete Works of Tacitus: Annales* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1942) 4.47

<sup>42</sup> Italicus, *Punica*, trans. J.D. Duff (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934) 3.35-55.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

and bodies as were customary for each tribe, while Hannibal himself honored the obsequies with every tribute in act and word.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Livy. *The History of Rome*, trans. William Heinemann, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940) 25.17.4.

## Conclusion

Musicologist Christopher Small argues,

“Coronations, Olympic games...bullying of recruits in armed forces, and all other rituals, large and small are patters of gesture by means of which people articulate their concepts of how humans ought to relate to one another.....Rituals are used both as an act of affirmation of community (“this is who we are”), as an act of exploration (to try on the identities to see who we think they we are), and as an act of celebration ( to rejoice in the knowledge of an identity not only possessed but also shared with others ).<sup>45</sup>

The act of ritualized music, whether it is in lay society or in the military, serves a much greater purpose than just aesthetic. It is a manifestation of the collective identity of the people who practice it. A sense of community and identity, as a single people, can be understood in ritualistic behavior. Musical rituals are great indicators of the values, judgments, and core cultural beliefs of a culture. This is critical to understand because it contextualizes, in essence, world history. Additionally, musical ritual was a critical part of the success of military campaigns during the Gallic Wars.

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<sup>45</sup> Christopher Small, *Musicking* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998) 95.

## Epilogue

*A singing army is a fighting army.* This was a motto for a US Government program that issued patriotic songbooks to all soldiers who were serving overseas during WW1. The idea was that if citizens and soldiers were exposed to nationalistic music that it would increase morale and help the war the effort.

From the ancient Britons to the modern US Soldier, there has always been a significant connection between music and the battlefield. Although for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century music was not used as much. But with the advent of technology, music is beginning to make a comeback. The accessibility of music through portable media has allowed the modern soldier to interact with music, albeit on a much more personal level. Today scholars are begging to make more headway in the way music interacts with our physiology. Analyzing scholarship on today's soldier gives invaluable clues to the state of mind of the ancient warriors and understanding their emotional and physical state.

Professor Pieslak, a musicologist from the City college of New York, has a continuing study on how music has affected American Troops who are about to go to battle in Iraq and Afghanistan. One of the more important things that he notices was the psychological effect soldiers listening to music before battle had on them. Soldiers have reported to be able to “inhumane acts” which they would otherwise not. An anonymous soldier said, “ You have to listen to negative to become inhuman in order to do inhuman things.”<sup>46</sup>

This experiment is a good example of what the future holds in understanding the relationship of music and the human psyche. Clearly, there is a substantive correlation in

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<sup>46</sup> Jon Pieslak, “Music Gives Predator Mindset.” Colin Paterson. Radio. July 20, 2009. BBC.

the way people perceive music and music's ability to affect our emotional capacity and behavior. Further study of the musicological perspective of Roman and Gallic would shed more light on their livelihoods and of warfare.

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