

NEW ANCESTRAL MUSIC – REBIRTH OF THE ANCIENT LYRE

NEW ANCESTRAL MUSIC Rebirth of the Ancient Lyre



Michael Levy

Aiming to literally redefine 'New Age' music, this release features a selection of brand new, completely spontaneously created improvisations for the recreated lyre of the ancient world - *new compositions, for an ancient instrument!*

The theme of the album is the progression to the ancient Greek ideal of "[Ataraxia](#)" (the inner harmony we strive to attain, once we achieve freedom from distress) - an inner peace which can only come, when we learn to live with the difficult truth that *the only thing certain in the enigma of our*

conscious experience, is uncertainty. Only once we can swallow this truth, can we finally appreciate the *mystery!*

This perfect contentment, “*inner harmony*”, was first expressed in ancient Greece by the philosopher, [Pyrrho](#), as ‘[Ataraxia](#)’; a state of freedom from emotional disturbance and anxiety - *tranquillity*.

The hallowed state of Ataraxia, according to Pyrrho, can only to be achieved by finally accepting the hard but timeless truth, that *the only thing we can ever know for certain, is uncertainty!* Translating this incredible philosophical insight to our modern times, we can only find our own state of Ataraxia; our personal inner harmony, *by learning to appreciate the cosmic mystery of the very existence our conscious experience, as actual sentient beings, instead of becoming too obsessed in the actually futile quest to try to understand everything; which will only bring us struggles, unhappiness and dissatisfaction.* Indeed, we can only ever have a finite understanding of this infinite universe!

To sum up this cosmic enigma, so famously described by the late astronomer, Carl Sagan, [we are literally forged of star dust - that briefly became conscious of the stars...](#)

Back in classical antiquity, the [Pythagoreans](#) likened a just and well-ordered society to a well-tuned lyre - while each note retains its individuality, all are proportionally linked together in a larger whole to form a musical scale and all are interdependent in terms of their reliance on one another. This beautiful analogy between a well-ordered society and a well-tuned lyre is famously described by Plato in [“The Republic”, 443 D–444](#)

Bringing this idea new life in my quest for a ‘*New Ancestral*’ musical revolution, the limitless creative musical possibilities of the 10 strings I have on the lyre with which I recorded this release with, are *analogous to the maximum of 10 decades with which our brief human lives span* - even although the present human species has a maximum of 10 decades of natural lifespan, there are almost limitless possibilities in each of them, for each and every one of us to shape our precious years as conscious, sentient beings in any way we can possibly imagine! To further mirror this analogy, in editing down to the final version of this release, there are also 10 tracks – each track marking a step nearer on the path to achieving the ideal of achieving in our brief, precious lives, the inner harmony Ataraxia.

Even if there is no God or gods, *we alone still miraculously have the power within our 'Inner Shaman', to create our own meaning in life;* even if all our religions prove eventually to be wrong and the universe itself, of which we are briefly a part, exists for no particular cause or reason.

Each of us must create our own form of harmony and order out of the chaos of this world in which we briefly find ourselves in - therefore, *we all need to ultimately strive to literally become the lyre players of our own lives...*

THE TRACKS

1. Pensive Thoughts

Why do we exist? Is there a God or gods? If not, how are we to make sense of ourselves, as sentient beings who find themselves in a magnificent universe which might not even have any cause for its existence?

This piece features the intense and poignant sounding ancient Greek Phrygian Mode - the equivalent intervals as D-D on the white notes of the piano, this mode was misnamed the 'Dorian' mode by early medieval scholars.

The distinctively poignant and intense qualities of this ancient Greek mode are further enhanced in this track by the use of [just intonation](#), to create geometrically pure musical intervals – this pure, ancient tuning can be heard in all the other tracks on this album.

2. The Enigma of Existence

These dark mysteries of the nature of our own miraculous existence and the universe we find ourselves in, can never be fully illuminated by even our best cognitive efforts. Can we ever learn to live with this?

This piece features my own variation on an exotic, ancient Near Eastern scale, to evoke the required mood of mystery and perplexity of the theme of this track. The mode I use in this track has the equivalent intervals as:

E F G# A B C D# E

I also experiment with a percussive style of lyre playing, whereby instead of plucking the strings with either the fingers or a plectrum, I actually hit the strings with a small wooden baton, to create an eerie sound, rather like a hammered dulcimer.

3. The Sorcery of Sentience

Conscious experience, by us sentient beings whose bodies were randomly forged, literally from the stuff of stars, is quite literally, sorcery! Is there any purpose behind this sorcery, or do we have to forge our own meaning to our forever private, conscious experience?

This piece uses a distinctively mysterious-sounding ancient Near Eastern mode, still surviving in Jewish klezmer music today, where it is known as the *Mi Sheberach Mode* ('He who blessed,') - this mode is the equivalent intervals as:

E F# G A# B C# D E

I also attempt to enhance this sense of mystery is also by the eerie use of harmonics throughout the piece, created on the lyre with my left hand, by partially muting the strings at their centre with the knuckle of my middle finger whilst simultaneously plucking the string with my thumb.

4. Lost in the Dark Forest of Questioning

Being too tunnel-visioned in our relentless quest to seek a complete understanding of the magnificent universe we are for a brief time, a conscious part of, will in time, only serve to make our precious brief time laden with discontentment - we need to instead, sometimes sit back and simply enjoy the mystery!

I attempt to create this sense of mystery by the use again, of my own variant of an exotic ancient Near Eastern mode, in the equivalent intervals as:

E F G# A B C D# E

5. To Seek Meaning, Seek the Inner Shaman

To seek any form of meaning in life, we literally need to evoke our own 'Inner Shaman' to guide use through tangled paths of unexplored reality we find ourselves in. We need to become our own shaman of the wild wood of reality; able to conjure our own personal sorcery, in order to begin to appreciate the mystery, instead of destroying our happiness by the futile attempt to understand everything!

Even although we can never know everything, this still should never be an excuse not to exercise our miraculous, inquisitive abilities - part of the wonder of being alive, is our ability, out of all the animal kingdom, to understand our place in the universe.

This piece features the dark and mysterious ancient Greek Hypodorian Mode - the equivalent intervals as:

ABCDEFGA

Also sometimes referred to as the 'Natural Minor', from which our modern minor keys are ultimately derived, this mode was misnamed the 'Aeolian' mode during the early Middle Ages.

6. Finite Understanding in an Infinite Universe

We must learn to live with and accept the fact, that we can never hope to understand every truth about the infinite universe with our finite minds.

This piece features the intensively introspective ancient Greek Doran Mode - the equivalent intervals as E-E on the white notes of the piano, this was misnamed the "Phrygian" mode during the Middle Ages.

7. The Regrets of Mortality

We must overcome the regrets and mistakes we might have made along the journey of life - the more regrets we carry forward, the less happiness we can experience. *Regrets will actually deprive us of meaning from our lives!*

The track features once more, the distinctively poignant quality of the ancient Greek Phrygian mode, in geometrically pure just intonation.

8. Seek Comfort in the Arms of Mother Nature

When we become overwhelmed by the tangle of thoughts crowding our conscious experience, we must look to the beauty of the natural world of which we are briefly a part of - our precious, sentient souls are a transient but very real part of that beauty!

To evoke the feel of the comforting, nurturing maternal feel of this track, I used the distinctively feminine and dreamy sounding ancient Greek Hypolydian mode in geometrically pure just intonation. This mode, the equivalent of F-F on the white notes of the piano, was misnamed the '*Lydian*' mode during the early Middle Ages.

9. The Only Thing Certain is Uncertainty

A definition of perfect contentment, was expressed in ancient Greek philosophy by Pyrrho, as '*Ataraxia*'; a state of freedom from emotional disturbance and anxiety; *tranquillity*.

The hallowed state of Ataraxia, according to Pyrrho, can only to be achieved by finally accepting the hard but timeless truth, *that the only thing we can ever know for certain, is uncertainty!* It is only once we have learnt to live with this fact and to cease striving to perceive the impossible, that we can find our inner harmony.

To best attempt to reflect the profundity of this philosophical insight, I used the intensively introspective ancient Greek Dorian Mode; the equivalent intervals as E-E on the white notes of the piano. This mode, misnamed the '*Phrygian*' mode during the Middle ages, was also the only musical mode which Plato thought had true moral worth.

10. Ataraxia (Inner Harmony)

Once we have accepted that the only certainty is uncertainty, can we finally relax and find this perfectly contented state - it is only then, that we can finally fully appreciate the miracle of our brief existence and even though there will

be so much we can never understand, we can still learn to appreciate the mystery of it all!

This piece features again, the intensely introspective qualities of the ancient Greek Dorian Mode, further enhanced by using geometrically pure just intonation; the equivalent intervals as E-E on the white notes of the piano.

The feeling of inner harmony is directly evoked at the beginning of the piece, by the simple quoting of the intervals of perfect fifths in pure just intonation. Of all the musical intervals, the pure 5th, when also played in geometrically symmetrical just intonation, takes on an almost three dimensional, glassy, crystal clear quality - it is this feeling a geometrical purity which I particularly wanted to express in this final piece on the album, which actually attempts to evoke the analogous '*geometry of the soul*' required to achieve Ataraxia - quite literally, '*Inner Harmony*'.
