

# ANCIENT VISIONS – NEW COMPOSITIONS FOR AN ANCIENT LYRE

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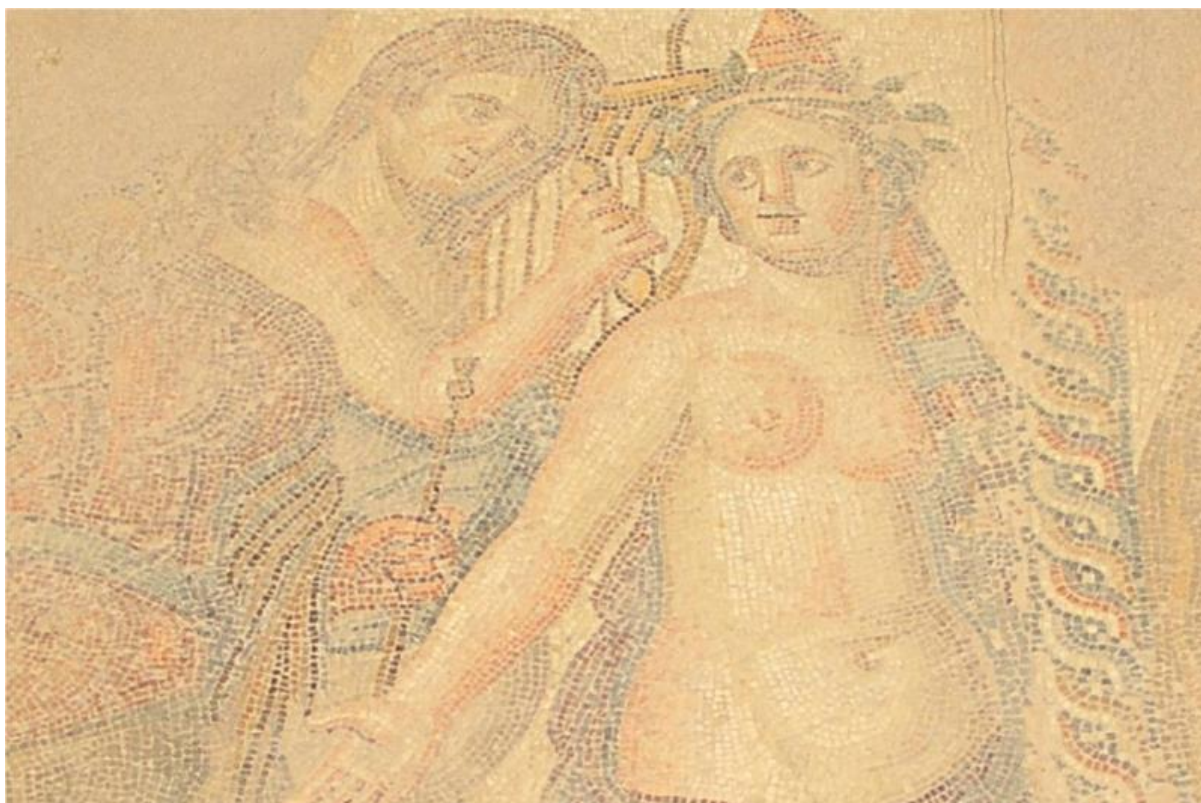


This unique album features original compositions for replica ancient lyre, in a selection of some of the ancient Middle Eastern Modes, and ancient lyre-playing techniques, not heard since c. 700BCE...

The lyre I play, is a replica of the type of portable wooden lyres played throughout the Middle East, over 3500 years ago. I experiment with a unique style of percussive lyre playing in two of the tracks, "Shadow of the Ziggurat" & "Lyres of Nineveh". This technique entails hitting the strings with a wooden baton (as opposed to plucking the strings with a plectrum). This ancient technique can clearly be seen in the famous Bas Reliefs of lyre players & musicians in the ruins of the Palace at Nineveh, c.700BCE:



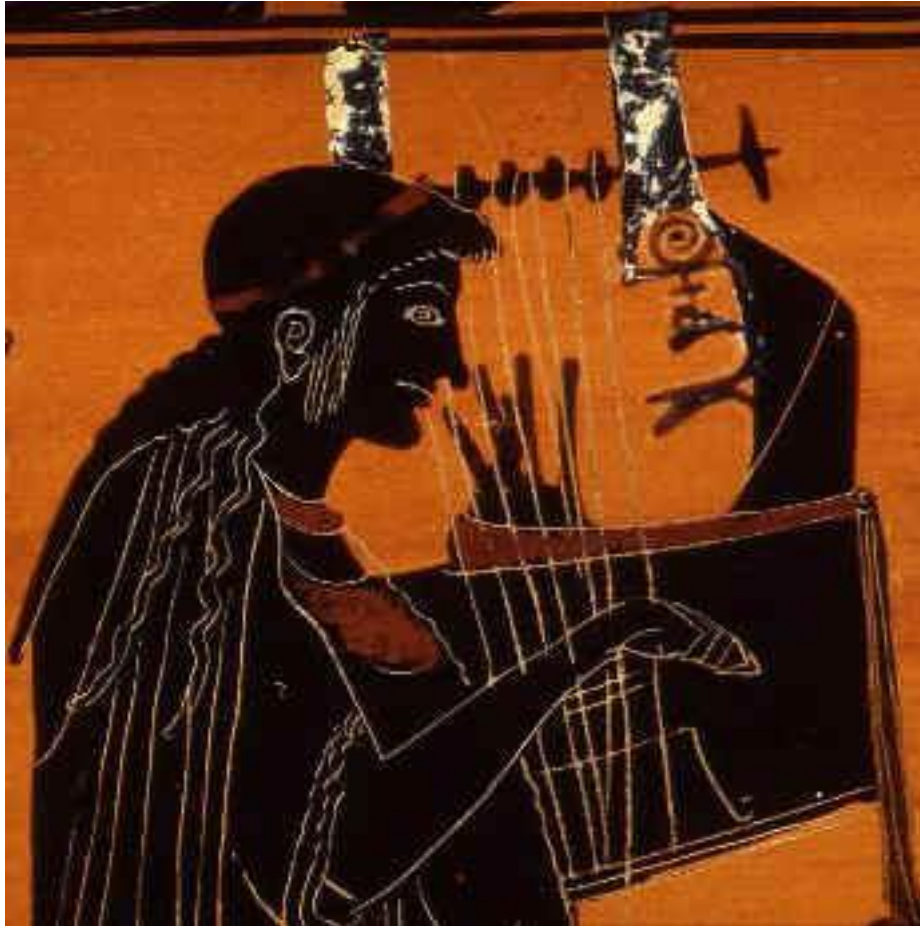
This unique style of lyre playing also appears to have radiated from ancient Mesopotamia to parts of the Mediterranean - in the famous Paphos Mosaics in Cyprus, the many illustrations of lyre players clearly show a small wooden baton, not a plectrum, in the left hand of the lyre player:



All the various lyre-playing techniques heard in this album, are authentically based on lyre-playing styles which have remarkably survived from Antiquity & which still can be heard today in the amazing lyres still played throughout the continent of Africa, where unlike the rest of the Western world, a precious remnant of the cross-cultural influences from the around ancient world have miraculously survived.

Some of these lyre-playing techniques include the “block & strum” method, still practiced today by the Krar Lyre players of Eritrea in East Africa – this technique allows the player to strum rhythm & basic chords on the lyre, similar to an acoustic guitar. This technique entails blocking strings with the left hand which are not required and leaving open only the strings which form the required intervals, which then can be strummed with a plectrum in the left hand.

Ancient illustrations of Kithara players seem to infer that this technique was also prominent in Ancient Greece – many illustrations clearly depict the left of the lyre player blocking/dampening the strings with the left hand whilst strumming the open strings with a plectrum in their right hand:



Other lyre playing techniques include the use of tremolo (based on the style of Egyptian Simsimiyya Lyre Players still heard today), alternating between harp-like finger plucked tones played with the left hand, and guitar-like plectrum-plucked tones with the right hand, using basic finger-plucked intervals/chords with the left hand to form a basic harmonic background for the melodic line being played with the plectrum in the right hand:



Travel back in time with me now, on an amazing "Musical Adventure in Time Travel", back to ancient Mesopotamia, hear once more, the Lyres of Nineveh, and see once more, the ancient splendour of the Ziggurats of Ur...

