ANCIENT ASSYRIA

ANCIENT ASSYRIANS of northern IRAQ (Mesopotamia) - Iraqi folk music. Heritage of the ancient Assyrian civilization of Mesopotamia.

Music: Assyrian folk dance "Dabka", a line stamp dance popular among the Assyrians of Iraq and in neighbouring territory. Performed by Munir Bashir - Assyrian musician from Iraq. One of the local words for the dabka -- ashūriyya, which means "from Assyria".

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Assyria was a Semitic Akkadian kingdom, extant as a nation state from 2400 BC to 608 BC centred on the Upper Tigris river, in northern Mesopotamia (present day northern Iraq), that came to rule regional empires a number of times through history. It was named for its original capital, the ancient city of Assur. Nineveh was the later capital of the ancient Assyria.

6:14 - Assyrians lead ancient Israelites into captivity under king Sennacherib (5:48, 7:00) who ruled Assyrian empire in 705 -- 681 BC and whose capture of Judean cities is recorded in 2 Kings 18/13.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Neo-Assyrian monarchs, Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul) and Shalmaneser V. The later Assyrian rulers Sargon II and his son and successor, Sennacherib, were responsible for finishing the twenty year demise of Israel's northern ten tribe kingdom. Sennacherib also invaded some parts of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He records forty-six fortified towns captured from Judah, and presumably carried away into Assyria. Jerusalem was besieged, but not taken. The tribes exiled by Assyria later became known as the Ten Lost Tribes. The captivities began in approximately 740 BC, when the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and eastern half-tribe of Manasseh were carried away by one of the first successful Assyrian invasions. In 722 BC, nearly twenty years after the initial deportations, the ruling city of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Samaria, was finally taken by Sargon II after a three year siege started by Shalmaneser V.

ANCIENT EGYPT

The concept for this album came when composer/multi-instrumentalist Michael Atherton was commissioned to produce a creative reconstruction of ancient Egyptian music for an exhibition at the Australian Museum in 1998. Atherton took it one step further, pursuing a long-term research project of which this entrancing CD is the result. By studying literary and visual records as well as surviving artifacts, he began to get an idea of which instruments had been used in ancient Egypt, then approached the compositions by drawing on his experience with medieval monophony, Eastern European and Turkish folk music, and a variety of intercultural projects. Atherton primarily uses 5, 6, and 7 note scales based on specific pitches, resulting in a combination of Moroccan ramal mai mode and Persian afshari. He also gravitates toward pentatonic scales and major modes. The melodies move in small steps. The
setting of the hymns is monophonic, with the inclusion of call and response development. Sung items include interpolated recitations, as a means of acknowledging a deep connection between language and music.

Although music existed in prehistoric Egypt, the evidence for it becomes secure only in the historical (or "dynastic" or "pharaonic") period--after 3100 BCE. Music formed an important part of Egyptian life, and musicians occupied a variety of positions in Egyptian society. Music found its way into many contexts in Egypt: temples, palaces, workshops, farms, battlefields and the tomb. Music was an integral part of religious worship in ancient Egypt, so it is not surprising that there were gods specifically associated with music, such as Hathor and Bes (both were also associated with dance, fertility and childbirth).

All the major categories of musical instruments (percussion, wind, stringed) were represented in pharaonic Egypt. Percussion instruments included hand-held drums, rattles, castanets, bells, and the sistrum--a highly important rattle used in religious worship. Hand clapping too was used as a rhythmic accompaniment. Wind instruments included flutes (double and single, with reeds and without) and trumpets. Stringed instruments included harps, lyres, and lutes--plucked rather than bowed. Instruments were frequently inscribed with the name of the owner and decorated with representations of the goddess (Hathor) or god (Bes) of music. Both male and female voices were also frequently used in Egyptian music.

Professional musicians existed on a number of social levels in ancient Egypt. Perhaps the highest status belonged to temple musicians; the office of "musician" (shemayet) to a particular god or goddess was a position of high status frequently held by women. Musicians connected with the royal household were held in high esteem, as were certain gifted singers and harp players. Somewhat lower on the social scale were musicians who acted as entertainers for parties and festivals, frequently accompanied by dancers. Informal singing is suggested by scenes of workers in action; captions to many of these pictures have been interpreted as words of songs. Otherwise there is little evidence for the amateur musician in pharaonic Egypt, and it is unlikely that musical achievement was seen as a desirable goal for individuals who were not professionals.

The ancient Egyptians did not notate their music before the Graeco-Roman period, so attempts to reconstruct pharaonic music remain speculative. Representational evidence can give a general idea of the sound of Egyptian music. Ritual temple music was largely a matter of the rattling of the sistrum, accompanied by voice, sometimes with harp and/or percussion. Party/festival scenes show ensembles of instruments (lyres, lutes, double and single reed flutes, clappers, drums) and the presence (or absence) of singers in a variety of situations.
**Hurrain Music**

The most ancient example of written song. A hymn to Nikkal, wife of the moon god. The text is written upon a fragmented tablet and, therefore, is incomplete. The hymn has four stanzas, each with a refrain. Stanzas 1 and 4 are imitation, and stanzas 2 and 3 are identical musically. The singer is accompanied by a lyra. The lyra harmony is predominantly in thirds and sixths, a few fourths, and one fifth.

There are startling similarities between the Babylonian principles of music theory and those used by ancient Greeks. Moreover, the Babylonian principles antedate the Greek ones by more than a millenium.

The Babylonians seem to have used music exclusively in connection with religious observances and festivals. The names of lyra/kithara strings and musical pitches were related to their cult deities and to the planets in a cosmology similar to Greek philosophers' "harmony of the spheres."

**Ancient China**

According to analyses of historical materials, Xi'an drum music is said to probably be originated from the Tang Dynasty (618-907). It has been developed by the following dynasties. Great vitality was added to Xi'an drum music through continuous practice and developments, especially being influenced by opera music of the Ming and Qing dynasties (1364-1912), so that it was gradually formed into a complete grand folk music style.

During the period of the An Shi Rebellion (755-763) in the Tang Dynasty, musicians escaped from the imperial palace, and that's why drum music was heard and became known by common people. The drum music from the palace was greatly different from folk music at that time; it was solemn, plentiful, complete and rhythmical.

From 1951, Chinese scholars began to collect and classify the historical materials of Xi'an drum music, in order to make people aware of the wonderful cultural heritage of China and to make protection a priority.

A great number of famous musicians were involved in the protection of Xi'an drum music, and great achievements have been made so far. High praises have been given by musicians from all over the world.

In 2011, the "Xi'an Drum Music" was list as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. The rich features of drum music have provided precious evidence in the study of Chinese ancient music, and will play an important part in the further development of Chinese folk music culture.
**Ancient Persia**

Ancient Persians of antiquities (Achaemenid Empire - territory of modern Iran) - traditional Persian folk music from Lurestan (Lurs are aboriginal Persians), Iran. Ancient Persian people - artefacts, clothing, weapons, writing and culture.

Luri is one of the purest dialects of ancient Persian language. The main musical instrument of Luri music is Kamancheh which is the old form of violin. According to the Encyclopaedia of Islam, the Lurs speak a form of Archaic Persian. According to the linguist Don Still, Lori-Bakhtiari alongside Persian is derived directly from Old Persian.

2:37 - Persian king Darius the Great (550--486 BC).
3:38 - Ancient Persepolis (Parsa) - capital of great persian Achaemenid empire (550-330 BC) is 70 km from modern Shiraz in Iran.

**ANCIENT GREECE**

This song is one of the earliest examples yet found of a complete musical composition from the ancient world. Although other songs have been found that pre-date 'The Song of Seikilos' by many centuries, they only survive in fragments.

Seikilos carved the song on a grave pillar in dedication to his wife. The Grave was discovered in 1883, near Aydin in Turkey. Archaeologists believe it dates between 200 BC and AD 100.

Seikilos also inscribed a poem on the gravestone, it reads:

"Hoson zēs, phainou
Mēden holōs sy lypou;
Pros oligon esti to zēn
To telos ho chronos apaitei."

In English:

"As long as you live, shine,
Let nothing grieve you beyond measure.
For your life is short,
and time will claim its toll."