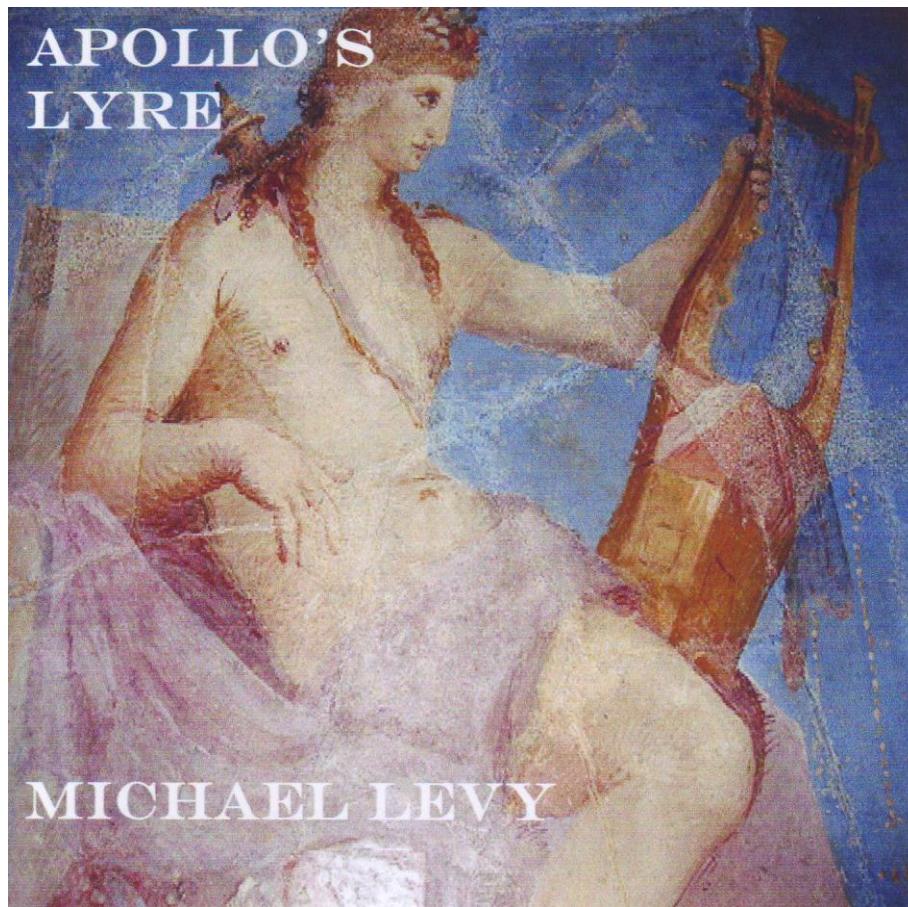


APOLLO'S LYRE



MICHAEL LEVY

According to ancient Greek tradition, Apollo was the god of music, and above all, a master of the lyre. Here is the fascinating background to this ancient Greek mythology...

"Hermes was born on Mount Cyllene in Arcadia. The story is told in the Homeric Hymn to Hermes. His mother, Maia, had been secretly impregnated by Zeus. Maia wrapped the infant in blankets but Hermes escaped while she was asleep. Hermes ran to Thessaly, where Apollo was grazing his cattle. The infant Hermes stole a number of his cows and took them to a cave in the woods near Pylos, covering their tracks. In the cave, he found a tortoise and killed it, then removed the insides. He used one of the cow's intestines and the tortoise shell and made the first lyre. Apollo complained to Maia that her son had stolen his cattle, but Hermes had already replaced himself in the blankets she had wrapped him in, so Maia refused to believe Apollo's claim. Zeus intervened and, claiming to have seen the events, sided with Apollo. Hermes then began to play music on the lyre he had invented. Apollo, a god of music, fell in love with the

instrument and offered to allow exchange of the cattle for the lyre. Hence, Apollo became a master of the lyre” (quoted from Wikipedia).

The concept of this album is to restore the sound once more, the Lyres of Apollo – both the large wooden lyre, known in ancient Greece as the [Kithara](#), once favoured by the professional musicians of ancient Greece...



...and the skin-membrane lyre, known in ancient Greece as the [Lyra](#) – the lyre made from a tortoise shell resonator, over which was stretched a soundboard of taut leather...



THE ANCIENT GREEK MODES

The names of musical modes in use today, (e.g. Dorian, Mixolydian etc) although having the same names as the original Greek musical modes, were actually misnamed during the Middle Ages! Apparently, the Greeks counted intervals from top to bottom. When medieval ecclesiastical scholars tried to interpret the ancient texts, they counted from bottom to top, jumbling the information. The misnamed medieval modes are only distinguished by the ancient Greek modes of the same name, by being labelled “Church Modes”. It was due to a misinterpretation of the Latin texts of Boethius, that medieval modes were given the wrong Greek names!

According to an article on Greece in the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, the original ancient Greek names for species of the octave included the following (on white keys):

B-B: Mixolydian

E-E: Dorian

A-A: Hypodorian

D-D: Phrygian

G-G: Hypophrygian

C-C: Lydian

F-F: Hypolydian

For what Plato & Aristotle had this to say about these ancient musical modes,
please see this fascinating link:

<http://www.pathguy.com/modes.htm>

THE REPERTOIRE

The repertoire in this unique album consists of a selection of original compositions based on ancient Greek scales. The album also features improvisations on a mystical Middle Eastern scale, Ancient Hebrew scales and an Ancient Egyptian scale...

1) "Apollo's Lyre" – an original composition for replica Kithara-style lyre, in the Ancient Greek Hypophrygian Mode.

2) "Ode To Orpheus" – an original composition on replica skin-membrane lyre, in the Ancient Greek Hypodorian Mode.

3) "Hymn To Zeus" – an original composition on replica Kithara-style lyre, in the Ancient Greek Dorian Mode.

4) “Magic of the Ancients” – an improvisation on a mystical Middle Eastern scale:

EFG#ABCD#E

This scale and its variants are known as [“Hijaz” modes.](#)

5) “Ode To Athena” – an original composition for replica skin-membrane lyre in the Ancient Greek in the Hypodorian mode.

6) “The Holy Tabernacle” – an improvisation on the Ancient Hebrew “Ahava Raba” mode:

EFG#ABCDE

The ancient 3000 year old Hebrew “[Kinnor](#)” was almost identical to the later Greek Kithara – coincidence or tantalizing evidence of an ancient cross-cultural musical exchange of ideas? A fascinating possibility!

This lyre was the “harp” of King David, and it was later played by the Levitical Ensemble in the Temple of Jerusalem to accompany the singing of the Levitical Choir...

7) “The Wisdom of Solomon” – an improvisation on the Ancient Hebrew “Misheberakh” scale:

EF#GAA#BC#DE

This same scale can be heard in an example of ancient Greek music, called “Tecmessa’s Lament” – coincidence, or yet more possible evidence of an ancient cross-cultural exchange of musical ideas?

Below is a modern orchestral arrangement of this unique ancient Greek melody:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rw0D-cCXYY>

8) “Hymn To Horus” - this piece for solo kithara-style lyre, is based on a traditional Egyptian folk song. It is in the Natural Minor mode – which is very common in the Middle East, both now and in ancient times. During the New Kingdom of Ancient Egypt, over 3000 years ago, wooden lyres very similar to the later Kithara lyre of Ancient Greece were introduced to Egypt for the first time, most likely from the ancient Canaanites.

9) “Hymn To Hathor” – an improvisation on replica Kithara-style lyre, based on an ancient Egyptian minor pentatonic scale.

The late [Professor Hans Hickmann](#) of the Museum of Cairo, deciphered this pentatonic scale from ancient Egyptian tomb illustrations, which represented an ancient system of musical notation called "[Chironomy](#)"; this is a system of hand gestures which were used, to denote both the pitch and ornamentation of a melody.