

Call for Papers: 'The Aulos and Symposium Re-Imagined' (Royal Holloway, University of London)

CfP: The Aulos and Symposium Re-Imagined

Date: Tuesday 10 June 2025

Venue: Royal Holloway University of London, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX

RHUL Organising Committee: Lydia Kakabadse (PhD researcher, Music/Classics), Henry Stobart (Music), Richard Hawley (Classics), Susie Ashton (Classics), Despoina Christianoudi (PhD Researcher, Drama & Theatre)

Conference Brief:

Originally associated with aristocratic citizens of Athens and philosophers, the symposium was an important social institution in ancient Greece. Iconographical images of symposia often show them enlivened by musicians and dancers, commonly depicting the aulos – one of the most important and controversial musical instruments in the Classical world.

The conference will take the form of a one-day event consisting of a scholarly symposium, and an evening performance, which is open to the public. The scholarly part of the day will feature presentations focused on the ancient Greek symposium and the role of the aulos within it. This will aim for an interdisciplinary perspective that showcases recent research and facilitates dialogue between scholars and practitioners. Specific objectives include:

- To investigate the realities of playing the aulos in an enclosed acoustic space, such as the andron.
- To explore the status, identities, technical competencies and pedagogic practices of aulos players (auletes) (including comparison with extant reed pipe and shawm traditions of the Mediterranean).
- To consider how hired aulos players influenced the character or essential essence of the symposium.
- To explore the technical challenges and other considerations faced by women aulos players (aulêtrides) e.g. Did they wear the phorbeia or use: i) softer reeds; ii) different piping techniques; iii) different types of auloi?
- To examine relations between symposiasts and hired musicians: i) were sympotic aulêtrides treated differently from their male counterparts? ii) to what extent is the ambivalent view of the philosophers reflective of the ancient reception of auletes?

The evening event will take place in the Picture Gallery within Royal Holloway's Founders Hall, where the room will be set up as if it were an andron. Watered wine will be served, and reconstructions of the aulos played, alongside dance, songs with lyre, spoken dialogues drawn from ancient Greek texts as well as the sort of games that were played at the symposium (though probably not kottabos).

We welcome abstracts (c. 250 words) for paper presentations (probably 20 minutes, plus discussion) or proposals for other discussion formats. Proposals should be sent to Lydia.Kakabadse.2023@live.rhul.ac.uk by **18 January 2025**.

A small conference fee may be charged for symposium participants to help cover the cost of refreshments.