

MICHAEL LEVY: COMPOSER & PERFORMER OF THE LYRE OF ANTIQUITY



Michael Levy is a multi-talented musician & prolific composer, who since 2006, has focused his unique skills, at both intensively researching & recreating the ancient playing-techniques of the lyres of antiquity. Basing these techniques from both illustrations of ancient lyre players and the various playing-techniques still practiced today in Africa, he has independently produced almost 30 albums of his mostly original evocations of ancient lyre music since 2008.

In 2013, Michael's contribution to attempting to recreate the music of antiquity received academic recognition and was featured in an article published in the summer 2013 edition of *"The American Harp Journal"*. The paper, by Diana Rowan, was entitled [*"The Universal Lyre: Three Perspectives"*](#).

Since 2014, Michael has also been closely collaborating [with Luthieros; the specialist replica lyre makers in Thessaloniki, Greece](#), in their inspirational "Lyre 2.0 Project" - dedicated to reintroducing the beautiful lyres of antiquity back into the hands of every modern musician, a project now featured as a new entry in the world-renowned "Ancient History Encyclopaedia":

<http://etc.ancient.eu/2016/01/11/luthieros-lyre-2-0-project/>

As part of Michael's ongoing collaboration with Luthieros, he performed his first series of international live lyre performances in Thessaloniki in October 2015. Each year from 2012, as part of the UK *"Museums at Night"* festival, Michael is invited to perform his lyre, live, at the world famous Roman Baths at Bath Spa. He has also performed live at the Caerleon Roman Fortress and Baths as well as the Chester Roman Festival.

For the majority of Michael's earlier albums, he played an evocation of an ancient Biblical lyre called the *"kinnor"* – once played by his very own, very ancient Levite ancestors in the Temple of

Jerusalem, to accompany the singing of the Levitical Choir. His instrument is based on depictions of Temple lyres depicted on ancient Jewish coins minted at the time of the Simon Bar Kokhba revolt against the Roman occupation of Judea (132–136 CE). The kinnor is documented in both the Biblical texts & the writings of the 1st century Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, who actually witnessed the Levites play their lyres in the Temple of Jerusalem during the 1st century CE.

As the kinnor is strikingly similar to the ancient Egyptian lyre of the New Kingdom, the ancient Greek kithara & later, the Roman kithara, Michael has also explored evoking & recreating the music of ancient Egypt, the music of ancient Greece & the music of ancient Rome, with both original compositions for lyre in a selection of some of the original ancient musical modes, as well as arrangements of some of some of the actual music of ancient Greece.

In his more recent albums, he has focussed on recording with more authentic replica ancient Greek tortoise shell lyres and the kithara of the Golden Age of Classical Greece (hand-made in modern Greece by Luthieros).

USE OF MICHAEL'S HISTORIC MUSIC IN MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS AROUND THE WORLD

In the summer of 2013, tracks from Michael's albums "*Ode to Ancient Rome*" & "*Echoes of Ancient Rome*" were used in support of an exhibition on Roman dining in Room 3 of the British Museum "[Silver Service - Fine Dining in Roman Britain](#)" & was invited to perform live at a British Museum Members Evening. Michael was also invited to perform his lyre as historical background music for the event "*A Roman Feast from The Classical Cookbook*" at the British Museum, hosted by the historical food specialist, author & TV chef, Sally Grainger.

In 2014, Michael's arrangement for solo lyre, of the 3400 year old Hurrian Hymn Text H6, was used in support of an exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum, "*Mesopotamia - Inventing Our World*". Michael's live performance of the Hurrian Hymn (Text H6), the oldest fragment of written music so far discovered in History, [also featured in an article in the January 2011 edition "The Biblical Archaeology Review"](#).

Tracks from Michael's albums "*A Well Tuned Lyre - The Just Intonation of Antiquity*", "*The Ancient Greek Modes*" & "*The Ancient Egyptian Harp*" featured in the exhibition "*In the Shadow of Olympus*", (*Vestnu Olympu*) held at the National Museum of Prague, between December 2012 - March 2013.

In 2011, a selection of Michael's lyre music featured as part of the British Festival of Archaeology Week, as background music for the show "*Skies of Ancient Egypt & Greece*" at the Planetarium in the World Museum, Liverpool, UK.

USE OF MICHAEL'S MUSIC IN RADIO, TELEVISION & MEDIA

In 2015, [Michael gave a full length interview about his lyre music](#) with the New York radio producer and presenter, Zach Martin.

In 2014, Michael's Roman-themed music [was featured in a BBC Radio 5 Live broadcast to accompany a reading from Pliny the Younger's account of the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE](#). Also in 2014, tracks from Michael's album "A Well Tuned Lyre - The Just Intonation of Antiquity" were used in Michael Goldfarb's Sunday Feature programme on BBC Radio 3, "[Faith Without God](#)".

In January 2013, Michael's arrangement of "The First Delphic Hymn to Apollo" (circa 128 BCE) from his album, "A Well Tuned Lyre - The Just Intonation of Antiquity" featured in the broadcast, "[The Story of Music Question Time](#)" on BBC Radio 3, presented by Sue Perkins and Tom Service. Also in 2013, on BBC Radio 4, "The Wisdom of Minerva" (a track from Michael's album, "Ode to Ancient Rome") [featured in "Tuning the Body" - episode 12 of Matt Thompson's series, "A History of Noise"](#), presented by Professor David Hendy.

In November 2012, Michael's arrangements for Biblical lyre, of the traditional Klezmer melodies "Sherele" & "Ale Brider" from his album "Lyre of the Levites", were used as the theme music for the BBC Radio 4 ten-part "Book at Bedtime" series – "[The Liars Gospel](#)" by Naomi Alderman (a book set in Roman-occupied 1st century Judea).

Michael's lyre music also featured in episode 2 of the 4-part BBC television documentary series "[The Dark Ages: An Age of Light](#)" by ZCZ Films, directed & presented by the Sunday Times art critic, Waldemar Januszczak.

Michael collaborated with the composers Michael & Maryanne Tedstone in the production of an ancient Roman-themed album "SPQR" for use in television & film (recorded for Felt Music at the renowned George Martin Air Edel Studios in London).

Internationally, in 2012, [Michael was also featured in a show on the German Radio Station "Freies Radio Wüste Welle" in a full length interview](#), including many tracks from his albums and his albums.

Michael's album "The Ancient Egyptian Harp" was featured on the German Radio Station WDR3 in a broadcast about the arched harp from Myanmar.

USE OF MICHAEL'S MUSIC IN FILM & THEATRE PRODUCTIONS

Music from Michael's album "Apollo's Lyre" featured in the feature film by Sean Kane, about the life of the ancient Greek Philosopher Plato, "[Plato: The Cave](#)" and Michael's historic music also featured in the Medieval-themed film "[Becket 2](#)" produced by Michael D Perkins.

Tracks from Michael's album "The Ancient Greek Lyre" featured in the Mexico National University Theatre Festival: XXI Festival Nacional (e Internacional) de Teatro Universitario. The play, directed by Ricardo Ruiz Lezama, was about the ancient Greek myth of "Pygmalion" (it is about a sculptor who

falls in love with his creation. He prays to Aphrodite to meet someone like the sculpture, but Aphrodite knows the true and hidden desire of Pygmalion: he wants Galatea, his sculpture, to come to life. Aphrodite, touched by Pygmalion's love, grants him his wish).

In 2015, Michael's composition "*Nero's Lyre*" was featured in the London ballet production by Riccardo Buscarini, "[No Lander](#)":

"A melancholic and subtle meditation on the themes of Homer's Odyssey, No Lander reflects upon longing and belonging"

USE OF MICHAEL'S MUSIC IN AUDIO BOOKS & PODCASTS

Tracks from Michael's albums "*Apollo's Lyre*" & "*The Ancient Greek Lyre*" featured in an audio book by the US author, TM Camp, called "[The Cradle](#)" (a book inspired, in part, by the story of 'Baucis and Philemon' from Ovid).

Tracks from Michael's Biblical lyre-themed album, "*King David's Lyre; Echoes of Ancient Israel*" was featured in Rob Monaco's "[History of Our World](#)" series of iTunes podcasts, in the series about the ancient Hebrews.

Clips from Michael's album "*The Ancient Egyptian Harp*" were featured in a new CD of children's stories about the ancient world, "[Music in Stories](#)" by the UK author, Robina Wilson.

Michael's composition "*Ancient Lyre Strings*" (track 18, "*Musical Adventures in Time Travel*") was used in the accompanying CD to an educational publication by A & C Black: "[Music Express Book 3](#)"

COMMERCIAL USE OF MICHAEL'S MUSIC

A clip from Michael's Album, "*A Well Tuned Lyre - The Just Intonation of Antiquity*" [was used in a radio advertising campaign](#), produced by the Postmodern Company, on behalf of the USA-based restaurant chain, "Noodles & Company".

The track "*Rites of Baal*" from Michael's ancient Mesopotamian-themed album, "*Ancient Visions - New Compositions for an Ancient Lyre*" was used to promote the historical-themed board game "[Ancient Civilizations; Cities & Settlements](#)", by Bajosocial Productions.

MICHAEL'S WORK FEATURED IN INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIA

Michael's arrangement of "*The First Delphic Hymn to Apollo*" from his album "*The Ancient Greek Lyre*" was used in a DVD lecture "*The Great Tours: Greece & Turkey*" by Professor John R Hale of the University of Louisville, produced by "The Great Courses Teaching Company"

Michael's arrangement of the First Delphic Hymn in just intonation (from his album "*A Well Tuned Lyre - The Just Intonation of Antiquity*") was licensed for use in both a course on ancient Greek architecture hosted by the Oxford Royale Academy Prep & for an on-line humanities course run by MindEdge in the USA.

Music from Michael's albums "*A Well Tuned Lyre - The Just Intonation of Antiquity*" & "*Echoes of Ancient Rome*" [were used in a series of scholarly lectures & videos on the Pythagorean influence on the design of Byzantine architecture](#), in a conference at the UCLA presented by Dr Ruth Dwyer.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Michael was born in Liverpool in 1968 & studied Philosophy at the University of Hull. After living in Manchester, where for many years, he worked as a piano teacher, he now lives with his wife & daughter, Rosalind & Rosie, on the border of semi-rural South Wales, UK: where in his new role, as a full-time "*Musical Shaman*", he continues to his relentless quest - *recreating the forgotten magic of the music of the ancient world...*

