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Constructing the 'theatre of power': the performance of speeches of Emperor Leo VI the Wise*

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Emperor Leo VI the Wise made speeches on various occasions, and the surviving texts have attracted numerous philological and historical studies. However, delivering a speech was never merely a monologue, especially in the court milieu where life was highly ritualized. It combined text-reading and multiple ceremonies and thus became a theatrical performance. In this 'theatre', the emperor's elegant appearance, the audience reaction to the orator's words following a set of conventions, and the venue decorated with torches, candles, and many other objects all played an indispensable role.

Keywords: Leo VI; oratory; theatre; performance; court ceremonies

According to the *Book of Ceremonies*, while sometimes uttering a few ritualistic words, the Byzantine emperor generally remained silent and unapproachable. This maintained a majestic public image and thus embodied the eternal and unchanging celestial power. Liudprand of Cremona also bears witness to a court marked by solemn silence.[1] The only exception was the Monday of the first week of Lent when the emperor delivered an address at a *silention* at the Magnaura.[2] Some chroniclers attest that Leo VI continued to preach at the beginning of Lent until his death.[3] But contrary to

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1 Liudprand of Cremona, *The Complete Works*, tr. P. Squatriti (Washington, D.C. 2007) 197–8.

2 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Le livre des cérémonies*, II, 10, ed. and tr. G. Dagron (Paris 2020) 65.1–2.

3 Symeon Magister and Logothete, *Chronicon*, ed. S. Wahlgren (Berlin 2006) 294.436–9; Leo the Grammarian, *Chronographia*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn 1842) 285.5–7; Continuator of George the Monk, *Vitae Recentiorum Imperatorum*, in I. Bekker (ed.), *Theophanes Continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister, Georgius Monachus* (Bonn 1838) 870.18–20; John Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*,

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affirmations of this ceremonial manual, Leo VI delivered many other speeches. Except for the funeral oration dedicated to his parents, all these pieces are religious.[4] Although other emperors, such as Constantine VII and Manuel II, also made speeches, Leo distinguished himself by the number of his own works. Among these speeches, it is the funeral oration that has most held the attention of modern scholars, especially those interested in political ideology.[5] Theodora Antonopoulou in particular has made enormous contributions to the scholarship on homilies. Beginning with a dissertation defended at Oxford,[6] she has collected and codified all of this emperor's speeches, thus aiding future studies.[7] Other Byzantinists have also dedicated numerous works to this subject.[8] However, such studies, philological or historical, only focus on texts.

Performance theory has significantly broadened the notion of 'performance' to all human activities occurring before a particular individual or group in a given space.[9] In this theoretical context, Leo's delivery of speeches is undoubtedly a performance. As Paul Magdalino notes of imperial orations of the twelfth century, verbal recitation was only part of a total performance in which architecture, decoration, dress, music, and choreography also played a role.[10] Speaking before a particular assembly in numerous churches and imperial palaces, the emperor strove to build a 'theatre of power'[11] not

ed. I. Thurn, (Berlin 1973) 191.9–12; John Zonaras, *Epitome Historiarum*, ed. L. Dindorf, IV (Leipzig 1871) 48.9–12.

4 For the emperor's customary sermons on all feasts, see Arethas of Caesarea, *Scripta Minora*, ed. L. G. Westerink, II (Leipzig 1972) 15.2–4. Nikephoros Gregoras too reports that Leo VI had composed speeches and odes for many annual festivals, see ed. E. Kurtz, *Zwei griechische Texte über die hl. Theophano, die Gemahlin Kaisers Leo VI* (= *Mémoires de l'Académie impériale des sciences de Saint-Pétersbourg*, VIIIe série, Cl. Hist.-philol. 3.2) (St Petersburg 1898) 40.32–3.

5 The editors of this speech have attached an introduction to the original text and the French translation, see A. Vogt and I. Hausherr, *Oraison funèbre de Basile Ier par son fils Léon VI le Sage* (= *Orientalia Christiana* 77) (Rome 1932) 5–35. This edition was immediately followed by a historical research, see N. Adontz, 'La portée historique de l'oraison funèbre de Basile Ier par son fils Léon VI le Sage', *Byzantion* 8.2 (1933) 501–13. See esp. P. Odorico, 'La politica dell'immaginario di Leone VI il Saggio', *Byzantion* 53.2 (1983) 597–631.

6 Published as T. Antonopoulou, *The Homilies of the Emperor Leo VI* (Leiden 1997).

7 Leo VI the Wise, *Homiliae*, ed. T. Antonopoulou (Turnhout 2008).

8 See A. Frolow, 'Deux églises byzantines d'après les sermons peu connus de Léon VI le Sage', *Études byzantines* 3 (1945) 43–91; J. Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études sur Léon VI', *Travaux et Mémoire* 5 (1973) 181–242 (181–206); P. Devos, 'La Translation de S. Jean Chrysostome (*BHG* 877h): une œuvre de l'empereur Léon VI', *Analecta Bollandiana* 107 (1989) 5–29; M. L. D. Riedel, *Leo VI and the Transformation of Byzantine Christian Identity: writings of an unexpected emperor* (Cambridge 2018) 137–53.

9 E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Edinburgh 1959) 13; R. Schechner, *Performance Theory* (New York 1994) 30.

10 P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos 1143-1180* (Cambridge 1993) 353–4.

11 Two Byzantinists have used this term in their works — *théâtre du pouvoir* in French and *Schauplätze der Macht* in German. See P. Odorico, 'La théâtralité à Byzance', in F. Mosetti Casaretto (ed.), *La scena assente. Realtà e leggenda sul teatro nel Medioevo* (Alexandria 2006) 25–45 (34); N. Gaul, *Thomas Magistros und die*

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only for convincing his listeners with arguments but also for overwhelming them with visual, auditory, and even olfactory effects. Although a few scholars have drawn attention to such performative elements,[12] Leo VI, the most prolific Byzantine emperor, still lacks such a study. For reasons of space, this article will only deal with the performative aspects of three fundamental factors of the performance: actor, audience and stage. Rhetorical techniques, especially *ethopoeia* and *enargeia*, which helped create a virtual theatre, will not be considered here.[13]

Leo VI as lead actor

The protagonist of the 'theatre of power', Leo VI, who delivered orations in person, was himself a theatrical element: the public appearance of an emperor had always to be carefully choreographed. A refined face, a fitting costume, and an elegant posture were deemed essential for an imperial orator. In his letter to Khan Boris of Bulgaria, Patriarch Photios urged Boris to maintain an orderly, harmonious and balanced bearing, for such an outward character reflected the wisdom of a ruler, especially for those who could not readily recognize spiritual strength and beauty.[14] Exterior beauty was indispensable in a highly ritualized society: the emperor must appear majestic in public to manifest his supreme power. Neglect of appearance would damage not only the imperial dignity but the ceremonial order with which *De ceremoniis* is concerned.[15] Solemn ceremonies, aiming at reproducing the heavenly court, were a reflection of one of the most crucial elements of imperial ideology – *taxis*.[16] And the

spätbyzantinische Sophistik. Studien zum Humanismus urbaner Eliten in der frühen Palaiologenzeit (Wiesbaden 2011) 17–61.

12 R. Morris, 'Beyond the *De Ceremoniis*', in C. Cubitt (ed.), *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages: the proceedings of the first Alcuin conference* (Turnhout 2003) 235–54; M. Loukaki, 'Notes sur l'activité d'Aréthas comme rhéteur de la cour de Léon VI', in M. Grünbart (ed.), *Theatron: Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter* (Berlin 2007) 259–75; P. Marciniak, 'Byzantine *theatron* – a place of performance', in Grünbart (ed.), *Theatron*, 277–85; I. Toth, 'Rhetorical *theatron* in Late Byzantium: the example of Palaiologan imperial orations', in Grünbart (ed.), *Theatron*, 427–46; E. C. Bourbouhakis, 'Rhetoric and performance', in P. Stephenson (ed.), *The Byzantine World* (London 2010) 175–87; P. Marciniak, 'The Byzantine performative turn', in K. Twardowska et al (eds), *Within the Circle of Ancient Ideas and Virtues: studies in honour of Professor Maria Dzielska* (Krakow 2014) 423–30; N. Gaul, 'Performative reading in the late Byzantine *theatron*', in T. Shawcross and I. Toth (eds), *Reading in the Byzantine Empire and Beyond* (Cambridge 2018) 215–33.

13 On this issue, see L. S. Lieber, 'Theater of the Holy: performative elements of Late Ancient hymnography', *The Harvard Theological Review* 108.3 (2015): 327–55; D. Olkinuora, 'Performance theory and the study of Byzantine hymnography: Andrew of Crete's *Canon* on Lazarus', *Ortodoksia* 59 (2019) 7–31.

14 Patriarch Photios of Constantinople, *Epistulae et Amphilochia*, ed. B. Laourdas and L. G. Westerink, I (Leipzig 1983) 23.674–87.

15 Constantine VII, *Le livre des cérémonies*, Livre I – Tome I, Préface, ed. and tr. B. Flusin, 3–5.

16 For the importance of the notion of order in Byzantine ideology, see H. Ahrweiler, *L'idéologie politique de l'Empire byzantin*, (Paris 1975) 129–47.

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emperor's public appearances, 'destinées à manifester l'éclat de la puissance divine dont le souverain tient son pouvoir',[17] must therefore conform to this fundamental ideology.

The emperor's presence consists in the first instance of his physical appearance. It seems that Leo VI was handsome by nature. In his first banquet speech delivered on the feast of the prophet Elijah, Arethas listed in detail the emperor's outward attributes according to standards set by Aristotle,[18] including bodily strength (*rhome*) and beauty (*kallos*).[19] Although aiming primarily at emphasizing spiritual superiority, this oration shows that physical beauty is a mark of the emperor. The author of the *Vita Theophano* praised the emperor's youth (νεότης), purity (ἁγνεία) and beauty (κάλλος) in referring to his marriage.[20] In reality, the three physical characteristics attributed to the emperor are a topos in wedding speeches, as confirmed by an epithalamium dedicated to Leo VI. This poem uses a series of epithets of the emperor's body: rose-like (ῥοδόεις), charming (ἱμερόεις), white-skinned (λευκοκρινόχρους), blooming (θαλέθων), and awe-inspiring (θάμβος ἔχων).[21] Although these literary pieces provide us with rhetorical praise rather than objective reports, physical beauty, seemingly a mark of the Macedonian dynasty,[22] would have naturally been shared by Leo VI.

Elegance of appearance, albeit of secondary importance compared to natural endowments, was understood to contribute to the success of a speech,[23] as confirmed by Nikephoros the Philosopher's funeral oration on Antony II Kauleas. Attributing the peace of the Church to Leo VI, the author evoked his graceful face (χαρίεντι προσώπῳ) and smiling eyes (μειδιῶσιν ὀφθαλμοῖς) because, in his opinion, the emperor's physical charms, like his brilliant virtues and eloquence, had led to the reconciliation of two parties in the Church.[24]

Imperial garb would further enhance an emperor's image. A range of costumes existed at the Byzantine court, and sovereigns frequently changed their clothes according to the needs of different ceremonies.[25] Among these costumes, the *chlamys*

17 C. Jouanno, 'Réflexions sur pouvoir et démesure à Byzance', *Kentron* 23 (2007) 127–65 (130).

18 R. J. H. Jenkins, C. A. Mango and B. Laourdas, 'Nine orations of Arethas from *Cod. Marc. Gr.* 524', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 47 (1954) 1–40 (12), repr. in R. J. H. Jenkins, *Studies on Byzantine History of the 9th and 10th Centuries* (London 1970) VI. See also H. Maguire, 'Essence and accident: Byzantine portraiture and Aristotelian philosophy', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 46.1 (2022) 1–23.

19 Arethas, *Scripta Minora*, II, 26.28–9.

20 Ed. Kurtz, *Zwei griechische Texte*, 5.5–9.

21 Ed. F. Ciccolella, *Cinque poeti bizantini. Anacreontee dal Barberiniano greco 310* (Alexandria 2000) 80.35–6.

22 C. Head, 'Physical descriptions of the emperors in Byzantine historical writing', *Byzantion* 50.1 (1980) 226–40 (231–2).

23 Physical beauty could stir the hearts of the Byzantines and thus play a role in the political arena, see M. Hatzaki, *Beauty and the Male Body in Byzantium: perceptions and representations in art and text* (New York 2009) 49–65.

24 Ed. P. L. M. Leone, 'l'"Encomium in patriarcham Antonium II Cauleam" del filosofo e retore Niceforo', *Orpheus* n.s. 10 (1989) 404–29 (421.304–16).

25 See N. P. Kondakov, 'Les costumes orientaux à la cour byzantine', *Byzantion* 1 (1924) 7–49; G. P. Galavaris, 'The symbolism of imperial costume as displayed on Byzantine coins', *Museum Notes*

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was the most common and helped display imperial greatness.[26] The *loros*, imperial insignia par excellence, was worn on just two feasts, Easter and Pentecost. This garment restricted the emperor's movement and thus made him look like a statue. However, constant change of clothes and our uncertainty of the precise moments when most speeches were delivered prevent us from knowing what clothes the emperor wore when he spoke on a given occasion. But very likely, the emperor did not wear his crown if he made speeches in church, especially in Hagia Sophia, since in most cases – the coronation is an exception – he removed his crown before entering a sacred space.[27] The only certainty is that on the Monday of the first week of Lent the emperor wore his *skaramangion* and gold-trimmed *sagion* while delivering his speech.[28]

In addition, two ceremonial manuals can give us some ideas on how the emperor dressed when speaking at a feast. Leo delivered his second homily on St Demetrius after dinner[29] in the Chrysotriklinos, where, according to the *De Ceremoniis*, he had to remove his *chlamys*.[30] At a banquet organized on the feast of the prophet Elijah, the emperor delivered a eulogy for this saint while wearing his *divitision*.[31] It is also very likely that Leo preached one of his sermons on Epiphany during the banquet. Arethas, in his speech delivered for the same feast, mentioned that the emperor presided over the banquet with pleasing words.[32] We cannot confirm that Leo and Arethas delivered their speeches on the same evening, but it is certain that Leo VI spoke at at least one such banquet. On this occasion, the emperor took off his *sagion* before the meal[33] and perhaps wore plain garb, given that Arethas in his own speech emphasizes the imperial humility:

> The Divine Shepherd left paradise and the Father's arms, clothing himself in sheepskin that was a bait for hunters. On this day, he came to John the

(*American Numismatic Society*) 8 (1958) 99–117; E. Piltz, 'Middle Byzantine court costume', in H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204* (Washington, D.C. 1997) 39–51; J. L. Ball, *Byzantine Dress: representations of secular dress in eighth- to twelfth-century painting* (New York 2005) 11–35; P. Odorico, 'Habiller le prince. Vêtements et couleurs à la cour de Byzance', in *Comunicare e significare nell'alto medioevo. 15-20 aprile 2004* (= *Settimane di studio della fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo* 52.1) (Spoleto 2005) 1013–58.

26 The political symbolism of this garment is unclear: according to Parani, the imperial chlamys shows the role of the emperor as chief of state, arbitrator, legislator, and protector of peace and order, while Galavaris considers it an emblem of sacred sovereignty. See M. G. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine material culture and religious iconography (11th-15th Centuries)* (Leiden 2003) 17; Galavaris, 'The symbolism of imperial costume', 109–10.

27 A. Walker, 'The Emperor and the threshold: making and breaking taxis at Hagia Sophia', in S. Tougher (ed.), *The Emperor in the Byzantine World* (London 2019) 281–321 (288).

28 Constantine VII, *Le livre des cérémonies*, Livre II, 10, 65.8–9.

29 Leo VI, *Homiliae*, 261.54–5.

30 Constantine VII, *Le livre des cérémonies*, Livre I – Tome I, 30, 229.60–4.

31 Philotheos, *Traité*, in N. Oikonomidès (ed.), *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles* (Paris 1972) 217.15.

32 Arethas, *Scripta Minora*, II, 35.12–18.

33 Constantine VII, *Le livre des cérémonies*, Livre I – Tome I, 35, 269.74.

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> Baptist with others and practised humility (ταπείνωσιν) after being baptized by him. Likewise, o audience, now look on the one who has received authority from God to rule over us on earth. Although his power unites all human nobility, he shares his house with us poor men and condescends to approach us and dine with us.[34]

A chapter concerning the emperor's ceremonial outfits completes our knowledge about the colours of various costumes. At the banquet on the feast of the prophet Elijah, the *divitision* worn by the emperor is purple.[35] The emperor also wore a purple *divitision* after removing his *chlamys* at the banquet on the feast of St Demetrios.[36] When Leo delivered his second homily on the Epiphany in Hagia Sophia, he combined the *chlamys* and the purple *divitision*.[37]

When it comes to the delivery of a speech, the importance of aural effects is self-evident, and the speaker's voice should have the euphony of music.[38] Writing to Boris I of Bulgaria, Photios mentioned the importance of orderly and moderate speech.[39] In his commentary on a work of Eunomios, the same author criticized the dissonance (δύσηχον ἦχον) of the text.[40] A student of Photios, Leo VI would have imbibed the same principles of public speaking and, consequently, known how to increase the charm of his declamation and influence his audience through diction and modulation – whatever the criticism of Psellos that the diction of this emperor lacked brilliance and skill.[41]

Praise is recorded of Leo VI's eloquence. A funerary poem compared his flow of words with the sea and with honey.[42] Nikephoros the Philosopher, in his funeral oration for Patriarch Antony II Kauleas, said that the words from the emperor's mouth, like those of Solomon and David, were sweeter than honey.[43] Arethas too notes the pleasing language of Leo VI in his banquet speech delivered on Epiphany:

> Does the emperor who presides over the feast not shine with the grace of physical beauty, on the one hand, does he not pour pleasant drops of language (σταγόνας γλώσσης ἡδίστας) that are enough to cover the sacred theatre on the other, either by extending joy as now and rendering our attitude more joyful, or by relieving all the sadness of those who are very distressed and melancholy?[44]

34 Arethas, *Scripta Minora*, II, 36.9–18. All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.
35 Constantine VII, *Le livre des cérémonies*, Livre I – Tome I, 46, 345.52–3.
36 *Op.cit.*, 347.72–3.
37 *Op.cit.*, 347.84–6.
38 G. Cavallo, *Lire à Byzance* (Paris 2006) 50–1.
39 Photios, *Epistulae et Amphilochia*, I, 23.688–4.703.
40 Photios, *Bibliothèque*, ed. and tr. R. Henry, II (Paris 1960) 107.35–11.
41 Michael Psellos, *Historia Syntomos*, ed. W. J. Aerts (Berlin 1990) 90.16–17.
42 Ševčenko, 'Poems on the Deaths', 202.30–1.
43 Ed. Leone, 'l'"Encomium in patriarcham Antonium II Cauleam" del filosofo e retore Niceforo', 422.335–43.
44 Arethas, *Scripta Minora*, II, 35.12–18.

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Although such examples, due to their laudatory nature, do not necessarily reflect the reality, it is still difficult to imagine that an emperor who did not excel at speaking could have delivered so many orations.[45] And an unskilled speaker could bring about a negative outcome: Joseph Bringas, during his struggle with Nikephoros Phocas, 'was totally incapable of flattering and swaying public opinion in adverse circumstances. It would have been necessary to massage the crowd's attitude with soft and flattering speeches (προσηνέσι λόγοις καὶ θωπευτικοῖς), while he tended rather to prickle and aggravate them (ἐξετράχυνε καὶ ἠγρίωσε).'[46]

Leo VI frequently used rhetorical devices to enhance the sound effects of his speeches.[47] Considering the large number of these devices, only the most conspicuous cases can be discussed here. Anaphora is the most common such device in Leo's speeches. In his homily on the Annunciation, for example, the imperial orator used a long series of χαιρετισμοί to underline the transport of delight brought by this feast.[48] We can find the same rhetorical technique in his sermon on the Dormition of the Virgin.[49] And the homily on Palm Sunday contains an anaphora introduced by 'blessed art thou' (εὐλογημένος εἶ).[50] Parallelism in the word order could strengthen anaphora's aural effect, as shown by a set of short sentences in the homily on the Burial of Christ.[51] Sometimes anaphora starts with a vocative particle (ὦ/ὤ) and thus constitutes a series of exclamations.[52] Adopting this device, the imperial orator could create an emotional aural effect and manipulate his audience.

Homoioteleuton is also abundant in Leo's orations. His homily on the Transfiguration II includes an abundance of words ending with του/τοῦ in one short clause.[53] The aural effect is further enhanced by the same syntactical structure of these expressions (τοῦ... διά...). In the homily on the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, we can see a double homoioteleuton of the ending -ων/-α, which, however, is slightly relieved by ἀνατροπή.[54]

More interesting is the combination of different aural devices. In the homily on the Resurrection, Leo combined homoioteleuton and anaphora. The first clauses of six

45 On the importance of public speaking skills for the emperor, see M. Grünbart, '*Euglottia* – Sprechen als Statusindikator in der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 45 (2011) 211–31 (219–30).

46 Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, 257.28–31. Tr. J. Wortley, *John Skylitzes. A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811–1057* (Cambridge 2010) 248.

47 For the figural devices used in Byzantium, see V. Valiavitcharska, *Rhetoric and Rhythm in Byzantium: the sound of persuasion* (Cambridge 2013) 65–76. An inspiring case study has been made by A. F. Stone, 'Aurality in the Panegyrics of Eustathios of Thessaloniki', in Grünbart (ed.), *Theatron*, 419–28.

48 Leo VI, *Homiliae*, 8.74–9.112.

49 *Op.cit.*, 173.156–4.86.

50 *Op.cit.*, 21.193–212.

51 *Op.cit.*, 30.29–32.

52 *Op.cit.*, 25.298–6.304; 38.222–30; 271.108–19.

53 *Op.cit.*, 163.58–61.

54 *Op.cit.*, 240.195–7.

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successive sentences (with the exception of the third) are introduced by verbs ending with -ουσι/οῦσι or -ωσι, while four of the second clauses begin with καὶ οὐκ. Besides, it is easy to recognize two pairs of parallels (καὶ οὐκ ὀργίζῃ — καὶ οὐκ ἀμνύνῃ; καὶ οὐκ ἀποστρέφεις τὸ πρόσωπον — καὶ οὐκ ἀνοίγεις τὸ στόμα).[55] Parallelisms which enhance the sound effects of the combination of anaphora with homoioteleuton are not unusual, as we can see in two homilies.[56] The homily delivered on the Feast of St Thomas provides an example of the tighter combination of these two devices. The homoioteleuton of the ending -τε is incorporated into a threefold anaphora of ὁρᾶτε.[57] In an extreme case, the imperial orator combined not only anaphora with homoioteleuton but also parallelism with chiasmus.[58]

Audience performing in the 'theatre'

The audience played an essential role in the 'theatre'. To ensure the success of the discourse, the orator had to take into account the expectations of listeners before composing the text. As Antonopoulou notes: 'as they were composed to be delivered rather than to be read privately, (these speeches) had to take into consideration, more than the other texts, the target audience because their effectiveness was determined by the influence they had on the public.'[59] But it is difficult to say how reactions on the part of an audience reflect actual emotions: an assembly, at least formally, is always inclined to eliminate differences and create an illusion of homogeneity.[60] Furthermore, considering that the emperor's speech was almost always framed within a ritual context, listeners could not react arbitrarily. To some extent, they too played a specific role in the performance; even, we may say, along with the speaker, became actors.[61]

Listeners started their performance by dressing in strict accordance with ritual requirements. As reported in the *Kletorologion* of Philotheos, when Leo VI spoke on the feast of the Decollation of St John the Baptist, courtiers went to the Holy Apostles wearing *skaramangia*.[62] When he delivered his speech at the Epiphany banquet, all those in holy orders should wear their white *phélônia*, while employees of the bureau, cantors and readers their *kamisia*.[63] During the banquet held on the feast of the

55 *Op.cit.*, 52.206–11.
56 *Op.cit.*, 77.203–6; 565.66–8.
57 *Op.cit.*, 440.33–40.
58 *Op.cit.*, 113.280–3.
59 Antonopoulou, *Βυζαντινή Ομιλητική*, 51.
60 H. Amirav, *Authority and Performance: sociological perspectives on the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451)* (Göttingen 2015) 73–4; J. Vanderspoel, 'Imperial panegyric: hortatory or deliberative oratory?', in Tougher (ed.), *The Emperor*, 199–215 (203).
61 Walker, 'The emperor and the threshold', 285–6.
62 Philotheos, *Traité*, 221.10–19.
63 *Op.cit.*, 185.19–7.4.

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prophet Elijah where Leo also made an address, the same ceremonial manual stipulated that all guests had to wear formal attire without the *chlamys*.[64]

When the emperor was about to speak, the audience must remain silent. Even for an orator other than the emperor, the audience's silence was a prerequisite for a successful speech. Niketas the Paphlagonian, in his encomium on St Paul, asked listeners to remain silent.[65] It follows that the imperial orator had to call for silence even more strictly before starting his own discourse. Since the emperor's speeches always conformed to particular ceremonial settings, the audience's silence was certainly ritualized. As noted above, the emperor delivered his homily at the Beginning of Lent at a *silention* at the Magnaura. In Byzantium, the term σελεντίον, derived from the Latin *silentium* that originally means silence, refers to a solemn sitting where the dignitaries assembled and the silentiary, a eunuch, imposed silence in the presence of rulers.[66] The *praipositos* who controlled the ritual process might be accompanied by a silentiary, as during the celebration of the Epiphany.[67] The detailed process of this ceremony also informs us that the sovereign only began his words after everyone had fallen silent.[68] Although the *De Ceremoniis* does not speak of other similar occasions, it is reasonable to imagine that the emperor always created a *silention* before speaking and thus began his address in a quiet atmosphere. In an uproar, the orator sometimes gave up his speech even before delivering it, as Leo VI did when the relics of St Lazarus were arriving at Hagia Sophia.[69] However, we cannot say that the renunciation implies the emperor's inability to control his audience and the weakness of imperial majesty. During the reign of Leo VI, a particular ideology – the resemblance between the terrestrial king and Christ – would have been deliberately developed within the imperial court. In his *ekphrasis* of the arrival of the relics of St Lazarus, Arethas considered Leo VI as Christ because he mingled with everyone and was surrounded by a great crowd.[70] Therefore, it is more appropriate to say that Leo VI changed his mind on his initiative because he believed that, more than an address, a public celebration was effective in propagating his ideology.

Obviously, silence is not always beneficial for the success of an oration: the audience, as Marie-France Auzépy has noted, is easily carried away by the flood of words.[71] We

64 *Op. cit.*, 217.15–17.

65 Ed. and tr. A. Vogt, *Deux discours inédits de Nicétas de Paphlagonie, disciple de Photius: Panégyrique de st. Pierre, Panégyrique de st. Paul* (= *Orientalia Christiana* 23.1) (Roma 1931) 60.

66 A. Christophilopulu, 'Silention', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 44.1 (1951) 79–85 ; J.-C. Cheynet, 'L'empereur et le palais', in J.-C. Cheynet et al (eds), *Le monde byzantin. II. L'empire byzantin (641-1204)* (Paris 2006) 67–87 (78).

67 Constantine VII, *Le livre des cérémonies*, Livre I – Tome I, 35, 265.18–21.

68 *Op. cit.*, Livre II, 10, 67.34–6.

69 Arethas, *Scripta Minora*, II, 15.1–5.

70 *Op.cit.*, II, 13.22–4.

71 M.-F. Auzépy, *L'hagiographie et l'iconoclasme byzantin: le cas de la Vie d'Étienne le Jeune* (Aldershot 1999) 5.

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frequently see Leo VI guide his audience to make an active response. A skilful rhetorician, he knew how to arouse the audience's emotion to propagate his political ideas. In many religious speeches, he expressed the desire to rejoice with his audience by using first-person plural imperatives, such as 'celebrate' (ἑορτάσωμεν), 'rejoice' (εὐφρανθῶμεν), and 'exult' (ἀγαλλιασώμεθα).[72]

Delivering speeches prepared for three particular occasions, Leo VI also called on the audience to react passionately. At the beginning of his homily on the prophet Elijah, the emperor invited listeners to stay with him and share his exultation and thanksgiving.[73] In the speech on the consecration of Patriarch Stephen, Leo VI first addressed a group which had a good relationship with him and rejoiced with them.[74] Then, in a short allocution to his brother, Leo called him to rejoice and enjoy (εὐφραίνου καὶ κατατέρπου).[75] To commemorate his dead father, Leo also encouraged the audience to rejoice and not to mourn,[76] despite the fact that tears seem more fitting the occasion.[77] We see the audience's tears in many rhetorical pieces concerning deceased persons. Three elegies dedicated to Leo VI and Constantine VII asked their audience to cry.[78] The author of the third monody for Christopher Lekapenos did the same.[79] Listeners shed tears not only for defunct emperors but also for suffering ones. Skylitzes recorded in his chronicle an investiture speech of Leo: listening to this address given by a gravely ill emperor, senators lamented and regretted the coming loss of such a sovereign.[80] Moreover, when Leo mentioned his imprisonment in the homily on the prophet Elijah, the audience's mood turned gloomy:

> I wish, o congregation of my honourable friends and fathers, that my words could continue longer. For reason, having gladly undergone these trials – for sweet is the experience of pain once deliverance comes – is loath to part with them and considers separation from them to be harm. But I see on your faces, friendly to me, a dark colour (στυγνὸν χρῶμα) which probably is due to your

72 Leo VI, *Homiliae*, 259.9, 260.27, 432.44.

73 *Op.cit.*, 448.22–4.

74 *Op.cit.*, 300.28–31/47–9.

75 *Op.cit.*, 302.104.

76 *Op.cit.*, 212.501–10.

77 For tears in Byzantine society, see M. Hinterberger, 'Tränen in der byzantinischen Literatur. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Emotionen', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 56 (2006) 27–51; M. Grünbart, 'Der Kaiser weint: Anmerkungen zur imperialen Inszenierung von Emotionen in Byzanz', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 42 (2008) 89–108; P. Odorico, 'Les larmes à Byzance: de la littérature au fait social', in F. Mosetti Casaretto (ed.), *Lachrymae. Mito e metafora del pianto nel Medioevo* (Alessandria 2011) 43–61.

78 I. Ševčenko, 'Poems on the deaths of Leo VI and Constantine VII in the Madrid manuscript of Scylitzes', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23/24 (1969/1970) 185, 187–228 (194, 202 and 210).

79 M. D. Lauxtermann, B*yzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres: texts and contexts*, vol. 2 (Vienna 2019) 96.

80 Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, 192.18–21.

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> affection for me, and I cannot bear to see you saddened. That is why I believe my words to be sufficient.[81]

Powerful emotions could show through acclamations which apparently intended to give the impression of the spontaneous outburst of feeling. They endowed the 'theatre' with solemn sound effects and gave performative recognition to the imperial power. In fact, unanimity and unison was deemed evidence not only of the audience's loyalty but also of the divine inspiration.[82] At the beginning of Lent, the people, at a sign from the *praipositos*, had to pray for the sovereign before and after his address.[83] In the sermon on the Annunciation, Leo VI repeatedly called on his audience to 'utter a cry' (βοῶμεν).[84] The shift from acclamation to silence demonstrates the imperial ability to wield control over sound. Although not always silent, the audience could only enunciate certain formalized words or phrases at the appointed times. Such expressions combined various rhetorical strategies and could create impressive sound effects in the 'theatre'. The acclamations recited at a *silention* include homoioteleuton of the ending -ων/ῶν, anaphora of ὁ δεῖνα καὶ ὁ δεῖνα and that of υἱὲ Θεοῦ, and epiphora of πολλὰ τὰ ἔτη.[85]

Mise-en-scène of Leo VI's speeches

The various special occasions or religious festivals to which Leo VI dedicated his speeches were celebrated with complex and solemn ceremony. Although the *De Ceremoniis* presents ideal regulations rather than actual situations, the Byzantine court was undoubtedly attached to pomp. Even if an emperor was temporarily absent on the front, a smaller court might accompany him to ensure the uninterrupted organization of ceremonies.[86] In this case, it is necessary to interpret the emperor's speeches within relevant ritual frames.

81 Leo VI, *Homiliae*, 450.70–7.

82 For studies on acclamations in Late antiquity, see C. Roueché, 'Acclamations in the Later Roman Empire: new evidence from Aphrodisias', *The Journal of Roman Studies* 74 (1984) 181–99; 'Acclamations at the Council of Chalcedon', in R. Price and M. Whitby (eds), *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400–700* (Liverpool 2009) 169–77. H.-U. Wiemer principally deals with the acclamations of provincial assemblies in Late antiquity, see 'Akklamationen im spätrömischen Reich. Zur Typologie und Funktion eines Kommunikationsrituals', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 86 (2004) 27–73; '*Voces populi*. Akklamationen als Surrogat politischer Partizipation', in E. Flaig and E. Müller-Luckner (eds), *Genesis und Dynamiken der Mehrheitsentscheidung* (Munich 2013) 173–202.

83 Constantine VII, *Le livre des cérémonies*, Livre II, 10, 67.32–9.

84 Leo VI, *Homiliae*, 8.74–6/96.

85 Constantine VII, *Le livre des cérémonies*, Livre I – Tome II, 86, 335.

86 Constantin VII Porphyrogennetos, *Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, ed. and tr. J. F. Haldon (Vienna 1990) 102.136–8.223. See also M. Jeffreys, 'Manuel Komnenos' Macedonian military camps: a glamorous alternative court', in J. Burke and R. Scott (eds), *Byzantine Macedonia: identity image and history* (Leiden 2000) 184–91; M. Mullett, 'Tented ceremony: ephemeral performances under the Komnenoi', in A. Beihammer, S. Constantinou and M. Parani (eds), *Court Ceremonies and Rituals of*

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The venue of the oration is the first factor governing the performative. Leo VI gave most of his speeches in churches in Constantinople, notably Hagia Sophia. Unfortunately, sermons delivered in the Great Church include no description of the scene before the listeners' eyes. But Arethas, in his speech delivered on the anniversary of the translation of the relics of St. Lazarus, provides some clues, recalling the lighting in Hagia Sophia.[87] It is quite possible that the emperor too manipulated lights, natural or artificial, to amaze his listeners and make them experience his majesty. In fact, lamps and candles were vital elements in almost all ceremonies.[88] The emperor was well aware of the effect of a splendid building on the audience, as he indicated in his sermon for the consecration of a church in the Kauleas monastery.[89]

In the second most important church in Constantinople, the Holy Apostles, the emperor would have delivered the funeral oration to his parents on the second anniversary of the death of Basil I,[90] 29 August. On this day, according to the *Kletorologion* of Philotheos, the emperor had to visit this church with great pomp and organize a banquet in the Triklinos of Justinian to commemorate his father.[91] Compared to the Triklinos of Justinian, the Church of the Holy Apostles was a more suitable space for this speech. In this church lay the sarcophagus of Basil I and Eudocia;[92] it is highly probable that a funeral oration was delivered near the tomb. Moreover, unless the text read at church was shorter, and what we possess represents a complete version published for official reasons, this work seems too long for a banquet speech: all ninth- and tenth-century addresses of this genre are relatively short.

A newly built church could draw the audience's attention more easily than Hagia Sophia and Holy Apostles that people regularly attended. In his sermon on the consecration of a church in the Kauleas monastery, the imperial orator, quoting the proverb of Solomon, juxtaposed the praise for righteousness and that for the dedication of a church which could both bring joy to people.[93] What followed was an

Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean (Leiden 2013) 487–513; L. Jones, 'Taking it on the road: the palace on the move', in Tougher (ed.), *The Emperor*, 322–40.

87 Arethas, *Scripta Minora*, II, 14.18–26.

88 See M. G. Parani, '"Rise like the sun, the God-inspired kingship": light-symbolism and the uses of light in middle and late Byzantine imperial ceremonial', in A. Lidov (ed.), *Hierotopy of Light and Fire in the Culture of the Byzantine World* (Moscow 2013) 159–84; I. Potamianos, 'Byzantine church space: a holy mountain of light and shadow', in A. Lidov (ed.), *The Hierotopy of Holy Mountains in Christian Culture* (Moscow 2019) 100–21. According to N. Schibille, the aesthetic experience of Hagia Sophia primarily depends on lights, see N. Schibille, 'Light as an aesthetic constituent in the architecture of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople', in D. Mondini and V. Ivanovici (eds), *Manipolare la luce in epoca premoderna: aspetti architettonici, artistici e filosofici* (Mendrisio 2014) 31–43; *Hagia Sophia and the Byzantine Aesthetic Experience* (Farnham 2014).

89 Leo VI, *Homiliae*, 423.11–16.

90 Adontz, 'La portée historique', 501–13.

91 Philotheos, *Traité*, 221.10–19.

92 Constantine VII, *Le livre des cérémonies*, Livre II, 43, 277.25–6.

93 Leo VI, *Homiliae*, 423.11–16.

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ekphrasis of this church that could guide the audience to contemplate its greatness. The discourse dedicated to the consecration of a shrine erected by Stylianos also contains a detailed description of its structure and decoration.[94] We see in both speeches a combination of word and spectacle: as Leo said himself, 'but let words go around this work in the company of the eyes'.[95] The emperor did not multiply epithets to qualify the magnificence of these buildings but invited the audience to feel their beauty personally. The speech served to control the sights of listeners and determined the sequence of visits, and the performance, in turn, could make a speech easier to understand.

Palaces were venues where the emperor could address a more limited audience. As we have noted several times, on the Monday of the first week of Lent, the emperor delivered a speech at a *silention* at the Magnaura. Though not described in detail by any source, this palace was so magnificent that it offered a spectacle capable of astonishing the diplomat Liudprand of Cremona.[96] Solomon's throne was without question the most precious object in this hall. Placed at the back and separated from the rest of the space by a barrier, this luxuriously decorated throne could easily catch the eye of spectators. The Chrysotriklinos, where Leo VI delivered his banquet speeches on the prophet Elijah and St Demetrios, surpassed all other parts of the Great Palace in its grandeur and magnificence.[97] The most prominent visual element in this room was an image of Christ seated on the throne. In the Triklinos of the 19 Couches, Leo VI delivered a speech at the Epiphany banquet. According to Liudprand, this hall was 'of a wondrous height and beauty',[98] although no source can provide a more detailed description.[99]

The venues were of great significance for speeches not only because they could astonish spectators with magnificent structures and elaborate decorations, but also because they allowed the emperor to manipulate space for the display of his sovereignty. No source mentions the spatial arrangements when the emperor made addresses at churches, but the title of a homily on the Epiphany indicates that it was very likely delivered from the holy altar in Hagia Sophia (ὁμιλία ῥηθεῖσα ... νεοτεύκτου περιβολῆς τῇ θείᾳ προσενηνεγμένης τραπέζῃ).[100] Ascending the dais, Leo would have

94 For a study on these two discourses, see Frolow, 'Deux églises byzantines', 43–91.

95 Leo VI, *Homiliae*, 472.42–3.

96 Liudprand, *The Complete Works*, 197–8. See also J. Ebersolt, *Le Grand Palais de Constantinople et le Livre des cérémonies* (Paris 1910) 68–70.

97 J. M. Featherstone, 'The Chrysotriklinos seen through *De Cerimoniis*', in L. M. Hoffmann (ed.), *Zwischen Polis, Provinz und Peripherie: Beiträge zur byzantinischen Kulturgeschichte* (Wiesbaden 2005) 845–52; 'The Great Palace as reflected in the *De Cerimoniis*', in F. A. Bauer (ed.), *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen – Gestalt und Zeremoniell* (*Byzas 5*) (Istanbul 2006) 47–61 (50–3).

98 Liudprand, *The Complete Works*, 199.

99 For several assumptions about the structure of this hall, see I. Baldini and S. Cosentino, 'Rituali di corte. Il Triclinio dei XIX Letti del Grande Palazzo di Costantinopoli', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 114.1 (2021) 65–110.

100 Leo VI, *Homiliae*, 453.1–4.

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been in full view of his audience.[101] The choreographed positioning of the orator and his audience in other palaces is much more explicit. On the Monday of the first week of Lent, Leo spoke from the top step of stairs at the Magnaura while the audience stood in two lines from the top step to the bottom.[102] We do not know the precise position of the imperial seat at two banquets held in the Chrysotriklinos, but, logically, the emperor and the image of Christ were in the same line. When Leo VI spoke, the audience who looked at him simultaneously noticed the sacred figure. The *Escorial Taktikon* recorded the Easter banquet held in the same hall. On this occasion, the emperor sat alone at a small imperial table, placed in the eastern apse containing the image of Christ.[103] At all events, other tables were inferior to the imperial table (αἱ κάτω τράπεζαι).[104] As for the situation in the Triklinos of the 19 Couches, the emperor spoke in the apse where the imperial table was located, dominating the room and surrounded by the other eighteen tables aligned in two columns. And at the imperial table, the emperor was surrounded by twelve metropolitan bishops, mirroring Jesus and his disciples.[105] In all these cases, the spatial arrangements helped manifest strict hierarchy and the emperor's superiority.

The spectacles embracing Leo's speeches were not only visual but also aural. Besides the audience's acclamations, the orator often made addresses in a musical atmosphere. In general, music was indispensable to court ceremonies.[106] At the beginning of the speech on the consecration of Patriarch Stephen, Leo asked the choir to sing.[107] There were also cantors at the Epiphany banquet during which the emperor most likely delivered a sermon. Philotheos, although not mentioning Leo's speech, referred twice to the musical aspect of the occasion. When the dishes called *touldia* were offered, two servants of the Great Church entered the room with singers and orphans who would invite 'all participants to sing in chorus an antiphonal melody'.[108] Once the song ended, they brought in the four most famous servants of the Great Church who would sing along with all present.[109]

It is noteworthy that in his homily on the Presentation of the Virgin, the emperor mentioned a choir composed of young girls and invited the audience to participate in

101 For the position of the holy altar, see R. J. Mainstone, *Hagia Sophia: architecture, structure, and liturgy of Justinian's Great Church* (New York 1988) 233.

102 Constantine VII, *Le livre des cérémonies*, Livre II, 10, 65.19–7.29.

103 *Le taktikon du cod. Scorialensis gr. R–II–11*, in Oikonomidès (ed.), *Les listes de préséance*, 275.1–7.1.

104 Philotheos, *Traité*, 209.7/19–20.

105 *Op.cit.*, 185.19–21.

106 N. Maliaras, *Die Orgel im byzantinischen Hofzeremoniell des 9. und des 10. Jahrhunderts. Eine Quellenuntersuchung*, Munich 1991, pp. 35–189; A. Berger, 'Die akustische Dimension des Kaiserzeremoniells: Gesang, Orgelspiel und Automaten', in F. A. Bauer (ed.), *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft*, 63–77.

107 Leo VI, *Homiliae*, 299.5–7.

108 Philotheos, *Traité*, 187.4–15.

109 *Op.cit.*, 189.1–7.

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it.[110] In another homily on the Birth of the Virgin, Leo VI also mentioned such a choir.[111] Despite the correspondence between these young girls and pure daughters of the Hebrews in the *Protoevangelium of James*,[112] this reference is not likely to be a simple diegesis. Women singers were not absent from Byzantium. Corippus mentioned a choir of virgins in Justinian's funeral procession.[113] In the eighth-ninth-century *Narratio de S. Sophia*, Justinian is attested as having given two convents as domiciles for female singers.[114] Michael Psellos, in a letter addressed to Constantine, *sebastos* and nephew of the Patriarch Michael Keroularios, spoke of the chantresses (αἱ ἀντᾴδουσαι).[115] Anna Komnene said that his father, following Solomon's example, had appointed male and female singers to the Church of St Paul.[116] The *Timarion* told us that nuns, divided into two choirs, participated in the Vespers of the forefeast of St Demetrios in Thessalonike.[117]

Byzantine architects designed buildings with acoustics very much in mind. It is true that the soundscape of Byzantium is indeed lost, and due to the collapse of many churches and palaces in which Leo VI delivered his speeches, it is hard to reconstruct their influence on sound effects precisely. However, studies on the acoustics of Hagia Sophia and a few churches in Thessaloniki could give us some ideas.[118] Although churches create different sound effects according to their size, structure and decoration, they generally prolong the reverberation and amplify the sound but lower the clarity and intelligibility of words.

110 *Op. cit.*, 267.11–13, 268.26–33.

111 *Op. cit.*, 230.237–8.

112 *Protev. Iacobi.*, VII, 2, ed. and tr. É. de Strycker, S.J., *La forme la plus ancienne du Protévangile de Jacques* (Brussel 1961) 98.

113 Flavius Cresconius Corippus, *In laudem Justini minoris*, III, ed. and tr. A. Cameron (London 1976) 62.43.

114 *Accounts of Medieval Constantinople: The Patria*, IV, ed. and tr. A. Berger (Washington, D.C. 2013) 262–3.

115 Michael Psellus, *Epistulae*, ed. S. Papaioannou (Berlin 2019) 330.38.

116 Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, XV, ed. D. R. Reinsch and A. Kambylis (Berlin 2001) 484.90–4.

117 Pseudo-Luciano, *Timarione*, ed. and tr. R. Romano (Naples 1974) 59.276–9.

118 A. Papalexandrou, 'Echoes of orality in the monumental inscriptions of Byzantium', in L. James (ed.), *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture* (Cambridge 2007) 161–87; 'Perceptions of sound and sonic environments across the Byzantine acoustic horizon', in S. A. Harvey and M. Mullett (eds), *Knowing Bodies, Passionate Souls Sense: perceptions in Byzantium* (Washington, D.C. 2017) 67–85; 'Sacred sound and the reflective cornice', in V. Marinis, A. Papalexandrou and J. Pickett (eds), *Architecture and Visual Culture in the Late Antique and Medieval Mediterranean* (Turnhout 2021) 37–48. B. V. Pentcheva, 'Hagia Sophia and multisensory Aaesthetics', *Gesta* 50/2 (2011) 93–111 (101–6); 'Performing the sacred in Byzantium: image, breath, and sound', *Performance Research* 19/3 (2014) 120–8 (124–7). B. V. Pentcheva and J. S. Abel, 'Icons of sound: auralizing the lost voice of Hagia Sophia', *Speculum* 92/1 (2017) 336–60; W. Woszczyk, 'Acoustics of Hagia Sophia: a scientific approach to the humanities and sacred space', in B. V. Pentcheva (ed.), *Aural Architecture in Byzantium: music, acoustics, and ritual* (London 2018) 176–97. S. E. J. Gerstel et al., 'Soundscapes of Byzantium: the Acheiropoietos Basilica and the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Thessaloniki', *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens* 87/1 (2018) 177–213. S. Antonopoulos et al., 'Soundscapes of Byzantium', *Speculum* 92/1 (2017) 321–35.

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Orations delivered in them by Leo VI would be semantically weakened but ritually reinforced. The echoes arrived from different directions, thus creating a heavenly and solemn atmosphere and demonstrating imperial might.

Smell likewise was an indispensable element for the 'theatre of power'. Hagia Sophia and other churches in Constantinople where Leo VI delivered many of his speeches were filled with pleasant odours.[119] Palaces too resorted to fragrances. In accordance with the *De Ceremoniis*, the eparch of the City had to adorn the imperial exit of the Chrysotriklinos with 'ivy, laurel, myrtle, rosemary, and a variety of fragrant flowers that the season offers'.[120] The *Book of the Eparch* assigned a particular location to perfumers' counters in order that the scent could permeate the vestibule of the imperial palace.[121] Even for a temporary court stationed on the battlefield, perfumes were indispensable.[122]

Conclusion

Just as religious rituals offered a multisensory experience to participants,[123] Leo VI's speeches created a 'theatre of power' to persuade his audience and manifest his supreme authority. Although the emperor delivered his addresses in various places, and we cannot reconstruct with certainty all these 'theatres', there were some common characteristics since the public appearance of the emperor was always carefully choreographed. When Leo VI communicated with his listeners to convince them to approve of his interpretations, the grandiose spectacle also played a part. Sparkling lights, fragrances, embellishments and beautiful sounds led the audience to an emotional experience of the greatness of imperial power over and above any intellectual understanding of imperial ideology. Throughout this process, listeners were not passive witnesses but active participants interacting with the emperor, the protagonist in the 'theatre'.

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119 Various scholars have noted fragrances inside churches, see L. James, 'Senses et Sensibility in Byzantium', *Art History* 27.4 (2004) 522–37 (525–6); B. Caseau, 'Incense and fragrances: from house to church. A study of the introduction of incense in the Early Byzantine Christian churches', in M. Grünbart et al (eds), *Material Culture and Well-Being in Byzantium (400-1453)* (Vienna 2007) 75–92. For a complete study on the relationship between odours and Christianity, see S. A. Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: ancient Christianity and the olfactory imagination* (Berkeley 2006).

120 Constantine VII, *Le livre des cérémonies*, Livre I – Tome I, 1, 7.20–2.

121 Leo VI the Wise, *Das Eparchenbuch*, ed. and tr. J. Koder (Vienna 1991) 110.465–8.

122 Constantin VII, *Three Treatises*, 108.219–22.

123 See B. Caseau and E. Neri (eds), *Rituels religieux et sensorialité (Antiquité et Moyen Âge). Parcours de recherche* (Milano 2021).

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