



**Seated musician**

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## On display

**Title/Description:** Seated musician

**Measurements:** h. 137 x w. 76 x d. 140 mm

**Accession Number:** 650

**Historic Period:** Late Classic period (AD 600-900)

**Credit Line:** Purchased with support from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1976

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Hundreds of ceramic figurines have been found on the island of Jaina off the west coast of Yucatán (Corson, 1976; Piña Chan, 1968). Their quality varies, but the finest are among the most outstanding of Meso-american ceramic works. Most of them date to the Classic period, and are believed to have been part of funerary assemblages in primary burials and in secondary burials of desiccated bones. Thejaina figurines represent a broad thematic range: dwarfs, warriors, ballplayers and others were shaped by hand and with the aid of a mould. Many functioned as whistles and rattles.

This delicately modelled figure represents a seated musician holding a trumpet in his right hand. His face is of the classical Maya type with an elongated, slightly bent nose. His left elbow rests on the knee to lend additional support to the long, tapering body of the instrument, which has a striated band on the outer rim, and an unidentified object, perhaps a textile, extending from the interior. The musician wears a knotted head-band and a hip-cloth with a band tied in front.

Musicians were an important part of Maya court life, but are not commonly represented in ceramic figurines (Miller, 1975: 4, *see frontis* for this piece). Depictions of musicians appear more frequently in two-dimensional imagery such as the mural paintings of Bonampak and painted ceramic vessels (Miller, 1988). Perhaps the closest comparable example of a trumpeter is from the early Classic period in Veracruz (Parsons *et al.*, 1988: no. 97). The narrow end of the trumpet has been restored; the left arm has been re-attached.

Entry taken from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection 3 volume catalogue, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997).

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## Provenance

Purchased by the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia from John A. Stokes Jnr., New York in 1976 out of funds provided by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury.

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