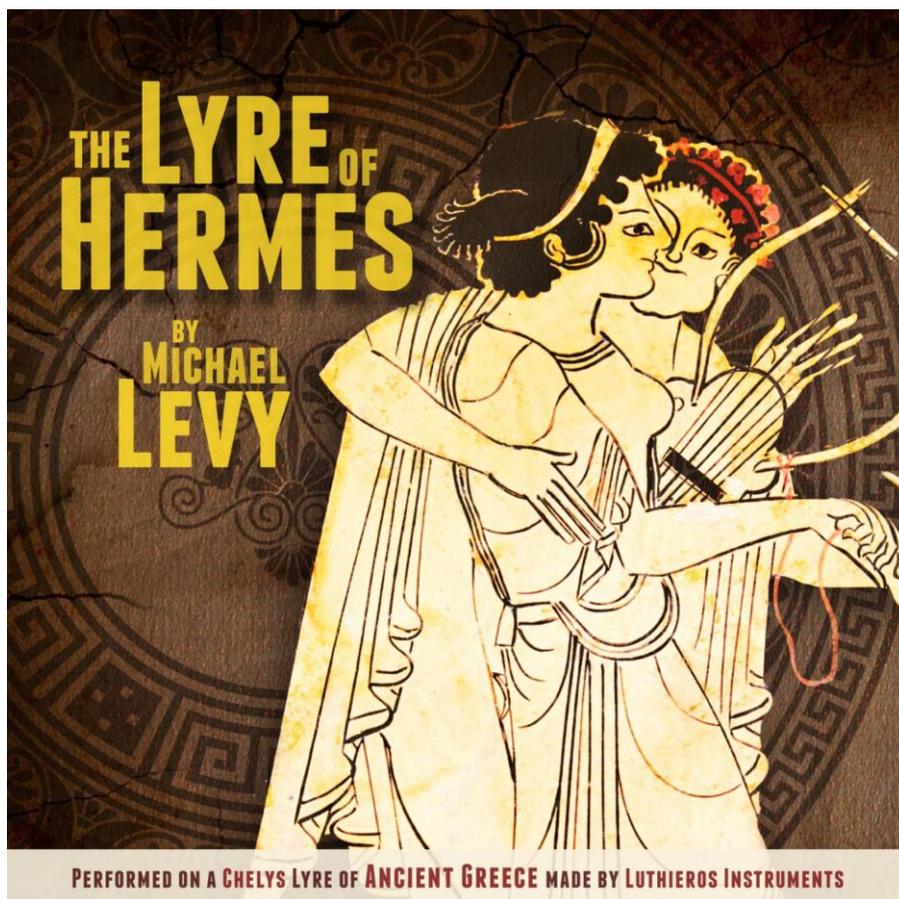


THE LYRE OF HERMES



This album is the sequel to my album, ["The Lyre of Apollo - The Chelys Lyre of Ancient Greece"](#). Both of these albums are part of an exciting collaboration between myself and [Lutherios Ancient & Modern Music Instruments](#) for their inspirational ["Lyre 2.0 Project"](#) - dedicated to reintroducing the beautiful lyre of antiquity back into our much aesthetically poorer, bland modern world. Their vision is one I share and which continues to inspire me - maybe, someday soon, the beautiful lyre of antiquity will once again resonate the 21st century and beyond, with its haunting, ancient beauty.

"Lutherios" is comprised of members of the Koumartzis family of specialist musical instrument makers, who are based in Thessaloniki, Greece. Their *"Lyre 2.0 Project"* recently featured in an article in ["Lifo Magazine"](#) - one of the most widely read cultural magazines in Greece.

The lyre featured in this album is their handcrafted *"Lyre of Apollo III"* model, a [chelys](#) form of lyre. The literal translation of the ancient Greek word *"chelys"* means "tortoise shell lyre"; the lyre made with a resonator fashioned from a tortoise shell carapace over which a soundboard of taut leather was stretched:



However, as well as an actual tortoise shell carapace , the term '*chelys*' could also refer to a lyre with a resonator made of wood, but carved into the general form of a tortoise. Indeed, the latter would have produced a much richer, resonant tone, as wood is a far lighter and resonant material to construct a musical instrument from, than a much denser tortoise shell parapace, in addition to its irregular thickness. The 'Lyre of Apollo III' was therefore constructed in accordance with the latter form of *chelys*.

The definitive proof that in antiquity, the *chelys* was also sometimes made out of wood fashioned in the accurate *portrayal* of a tortoise shell, can be found in this fascinating passage by [Philostratus the Elder](#), in his writings "[Imagines](#)":

*"All the wood required for the lyre is of boxwood, firm and free from knots – there is no ivory anywhere about the lyre, for men did not yet know wither the elephant or the use they were to make of its tusks. The tortoise-shell is black, **but its portrayal is***

accurate and true to nature in that the surface is covered with irregular circles which touch each other and have yellow eyes”

The word 'chelys' was said to have been invented by Hermes. Hermes, the messenger of the Olympian gods, is the son of Zeus and the nymph Maia, daughter of Atlas and one of the Pleiades. According to the Homeric Hymn to Hermes (475) he was attracted by sounds of music while walking on the banks of the Nile, and found they emanated from the shell of a tortoise across which were stretched tendons which the wind had set in vibration. The story is recounted here, in a passage from ['Encyclopedia Mythica'](#), which goes on to describe how the chelys became forever associated with Apollo, the ancient Greek god of music:

"According to legend, Hermes was born in a cave on Mount Cyllene in Arcadia. Zeus had impregnated Maia at the dead of night while all other gods slept. When dawn broke amazingly he was born. Maia wrapped him in swaddling bands, then resting herself, fell fast asleep. Hermes, however, squirmed free and ran off to Thessaly. This is where Apollo, his brother, grazed his cattle. Hermes stole a number of the herd and drove them back to Greece. He hid them in a small grotto near to the city of Pylos and covered their tracks. Before returning to the cave he caught a tortoise, killed it and removed its entrails. Using the intestines from a cow stolen from Apollo and the hollow tortoise shell, he made the first lyre. When he reached the cave he wrapped himself back into the swaddling bands. When Apollo realized he had been robbed he protested to Maia that it had been Hermes who had taken his cattle. Maia looked to Hermes and said it could not be, as he is still wrapped in swaddling bands. Zeus the all powerful intervened saying he had been watching and Hermes should return the cattle to Apollo. As the argument went on, Hermes began to play his lyre. The sweet music enchanted Apollo, and he offered Hermes to keep the cattle in exchange for the lyre. Apollo later became the grand master of the instrument, and it also became one of his symbols"

MY EXPERIENCE OF PLAYING "THE LYRE OF APOLLO"

Inspirationally authentic - this was my first observation! In particular, the unique, exotic timbre of this lyre is mainly thanks to the much more authentically 'bench-shaped' bridge - much wider at the top and flatter than the standard guitar-style 'A-shaped' bridges which feature on my other lyres.

The shape of the lyre bridge is really significant in the creation of the unique tone of the lyre, for whereas the modern guitar-style 'A-shaped' bridge is designed to be buzz-free, creating a pure, harp-like tone almost all detailed illustrations of ancient

lyres seem to show the flatter, bench-shaped bridge, which creates a completely different tone!

The wider top of these 'bench-shaped' bridges creates a subtle but very pleasant 'buzz' to the overall timbre - rather like that of a sitar, or a much more subtle version of the [begena](#), a lyre still played today in Ethiopia, where the inherent buzz of the archaic flatter lyre bridge has become the primary feature of the particular tone of this bass register 10-string lyre.

Every detail of this beautiful lyre has been designed with authenticity in mind, even down to the incredibly useful and aesthetically pleasing braided '*telamon*' - the strap traditionally used to play the lyre with two hands simultaneously, which contrary to the prevailing prejudice for a belief in the 'urban myth' of the monotony of monophony in the ancient world, this is exactly how these beautiful instruments were indeed designed to be played in antiquity, as illustrated in countless actual ancient depictions of lyre players. All of these beautiful lyres, lovingly hand-crafted by Luthieros are indeed, divine artefacts, reintroduced into the modern world...



THE TRACKS

All of the tracks in this album are composed in a selection of the original ancient Greek modes, in the wonderfully pure just intonation of antiquity. The tracks are inspired by the unique characteristics of some of the Nymphs of ancient Greek mythology:

1. Naiads (Water Nymphs) - a spontaneous improvisation for replica ancient Greek chelys lyre in the dreamy, soft and feminine sounding ancient Greek Hypolydian Mode (equivalent intervals as F-F on the white notes of the piano and misnamed the 'Lydian' mode in the Middle Ages), in the wonderfully pure just intonation of antiquity. In this improvisation, I wish to conjure through music, an evocation of the beautiful painting, "*Hylas and the Nymphs*" by [John William Waterhouse](#):



2. Anthousai (Nymphs of the Flowers) - a spontaneous improvisation for solo chelys (tortoise shell form) replica ancient Greek lyre, in the warm & exhilarating ancient Greek Hypophrygian mode, (equivalent intervals as G-G on the white notes of the piano and misnamed the 'Mixolydian' Mode in the Middle Ages), in the just intonation of antiquity.

3. Dryads (Nymphs of the Forest) - a spontaneous improvisation for solo chelys (tortoise shell form) replica ancient Greek lyre in the intense and mystical sounding ancient Greek Dorian mode (equivalent intervals as E-E on the white notes of the piano and misnamed the 'Phrygian' Mode in the Middle Ages), in the just intonation of antiquity.

4. Nephelai (Nymphs of the Clouds) - a spontaneous improvisation for solo chelys (tortoise shell form) replica ancient Greek lyre, in the intense ancient Greek Hypodorian mode (equivalent intervals as A-A on the white notes of the piano and misnamed the 'Aeolian' Mode in the Middle Ages), in the just intonation of antiquity.

5. Asteriai (Nymphs of the Stars) - a spontaneous improvisation for solo chelys (tortoise shell form) replica ancient Greek lyre, in the profound and timeless ancient Greek Phrygian mode, (equivalent intervals as D-D on the white notes of the piano

and misnamed the 'Dorian' Mode in the Middle Ages) in the just intonation of antiquity.

6. Lampades (Nymphs of Hades) - This track is a spontaneous improvisation for solo chelys (tortoise shell form) replica ancient Greek lyre, in the ancient Greek Chromatic Phrygian Mode (equivalent intervals as DEFG#ABCD) - this unsettling mode can also be heard in an actual surviving fragment of written music from ancient Greece, in a dramatic fragment from [Ajax](#), known as "[Tecmessa's Lament](#)".

