



# FEATURE

## THE MUSIC OF ANCIENT GREECE

Meets National Core Arts Anchor Standards 5, 7, 9 and 11

### OBJECTIVES

Perceive and analyze artistic work. (Re7)

Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. (Re8)

Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. (Re9)

Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding. (Ch11)

### MATERIALS

Music Alive! magazine (Vol. 40 No. 7)

Computer or mobile device with internet access

### START

Ask your students to read “The Music of Ancient Greece” on pages 6-9. Then, go over the following highlighted words to reinforce comprehension and expand vocabulary.

**Lyre** - a strummed and plucked string instrument, built on a tortoiseshell (*chelys*), generally with seven or more strings tuned to the notes of one of the modes.

**Kithara** - A professional version of the lyre used by paid musicians.

**Aulos** - consisting of two double-reed (like an oboe) pipes, played with a mouth-band to hold both pipes steadily between the player's lips.

**Melos** – a composition of words, tune, and rhythm.

**Genera** – groupings of four notes that have distinct sounds. Also called tetrachords.

**Tonoi** – also called “harmoniai”, thought of as the tonal center, or “key”.

**Ethos** – character of music that is felt by the listener

**Monophonic** - consisting of a single musical line

**Music theory** – the study of practices and possibilities in music.

**Harmony** - An order-

ly or pleasing combination of elements in a whole

**Interval** – distances between two notes

**Note** – a single tone or pitch

### DEVELOP

**As a class, watch the TED talk about Greek music culture.**

• How do you compare the ancient Greeks' emphasis on music education compared to ours today?

• Why was music incorporated into all subjects of learning?

• Why was music so revered in ancient Greece?

**Listen to the musical fragments in Hear the Music?**

• How important is it to know what ancient Greek music sounded like in order to play it today? Why do you think so?

• What do you think is important about recreating music from antiquity?

• What does this tell you about how historians discover what happened in the past?

• How do you think we could help the historians of the future know about what the music of our time is like?

• Can you detect a steady beat?

• Does this music sound like today's music? How does it sound different?

• The Seikilos epitaph is the only known complete *melos* found to date and is thought to be an ode to the composer's deceased wife. After listening, how does it make you feel?

• Do the lyre, aulos, and kitara sound like any instruments you may recognize today?

**Watch the video demonstrating how ancient instruments and melodies sounded. The video also shows examples of musical notation.**

• How does the music notation of ancient Greece differ from ours today?

• Which methods did music researchers use to figure out how the music was supposed to sound?

• How does the musician create different tetrachords on the *kitara*?

### EXTRA CREDIT

**If you have a piano or keyboard in your classroom, have students take turns playing and/or writing the Greek harmoniai from the Greater Perfect System:**

- Dorian (e-d-c-b-a-g-f-e)
- Phrygian (d-c-b-a-g-f-e-d)
- Lydian (c-b-a-g-f-e-d-c)
- Mixolydian (b-a-g-f-e-d-c-b-a)
- Hypodorian (a-g-f-e-d-c-b-a-g)
- Hypophrygian (g-f-e-d-c-b-a-g-f)
- Hypolydian (f-e-d-c-b-a-g-f)

**Using any harmoniai, allow students to try and compose a melody of their design.**

### CLOSE

How has ancient Greek music influenced Western music as we know it? What is the impact of the complex music theory they created?

### ASSESS

**Did the students read the article?**

**Did they review the vocabulary words?**

**Did they answer the supplemental questions?**