

Workshop



**“Music in Mesopotamia
3000 – 300 BC”**

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**Freitag – 21. November 2008
15 (c.t.) – 18 Uhr Hörsaal B 206**

The first known written sources concerning music come from Mesopotamia, which encompasses present-day Iraq and parts of surrounding countries. These documents are spread over a time-span of approximately three thousand years before the present era. The texts are primarily in Sumerian and Akkadian languages. Akkadian is a semitic language, belonging to the same family as Hebrew and Arabic. Letters, accounts, lexical lists of objects and professions, and literary texts all refer to musicians and musical instruments. They tell us about the nature and structure of musical instruments, music theory, elements of musical practice and the place of musicians in society.

The textual evidence is complemented by archaeological remains of instruments, featuring the first known actual remains of lyres and harps. Furthermore, remains of pipes, clappers, bells, rattles, and possibly sistra, have survived. Lastly, an abundant quantity of iconographic sources from all periods of Mesopotamian history is known, in the form of miniature cylinder seals, figurines, plaques, wall reliefs and stelae. The visual sources often represent music in the context of mythological and cultic scenes.

Textual, archaeological and visual sources concerning music in ancient Mesopotamia provide us with the first rich picture of musical life, predating ancient Greece. Unlike music in ancient Greece, which has been extensively studied and researched, the study of music in ancient Mesopotamia is based on textual sources which have only come to light in recent decades.

Bibliography:

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- Kilmer, Anne Draffkorn/ Lawergren, Bo: Mesopotamien, in: Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart II, Sachteil 6, 133-174.
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