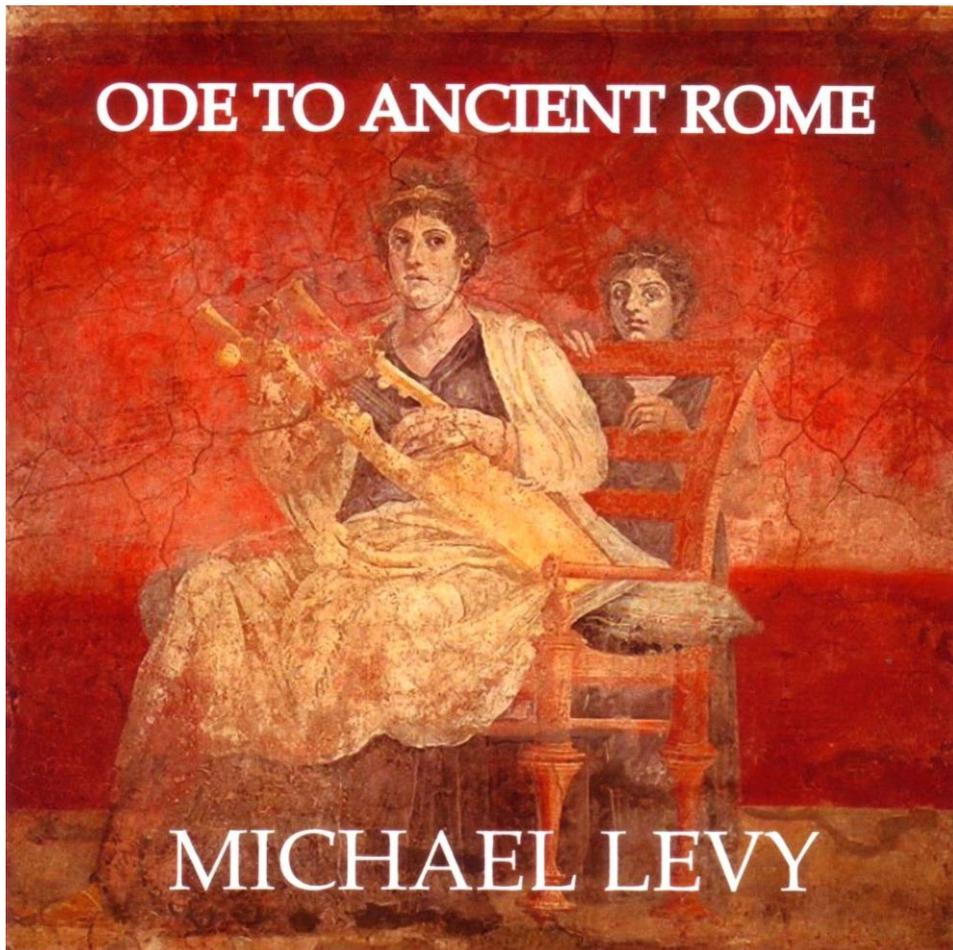


## ODE TO ANCIENT ROME



This album is the sequel to my album “Echoes of Ancient Rome” – like the first album in this series, “Ode To Ancient Rome” comprises of a series of new compositions for an ancient lyre in authentic ancient musical modes, to evoke once more, the lost music of ancient Rome. These set of compositions 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 pitiful 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 gods 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 had this to say about these ancient musical modes, please see this fascinating link:

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

### **THE TUNING OF ANTIQUITY**

In antiquity, lyres were tuned either cyclically, in perfect 5ths, the 3rds & 6ths then being fine-tuned by ear ([Pythagorean tuning](#)) or divisively (using exact mathematical ratios to precisely divide a musical string into specific pitch ratios) to achieve what is called "[Just Intonation](#)".

The modern tuning system of [equal temperament](#) was devised to enable music to be performed in any of the 12 keys of the chromatic scale whilst keeping exactly the same equal ratio of pitch between each of the 12 notes of the chromatic scale...which sadly has sacrificed the essential purity of tone, which can only be heard in the just intonation once used in antiquity.

[Divisive tuning](#) was the most natural way to tune the ancient lutes, or any fretted instrument, which uses frets to divide the vibrating portion of each string into the required precise ratio of pitches. Although more often cyclically tuned when played solo, Lyres were also often divisively tuned in antiquity, as they were quite often played in ensemble with other instruments which were in turn, divisively tuned.

Although described in the writings of Pythagoras in his experiments at dividing a musical monochord, the divisive tuning system predates Pythagoras by thousands of years and may have evolved along with the origin of the long-necked lute in ancient Babylonia some 5000 years ago, according to John Wheeler (editor of [Suzanne Haik Vantoura's](#) book, "[The Music of the Bible Revealed](#)"):

*"The long-necked lute (according to [Curt Sachs](#)) was invented in Babylonia, and indeed thanks to that fact divisive tuning was invented there also. Cyclical tuning was also known there (and that got documented long after his death by the famous theory and hymn tablets from Babylon and Ugarit), but there is this*

*curious fact: the Babylonians used divisive tuning as the basis for their symbolic correlation of the pillar degrees of the octave (e.g., C-F-G-C') with the four seasons, while the Chinese used cyclical tuning as the basis for the symbolic correlation of the same. This (wrote Sachs) is consistent as Babylon was the "home" of the lute and China the "home" of the harp (even though Babylon knew of harps and lyres too and China, if memory serves, also knew the lute from very early times). Divisive tuning is the "natural" tuning of the lute, as cyclical tuning is the "natural" tuning of the harp and lyre, according to Sachs. By that he meant that it's easiest and most natural to tune, and then to play, folk instruments of those genres that way - as I can vouch as a working musician"*

I have used divisive tuning throughout this album, in my attempt to recreate the purity of the just intonation used in antiquity, which like the music of ancient Rome, has now sadly been forgotten...

## **THE TRACKS**

### **1. Ode To Ancient Rome (Original Composition For Lyre in The Ancient Phrygian Mode)**

A requiem to the tragically lost music of ancient Rome, this piece is performed in the mournful ancient Geek Phrygian Mode.

### **2. The Wisdom of Minerva (Original Composition For Lyre in The Ancient Chromatic Phrygian Mode)**

Minerva was the Roman goddess of Wisdom...

In this piece, I have experimented with a rare ancient lyre playing technique, whereby the strings are hit percussively, with a small wooden baton (like on a hammered dulcimer) instead of being plucked with either the fingers of a plectrum.

The first illustration of the hammered lye playing technique dates back to c.700BCE, in the illustrations of musicians on the Bas Reliefs found at the ruins of the Palace of Nineveh, in ancient Assyria:



This playing technique seems to have spread from ancient Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean, and may there is indeed evidence that this technique could have also been practiced in ancient Rome, as can be seen in the depictions of lyre players discovered in the ruins of Roman Villas on the island of Cyprus, in the famous [Paphos Mosaics](#):



**3. Sacred Flame of Vesta (Original Composition For Lyre in The Ancient Hypophrygian Mode)**

Vesta was the Roman virgin goddess of the hearth & home, to whom the sacred fire of Vesta was perpetually kept burning by the Vestal Virgins...

**4. Dark Realms of Pluto (Original Composition For Lyre in The Ancient Hypodorian Mode) - Pluto was the Roman god of the underworld...**

**5. On The Wings of Cupid (Original Composition For Lyre in The Ancient Hypolydian Mode)**

Cupid was the winged god of love & erotic desire...

**6. The Flight of Mercury (Original Composition For Lyre in The Ancient Dorian Mode) –**

Mercury was the Roman god of travel, a messenger who wore winged sandals...

**7. Libation to Laetitia (Original Composition For Lyre in The Ancient Lydian Mode)**

Laetitia was the Roman goddess of joy & gaiety...