

# MUSIC IN ANCIENT ROME



One of the most important attributes of the Romans was the ability to take certain ideas and customs from the cultures and societies which they encountered. Roman music and their musical instruments was therefore highly influenced by the Greeks. Under the influence of ancient Greek theory, music was associated particularly with mathematics and knowledge.





# Music was used at a variety of different occasions:

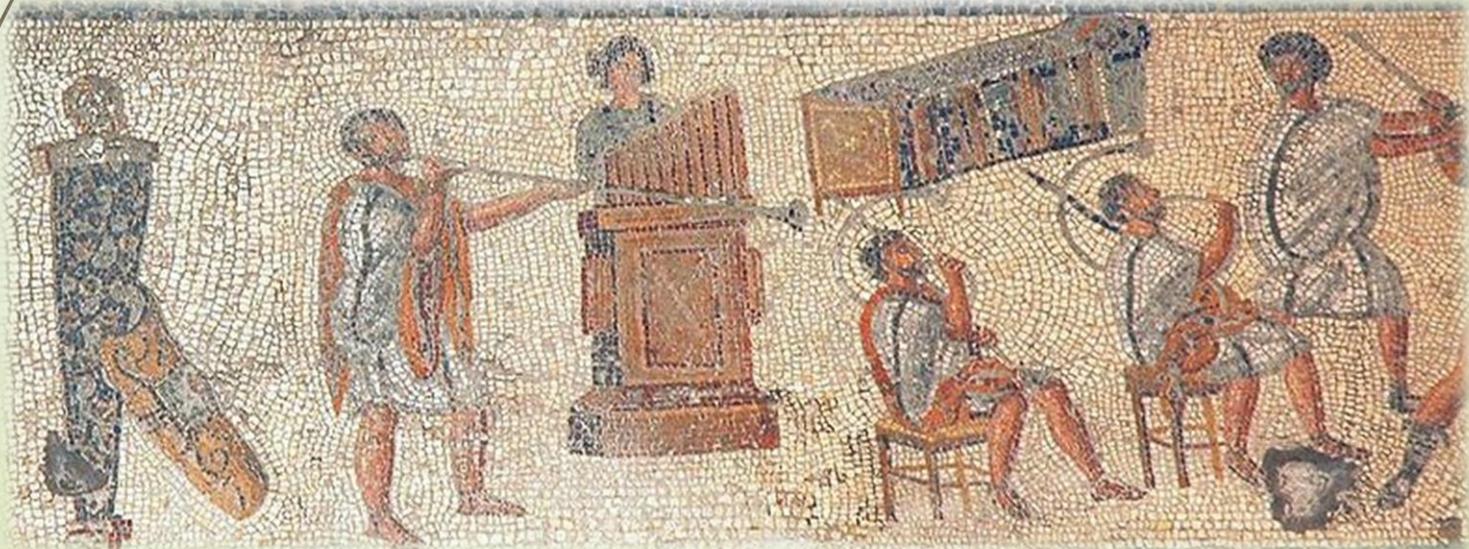
- during processions, on weddings and funerals
  - at public events such as games at the Colosseum
  - religious ceremonies and public performances
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# Musical instruments

- ▶ Today we can categorize musical instruments by their way of use and by their structure:
  - Percussion instruments (idiophones, membranophones)
  - Wind instruments (woodwinds and brass instruments)
  - String or stringed instruments
  - Keyboard instruments
  - Electronic instruments

Categorization was not different in the ancient times either, except there were no keyboard or electronic instruments, of course. Roman art depicts various woodwinds, "brass", percussion and stringed instruments.



# Examples

Percussion instruments:

- Variations of a wooden or metal device — a 'clapper' — were used to beat time. Also, there were various rattles, bells and tambourines.
- And timpani, castanets, sistrum, and brazen pans.



## Wind instruments

For example:

- The Roman tuba (a long, straight bronze trumpet)
- The cornu (Latin "horn") (a long tubular metal instrument that curved around the musician's body)
- The tibia (Greek aulos) (usually double, had two double-reed pipes)



➤ The „cornu“

## String instruments

- The lyre, borrowed from the Greeks (had a sounding body of wood or a tortoise shell covered with skin)
- The cithara: was the premier musical instrument of ancient Rome and was played both in popular and elevated forms of music. (larger and heavier than a lyre)
- The lute (pandura or monochord)





# Music in society

- ▶ In spite of the lack of musical originality on the part of the Romans, they did enjoy music and used it for many activities. The Romans cultivated music as a sign of education. Music contests were quite common and attracted a wide range of competition, including Nero himself, who performed as an amateur and once traveled to Greece to compete.
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# Music education

- Romans also created their education system based on the Greeks'
- Romans were not innovative in music.
- Music was mainly produced by professionals:
  - Mostly slaves from other countries
  - Not respected by educators
- Only sons of Aristocrats were allowed to learn music
- Girls were hardly ever allowed to participate in these kind of activities