

ECHOES OF ANCIENT ROME

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MICHAEL LEVY



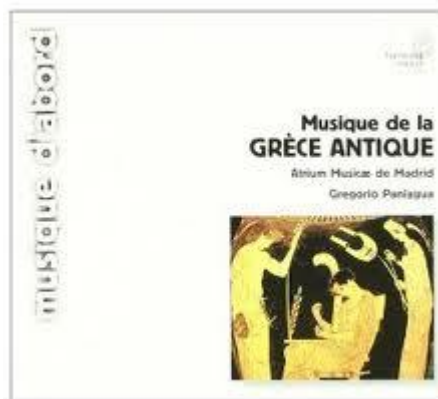
This album comprises of a series of new compositions for an ancient lyre, to evoke once more, the lost music of ancient Rome! These set of composition for my replica Kithara-style lyre is my attempt to restore a precious remnant of the music of ancient Rome, which for the most part, is now forever lost...

Unlike ancient Greece, tragically, virtually no surviving written music has survived from ancient Rome. These set of composition for my replica Kithara-style lyre is my attempt to restore a precious remnant of the music of ancient Rome, which is now forever lost - so far, all that has been discovered, is one pityful fragment by Terence:

TERENCIO, HECYRA 861 (Terence). Versus 861. Hecyra of Terence. Codex Victorianus Laurentianus XXXVIII-

24, saec. X

This piece can be heard track 19, on the recording "Musique de la Grece Antique":



Here are some more details from the notes for this unique album, about the only surviving fragment of written music ever found from ancient Rome:

"We have added the only surviving musical fragment of Imperial Rome: four mutilated measures from a work by Terence. It is as if nothing were left of the Acropolis but a few scattered bits of columns and a pair of ruined capitals"

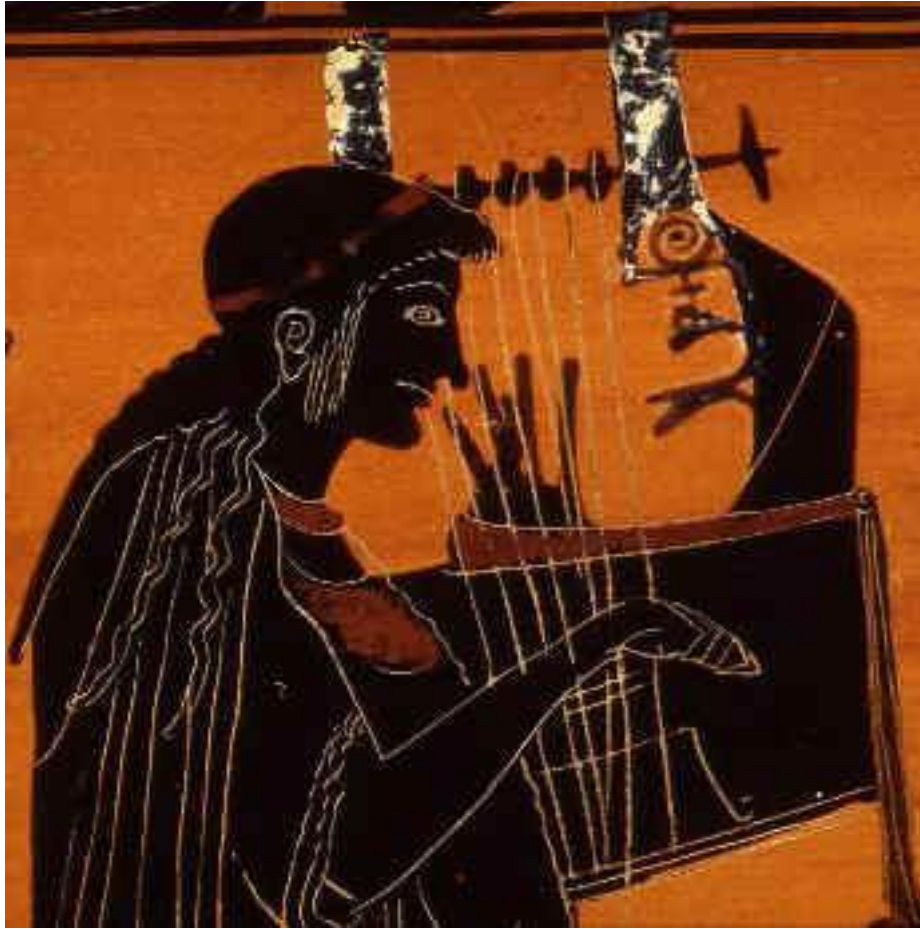
All the various lyre-playing techniques heard in this album, are authentically based on lyre-playing styles which have remarkably survived from Antiquity & which still can be heard today in the amazing lyres still played throughout the continent of Africa, where unlike the rest of the Western world,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

THE ANCIENT MUSICAL MODES USED IN THIS ALBUM

Due to the known prominent influence of Ancient Greek culture in the Roman world, in order to create an authentic-sounding evocation of what the solo lyre music of ancient Rome may have once sounded, I decided to base the compositions in a selection some of the original Ancient Greek modes, with

melodies inspired mostly by a "Musical Adventure in Time Travel" of the
Temples of Ancient Rome.

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

Full details can be found here:

<http://www.midicode.com/tunings/greek.shtml>

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

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

THE TRACKS

1. Echoes of Ancient Rome

A requiem to the tragically lost music of ancient Rome, composed in the mournful ancient Greek Phrygian Mode.

2. The Temple of Mars

Mars was the Roman god of war – this piece is composed in the ancient Greek Dorian mode, which according to Plato & Aristotle, could inspire bravery in battle!

3. The Temple of Venus

Venus was the Roman goddess of Love. This piece is composed in the gentle-sounding ancient Greek Hypolydian mode.

4. The Temple of Saturn

Saturn was the Roman god of the Harvest – the reaper. This piece is composed in the Hypodorian Mode

5. The Temple of Jupiter

Jupiter was the Roman King of the gods. This piece is composed in the jubilant ancient Lydian mode.

6. Procession of the Vestal Virgins

The Vestal Virgins kept the sacred flame of Vesta, the Roman goddess of the home, perpetually alight. This piece is composed in the ancient Greek Hypophrygian mode.

7. Roman Banquet

In this piece, I tried to evoke the sort of background music which once accompanied a lavish Roman banquet. This piece is composed in the ancient Greek Hypophrygian mode.