

to a bride;<sup>20</sup> but it looks as though it may have been something that people just did not do.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> I am indebted to Professor MacDowell for emphasizing this point: 'there is no doubt', he writes, 'that it was possible for an Athenian woman to own things (cf. Lys. 32.6 *κατέλιπε*...), so that, if her father or other relative wished to give her something on the occasion of her marriage, I do not see how that can have been legally impossible, even if we do not happen to know of an instance'.

<sup>21</sup> When Plato in the *Laws* prohibits dowries (5.742c) but allows the bride's *kyrios* to make a gift of limited value *ἐσθῆτος χάριν* (6.774d), he assumes that such a gift would be made to the husband, not the wife; for if the value of the gift exceeds the prescribed limit, *ὁ... διδοὺς ἢ λαμβάνων* (n.b. masculine) is liable to punishment.

### SENECA'S NEIGHBOUR, THE ORGAN TUNER

In one of his letters to Lucilius (Book 6, *Ep.* 56), Seneca discusses the effects of noise and silence on study and contemplation. In the opening sections of the letter, he reveals that his current lodging is located above a bathhouse whence issue continually all sorts of irritating sounds. Seneca insists that such noises, despite their persistence, present no real distraction to one who possesses inner peace and a clear, untroubled mind (*animum enim cogo sibi intentum esse nec avocari ad externa: omnia licet foris resonent, dum intus nihil tumultus sit*, §5) and whose thoughts are 'good, steadfast, and sure' (*nullus hominum aviumque concentus interrumpet cogitationes bonas solidasque iam et certas*, §11).

In discussing the nature of distracting sounds (§4), Seneca rightly insists that it is the voice and words which demand one's attention and engage one's soul; mere din is no barrier to concentration. Among the sounds which he considers not distracting are passing carriages (*essedae transcurrentes*), a neighbouring craftsman (*faber inquilinus*), a saw-sharpener (*serrarius*), and another fellow *qui ad Metam Sudantem tabulas experitur et tibias, nec cantat sed exclamat*. Editors and commentators have generally accepted Gruter's emendation of the manuscripts' *tabulas* to *tubulas*, i.e. small *tubae*;<sup>1</sup> the word *tubula*, however, is attested nowhere else in Latin literature,<sup>2</sup> and one wonders why Seneca would have preferred it to *tubas* here.<sup>3</sup>

Seventy-five years ago Walter C. Summers offered a cleverer solution.<sup>4</sup> Maintaining that the mention of the *Meta Sudans*, the 'Sweating (i.e. Trickling) Fountain',<sup>5</sup> has some special point ('why should a tuner of musical instruments be found near one?'), Summers proposed reading *tubulos*, 'the regular word for waterpipes, of which this

<sup>1</sup> Cf. e.g. Otto Hense (Teubner, 1914), 171; Achilles Beltrami (Brescia, 1916), 179; Richard M. Gummere (Loeb, 1917), 374; François Préchac (Budé, 1958), 62; L. D. Reynolds (Oxford, 1965), 148.

<sup>2</sup> See *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, edited by P. G. W. Glare (Oxford, 1982) s.v. *tubula*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf., e.g., *Ep.* 90.26 in which Seneca writes *per tubam ac tibiam*.

<sup>4</sup> *Select Letters of Seneca* (London, 1910, reprinted 1965), 62–3 n. 7.

<sup>5</sup> The name of this fountain is descriptive of its appearance, resembling a goal in the circus (*meta*), flowing, spraying, or 'sweating' jets of water (*sudans*). The *Meta Sudans* in Rome stood between the Arch of Constantine and the Colosseum at the meeting point of the five regions of Augustus, I, II, III, IV, X. After thorough excavation in 1933, Mussolini removed the remains in 1936 to construct for his fascist parades the great street which passes through the imperial fora area. See Samuel B. Platner and Thomas Ashby, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (Oxford, 1929), 340–1; Ernest Nash, *Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (New York, 1962), II.61–3; Raymond L. DenAdel, 'Seneca the Younger and the *Meta Sudans*', *CB* 60 (1984), 1–4; Filippo Coarelli, *Guida Archeologica di Roma* (Milan, 1975), 175.

kind of fountain must have had a large number: the man in question is testing them to see if they are clear'. He also argued that *et* should be emended to *ut*, since 'the inspector blows down the tubes "like so many *tibiae*" and this causes a horrible noise, so that Seneca says "but he isn't playing a tune on them – only making intermittent bellowings".'

Ingenious as the *tubulos* conjecture may be, it will not, so to speak, hold water. Anyone who has experience in playing a horn of any sort knows that, in order to create a sound by blowing through a pipe, one must adopt the special embouchure of a trumpet or horn player; a man testing waterpipes to see if they were plugged would blow directly through the pipes, an action which would not result in a 'horrible noise', but rather in an almost indiscernible hiss.

I suggest that *tabulas*, the reading of the principal manuscripts, should be retained here. The man in question is a tuner, builder, or repairer of the *hydraulus*, the water organ. This loud, raucous instrument, whose invention is attributed to Ctesibius of Alexandria (fl. 270 B.C.), was extremely popular in Seneca's time, particularly with the Emperor Nero.<sup>6</sup> Vitruvius gives us a detailed description of the *hydraulus* in which he indicates that the *tabula summa* is the Latin equivalent of *pinax*.<sup>7</sup> This 'top board' contained the openings into which were placed the pipes (*tibiae*) of the water organ.<sup>8</sup>

If the *tabulae* mentioned by Seneca are the boards of *hydrauli*, and the *tibiae* are the pipes inserted in them, the significance of the tuner's location beside the *Meta Sudans* (so puzzling to Summers) becomes clear: in the days before running water was readily available, what better location for the workshop of a water-organ builder than near a constant supply of water? Nor need we require of Seneca a builder's knowledge of the *hydraulus* to account for his use of a technical term so matter-of-factly; rather, we can draw a parallel with those today who are knowledgeable laymen in respect to an organ or a harpsichord. Many amateur musicians speak about keyboards, ranks, stops, pedals, jacks, plectra, soundboards, and jackrails without intimate knowledge of the way such parts actually function in the instrument. It is certainly conceivable that Seneca, who lived near this shop and perhaps had even talked with or observed the tuner at work, had learned the common name for the top board of the organ, a part which, because it contained the orifices for the pipes, was more conspicuous than many others. Furthermore, recalling the words of Suetonius (above, n. 6), there exists

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Suetonius, *Nero* 41: *Ac ne tunc quidem aut senatu aut populo coram appellato, quosdam e primoribus viris domum evocavit, transactaque raptim consultatione, reliquam diei partem per organa hydraulica novi et ignoti generis circumduxit, ostendensque singula, de ratione ac difficultate cuiusque disserens, iam se etiam prolaturum omnia in theatrum affirmavit, si per Vindicem liceat*; 54: *voverat...proditurum se...ludis etiam hydraulam*. Cf. also Cic. *Tusc. Disp.* 3.43; Petronius, *Satyricon* 36; J. F. Mountford, 'Greek Music and Its Relation to Modern Times', *JHS* 40 (1920), 38.

<sup>7</sup> *De Architectura* 10.8.3: *Ex canalibus autem canon habet ordinata in transverso foramina respondentia naribus, quae sunt in tabula summa, quae tabula graece pinax dicitur*.

<sup>8</sup> See figures 124a and 124b, reproduced below as Figs. 1 and 2, in Wilhelm Schmidt's edition, *Heronis Alexandrini Opera quae supersunt Omnia* (Leipzig, 1899), 1.498 and 500, which also includes Vitruvius' chapters on pneumatic inventions. The adjective, *summa*, implies the existence also of a *tabula media* and a *tabula ima*. The *tabula media* would appear to be that board containing (r) the openings (*in transverso foramina*) which correspond to (t) the openings in the *tabula summa*. The *tabula ima* would then be the bottom board below the *canales* (n), which contained the first set of openings through which air passed from the *arcula* (m), through the openings of the other two boards, and finally into the pipes. One of the most delicate and painstaking tasks of the organ builder/tuner would have been the adjustment of the action of the instrument, i.e. the adjustment of these planks and the holes in them (as well as the *plinthides*, s) so that they lined up precisely and accurately when each key of the organ was depressed.

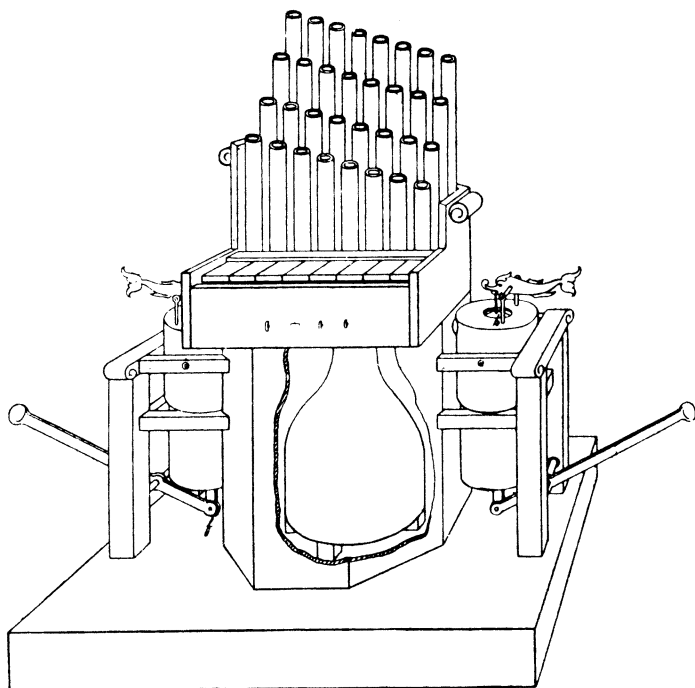


Fig. 1

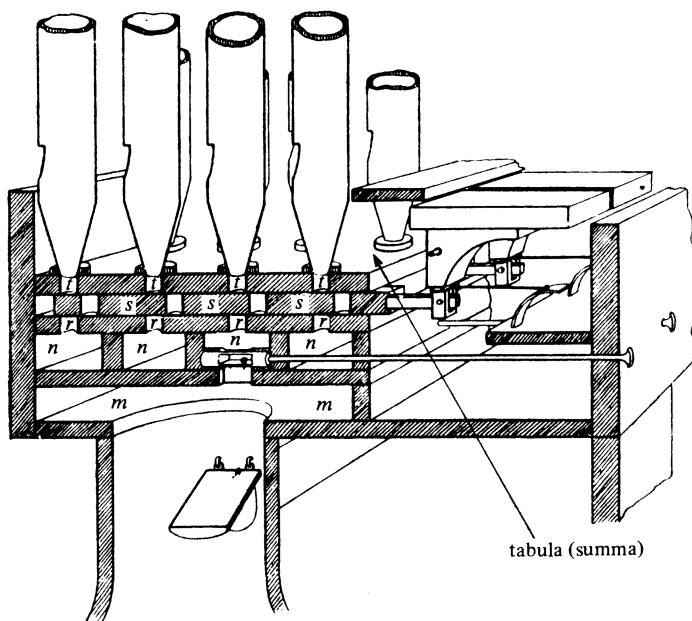


Fig. 2

the distinct possibility that Seneca had, in fact, been one of the *primores viri* who accompanied Nero on guided tours of his favourite water organs. During these junkets Seneca would have been instructed about the *tabulae et tibiae* of the instruments by the Emperor himself (*ostendensque singula, de ratione ac difficultate cuiusque disserens*)!

This interpretation, then, has at least two advantages: it makes sense of the reading of the manuscripts, and it gives point to the mention of the *Meta Sudans*. Consider the sounds which issue from your own living room when your piano tuner is at work and you will appreciate the accuracy of Seneca's description. I therefore suggest that Summers' translation be adapted to read: 'and this fellow who, near the *Meta Sudans*, tests the planks and pipes [of water organs] and does not play a tune on them,<sup>9</sup> but only makes intermittent bellowings.'<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Cantare* appears to be the *mot juste* for making music on the water organ; cf. Petronius, *Satyricon* 36: ...*ut putares essedarium hydraule cantate pugnare*.

<sup>10</sup> I would like to thank Professor Philip Stadter and an anonymous reader for their helpful suggestions.

### Correction

On p. 339 of *Classical Quarterly* 36 (1986), note 9 of the posthumous article by T. C. W. Stinton, 'Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 94–102', refers to '*JHS* 106 (1986, forthcoming)'. The reference should in fact be to T. C. W. Stinton, 'Greek tragic texts and the limits of conservatism', *BICS* 32 (1985), 35ff.

THE EDITORS