

**Goldsmiths University of London**

**The Pontic *lyra* in contemporary Greece**

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**Thesis submitted to the University of London  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**



**June 2007**

## Abstract

This thesis examines the performance techniques for playing the Pontic *lyra*, a vertically-held bottle-shaped bowed lute which is the main instrument of the Pontic Greeks. The objectives of the research were to identify the ways in which the traditional performance techniques for the *lyra* have been extended in the past, especially in the work of Gogos Petrides, and to explore the possibilities of extending these further in order to enable the *lyra* player to effectively perform styles and repertoires from outside Greece, with particular reference to the music of Afghanistan.

A detailed discussion of changes in performance practices required the use of a broad range of contextualising material, enabling the author to position his work in the context of modern Greece. The thesis begins with a historical overview and provides background information about the culture and history of the Pontic settlements on the Black Sea coast of what is modern Turkey, up to the population exchanges of 1922. It provides a detailed organological study of the instrument and looks into its history, concluding it has a European/Byzantine rather than a Middle Eastern origin. The author also discusses the traditional and the contemporary performance techniques of the Pontic *lyra* and describes his own experience as both performer and ethnographer during extended periods of fieldwork. The DVD and CD included in the thesis are of major importance as they provide a key role in demonstrating and illustrating the author's core research methods, findings and outcomes. The author's work was 'mirrored' in an unassessed recital given at the end of the research.

Chapter 1 provides a historical overview of the culture of the Pontic Greeks. Chapter 2 describes the morphology of the Pontic *lyra* and discusses its origins. Chapter 3 discusses the traditional and the contemporary performance techniques for the *lyra*; the author also describes his own learning experience within the context of a musical family. Chapter 4 considers three traditional genres of *lyra* music, the extended techniques attributed to Gogos Petrides, which have been further developed by the author. Chapter 5 recounts fieldwork carried out in Greece with six well-established Pontic musicians, who have much to say about the influence of Gogos Petrides. Chapter 6 explains how, through making a study of Afghan music as played on the *dutar* and *rubab*, the author has adapted pre-existing and devised new techniques for playing the Afghan repertoire on the Pontic *lyra*. Chapter 7 summarises the research carried out, while an Appendix describes the preparations made for the recital which is part of the examination process. This thesis is accompanied by a CD and a DVD illustrating aspects of the research.

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## List of audio CD examples

1. My grandfather plays the *lyra* and myself singing – the recording dates back to early '80s.
2. *Varyn logon mi lete ato* (“Don’t say a bad word about my dear one”).  
Pontic *lyra*, vocals: Matthaïos Tsahourides.
3. *Chamomilon* (“The little apple tree”) Pontic *lyra*: Matthaïos Tsahourides,  
vocals: Konstantinos Tsahourides.
4. *Serra* dance performed by Gogos Petrides (with the support of  
Charalambos Efremides in vocals).
5. Pontic *lyra* improvisation (Performed by Matthaïos Tsahourides in the  
album “From Pontos to Persia”, released in October 2003 by Protasis  
Music, Greece).

## Acknowledgments

The people who first introduced me to the performance of the Pontic *lyra*, my grandfather Makos Tsahourides and my father Stavros, have continued to be an inspiration to me. The Pontic *lyra*, a musical instrument that continues to support and give emotional strength to my psyche, is transforming every single day my will for reaching altered states of emotion, psychological diathesis and internal communication. This I owe to both of them, who supported my dream to perform the instrument from an early age and become a Pontic *lyra* player.

Many thanks are due in the first instance to Lady Marina Marks and to the Michael Marks Charitable Trust for supporting my research. Without the help of my supervisor Professor John Baily this study would never have been started, much less completed. He introduced me to the experimental method and nurtured my interest in the performance practice of the instrument and has continued to guide the development of this study to its conclusion with advice which perhaps no other person could have provided. Besides setting the highest standards of scholarly excellence, his teaching and his ability to transmit to me his life experience of performing Afghan music has been invaluable.

I wish to thank Professor Kostas Fotiadis to whom I am indebted for his ability to impart a sense of history and appreciation upon this study for the importance of the classical heritage of the culture that is a subject of this study. Thanks are due also to Dr. Elias Petropoulos for his careful reading and suggested changes in the first chapter. I am grateful to them for their continued support.

The professional Pontic *lyra* players and musicians, Theodoros Eleftheriou (Veriotis), Yiorgoulis Kougioumtzides, Andreas Kougioumtzides, Panayiotis Aslanides, Dimitris Karasavides and Stathis Nikolaides made substantial contributions to this study with their willingness to spend long hours discussing the performance practice of the instrument. Their understanding of the music repertory and the playing techniques of the Pontic *lyra* was shared freely out of their love for the art. Their reputation for being some of the finest musicians has not decreased their humility and sense of humanity. They graciously and patiently spent many hours of their time teaching me some of the finer points of Pontic *lyra* music performance.

I am grateful to Mr Takis Sachinides (Thessaloniki) and Mr George Panitsidis (Boston, U.S.) for their hospitality and willingness to provide to me with photographs and a number of audio and visual materials of Gogos Petrides.

Finally, I wish to thank my brother Konstantinos, for his full support, advice and patience.



## Introduction

The Pontic *lyra* is the pre-eminent musical instrument of the Greeks of Pontos. This thesis provides detailed information regarding the origin of the instrument and presents the research of different scholars. As a practice based study, it is probably the first detailed research ever done regarding the origin, the playing techniques and the musical possibilities of the Pontic *lyra*. The origin of the instrument, which according to my research derives from Byzantium and Mediaeval Europe, justifies the functionality of both the traditional and the contemporary performance practice for the instrument. The Pontic *lyra*, with its similar construction and musical performance to European and Byzantine bowed stringed instruments, brings it close to the violin family. The physical structure of the *lyra*, in combination with the performer's ability to execute the various playing techniques, makes it as a highly sophisticated musical instrument.

The presence of the Greek element in the Black Sea and more specifically in the north coast of Asia Minor dates back to antiquity. According to available archaeological and historical sources<sup>1</sup>, the civilisation of the Greeks of Pontos and the rest of Asia Minor lasted for more than 3,000 thousand years.

The year of 1922-1923 is a landmark for the history of the Greeks of Pontos. The 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey was the first large scale population exchange, or agreed mutual expulsion in the 20th century. It involved some two million persons, most forcibly made refugees and *de jure* denaturalized from homelands of centuries or millennia, in a treaty promoted and overseen by the international community as part of the Treaty of Lausanne. The document about the population exchange was signed at Lausanne, Switzerland, January 30, 1923, between the governments of Greece and Turkey.

In Greece this was called the 'Asia Minor Catastrophe' (Greek: Μικρασιατική καταστροφή) as it involved the expulsion of about one third of the Greek population, practically ending some 3,000 years of presence of ethnic Greek people in Asia Minor, from Smyrna (Izmir) on the Ionian shores to Samsun and Trebizond (Trabzon) on the Black Sea coast of Asia Minor. The Treaty of Lausanne affected the

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<sup>1</sup> Fotiadis 2002: *I Genoktonia ton Ellinon tou Pontou* (The Genocide of the Greeks of Pontos), Vol.1 p63, Thessaloniki: Herodotus Publishing. Xenophon 1839:22-28. Petropoulos 2003:2-7 and Doonan 2004:74-78.

populations in the following way. Almost all Greeks and Turkish speaking Christian populations from middle Anatolia (Asia Minor) but mainly Greeks from Ionia, Pontos, Prusa (Bursa) and other regions of Asia Minor, as well as from the European Eastern Thrace parts, numbering about 1.5 million people, were expelled or formally denaturalized. Expelled from Greece were about 500,000, predominantly Turks, as well as other Muslim populations.

After the forced migration, the Greeks of Asia Minor have played an important role in both culture and society of modern Greece. Chapter 1 discusses the position of the Pontic people in Greece today and their social and economic contribution to mainland Greece after the exchange of populations. Today, some of the strongest elements of this great civilisation have been preserved through a rich music culture. The Pontic *lyra* and its traditional music repertory reflects many aspects of Pontic culture and life and it provides a role of visibility, acceptance and celebration of Pontic culture throughout Greece.

The Pontic *lyra* today has a strong symbolic value for the Pontic Greek population (about three million people approximately out of the total Greek population, numbering about eleven million people). It serves as a symbol of cultural identity. Nowadays, one may see a Pontic *lyra* hanging on the wall of a Pontic house, either as a decoration or as a playable instrument owned by a member of the family. It is important to mention that when the instrument serves the purpose of decoration in the house, it is usually put in an important place, like the living room, where everyone can see it. For the Pontic Greeks the presence of a Pontic *lyra* in the house symbolises something very important. It can only be compared to the cultural value of an ancient Greek statue. It symbolises what many Pontic Greeks refer to as 'το ένδοξο παρελθόν' (the glorious past), the culture, the history, the music. That is why the symbolic presence of the instrument in a Pontic house is considered precious by all members of the family.

My approach to this research is from the point of view that I come from a traditional musicians' family. The sounds of the Pontic *lyra* always played an important role in my family and in the environment where I was brought up. My engagement with the instrument started nearly twenty years ago and since then, I have committed myself into a continuous study of the Pontic *lyra* and its musical performance.



The need for a detailed approach to the performance techniques of the instrument was what has inspired me to do this research, together with my personal experiences as a Pontic *lyra* player and researcher in the fields of Ethnomusicology and Performance Practice. My collaboration with members of different music cultures in the diverse multi-cultural society of London made me aware of the importance of researching and studying the Pontic *lyra* and its musical possibilities in depth. I had to approach such music collaborations by introducing new playing techniques for the instrument and establish a common ‘music language’ during performance.

In 2005, I was awarded a prize by the British Arts Foundation as ‘performer of the year’ and winner of the category ‘Instrumentalist – working in a non-Western musical tradition’. My early nomination in this competition and the recognition in the end of the Pontic *lyra* as a musical instrument with many musical possibilities by various scholars, musicians and producers like Brian Eno, reinforced my determination to complete this research.

Today, I present this work with the aim to inspire other musicians, not only those of Pontic origin, to experiment with the Pontic *lyra* and its musical possibilities. The ability of the *lyra* to execute various performance techniques like these of the western classical violin, undoubtedly gives to the instrument’s unique potential. It is this prospective of the instrument that I try to bring out through this research and ‘open the soul’ of the Pontic *lyra* to the world.

When I did the BMus course in Music Studies and the MMus in Ethnomusicology course at Goldsmiths, I decided to continue my studies at Doctoral level as a practice based study. My original aim was to find out more about the history of the Pontic *lyra* and think in detail about its performance techniques, and to understand my own work in developing new extended techniques. From the beginning I planned to work with a number of Pontic *lyra* players in Greece in order to detail the micro-structures of their individual performance techniques. A big inspiration to this study and to the development of new musical possibilities of the instrument was Gogos Petrides (1917-1984), a musician whose performance is extensively discussed in Chapter 5 by the other professional *lyra* players I interviewed.

At the same time I was studying the music of Afghanistan and learning Afghan pieces to play as part of the *Ensemble Bakhtar*, a Goldsmiths ensemble established by Professor John Baily, specialising in the performance of traditional

music from Afghanistan. I also started to learn the Afghan *rubab* both as a way of understanding Afghan music and because I have admired this instrument and its playing technique. Later on, I realised that the challenge of putting Afghan music onto the *lyra* was telling me a great deal about the relationship between the *lyra* and my own body, as well as extending my repertoire.

My experience of learning how to perform Afghan music on the Pontic *lyra* gave me the opportunity to add, adopt and extend the contemporary performance techniques for the instrument. As a regular member of *Ensemble Bakhtar*, I had the opportunity to experiment with various stringed Afghan musical instruments such as the *rubab* and the two-stringed and the fourteen-stringed *dutar*s. The music repertoires of the Afghan *rubab* and *dutar* exhibit a diversity of musical performance and consequently different playing techniques are required. I was able to perform some of these techniques on the Pontic *lyra* and through my research on Afghan music, I realised new performance possibilities for the instrument. The reader will often find her or himself referred to Baily's work, which is indispensable for a full understanding of the data that I present in Chapter 7. Baily's experience of the music of Afghanistan and his understanding of the *rubab* and the *dutar*'s performance gave me vital information regarding approaches to contemporary performance practice on the Pontic *lyra*.

The detailed study of the contemporary playing technique of the Pontic *lyra* is presented in the thesis through various musical examples that are demonstrated by the author on DVD and CD format. In this manner, the reader can get direct information about the instrument and its contemporary musical performance. Aspects of both traditional and contemporary performance, as well as the style of playing the instrument by Gogos Petrides (1917-1984) earlier, the greatest of all Pontic *lyra* players, are also discussed in the thesis with a number of professional Pontic musicians, most of them based in the city of Thessaloniki, Greece. They have provided me with a wealth of invaluable information and many important insights into the music performance of the *lyra*.

The importance of practice based research is that it provides insight into performance that is not possible in other ways. It allows someone to experience music from a unique perspective. The person who actually performs the music is the self evident. The discussion also brings out the many advantages of learning to perform as part of the fieldwork enterprise. Mantle Hood's argument that training in basic



musicianship is fundamental to many kinds of musical scholarship and assures a real comprehension of theoretical studies (Baily 2001), could be perfectly 'extended' in this study, as the author provides the experience of professional musicianship and does not provide arguments from a basic musicianship point of view.

The professional music training in this research brings unique potentials and encourages other similar studies. Until now we knew very little about practice based research studies that are actually approached by professional musicians and performance experts. This particular study emphasises the importance of a professional musician understanding the music from "inside".

The available bibliography regarding the music of the Greeks of Pontos and the Pontic *lyra* is limited, as far as the performance techniques of the instrument is concerned. There is a limited number of articles and books about the music of the Pontic *lyra* referring to certain repertoire of the instrument without discussing elements of performance. However, the work and research of two authors, D.B. Kilpatrick and C.E. Fotiadis, were a great help to me. Kilpatrick's (1980) work on function and style in Pontic dance music provided me with a wealth of information about the origin and the history of the instrument. However, there were limited references about the performance techniques of the *lyra*. Picken (1975) also provides little information about the playing technique of the instrument and focuses to a few examples of Turkish Black Sea dance music. Nercessian (2001) provides useful information about the importance and the role of the Armenian *duduk* as a symbol of national identity. His book attempts to deepen our understanding of musical instruments not only through an examination of musical and constructional features, but also through the application of a socio-cultural framework which allows a theorization of the idea of the instrument as social being. I have used parallel facts and thoughts in the present study, as the role of the Pontic *lyra* within the community is considered to be both vital and symbolic. Dawe (1996, 2003) provides important information about the Cretan *lyra* musicians in Greece and the society in the island of Crete. His extensive work on the instrument provided me with a wealth of information. However, a comparative *lyra* study is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Despite the essential work of Greek scholars, folklorists and academics concerning music, culture and folklore throughout the Greek region, there have been very little references regarding the musical performance of the Pontic *lyra*. Most works refer to the music repertory and to the social understanding of Pontic music

and there are limited constructional references to the instrument with some basic elements of performance. Anoyanakis (1991) and Efstathiades (1992) refer to descriptive posture information as well as structural information and very basic data is given about the performance techniques.

The performance style of the Pontic *lyra* in Greece today is changing rapidly. Nowadays, musicians who do not have a Pontic origin or background are learning the instrument, which is taught in music schools or at individual private lessons that are given by some of the professional Pontic *lyra* players (professional in the sense of being full-time economic specialists). Pontic *lyras* are nowadays made by instrument makers who usually make no other musical instruments apart from Pontic *lyras*. In the past, the player used to make his own instrument but today most of the instrument makers are not professional musicians and instrument making remains their main source of income. A decorative Pontic *lyra* that is usually hung on the wall of a house could cost between 50 to 150 euros approximately. For a professional instrument, a musician could pay from 400 up to 800 euros approximately.<sup>2</sup> The instrument is played by both men and women. However, I am not aware of any professional women *lyra* players today in Greece. The number of women *lyra* players compared to the male population who perform the instrument is very limited. Despite this fact, I have seen and listened to astonishing performances on the *lyra* performed by female musicians.

The different approaches to the performance on the instrument by musicians nowadays, as well as the demand for the *lyra* in traditional, popular and world music recordings, has already brought a new era for the instrument and its playing techniques. The Pontic *lyra* is now conceived in Greece not just as a Pontic traditional instrument, but as a musical instrument with many musical possibilities that performs many kinds of music. My collaboration with the celebrated Greek composer Mimis Plessas involved me as a musician in a Greek TV series titled: *Ta Paidia tis Niovis* (“Niovis’s Children”). My part was to perform on the *lyra* the main music theme for the soap opera that became a favourite tune to the Greek audience and was performed every week for one year on the national Greek TV channel ERT, as part of the programme soundtrack. In a short space of time, the popularity of the instrument was

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<sup>2</sup> These are rough estimated prices according to what I have experienced up to date.



increased due to this performance and reached a wide audience. The sound of the Pontic *lyra* was perceived by the Greek audience as a new sound, though a Greek sound. In this particular recording with Mimis Plessas, I put in practice elements of contemporary playing techniques and the only traditional technique that I used was the use of the drone tone (one string performs the melodic line and the second keeps the drone tone of the original key). This different style of playing the *lyra* was similar to the classical way of playing Greek violin music. Thus, by adopting violin techniques on the instrument and creating a ‘new sound’ on the *lyra*, I managed to break through the lines that kept the instrument into a limited traditional performance.

In the past, there have been many attempts to breach the line of traditional performance by various Pontic *lyra* players. But the only one who managed to break through was Gogos Petrides, whose performance and work on contemporary *lyra* playing is discussed at Chapter 5 by some of the leading Pontic musicians of our time. But there are tensions between those who insist that the instrument should be played in a traditional manner and who maintain that the musicians who depart from the traditional playing should be criticised. However, at the time of writing, such tensions are not so much in evidence because there is a huge interest and demand for contemporary *lyra* playing by the commercial pop music scene of Greece. A perfect example is the participation of the Pontic *lyra* in the recording of the Eurovision song context of 2004 where Greece won the competition. Another example was when I performed on the *lyra* the main music theme of the Olympic Games of Athens 2004 for the BBC television, accompanied by Prague Symphony Orchestra. These two examples and many others took the sound of the instrument outside its traditional context. Eventually, we can speak of a ‘new era’ for the Pontic *lyra* performance.

This ‘new era’ of the instrument has offered more positive rather than negative outcomes. An important negative element could be considered the fact that many young *lyra* players nowadays are learning mainstream music of Greece, such as Greek *bouzouki* pop tunes played on the Pontic *lyra* and their approach to the traditional style of playing is becoming more distant. On the other hand, I can certainly find many examples of the positive outcome of the new *lyra* playing. In the last fifteen to twenty years, the instrument was strictly performed within the circles of the Pontic Greek community, at festivals and other cultural events. It was strictly regarded as a Pontic musical instrument and the participation of *lyra* players in commercial recordings of Greek mainstream music was limited. Nowadays, there is a

huge demand for Pontic *lyra* players in Greek pop music recordings, on the radio and in television programmes.

The goal of my research has been to extend the playing techniques of the instrument, from traditional to contemporary performance. This work proved to be both important and challenging not only for the author, but also for musicians who are interested in the Pontic *lyra*. It is important because it gives detailed information and analysis about contemporary performance on the instrument, and on the other hand, is challenging because it extends the musical possibilities of the instrument. This research is also important for the survival of the Pontic *lyra*. The new approach of the instrument and its musical possibilities will bring new potentials to the performance of the instrument. Taking the instrument outside its cultural borders and introducing a new style of performance which can be approached by non-Pontic musicians, brings new dimensions to the Pontic *lyra* performance.



## Chapter 1

### The Pontic Greeks

When I visited Tehran in August 2004 for the purpose of research on the Iranian classical *kamancheh* (spike fiddle), I received a phone call at the house where I was staying from Mr Panayiotis Symeonides, the Secretary of the Pontic Greek Club of Tehran. He told me that the Pontic Greeks came to Iran in 1922-1923, the year that marks the origin of the Pontic Diaspora. I was excited and felt quite emotional when the Secretary of the Club talked to me in the Greek Pontic dialect. He told me:

We were about 5,000 when we arrived in Tehran but now we are about 150 people. We still run our Club and we all gather mainly during our national celebrations like the 25<sup>th</sup> of March – Greek Independence day – Easter time and Christmas. Our children dance all our traditional dances of Pontos and of mainland Greece, but we have to bring musicians from Greece to come to perform in such events. Every time a Pontic musician comes from Greece, it is a major event for us. Unfortunately, there aren't any Pontic *lyra* players here in Tehran. Nowadays, bit-by-bit, the Greek Pontic community of Tehran is disappearing, as all of our children went to live in Greece. There is not a good future for us here and the only ones left behind are the older people.

While he was talking to me over the phone, I took the *lyra* and started to play a traditional nostalgic song of Pontos to him. That was one of the most emotional moments of my life. He was in tears, crying over the phone, saying to me, “You don't know what you are doing to me now; you don't know how important this is to me, to live such a moment here, at mid-day in Tehran”. I replied to him in my limited Pontic Greek and I told him that this moment is very emotional for me too, and that I am going to visit him soon. He interrupted me, saying that the community will invite me whenever there is a Greek cultural event in Tehran. That was an experience I will never forget. I cannot explain why that moment was so emotional for me. Perhaps it was because I also was away from home. Clearly, I gave comfort to someone who missed his culture deeply.

I have chosen to begin my dissertation with this anecdote because it establishes from the outset the idea that the Pontic *lyra* is no ordinary musical instrument, but for the Pontic Greeks whose homeland was for centuries the Black Sea coast of Asia Minor, is a powerful symbol of Pontic identity and a reminder of what we Pontic Greeks term “the great catastrophe” of the population exchange between Greece and Turkey, which took place in 1922-23.

## **1.1 Pontos – its place in history.**

From the time of Homer, the word “Pontos” (Greek: Πόντος) has meant “open sea”, the broad and restless sea. For many ancient authors, the term “Pontos” was identified with *Axenus* (Greek: Ἄξενος) meaning “inhospitable Pontos”, the stormy, dark coloured Black Sea. Evidence of the Greek presence in Trapezous (Trabzon) we have in the year 401B.C. from ancient Greek historian Xenophon in his epic *Kyrou Anabasis*. He refers that the Myriads who stayed in the area of Trapezus for thirty days, met the traditional hospitality of the Greeks of Pontos; they celebrated the Greek customs, they danced the ancient war dance *Pyrrichios* and organised athletics honouring the twelve Gods of Olympus and characterising Trapezus as a great and felicitous Hellenic city (Xenophon 1839:22-28).

The Greek presence in Pontos (Fotiades 1996:11) goes far back to classical antiquity. Since the Bronze Age, Greek seafarers conquered the shores of the Aegean Sea and with their improved ships wanted to explore the wild Black Sea with its unknown coastal areas and lands. According to ancient written sources (Fotiades 1996:11), the first attempts to explore this unknown region that was opened beyond the mythical *Symplegades* (“Clashing Rocks”<sup>3</sup>) were carried out in approximately 1200 B.C. Within the century, those “inhospitable shores” of Euxeinus<sup>4</sup> Pontos were teeming with Greek colonies. The *Symplegades* ceased to close off the Bosphorus and Euxeinus Pontos became a hospitable sea, free and Greek (**Illustrations 1, 2**).

According to Herodotus, the ‘father of history’, Pontos is the long coast and broad area of the region including the lands between the river Phasis near today’s city of Batumi (Georgia) and the river Halys which is near the city of Sinope (Turkey), the

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<sup>3</sup> These mythical clashing rocks were the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus Straits.

<sup>4</sup> Euxeine, Euxeinos and Euxeinus Pontos are names given to the Black Sea area including all coastal and some hinterland areas.



first Greek colony in Euxeinus Pontos in antiquity (Petropoulos 2003:2-7 and Doonan 2004:74-78). In the hinterland, the area extended to 200 - 300 kilometres, where natural boundaries formed by the mountain range of Skidisis, Paryadros and Anti-Taurus separated it from the rest of Asia Minor (**Illustration 3**). The highlands and areas of uncultivated land had the good fortune to be irrigated by many rivers that gave wealth to the soil. Although the soil was fertile, it was still limited in amount and the sea remained a more attractive prospect for the development of shipping and transit trade and a source of fish and other nutrients.

In 1204 A.D. the Empire of the Great Komneni or the Empire of Trebizond (Trapezus, Trabzon), was established and lasted for 257 years, until the fall of Trapezus in 1461 to the Ottoman Turks (**Illustrations 4, 5**). According to the historians, the Empire of the Great Komneni has a distinguished and particular place in the history of Medieval Europe and European civilisation. Due to the political and strategic skills of its leaders, they managed to limit and reduce the Asian expansion to the West. For the whole of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Trapezus was an important centre of science and research, particularly in the fields of mathematics and astronomy. Apart from being a cultural and intellectual centre during the era of the Great Komneni, Pontos became a centre of trade and exchange between the countries of the East and the West. According to the English researcher Antony Bryer (Fotiadis 2004:35), the city of Trebizond was handling 40% of the Persian trade up to 1869.

The Ottoman conquest of Pontos (**Illustration 6**) can be divided into three periods. The first period begins with the fall of Trapezus in 1461 and ends in the mid-seventeenth century. During that period the Ottomans adopted a rather neutral stance towards the Greeks of Pontos. That particular period can be considered as a time of adjustment to the complete Turkish domination of the region. The second period of Ottoman rule began in the mid-seventeenth century and lasted until the end of the Russian-Turkish War and the Treaty of Küçük Kainartzi in 1774. This period is characterised by the establishment of a feudal system and by the religious persecution of the Christian population (Agtsides 2003:58). The third period of the Ottoman rule, which ended in 1922, is divided into two sub-periods. The first sub-period begins with the Treaty of Küçük Kainartzi in 1774 and is characterised by the attempt of the local authorities to smother the liberal laws that were to the benefit of the Christian

population. The second sub-period (1908-1923)<sup>5</sup> began with the violent seizure of power by the Young-Turks who decided that the problem of the ethnic issue could only be resolved with the eradication of the Christian minorities (Federation of Pontian Societies of Southern Greece, Agtsides 2003:58).

The Christian population of the region of Pontos during the Roman and the late Byzantine era and during the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century probably numbered between 200,000 and 250,000. By the year 1520, the Greek population was 180,000 (Yiannakopoulos 2004:13). According to the General State Archives of Greece (ibid.14), under Ottoman administration Pontos consisted of the vilayet<sup>6</sup> of Trapezus, the vilayet of Sebasteia and the vilayet of Kastamoni. In terms of church administration, Pontos included the ecclesiastical provinces of Trapezus, Rhodopolis, Chaldea, Kolonia, Neocaesarea, Amaseia and Theodosiupolis (**Illustration 7**). If we accept the figures cited by Archimandrite Panaretos Topalides (Central Information Service Department 1920:10-12), the Greek population of Pontos during World War I numbered some 700,000. The data from the census of 1911 of the Greek population of Asia Minor by the local consular authorities, gave the number of Greeks inhabiting Pontos as about 400,000 (ibid.).

## 1.2 Greek society in Pontos

The land of Pontos was first a centre of ancient Greek civilisation and later became an area where Orthodox Greek Christianity developed. The Greeks of Pontos, from antiquity until the present day, were pioneers in the cultivation of science, philosophy and the arts. Christianity spread throughout Pontos very early on through the Apostles Andrew and Peter, whose difficult and dangerous missionary work was assisted by the widespread use of the Greek language at the time.

Pontos, as a particular geopolitical and strategical area, was, following the Crimean War (1854-1856), a place of great interest to the European Powers of that period (late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century) (Fotiadis 2002:167-187). The ethnographic

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<sup>5</sup> Before the Treaty of Lausanne (January 30, 1923) Greeks in Asia Minor were already on the move. The Treaty formalised this population exchange but people were still migrating and seeking refuge well into 1923.

<sup>6</sup> Turkish word meaning Prefecture.



situation of Pontos was diverse and a mosaic of ethnicities inhabited the area long before the coming of the Turkic tribes.

The first official ethnological census was carried out in the year 1870 by a Greek professor of the *Frontisterion* of Trapezus (a place of higher learning), Savvas Ioannides. These are the results of his detailed study of the history and statistics of the area of Pontos, as far as the religious and ethnic composition of the people is concerned:

Countries with so many ethnicities with different language, nation and religion living together are rare. Thus, if we divide them according to the language, we have Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Laz, Kircasians, Apazades, Georgians, Persians and Kurds. If we divide them according to the characteristics of its people, we have Greeks, Turkomans, Ottomans, Kircasians, Laz, Armenians, Apazades, Georgians, Kurds, Tzepnides, Persians and others. Finally, as far as the religion of the people of Pontos is concerned, we have Muslims, Greek-Orthodox, Armenian-Orthodox, Armenian-Catholic and some Armenian-Protestant, Persians and Kircasians.<sup>7</sup> And as far as religion and language, the most dominant is Mohammedanism, Hellenism, Armenians and others. As for the nation, the most dominant are the Greek, the Ottoman and the Armenian, as shown below:

<b>The religious division of Pontos</b>		<b>The racial division of Pontos</b>	
Muslims	480,000	Greeks	330,000
Greek-Orthodox	240,000	Ottomans	250,000
Armenians	120,000	Armenians	140,000
Kircasians &		Turkomans	85,000
Tzepnides	100,000	Kircasians	100,000
Kurds and Persians	60,000	Laz, Apazades	45,000
		Persians, Kurds	50,000
<u>Total:</u>	<u>1,000,000</u>	<u>Total:</u>	<u>1,000,000<sup>8</sup>.</u>

(Fotiadis 2004:47-48)

In 1920, Archimandrite Panaretos gave the following figures for the population of Pontos, according to both ecclesiastical sources of that time and documents provided by the different consulates in Pontos.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Persians and Kircasians represent different ethnic groups and they are not religious groups.

<sup>8</sup> Approximate numbers given by Ioannidis (1988).

### The religious division of Pontos

Muslims including Ottomans, Turkomans and crypto-Christians. <sup>10</sup>	988,000
Orthodox Christians including Greeks and Armenians.	697,000
Armenians, Gregorians, Catholics and Protestants.	60,000
Protestants	5,000
<u>Total:</u>	<u>1,750,000.</u>

### The racial division of Pontos

Greek of different religions excluding crypto-Christians.	847,000
Turks, Tartars, Kircasians, Islamized Greeks and Armenians	843,000
Armenians	60,000
<u>Total:</u>	<u>1,750,000.</u>

## 1.3 Exodus and migration – The Exchange of Populations.

With the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and of Trapezus in 1461, to the Ottoman Turks, the first part of the chapter concerning the history of the Pontic Greeks closed. Many Greeks from the wealthy coastal towns and villages chose to become exiles. Some moved to central and southern Russia, others to areas along the Danube, building new Greek cities and new centres of culture, which received many persecuted Greeks later on. By 1917 there were 750,000 Greeks living in Russia (Fotiadis 2002:88). Others went to various Aegean islands and to the Greek colony in Constantinople (**Illustration 8**). During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the great majority of them, however, chose the remote mountains of Pontos.

The First World War resulted in a very complicated political situation which was beyond the control of the Pontic Greeks living in Turkey and which resulted in their involuntary and forced migration to Greek Macedonia and other parts of the Greek mainland. The exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey followed

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<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece (1920).

<sup>10</sup> Christian population, mainly Greek who were forced to be Islamized but didn't lose their religious consciousness and they practiced their religion secretly. Also see Fotiadis 1996.



the Treaty of Lausanne (Switzerland), signed by Venizelos, Ataturk and representatives of Britain and France in 1923, transformed totally the Greek presence and influence in the region. The Treaty was based on religious affiliation, of Greeks and Turkish nationals. To the political powers, the objective was to give to Greece and Turkey homogeneous populations, ethnically and religiously identified. To the people involved, it meant that hundreds of thousands were to be uprooted from their homes and relocated in a foreign land. The Greek Christian population, both Greek and Turkish speakers, were forced to abandon the areas where they had lived for nearly three thousand years and had to establish a new life in mainland Greece.

The Greek presence in the Black Sea continued, now primarily along the Soviet shores, where approximately 450,000 Greeks, mostly of Pontic origin, were settled. Moreover, the musical tradition of Pontos with the sounds of the Pontic *lyra* and the dances remained alive within the members of the Greek population who moved into the new USSR and to Greece, as well as to the Greeks who remained in the Black Sea region. This particular musical tradition remains and belongs exclusively to the people living in the Turkish shores of the Black Sea and nowadays comprises one of the main forms of local cultural expression.

1922-1923 was a landmark in the history of the Greeks of Pontos. They left their motherland and properties in Pontos and a new era began for them in Greece. The decade of 1920-1930 was very difficult for these new Greek citizens. The refugees were generally settled by the Greek government in unhealthy parts of the country, rife with malaria and other insect-bourne diseases, and their integration into Greek society was not easy. But instead of becoming a liability to society, the Greek refugees of Pontos stood up on their feet and played a very important role in the economic life of Greece in the 1930's. Their contribution to the growth of the economy, society and nation was positive. The official statistical records (Georgiades n.d. 651-658) of the Greek state for the decade of 1920-1930 show the contribution of the Pontic refugees in the development of agriculture and the economy in general. In the year 1928, they increased the cultivation of land by 50% and at the same period the agricultural production of the country was three times bigger. The numbers are impressive. In Greek Macedonia alone, 942 refugee settlements were created. 50,000 refugee families were established in the urban areas (210,000 people) and only about 27,000 of them went to the city of Thessaloniki, where they changed the physiognomy of the area totally. In the beginning of the 1970s, 20% of Greek

industrialists (who established new industries) were refugees from Pontos and Asia Minor. In the years 1922-1932 the size of the Greek industrial sector more than doubled and industrial investment was four times greater. The industrial work force of the country increased by 175%. The arrival of the Greek refugees of Pontos and Asia Minor completely changed the face of the country. The population of Athens doubled in a short space of time. We could say that while the Asia Minor catastrophe was a tragic loss in all aspects for Greek culture and society, this exchange of populations brought economic advantages to the state of Greece.

#### **1.4 The Greeks of Pontos in Greece today.**

The majority of Pontic Greeks in Greece today are located in Macedonia, northern Greece. The refugee population of 1910-1925 according to 1928 census was 1,221,894 people and more than half, namely 638,253 people, were located in Macedonia. In relation to the same census, 45% of the regional population were Pontic Greek refugees. The 1960 census shows that one of the heaviest concentrations of Pontic Greeks was in central Macedonia, in the cities of Thessaloniki, Veria, Kozani, Drama, Serres, Kilkis, Edessa and in the adjoining rural areas. There were 44,682 Pontic Greek families. Of those, only 26,874 families were located in the urban areas of Thessaloniki (Georgiades n.d. 651-658).

We must note that Pontic Greeks are not a separate ethnic group in Greece today. They are Greek citizens who are not counted as refugees but still feel exiled from their homeland, Pontos, and maintain aspects of Pontic culture. For the Pontic Greeks, as well as with other exiled communities in the world, language, customs, traditional music and dance are important factors in their ideas about their origin, history and national identity. Today, Pontic Greeks in Greece and in the Diaspora try to keep alive these customs and traditions, their Pontic dialect, Pontic music and dance. But, although the Pontic Greek dialect has its roots in the ancient Greek language, it is tending to disappear today and is spoken mainly by the older generations of Pontic Greeks.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The Greek Pontic dialect morphologically and structurally is based on the ancient Greek language and has many loan words from Turkish.



Nowadays, music is perhaps the strongest element in the Pontic Greek culture; it reminds the Pontic Greeks of their social identity. According to Baily:

...music is itself a *potent* symbol of identity; like language (and attributes of language such as accent and dialect), it is one of those aspects of culture which can, when the need to assert 'ethnic identity' arises, most readily serve this purpose. Its effectiveness may be twofold; not only does it act as a ready means for the identification of different ethnic or social groups, but it has potent emotional connotations and can be used to assert and negotiate identity in a particular powerful manner (Baily 1994:48).

Music passes the "messages" of a culture more directly than theatre, food, and the speaking of the Pontic Greek dialect could do. Nowadays in Greece there are many music schools for learning traditional musical instruments. It is worth noting that in the areas where Greeks of Pontic origin are concentrated (notably in northern Greece), in the classes for instruments including *laghouto*, *clarino*, *tamboura*, *violi*, *bouzouki*, *outi*, *kanonaki*, Pontic *lyra* and others, the most crowded are the Pontic *lyra* classes. There are also over 200 Pontic folk dance groups in Greece today. The young people are learning their folk dance traditions to the accompaniment of the *lyra*. Parents send their children to learn the traditional dances of Pontos from an early age.

Another facet of social and cultural expression within the Pontic Greek community are the summer open-air festivals that take place every year, organised by the local Pontic clubs. They include all the folkloric aspects of the life of Pontic Greeks in the past. There are theatre performances in the Pontic Greek dialect, as well as music and dance accompanied by the sounds of the Pontic *lyra* and traditional food that our Greek ancestors used to cook in Pontos. All these social and cultural events show how Pontic Greeks love and care about their traditional culture and customs. The number of people attending these summer festivals is remarkable. They come from all over the world with their families in order to experience at first hand their culture.

Pontic music today in Greece has gone through many stages of transformation. As Baily puts it:

Music maybe used to recreate the culture of the past, to remind you of the place from which you come, but migration can lead to cultural innovation and enrichment, with the creation of new forms which are indicative or symptomatic of the issues facing the immigrant, and which help one in dealing with a new life in a place of settlement and in the articulation of

new identities. This is specially typical of the second or third migrant generation, born and brought up in a new land (Baily 2006:174).

The number of Greeks who originally came from Pontos living in Greece today is above 1, 2 million. Most of them, as mentioned above, are concentrated in Northern Greece. Today in Greece there is a large number of Pontic clubs and many others have been established in other parts of the Diaspora (U.S.A., Australia and Germany). There are over 350,000 Pontic Greeks living in Northern America and about 300,000 living in Australia. About 250,000 Pontic Greeks live today in Germany and the rest of Europe. Perhaps 700,000 Pontic Greeks live today in the former Soviet Union (Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan).<sup>12</sup>

### **1.5 The Pontic Diaspora**

My involvement with Pontic Greek tradition, customs and music is very strong. I can still remember the stories that my grandfather used to tell me about how his family went in 1922 as refugees from Pontos to Batumi (today in Georgia, former USSR), and from Batumi to Greece, to the Byzantine town of Veria in central Macedonia, where I was born in 1978. In my memory, I still hear the discussions he had with my grandmother and other relatives in our house, when they were so distressed and sad about losing their homeland and their brothers and sisters after the catastrophe of 1922. I remember them discussing all these events, in their strong Pontic Greek accents. I can still hear the voice of my grandfather, when he taught me to play the Christmas carols on his *lyra*. I can still remember the taste of the food that my grandmother used to cook according to the recipes of my family when they lived in Pontos.

It is remarkable that all these customs, the teaching of the Pontic music and the *lyra*, the dance, the food did not disappear but they still exist due to the attempts of some people who managed to save this culture, through the Pontic clubs and associations and through all these social events, dialects and concerts of Pontic music and dance.

I have limited experience of the Pontic Greeks living abroad; my main encounter was with the Pontic community in Montreal, Canada, which revealed to me

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<sup>12</sup> Those numbers were given to me by Professor Kostas Fotiadis.



the emphasis placed on maintaining Pontic music and dance within exiled Pontic communities of this kind. In March 2005 I was invited to play the *lyra* at the annual dinner-dance celebration of the Pontic Greek Club *Efxinos Pontos* in Montreal. The event was attended by more than five hundred people and representatives of other Pontic clubs came from New York, Connecticut, Philadelphia, Boston and Toronto. Two musicians provided the music for the whole event: John Apazides from Boston, who sang and played the *daouli* (big double-headed frame drum), traditionally the only accompaniment instrument for the Pontic *lyra*, and me, singing and playing the *lyra*. The event started with the speeches of the President of the club, Mr Lefteris Michaelides and His Excellency, the Greek Consul General of Montreal.

The President of the *Efxinos Pontos* Club of Montreal, Lefteris Michaelides, told me about the founding of the association in 1964 by Greek immigrants of Pontic heritage. Most of the Pontic Greeks in Montreal came from the cities and towns of Macedonia, northern Greece, such as Thessaloniki, Katerini, Veria and Serres. They decided to establish the Association in order to maintain their culture and traditions in Canada. The social activities of the club were very important for the community at that time. The members could get together, reminisce and talk about the *patrida* (“homeland”). They knew that in this new land they could easily forget their roots and traditions.

One important aspect of bringing the members of the Association together was the establishment of an annual dinner-dance, when the Pontic Greeks and other members of the Greek community of Montreal could get together in a large hall. Such an occasion was mainly devoted to Pontic music and dance. The Council of the Association also formed a *sinestiasi*, a small gathering of its members in order to learn the traditional Pontic dances, as well as to experience the traditional food of the *patrida*.

In 1971, the association rented its first place in the city of Montreal and opened the doors to all as the *Lesxi*, (the “club” or “gathering place”). The first dance group was formed in the *Lesxi* in 1971 and the association started to promote and represent the Pontic music culture in Montreal and in Canada generally. In 1972, the *Lesxi* moved to larger premises to meet the needs of the dance group and the performance rehearsals. Finally, in 1977 the Pontic Association of Montreal bought its own building and the *Lesxi* took the official name of *Syllogos* (“society, association”).

The only Pontic *lyra* player in Montreal was Mitsos Kougioumtzides, who stayed in Montreal with his family before returning to Greece. But the remarkable thing is that whenever a Pontic *lyra* player visits Montreal, the members of the Association do their best to keep him busy. I had this experience myself when I visited Montreal for the annual dinner-dance of the Association. I arrived there on a Thursday afternoon and the only thing that I remember until the actual day of the formal occasion was that I played the *lyra* in the houses of most of the members, where they had organized small parties. I was exhausted by the day of my main performance; but I was pleased with the fact that I was entertaining and informing the Greeks of the Diaspora, who were missing their music culture so much. It seemed to me that I was providing a kind of music therapy.



## Chapter 2

### The morphology and origin of the Pontic *lyra*

#### 2.1 The Pontic *lyra* as the main musical instrument of the Greeks of Pontos

The pre-eminent instrument in the Pontic Greek musical tradition is the Pontic *lyra* (pl. *lyras*) (**Illustrations 9, 10**). In the string family of musical instruments, the *lyra* belongs to the category of bowed lutes. In the Greek region today there are two types of bowed lute; the pear-shaped *lyra* and the bottle-shaped *lyra*. We find the pear-shaped *lyra* (**Illustration 11**) in Crete, in the island of Kasos, Karpathos, Limnos, Lesvos, in the islands of the Dodecanese and also in Thrace and in some parts of Greek Macedonia. It has three strings and is played with a bow. The tuning of the pear-shaped *lyra* differs from region to region but the most common tuning is in fifths. Thus, if the first higher string is A, the middle one will be the D string and the third one G,<sup>13</sup> while on the Pontic *lyra* the tuning is in fourths. The main difference between the pear-shaped *lyra* and the bottle-shaped *lyra*, apart from the construction of the instrument, is that on the pear-shaped *lyra* the performer uses the nails of the left hand to touch the strings and produce the sound, whereas in the case of the Pontic bottle-shaped *lyra*, the performer presses the strings against the fingerboard with the fingertips of the left hand, as is the case with the violin. This is the main difference between the two instruments as far as the production of the sound is concerned.

The Pontic *lyra* (**Illustration 12**) is an instrument with a long, narrow sound box tapering to a short, unfretted neck. The pegs of the *lyra* are inserted from the front. The instrument possesses a fingerboard, a bridge, and is equipped with three single strings fastened to a string holder. The *lyra* is constructed in different sizes, although the variations in length, breadth and bulk are not great. In the construction of the sound box, neck and head of the Pontic *lyra*, plum, mulberry, walnut, cedar, rose, acacia, etc. are among the woods most commonly used today. Of these, the best woods are considered to be, first of all plum, as it provides a good “voice” to the

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<sup>13</sup> The tuning is according to a regular diapason where A=440.

instrument. The table of the *lyra*, which is generally curved, is usually made of pine wood.

The walls of the sound box should not be more than 3-4mm thick, while the table of the *lyra* should be ever thinner, from 2-3mm. Two small holes are opened on each side of the sound box and four holes *tripia*, are made on the table *gia ti foni* (“for the voice”). Two long, narrow sound holes, the *kyrtes tryfes* (the nostrils) are also cut into the table; these are usually slightly curved towards the outside. A skilled *lyra* player carefully chooses the wood for the table of his instrument; the wood must be closer-grained on the left side, where the highest tuned string will be stretched. In the past, some *lyra*-players had two instruments – one with a close-grained table and other with less dense graining. The first of these, with its higher tuning and penetrating sound, was played to accompany dancing, whereas the latter, tuned to a lower pitch, had a *glykytero* (“sweeter”) sound, and was used to accompany singing. The *lyra* which is tuned to a higher pitch is called the *zil* and the one tuned to a lower pitch the *gapan lyra*. According to Anoyanakis:

The three strings of the *lyra* are wound onto the three *otia* (pegs), usually arranged in a T-like pattern. The strings rest upon the nut and the bridge and are fastened to the stringholder, known as the *pallikar* (stalwart young man). The bridge of the *lyra* known as the *ghaidaron* (donkey) is thin and slightly curved. Until approximately 1920, the strings with which the *lyra* was equipped were made of silk. Such strings resulted in the production of a beautiful but weak sound. The *lyra* was equipped with either three silk strings, or the two higher-pitched strings were of silk and the third, lowest string, of gut. When the entire complement of strings was of silk, the two higher-tuned strings were thinner than the third string. In the course of time, the three strings of the *lyra* were of gut; these subsequently were replaced by metal strings. Nowadays, various ways of stringing the Pontic *lyra* are found. It may be equipped with three metal strings of equal thickness; or with two strings of equal thickness and one slightly thicker; or two strings of equal thickness and one wrap wire string (Anoyanakis 1991:277).

The gauge of the string has an important influence on the frequency of its vibration. Thus the three strings of the Pontic *lyra* may be identical in length, but may differ widely in pitch because they are made to differ in weight. Nowadays, a standard set of strings for the Pontic *lyra*, which can be bought in a music shop, would be the B string of an acoustic guitar for the highest string (0, 14'') and the A string of the violin for the middle and the lower strings. But there are *lyra* players who prefer to use thick strings on the *lyra* in order to play in lower tunings and others



who prefer thin strings because they like to play in higher tunings, creating a penetrating sound.

The sound post of the *lyra*, also known as the *stoular*, is a small piece of wood which is located inside the body of the instrument exactly beneath the bridge and beside the right narrow sound hole. One end rests upon the table at its upper end, where the highest string is positioned, and its lower end at the base of the sound box. Its main purpose is to make the difference between the treble and the bass sounds more distinct.

The bow (**Illustrations 9, 10**) – approximately 50-60 cm in length – is made of hardwood and has horsetail hair. It is important to mention that the hairs from the male horse are the most commonly used and that is because the quality is better and the hair stronger. It is thought that mare's urine is not good for her tail because it burns the hair. The hair of the bow is fastened to the wood in different ways, usually by means of a small piece of linen cloth or a piece of leather at the end where the bow is held by the player, and a knot at the other. Nowadays one can find bows for the Pontic *lyra* made of plastic or synthetic hairs. Although they are easy to use, most *lyra* players prefer to use what they call 'a real bow', with horsetail hair. The natural bow produces a thick and rich sound. The use of rosin, in combination with the natural horsetail hair, provides the bow with more friction and better control for the performer. The bow itself must be easy to hold and control in order to perform the fast bowing techniques of the right hand, techniques that are very characteristic of Pontic *lyra* music. The pressure that the player exerts upon the bow as he or she touches the string or strings as well as the degree of tension on the hairs of the bow with the fingers of the right hand, influence the performance. This cannot be done with the standard violin bow.

Nowadays, nearly all Pontic *lyra* players have more than one *lyra* for playing, as every one of them has a particular use, either for music recordings, music for table songs at social gatherings in the *taverna* (tavern) or in houses, and those *lyras* used for live open air concerts and festivals. The *lyra* that is used in the recording studio is usually the best instrument of all, as it will provide the best sound quality and sensitivity in the dynamics of music for the actual recording. The *lyra* which is used by the player for the table song repertory is usually a loud and timbrally rich instrument, as well as being less tiring to play. The reason is that in those social gatherings that happen in small places such as houses or traditional taverns, the *lyra*

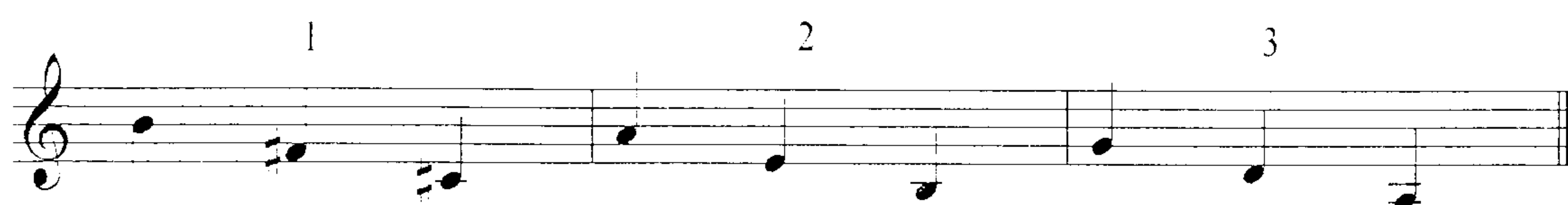
player needs a loud instrument in order to be heard by all those taking part in the *parakath* or *glendi* (“gathering”). And because on such occasions the *parakath* goes on until late in the night, it is necessary for the *lyra* player to play the instrument without undue strain, so he will be able to enjoy himself without getting tired. Finally, the Pontic *lyra* which is used for the open air festivals and concerts can also be a very good quality instrument. The only difference from the other *lyras* is that there is a pick-up on the instrument which is used for producing the sound of the *lyra* electronically through a mixing desk and the speakers, so it can be heard loud and clear through the sound system by many hundreds or even thousands of people. I personally possess five Pontic *lyras* that I use in different performance contexts. Each of them has a different sound.

One of the most important things that I have discovered through the last ten years of experience is that for every single Pontic *lyra* there is a unique tuning that fits the acoustic properties of the instrument, to the natural and constructional possibilities, as well as the musical possibilities. Gogos Petrides, the greatest ever Pontic *lyra* player, used the tuning of Ab (highest string), Eb (middle string) and Bb (lowest string) on his *lyra*. This particular tuning is used in most of the available music recordings of Gogos Petrides. Because of this fact, I have selected and marked out which instrument will sound better at different occasions or venues. I value all of them, and by understanding the acoustic possibilities of each *lyra* very well, I am able to select the appropriate instrument for the particular occasion.

## 2.2 The tuning of the Pontic *lyra*

The *lyra* is usually tuned in two successive descending perfect fourth intervals.

Figure 1: Three common tunings for the Pontic *lyra*.

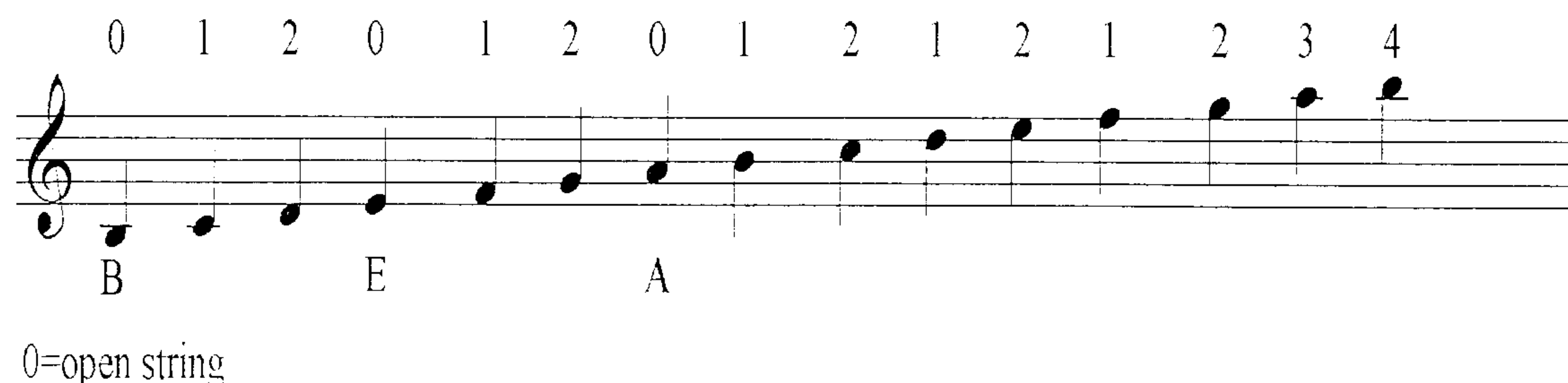


In such case, the first note is the highest string of the *lyra*.



There is no standard tuning in terms of fixed pitch. The tuning in fourths gives a range of approximately one and a half octaves. That range is appropriate for the traditional music repertory performed on the *lyra*. Other tunings are appropriate for performing the contemporary music repertory for the instrument. For the various recording sessions in which I have taken part in London I had to change the tuning of the *lyra*. Most of the time the music I was going to record on the *lyra* was not traditional Pontic music. Some of the music demanded a wider ambitus than the standard range of the *lyra*, which made me realise that a re-tuning of the instrument was appropriate. In these ways, I was able to extend the range of the instrument, at least for making music industry recordings. Thus, the Pontic *lyra* becomes a versatile stringed instrument. The freedom to tune according to the performer's or the singer's preference means the *lyra* can reach a wide ambitus and range of timbres. The instrument can be tuned according to the vocal range of the singer, whether bass, baritone, tenor or soprano, but for the traditional repertory it must be tuned with the two successive descending perfect fourth intervals. With the A-E-B tuning B is the lowest note the *lyra* can produce, while the highest note will be the one that is closer to the bridge and played on the top string. The use of this upper range depends on the player's ability to play in tune. This upper extension of the range is rare in Pontic music (**musical example 1 on DVD**).

**Figure 2: The range of the Pontic *lyra* according to contemporary western violin fingering technique.**



When the *lyra* is played at a *parakath - glendi* (“gathering”) or at family gatherings and in taverns, players of the instrument are not particularly concerned with the absolute pitch of the notes. Their tuning of the top string generally falls somewhat lower than the A (440). This is the way that all the great performers of the *lyra* tuned their instrument, from the old times until the present day.

A performer may experiment with other tunings. One of those is the imitation of the sound of the Pontic bagpipe, the *touloum*. The *touloum* has two pipes of the same pitch. The performer blows on both of them at the same time, creating a melodic line with drone accompaniment. The first reed plays the main melody and the second keeps the drone tone. Thus, the tuning of the *lyra* for this particular way of playing is: a) A for the highest string, where the melody is played, A (same pitch) for the middle string, where it keeps the drone tone, and E for the bottom string; b) A for the highest string, E for the middle and E (same pitch as the middle string) for the lower one and c) C for the highest string, C for the middle (one octave lower) and C for the lower string (one octave lower from the middle string) (**musical example 2 on DVD**). In some of those different tunings the melody is played simultaneously on two strings tuned to the same note with an octave's interval difference.

### **2.3 The origin of the Pontic *lyra***

From Bachmann's research, we learn that the area of distribution of bowing towards the end of the first millennium corresponded essentially to the area of the two great near-Eastern states, the Empire of Islam and the Empire of Byzantium, which were at the height of their powers around this time (Bachmann 1969:24).

The idea that the bow was used in ancient Greece is still found in a few recent works on the history of instruments. Authors of treatises on instruments written in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries sought to trace the development of the use of the bow back into antiquity. The word *plektron* was carelessly translated as 'bow', and the Greek poetess Sappho – according to tradition the first to use the *plektron* – was credited with having discovered the use of the bow (Bachmann 1969:6). Rühlmann believed that the bow originated independently in different places, among peoples of high cultural level (ibid.9). Curt Sachs has cited medieval texts which seem to support the idea that playing with the bow was known in different places as early as the ninth century (ibid.11). But looking for the first evidence for the bow, we find it in Persia in the ninth century and also in China in the ninth or tenth century AD. Sachs also believed that the oldest type of bowed fiddle can be placed in the beginning of the Christian era.



The Persian source is obviously the account of the journey made in the ninth century by the Persian-born Ibn Khurdādhbih, and related by him at the court of the Caliph al-Mu'tamid, wherein he merely states that the Byzantines played a musical instrument called a *lūrā*, made of wood and having five strings... (Bachmann 1969:11).

Hickmann believed that the Greco-Byzantine pear-shaped *lyra*, together with the *rabab* and *kamanja* of the Turks, Persians and Arabs, must be regarded as the predecessors of the European bowed instruments (Bachmann 1969:15). According to Kunst's research, there is no evidence that the bow was used in ancient times either in Indo-China or in the Malay Archipelago. Al-Farabi's<sup>14</sup> first reference to a bowed instrument is the *rabab*. But there is no significant similarity with the Pontic *lyra* according to pictorial evidence. Some old Spanish illustrations show the boat-shaped *rabab*, usually known to Europeans as the *rebec*, an instrument well-connected to the *rabab*, particularly in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Bowed instruments of the *kamanja* type<sup>15</sup> were widely used in the Islamic Empire. These bowed instruments, which belong to the genus of the spike fiddle, have a long, slender neck, a spike (which supports the instrument) and a small, round resonator made of wood, the front of which is covered with animal skin (**Illustration 13**). Around 1100 A.D. the Seljuk Empire stretched from Kashgar, across Persia and Mesopotamia as far as the Caucasus in Asia Minor. The advance of the Seljuks in Asia Minor brought the *kamanja* to Byzantium in the eleventh or twelfth century. But there is no similarity between the Pontic *lyra* and the *kamanja* type of instruments that Persians, Seljuks and people of Central Asia used. There are major morphological differences, as the *kamanja* refers to the spike fiddle, whereas the Pontic *lyra* looks more like an early Byzantine or Medieval instrument, as shown in Byzantine and European miniatures, manuscripts, frescoes, mosaics and sculptures.

The Greek word *lyra* referred to several musical instruments of ancient Greece. By medieval times the term *lyra* no longer denotes a lyre with a yoke-like bar to which the strings were attached, but an instrument of the fiddle type. There is evidence that this change of meaning had already taken place in Byzantium by the end of the ninth century. As mentioned above, the Persia-born Ibn Khurdadhbih observed that the Byzantines played a five-stringed wooden instrument called *lura* that was similar to the *rabab* of the Arabs. Among the earliest illustrations of a bow is

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<sup>14</sup> Al-Farabi lived roughly from 870 to 950.

<sup>15</sup> The word *kaman* in Persian means bow.

a miniature in the eleventh-century Greco-Byzantine Psalter now in the Vatican Library showing King David carrying a scroll, accompanied by musicians playing a transverse flute and a bowed stringed instrument (**Illustration 14**). Byzantine illustrations show bowed musical instruments with a pear-shaped body, gradually tapering off into a short neck. There is also a frontal stringholder (**Illustration 15**) to which the strings are attached, and lateral pegs. Bottle-shaped instruments are also to be found in Medieval and Byzantine miniatures (**Illustrations 16, 17**). It is important to note that the table (or belly) of the instrument was slightly curved, a feature we now know to increase the resonance of the strings (**Illustrations 18, 19**). From pictorial sources it is clear that the bow was flat, with no grip, and extends well beyond the end of the horsehair, thus forming a handle.

Bachmann believed that in the period up to the end of the tenth century, the spread of the bow was confined to the area encompassed by the Arabic and Byzantine Empires. There is yet no evidence that it was known in Europe, and in the East the spread of bowing ended at the borders of Islamic territory. The assimilation of different stylistic elements is also revealed in the music of these countries. From written historical sources, it is clear that Arab musicians borrowed and adapted musical forms and techniques from the various people of the Islamic cultural area. Others were inspired or influenced by Byzantine folk music. Musical instruments also were exchanged and gradually lost their regional characteristics. Although a religious gulf separated Byzantine Christian culture from that of Islam, there was a perceptible increase around the end of the first millennium in the flow of ideas between the two areas relating to the arts, the sciences, and to culture in general. And it is this cultural exchange of information that also brought changes to the musical instruments of that time.

We might suppose that instrumental music in Byzantium and in the East was closely related to vocal music, imitating the singing voice, varying and ornamenting the voice's melodic line. Bowed instruments are better adapted than other musical instruments to provide sustained support for the vocal line, playing the melody and providing a drone simultaneously. The drone is an accompaniment in Byzantine music and the Pontic *lyra* music makes extensive use of the drone, which is one of the most important characteristics of its music.

The development and the growth of polyphony in Western music is in agreement with the polyphonic character of Pontic *lyra* music, with the highly



improvised melodic line, the use of the drone, playing in parallel fourths and heterophony.

...the different types of bowed instruments shown in Western illustrations after the tenth century were certainly present in Europe centuries earlier, identical in form and structure but played as plucked instruments. This is as true of fiddle-type chordophones, with their sagittal pegs and end-pins, as it is of lyres. Thus, what was taken from the East was not, as so often suggested, bowed instruments, but merely the bow itself,<sup>16</sup> which was applied to instruments already present. Whereas in early medieval times the strings of these antecedents of our bowed instruments were generally plucked with the fingers, after the tenth century illustrations show a marked preference for the plectrum, which only began gradually to die out with the change to polyphonic playing in the fifteen and the sixteenth centuries (Bachmann 1969:59).

In medieval Europe, musical instruments are both played and made by the player. The same applied in the recent past to the Pontic *lyra* player, who used to make and repair the instrument himself. Medieval and Byzantine bowed instruments consist of a body, a neck and the peg-board all in one. The Pontic *lyra* is also constructed in the same way. The body is hollowed out from a single block of wood and covered with a wooden table (belly). In the East, apricot, mulberry, walnut and almond wood and occasionally ebony were used. In fourteenth century Europe craftsmen already preferred pine wood for the table of the instruments, an identical method applied to the construction of the table of the Pontic *lyra* (**Illustration 17**). On the contrary, the belly of bowed instruments of the East is made from stretched animal skin (**Illustration 13**).

In Asia the strings of these early fiddles were made of silk. The breeding of silkworms originated in China, and it was from the Chinese that the Arabs learned the art of silk-making in the early Middle Ages. Earlier, in the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century, Justinian introduced silk and silk-making into the Byzantine Empire, but it was not until the thirteenth century that the manufacture of silk material became of practical significance in Greece and Italy, and it only spread to the rest of Europe in the fifteenth century. The predominance of the gut string was absolute. In Europe during the Middle Ages, stringed instruments were fitted with gut strings and gut was specially favoured for bowed instruments because of its softer tone. Even in ancient

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<sup>16</sup> According to Bachmann, by the eleventh century, the bow had indubitably penetrated into Europe by way of Arab Spain and Byzantium. By 1100A.D., bowing had spread over the whole of Western Europe.

times, sheep-gut was used to make strings, as we know from Homer's *Odyssey* (XXI, 407). According to written historical evidence, this type of gut string was used in the past for the Pontic *lyra*. Gut, rather than silk strings, came to be used throughout Europe, and it is still much used today by musicians. As for the number of strings, in the earliest representations of bowed instruments the number of strings varies from one to six; but in the eleventh and twelfth centuries the western fiddle nearly always had three, as on the Pontic *lyra*; a few medieval examples have four strings (**Illustrations 20 to 31**).

As the early illustrations show, the fiddler usually played standing, though in the early period of bowing he was often seated. Noteworthy is the fact that the musician often played while walking or even dancing, a position that also applies to the Pontic *lyra* player, who accompanies the dancers while standing and walking among them.

Medieval illustrations suggest that the neck of the fiddle was firmly held by the fingering hand, the main function of which, therefore, was to act as a support. This presupposes, however, that these are instruments with fingerboards, against which the strings were pressed.<sup>17</sup> This type of instrument was mainly confined to Europe. On the other hand, Oriental instruments with no fingerboard would be automatically excluded from this position, since the wide gap between the strings and neck would make it virtually impossible to stop the strings, on which gradations of pitch are achieved by only a light pressure of the fingers, while at the same time keeping the necessary firm hold on the steeply-slanting instrument (Bachmann 1969:89).

Illustrations from European sources show that where the instrument was played in an upright position the strings were usually pressed against the fingerboard with the fingertips. When the instrument lay against the shoulder or chest they were likewise pressed by the fingers against the fingerboard. In addition, in the method of holding the bow the hand grasped both shaft and hair and could increase the tension of the bow by applying greater pressure to the hair. This was probably also the case with medieval sources and applies to the right hand bowing technique of the Pontic *lyra*.

In ancient Greek music theory the octave is formed of two conjunct tetrachords (*Harvard Dictionary of Music* 1972:352). This has a direct relationship to the tuning of the Pontic *lyra* in fourths. And this fact could be considered as further

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<sup>17</sup> A practice that structurally refers also to the Pontic *lyra* playing technique.



evidence for the origin and identity for the Pontic *lyra*. It is remarkable that in this long history of the instrument, the tuning of these two conjunct tetrachords (e.g. low string as B→ middle E→ high string as A) have been preserved in the construction and the nature of the instrument.

...Interesting evidence for this tuning comes from North-eastern Asia Minor. In the vicinity of the shores of the Black Sea elongated pear-shaped fiddles<sup>18</sup> with three strings, played exclusively in the first position<sup>19</sup> and tuned in fourths, are still to be found today. Where the melody is fingered on the top string, the middle string acts as a drone; but if the melody descends to the lower strings, the top string takes over the sustaining note. As well as the simple single-note drone, which can alter pitch by a fourth and lie now above, now below the melodic line, a double drone at the fourth is achieved by bowing all three strings at once...Greek refugees from the Black Sea coast of Turkey, the ancient territory of Pontus...brought with them to Greece the elongated pear-shaped fiddle<sup>20</sup>... (Bachmann 1969:96-97).

Laurence Picken takes the view that the medieval techniques of bowing and tuning have survived almost intact in this area of the Near East. 'The polyphonic fiddling of those who live on the Black Sea coast, in the belt of the hazelnut cultivation between Giresun and Hope, may without exaggeration be described as quasi-medieval' (Bachmann 1969:97).

According to the data discussed and analysed so far concerning the presence of the Greeks in Euxeinus Pontos (Black Sea region), as well as the musical organisation of melody and rhythm in Pontic *lyra* music performance, one may accept that the instrument and its music has similar roots in Medieval Europe and Byzantium. If we also compare and examine the construction of the instrument with other European instruments, as seen in the available illustrations of this study, the Pontic *lyra* looks more like a Byzantine or Medieval European musical instrument, rather than an instrument of Asian origin.

Kilpatrick (1980) who carried out research on music and dance in the Black Sea coastal area in 1968 and in 1972-73, states that this particular musical performance is conspicuously unlike the music and dance of any other area in Turkey. These two elements of the culture (music and dance) perhaps contribute more than

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<sup>18</sup> Bachmann probably meant the Pontic *lyra*, as it was and still is the main musical instrument of that region.

<sup>19</sup> A playing technique that applied to the traditional style of performing the Pontic *lyra*.

<sup>20</sup> That happened in the year of 1922, as discussed earlier at Chapter 1.

any other factor to the concept that other Turks have of Black Sea Turks today. The basic musical instrument for all purposes is the *Karadeniz*<sup>21</sup> *kemençe*<sup>22</sup> (Pontic *lyra*) and the violin and *zurna* (double reed Anatolian woodwind instrument) are rarely used for folk music. As Meeker points out:

The people of Turkey are aware of the different cultural influences which affect the various regions of their country, and they have a number of stereotypes which depict the expected customs, ways of thinking, and character traits of the people of different regions. The most unusual and distinctive regional stereotype is that of the eastern Black Sea Turks (Meeker 1971:318).

Picken also comments on the polyphonic character of the music of the Black Sea coast of Asia Minor:

The polyphonic fiddling of the Black Sea coast of Asia Minor is remarkable enough as a type of folk music; but it is the more remarkable to find such polyphony within the territory of the Islamic musical world, the territory of the purely homophonic (or at most mildly heterophonic) classical Perso-Arabo-Turkic tradition...Were the *kemençe*<sup>23</sup> the only instrument played polyphonically in Turkey, it might be argued, in view of the geographical limitation of the instrument to part of the territory of the late Byzantine Empire of Trebizond, that this polyphony is a survival of early mediaeval Western European polyphony (Picken 1954:73, 83).

Kilpatrick explains why Black Sea music is fundamentally different from the rest of the Asia Minor peninsula:

The polyphonic texture contrasts sharply with the heterophony of the rest of Turkey. The use of the perfect fourth as the primary interval sounds comparatively dissonant to the general Turkish audience whose ears are used to tertiary intervals when there is harmonic texture at all. The tempo of heterometric meters is impossible for many Turks to follow, especially since the melodic flow creates further rhythmic complexities. The timbre of the *kemençe* is rich in upper partials and sounds piercing and harsh to those who are used to the mellow sound of the violin. In short, the music is fundamentally and qualitatively different. As listed above, the vocabulary of tonal material, the periodicity of the rhythmic accents, and the characteristics of tone quality are all peculiar to Pontic or Black Sea music (Kilpatrick 1980: 80).

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<sup>21</sup> “*Kara*” in Turkish means black and “*deniz*” means sea, so “*karadeniz*”=Black Sea)

<sup>22</sup> Persian name given to bowed fiddles.

<sup>23</sup> The Black Sea lyre (Pontic *lyra*)



According also to Kilpatrick, the earliest recordings of Pontic *lyra* music date back to 1917. In another recording that had been dubbed from a disk made in Ankara, there is interesting evidence that the printed sources that provided the transcriptions of the Pontic songs were in Byzantine notation. These notations date from 1909. That confirms the fact that Pontic Greek musicians were familiar with the music of the Byzantine Orthodox Church.

The fiddlers in the Black Sea assert that they do not make use of the modes (maqam) of classical Turkish music. In fact...they commonly use tetrachords with the semitone below, in the middle, or occasionally on top, and such tetrachords of course occur in the classical modes (Picken 1954:79).

But the fact that the Pontic *lyra* belongs culturally to the musical tradition of the Greeks of Pontos does not mean that the instrument is not played by the Turkish people or by other ethnic groups of the Black Sea. Cultural exchanges bring people closer in all aspects of social and cultural life. And the exchange of musical information between cultures and ethnicities is probably one of the most important aspects of communication, in order to come closer to a 'foreign culture'. Apart from all other social events, the element of music is the strongest link, in order to bring closer Christians and Muslims, Greeks and Turks, Armenians, Persians and many people of the world.

Pontic Greeks have often been called *Lazoi* ("Laz"), and the nomenclature in the Black Sea area can be very confusing. According to available historical evidence, the word Laz denotes a specific ethnic group of local Caucasian people who are still scattered along the eastern shores of the Black Sea. Partly because of this geographic proximity, all people from the area were called Laz by the Turks from central Anatolia.

The Laz are an ethnic group who live primarily on the Black Sea coastal regions of Turkey and Georgia. They speak a language, related to Mingrelian and to Georgian (South Caucasian languages). In Georgia, they are frequently designated as a "territorial-cultural group" of the Georgian people. Some Laz living in Turkey do not accept the umbrella term "Kartvelian" and consider themselves as a part of a greater (Lazo-Mingrelian) Zan ethnos of Colchis that excludes Georgians (Iberians). However, most scholars who link Laz people linguistically, traditionally, and historically to Mingrelians consider the latter as an ethnographic group of Georgian people. Laz were converted to Christianity while living under

the Byzantine Empire and Georgian kingdom. With Ottoman rule, the vast majority of Laz became Sunni Muslims of Hanafi *madh'hab*. There is also a very limited number of Christian Laz in Georgia. The majority of Laz speak the Laz language.<sup>24</sup>

Sachs (1940:275) writes of a “Caucasian fiddle” (presumably the Pontic bottle-shaped *lyra*) and claims that this instrument is the same as the *kamanja Rumi* and the *lira (lyra)* of Greece, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. However, as discussed above, the *kamanja Rumi*, as well as the Bulgarian and the Yugoslavian instruments of this type are pear-shaped bowed lutes and not bottle-shaped, and the strings are stopped by touching with the fingernails, not by pressing them against the fingerboard. But what is this instrument called *kamanja Rumi*? Picken calls the *kamanja Rumi* the *fasil kemençesi* of Turkish classical music. Concerning the etymology of the word *Rumi*, it comes from the word *Rum*. According to available historical evidence, *Rum* is an Arabic-Turkish translation of the word *Romeos* (Roman). The history of the word *Romeos* comes from the Roman Era, when the Romans conquered Greece in 146 B.C. and Euxeinus Pontos (Black Sea area) in 30 A.D. In 212 A.D. the Roman Emperor Caracalus with his legislative decree *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace), in order to honour all the citizens of the Roman Empire and to bring peace, gave to everyone the right to be a Roman citizen. When Constantine the Great established Constantinople in 325 A.D. as the new capital of the Eastern Roman Empire and created the Byzantine Empire, all citizens continued to be called as *Romeoi Polites* (Roman citizens). And from the word *Romeos* (Roman), comes the word *Romios* meaning all Orthodox Christian citizens of the Byzantine Empire, the majority of whom were Greeks. This explanation of the word *Rum* leads us to a reconsideration of the word *Rumi* and consequently of *kamanja Rumi* that Sachs refers to, which according to my opinion is the pear-shaped bowed *lyra* of the Byzantines. Even today, the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and Istanbul are called Patriarchates of *Rum*, meaning the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate.

Picken’s assertion that the instrument is played by a large number of “Turkish speakers” on the Black Sea coast of Anatolia (Picken 1975:319), raises questions regarding the origin of these people. Who are these “Turkish speakers”? Extensive research has shown that a large population of people who live in the Black Sea coast of Anatolia regard the Pontic *lyra* as their “national musical instrument,” call

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<sup>24</sup> Source from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laz\\_people](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laz_people).



themselves *Romeoi* (Romans) as descendants of the Byzantine Empire and they speak *Roméika* (“Greek Pontic dialect”) (**Illustration 32**).

The fact that the Pontic *lyra*, according to informants in the city of Rize in 1952 (Picken 1975:319), was still to be heard even 60 years ago, confirms the views of my grandfather. My grandfather was born in 1917 in Batumi (today Georgia, Former U.S.S.R.). His parents came from Pontos (they lived in the area of Santa, south of Trabzon) and were moved to Batumi. In one of our vivid discussions in the late 80’s (my grandfather passed away in 1990), when I asked him about the origin of the Pontic *lyra*, he said to me that although exact information is not available, the instrument was certainly played long before the eighteenth century. From what he heard from the older generation of Pontic musicians, the instrument was performed mainly within the circles of the musical tradition of the Greeks of Pontos. During that time, only a few Turkish musicians played the instrument. My grandfather also remembered, through his vivid experience of the older generations of Pontic Greek musicians, that their Turkish friends in Pontos used to celebrate Easter and Christmas together with them. And they as Greeks, used to take part in the *Ramazani* (Ramadan) celebrations with their Turkish neighbours and friends. The Pontic *lyra* was always considered to be a Greek instrument by the Turks and it was the only instrument that took part in festivities and celebrations that was played by both Greeks and Turks.

Reinhard (Picken 1975:324) suggests that the approximate southern boundary of both *kemençe* and *touloum* or *aggeion* (Pontic bagpipe) areas are the watersheds of the mountain chains that defined the borders of the Empire of Trebizond: the mountains of Rize, Trabzon and Giresun. He also regards the area of Trebizond (Trabzon) as the ‘spiritual’ centre of the Black Sea fiddling.

Although Picken admits that the fastest and most highly decorated fiddling was to be heard in Trabzon and Rize provinces, areas of the Black Sea with a very distinguished musical tradition which is different from the rest of the Anatolian Peninsula, he supports that:

The music of the Black Sea is in fact less different from purely Turkish folk music.... The ‘Greek’ contribution to this music – to be looked for, perhaps, in view of the approximate coincidence of the *kemençe* area and the late Empire of Trebizond, seems to lie more in the fire, spirit and passion of fiddling in the region of Trabzon, than in the elements of the musical language itself.... Notwithstanding the lingering survival of the Empire of Trebizond, it is surely something of an exaggeration to regard

this part of Anatolia as more ‘Greek’ than the Aegean coast for example. In any case, the history of the late Empire of Pontus reveals constant contact with both Georgians and Turks (Pickens 1975:337).

The aim of this Chapter was to clarify the contradictory views about the origin of the Pontic *lyra*. According to the outcome of this research, it is clear that the instrument has its roots to Byzantine and European polyphonic music. Both the construction of the instrument, as well as the performance of the traditional playing techniques which are analysed in the following chapters, prove the European polyphonic character of the Pontic *lyra*. I consider the references of the above authors important and crucial. Pickens’s self-contradictory views in 1954 and in 1975 (see references on p.40-41 and 43-44) regarding the origin of the *karadeniz kemence*, together with Kilpatrick, Meeker and Bachmann are my main sources to this research and probably the only available regarding the instrument’s history. I also regard the outcome of this research as highly significant because it is the first of its kind in the field of Performance Practice. As a practice based research in non-western musical tradition, the knowledge about the origins of a musical instrument is vital, in order to understand better the musical functionalities and playing techniques.



## Chapter 3

### Performance techniques for the Pontic *lyra*

#### 3.1 Performing on the Pontic *lyra*

The Pontic *lyra* is held in an upright position. The player, usually seated, rests the instrument between the legs, which he or she holds together, or upon the left or the right thigh. In both instances, the *lyra* slants slightly to the left or forwards. When the musician plays in a standing position (**Illustration 33**), the instrument is supported by the thumb and the forefinger of the left hand, which rests upon the head of the *lyra*. Certain players are accustomed to rest the lower end of the sound box against their groin or upon their belt when they are playing while standing. In the past, *lyra* players used to pass the left wrist through a loop made of a narrow ribbon which was tied to the head of the *lyra*. This helped them to keep the instrument stable and provided some resistance especially when they played the notes of the upper register with the extension of the fourth finger (thumb holding the neck of the instrument and the four fingers on the fingerboard). The knotted ribbon can also be used to hang the *lyra* on the wall of the musician's house when the instrument is not being played, but nowadays, all professional and most amateur Pontic *lyra* players use a hard case for their good quality *lyras*. In this way, the instrument is well protected from humidity and weather changes, as well as being protected from physical damage. Only inferior instruments are hung on the wall to add decoration to the house.

#### 3.2 Playing techniques of the left hand

The strings of the *lyra* are stopped with the player's fingertips, as in the case of the violin. In playing the Pontic *lyra*, using the four fingers of the left hand give expressiveness to the colourful playing of the *lyra*. In order to produce pitches higher than those of an open string, the string is firmly pressed against the fingerboard with the fingers of the left hand, thus shortening the sounding length, and consequently raising the pitch. The string itself vibrates only between the bridge and the nut. The left hand therefore moves from a position closest to the nut (first position) up the

fingerboard toward the place where the bow is drawn across the string. As the hand moves up in order to produce higher pitches, it shifts from one position to another. It must be remembered that the index finger of the left hand and not the thumb is called the first finger.

When the *lyra* player plays a melody, he often simultaneously stops a neighbouring string with the same fingers. Something similar takes place in the case of the bow. In the course of playing, the bow will often be used to vibrate two strings, the string upon which the melody is played and the neighbouring string. In this way of playing, the role of the bridge is obvious. Its small dimensions (approximately 2-2.5 cm in length, and 1-1.5 cm in height) – which on the evidence of old instruments have been preserved unchanged – allow the bow and the player's fingers to strike and stop two strings simultaneously. Thus, one can distinguish the following modes of playing the *lyra*:

a) The melody is played on two strings (high and middle or middle and low) in parallel perfect fourths (fingers and bow respectively stop and touch both strings simultaneously). According to Western classical music terminology, this important playing technique of the Pontic *lyra* is called **double-stopping**. In this case, both notes (the melody and its accompaniment) are heard at the same time. The *lyra* player performs the parallel fourths playing technique by using mainly the index and middle fingers to stop the strings. Playing in parallel fourths is the most important music characteristic of the Pontic *lyra* music. Nearly the whole traditional music repertory of the *lyra* is based on this unique sound of parallel fourth intervals (**musical example 3 on DVD**).

b) The melody is played on the highest string and is accompanied by a drone, (the term for drone is *isokratis*) on the middle string (the player's fingers stop the highest string, while the bow touches both the highest string and the middle string). That results in a perfect 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> interval (three tones and one semitone), a 6<sup>th</sup>, a 7<sup>th</sup> and even an octave (**musical example 4 on DVD**). In this case, the first string plays the main melody and the second keeps the drone. Another musical instrument that functions in this way is the Pontic bagpipe called *touloum* or *aggeion*.

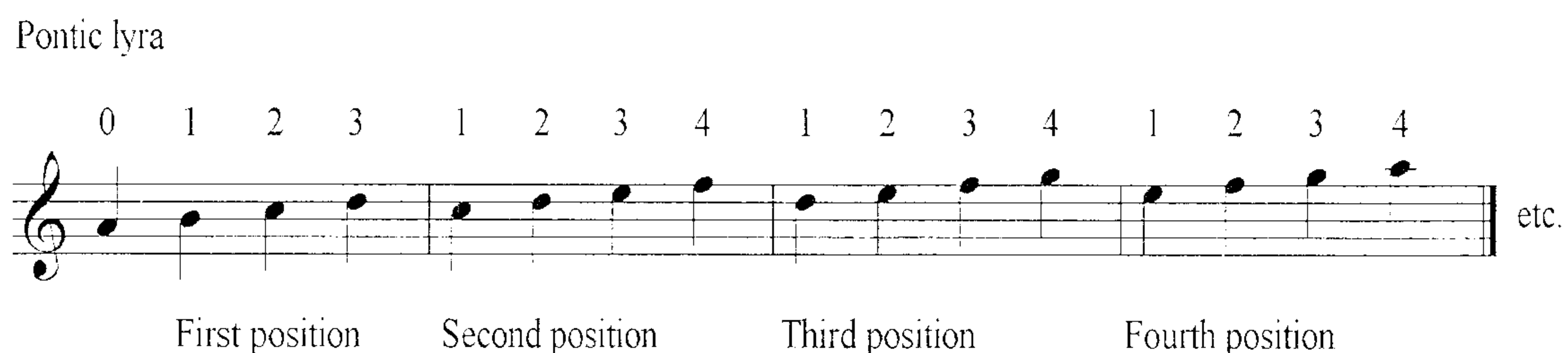
c) The melody is played on the middle string, and is accompanied by a drone on the adjacent, higher string: the fingers stop the middle string, while the bow simultaneously touches both the middle string and the neighbouring higher string (**musical example 5 on CD**).



This mode of playing the *lyra* is rarely encountered. Modes (a) and (b) above are often used in succession in playing a single piece. At one moment the first mode of playing will predominate, at another the second mode, according to the taste of the musician and the selection of the repertory, as well as the mood of the moment for improvisation.

When performing traditional Pontic music on the *lyra* the hand remains in the first position, the position closest to the nut of the *lyra*. All the notes required for traditional melodies, can be fingered from this position. Changing the left hand position up the neck of the *lyra* is considered to be a contemporary playing technique, modelled mainly on western classical violin techniques. A skilled performer can move from the first position up to the third position. The manner of shifting position is shown in the example below on the first string (**musical example 6 on DVD**):

**Figure 3: Shifting position on the Pontic *lyra*.**



The most important characteristic left-hand technique in Pontic *lyra* playing is the trill. The movement of one finger produces a note that alternates repeatedly with a sustained tone held by another finger. The trill may be performed upward or downward. Each finger plays its unique role when the trill is used and there are different combinations of trills between the fingers. Thus, we can have the use of trill playing when using: a) an open string while the first finger or the second finger perform the trills; b) a trill of the second finger when the first finger stops the string (or both strings); c) a trill of the third finger when the first or rarely the second finger stop the string (or strings); d) a trill of the little (fourth) finger where the strings are stopped by the index, the middle or the third finger; and e) trills while the first finger stops the string or two strings simultaneously and making the trills with the second, the third and the fourth finger (**musical example 7 on DVD**).

But the most common combination of trills on the *lyra* is a combination of the first and third finger together (in a certain repertory) and the second and the fourth fingers together as well (**musical example 8 on DVD**). Many times, according to the music piece and the way it is interpreted, the trill technique can be used in the first, second, third or even in the fourth position. Trills are also used on both strings and not just on one string, because most of the Pontic *lyra* pieces have the two voice character. Additionally, when the performer improvises in a long melodic line, he/she can also use the trill technique on one string only, according to his/her preference using the other accompanying string as a drone tone (**musical example 9 on DVD**). The vocal version of the trill in Pontic music is the breaking of the voice between an ornamental falsetto and the melodic tone and it is a desirable ornament for many Pontic singers.

Many playing techniques for the *lyra* that are used today are very similar to those which are used in western classical violin music, as well as in the popular violin music of Greece. They have been borrowed by the *lyra* players to enrich the musical possibilities of the instrument. One very characteristic playing technique is the *glissando*; the use of *glissando* on the Pontic *lyra* is considered by *lyra* players to be a new playing technique. The *glissando* gives its own unique character to the music, making it sound sweeter and more melismatic. A true *glissando* is made with one finger only, with *legato* (bowing).<sup>25</sup> It is accomplished by sliding one finger on one string from one pitch to another. It is possible to *glissando* upward or downward on a string. The *glissando* can be produced by the first, second, third and rarely by the fourth finger (**musical example 10 on DVD**). Indisputably, it is an innovative playing technique on the *lyra*. A perception about the *glissando* technique that is shared by many Pontic *lyra* performers and other Greek Pontic musicians, is that with this particular technique the sound of the *lyra* can reach high standards of performance. As a non-traditional playing technique, it develops and extends the musical possibilities of the Pontic *lyra*. It has been accepted by the musicians as a welcome and innovative contemporary playing technique. Another view that is shared by many Greek Pontic musicians is that the sound of the Pontic *lyra* is very similar to the sound of the violin and by imitating the melismatic sound of the violin with the Pontic *lyra*, the result will be an extraordinary and contemporary music performance.

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<sup>25</sup> Each note calls for a change in the direction of the bow.



The sound of the violin in Greek traditional music is very popular to folk musicians and by experimenting with its sound and the playing techniques, it brings interesting ideas and new standards in the performance practice of the Pontic *lyra*.

In the playing of stringed instruments the tone is given life and warmth through the use of *vibrato* of the left hand (Piston 1995:7). The open strings of the *lyra* are almost always ornamented with a trill as their pitch cannot be otherwise altered. When one of the four fingers is pressed down on a string and sustained for any length of time, the performer will use vibrato to enhance the beauty of the tone. This is accomplished by placing the finger firmly on the string at the desired pitch while performing a rocking motion parallel to the string. *Vibrato* also increases the ‘emotional’ quality and intensity of the pitch without distorting the essential frequency. The *vibrato* technique is rarely used in traditional Pontic *lyra* music. It is a technique borrowed from the violin and it is used only when contemporary music is performed on the *lyra*. On the Pontic *lyra*, the first, second, third finger and rarely the fourth finger are those which make use of this technique (**musical example 11 on DVD**).

### 3.3 Playing techniques of the right hand

The bow is held firmly, yet lightly, between the fingers and thumb of the right hand. The third finger is in a position to exert varying pressure on the bow hair. The fourth finger does not touch the hair of the bow and is used mainly to balance the bow. The bow is drawn at right angles across the strings, ordinarily at a place about halfway between the bridge and the end of the fingerboard. With the varying pressure that the *lyra* player exerts on the bow, can play softer or louder tones. The hair is placed flat, so that all the hairs are in contact with the strings. The part of the bow near the point is called the upper part of the bow; that nearer the hand grip is called the lower part. The correct bow position on the instrument (about 2 to 4cm away from the bridge) makes a clear and pure sound. The wrist of the *lyra* player must be very flexible and able to execute fast movements and rests. The correct use of the bow provides stable control over the sound. In performance, the performer may need to turn the body of the instrument with his left hand in order for the bow to touch another string.



In Pontic *lyra* music, the upper part of the bow is used more than the lower part. The lower part of the bow is used when the player uses whole bowing phrases and that takes place only during long improvised pieces, which are slow in tempo and in free rhythm. It is here that the performer enjoys the freedom of musical expressiveness. In a *legato* phrase, the movements of the bow are closely related to factors such as intensity, dynamic level, tempo, the length of the bow, fingering, etc. Any Pontic melody can be bowed effectively in many different ways, and it is no wonder that teachers of the Pontic *lyra* music disagree as to the best way to bow a given phrase or melody. Perhaps the most common bow stroke on the Pontic *lyra* is the one which changes direction for each note or each little phrase. This stroke, commonly known as *détaché* (French) or as *nonlegato* (Italian) or as **separate bows**, is usually performed so that one hears clearly the articulation of the bow's changes in direction. The notes are not so detached from one another and this effect could be called *staccato*, a very characteristic bow technique. *Staccato* may be performed by separate short strokes, or by having a series of short notes separated on one bow stroke, either an up or down bow. The *staccato* bowing technique appears many times in Pontic *lyra* music, especially in some of the dances, which demand a very fast and controlled *staccato* bowing. *Staccato* playing in fast tempo does not call for a lifting of the bow as in the case of the western classical violin bowing but the short, quick down and up bows made by the wrist alone, using the upper part of the bow close to the point (**musical example 12 on DVD**).

In Pontic *lyra* music, **accents** are made principally with the bow, but an accent may also be imparted by the left hand, by means of a sudden quickening of the trill or the vibrato, by a more forceful finger stroke or by both. It depends on whether the accented note is made by lifting the finger or by dropping it on the string. This left hand accent is nearly always combined with the bow accent in vigorous and rhythmic passages. Accents are of course relative to the general character of a particular tone or melody, whether it is soft or loud.

When the Pontic *lyra* player performs a melody with long phrases on the *lyra* and improvises in a free manner, he sometimes plays with the bow very close to the bridge and produces a special kind of sound, due to the bringing out of the upper partials which are not usually heard. This bowing playing technique is used more in contemporary music performance of the Pontic *lyra* and is called the *ponticello*



bowing technique. This effect is generally combined with the bow-tremolo (**musical example 13 on DVD**).

The bow **tremolo** is made with quick up and down bow strokes with the left hand holding the note or notes. It is an important and basic characteristic of Pontic *lyra* music, capable of great dynamic range and variety of accentuation. It is used mainly in the dance repertory of the *lyra*, as well as in contemporary music performance on the instrument (**musical example 14 on DVD**). As far as the dynamics of music are concerned, accents are very important, especially in the dance repertory, where the strong accent of the bow on every single dance step gives a particular sense to the music itself and provides a good communication between the dancer and the *lyra* player.

**Double-stops** are another characteristic bowing technique of the Pontic *lyra*. They are performed when two notes on adjacent strings are played simultaneously. In Pontic *lyra* music there are two kinds of double-stops; those in which one of the notes is an open string, and those in which both pitches are stopped. It is possible to play two notes on adjacent strings at the same time on all stringed instruments by fingering the two pitches and then having the bow drawn across both strings at the same time.

Having a lot of experience as a violin player since I was 14 years old, I was able to experiment and explore new playing techniques on the Pontic *lyra*. The *lyra* is my main instrument and I always wanted to find new ways of playing it. When I started to learn the violin, I was taught the usual western classical playing techniques referred to above. Another technique that I was fascinated by and wanted to transfer to the Pontic *lyra* was the *pizzicato*. *Pizzicato* is a typical western classical violin playing technique and performing it on the Pontic *lyra* was a real temptation. In 2003, I had the opportunity to work with Ostad Ardeshir Kamkar (**Illustration 34**), a Persian classical *kamancheh* player. Our music collaboration was based on improvisation, a performance practice that is commonly used in both our music cultures. In the studio, I noticed to my surprise that Ardeshir played *pizzicato* on his *kamancheh*. He told me that it was a contemporary playing technique for the Persian *kamancheh*. The experience I had with him in the recording studio inspired me a lot. I tried straight away the *pizzicato* technique on my Pontic *lyra*; although it sounded strange to my ears, the sound of the *lyra* was now similar to the violin. This particular technique does not exist in the Greek Pontic musical tradition. *Pizzicato* is performed with the thumb, the index and rarely with the middle finger of the right hand (**musical**

**example 15 on DVD**). Many young *lyra* players who want to extend the musical possibilities of the Pontic *lyra* have adopted all these playing techniques in recent years. Nowadays, the above-mentioned playing techniques are taking part in the contemporary performance of the *lyra*.

The Pontic *lyra* player decides which bowing techniques shall be used during a performance of a particular piece, as well as the sequence of the up and the down bowing. Concerning tremolo and the fast bowing technique, it is up to the player to combine different bowing movements, as well as to select and create a style that characterises his bowing technique. When Pontic musicians nowadays listen to various *lyra* players, they can instantly distinguish one player from another, because of their right hand technique. The left hand playing technique is also very important in order to evaluate a musical performance, but it is the bowing that forms the overall acoustical result. Thus, every Pontic *lyra* player who listens to Gogos Petrides's playing can instantly recognise that it is Gogos who plays the *lyra* in that particular performance, because of his full dynamic sound characterised by his right hand playing technique.

### **3.4 Melody and rhythm in Greek Pontic music**

The method of tuning the Pontic *lyra* in two successive descending perfect fourth intervals divides the scale structure into two tetrachords. The upper and lower perimeters of the tetrachords are fixed by the tuning of the strings in fourths and the character of the tetrachord and therefore the character of the mode is determined by two inner movable pitches. The fixed pitches function as the reference tones, somewhat comparable to the tonic and dominant pitches in the West. According to ancient Greek music, these fixed pitches have a "functional priority" (Kilpatrick 1980:226) but they operate with equal force rather than the implied primary and secondary importance of the tonic and dominant relationships in Western music. The octave system in Western Classical music includes two disjunctive tetrachords and it is this difference which accounts for the tendency for harmonies to be built on combinations of notes in thirds and has resulted in the major-minor modalities. But in the case of the Pontic Greek modal system, the three strings of the *lyra* exclude the octave and introduce "quartertones" which allows the ear to hear the B-E-A chord



(the open strings of the Pontic *lyra*) as points of rest corresponding to the return to tonic in the West. This nature of the perfect fourth relationship means that the tonic of any of the conjunct tetrachords may be a reference tone on the Pontic *lyra*. And it is this maintenance of the perfect fourth relationship between the upper and the lower voices that characterises and determines the modal practice of Pontic *lyra* music.

**Figure 4:**

The movable tetrachords on the lower (B) and middle (E) strings of the Pontic *lyra*



**Figure 5:**

The movable tetrachords on the middle (E) and higher (A) strings of the Pontic *lyra*

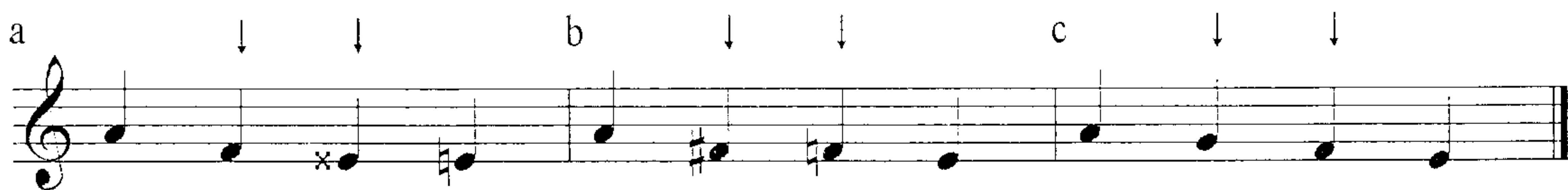


Pontic *lyra* music is usually polyphonic. Because of the relationship of the “two-voice” character of Pontic music, that specific type of polyphony is called diaphony. The diaphonic mode of polyphony is based on parallel fourths. Other intervals that characterise the musical texture of Pontic *lyra* music are: a) the fifths, which are the most common in use after the fourths (especially in traditional repertory); b) the seconds, as passing notes; c) thirds and sixths, used in contemporary *lyra* music repertory; d) sevenths, with a drone on the adjacent string; e) octaves and unisons, used for cadential patterns.

According to the tetrachordal modality of ancient Greek and Byzantine music theory, Pontic *lyra* music can be classified as diatonic or chromatic with the possibility of enharmonic modes. Thus, tonal materials may include ornamenting pitches that are contramodal (out of the mode), as well as pitches that establish the mode. The fundamental tetrachord was bounded by the “fixed notes” of the perfect

fourth; between them, two “movable notes” were placed in three genera, roughly as in the example below (*Harvard Dictionary of Music* 1972:352):

Figure 6:



Examples of the first tetrachord where A is the open high string of the Pontic lyra and E is the middle string

Thus, the highest of the three intervals of the tetrachord was widened from a whole tone, a-g (Ex. c, diatonic), into an interval of three semitones, a-f# (Ex. b, chromatic), or four semitones, a-f (Ex. a, enharmonic). The remaining interval (f#-e, or f-e) was halved, a procedure that, in the latter case produced two quarter tones (**musical example 16 on DVD**).

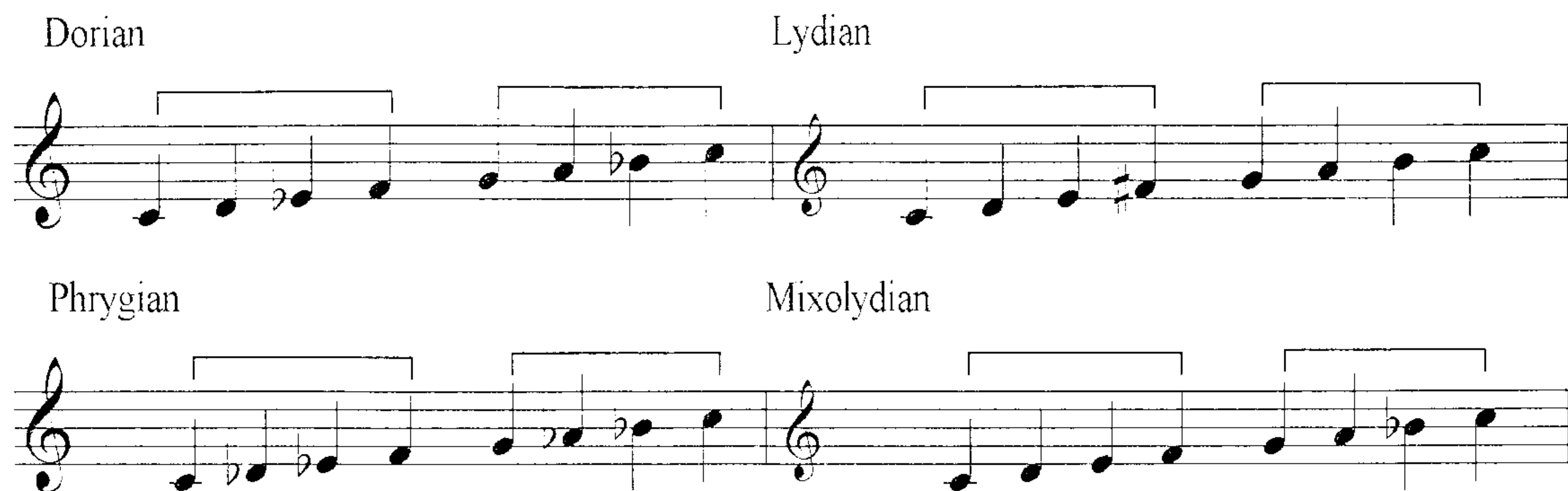
The fact that the octave is formed of two conjunct tetrachords has direct consequences for the tuning of the Pontic *lyra*. The tuning of these two conjunct tetrachords (low B → middle E → high A) of the ancient Greek music theory have been preserved in the construction and the nature of the instrument.

Hymnographer Bishop Amvrosios of Mediolans (340-397 A.D.) replaced the Greek names of the modes such as Dorian, Lydian, Phrygian and Mixolydian with the Byzantine *Protos* (“First”), *Defteros* (“Second”), *Tritos* (“Third”) and *Tetartos* (“Fourth”) *Echos* (“Sound”) respectively.<sup>26</sup> The chromatic modes of Hypodorian, Hypolydian, Hypophrygian and Hypomixolydian were renamed by Gregorios, Pope of Rome (540-604 A.D.) with those of *Plagios Protos Echos* (“First Plagal Sound”), *Plagios Defteros* (“Second Plagal”), *Plagios Tritos* (“Third Plagal”) and *Plagios Tetartos Echos* (“Fourth Plagal Sound”) respectively (Oikonomou 2001:44-46). Of those, the most commonly used in Pontic *lyra* music are the Phrygian, which corresponds to the Byzantine *Protos* (“First”) *Echos* and the Hypolydian which corresponds to the Byzantine *Plagios Defteros* (“Second Plagal”) *Echos*.

<sup>26</sup> The ancient Greek term of what nowadays we call mode is *tropos*. Thus, we can speak of the *Dorios* (“Dorian”) or the *Phrygios* (“Phrygian”) *tropos*, which later on was replaced by the Byzantine term *Echos* (“Sound”).



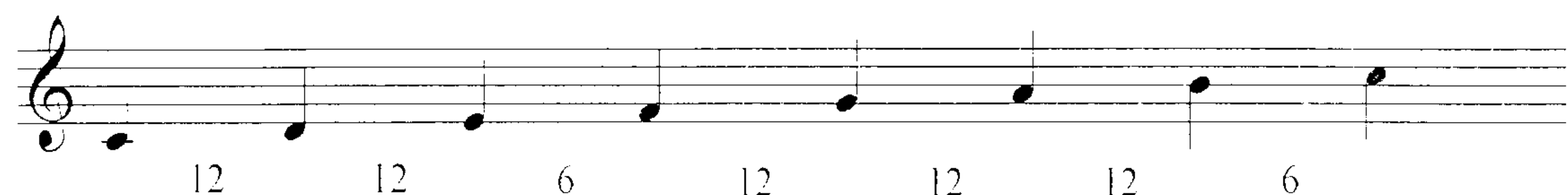
Figure 7: The ancient Greek modes.



For Greek Pontic traditional music there is no standardized music theory. Rather, the theory is been continually re-examined and redefined by musicians and dancers who perform and discuss their art almost daily at social gatherings, concerts and open-air festivals.

Pontic Greek musicians nowadays are familiar with the music of the Byzantine Orthodox Church and sometimes participate in the congregational singing of what may be called neo-Byzantine chant. Byzantine music theory is highly organized, with its own system of music notation that is systematically taught by teachers in public schools, private music schools and conservatoires, seminaries and monasteries. Theoreticians, hymn writers, and musicians divide the octave into 72 units which are called *moria* in Greek Byzantine terminology. The use of those microtones (a small number) or *moria* is very common in Pontic *lyra* music. The whole tone is divided into twelve *moria*, while six *moria* equal one semitone. The Western major scale would theoretically be structured as follows:

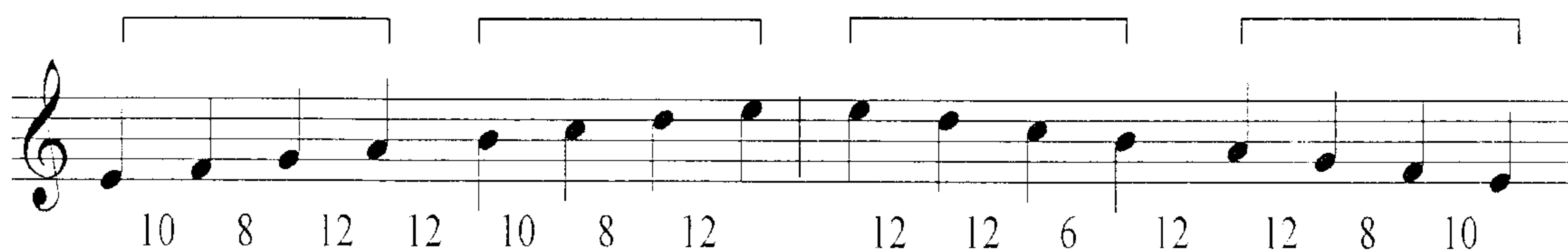
Figure 8:



According to this system, between the semitone and the tone, namely the six and the twelve microtones, there are two other notes, the 8<sup>th</sup> microtone and the 10<sup>th</sup> microtone. Their names are the Minor interval for the 8<sup>th</sup> and the Major interval for

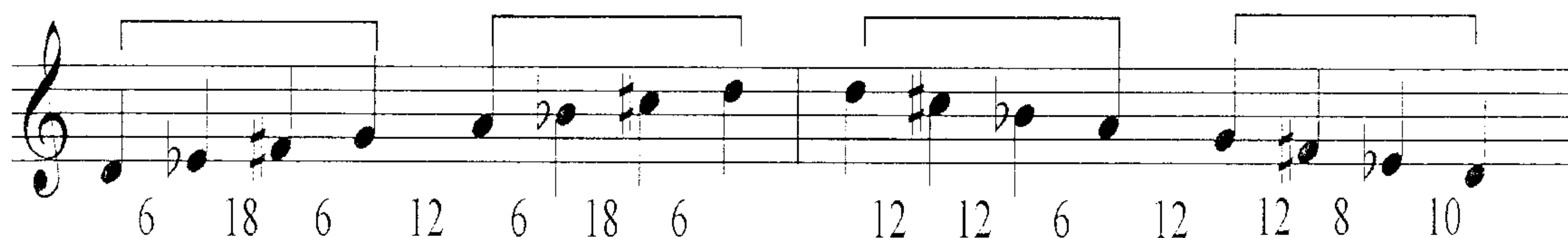
the 10<sup>th</sup> respectively. Thus, the structure<sup>27</sup> of the Byzantine *Protos Echos* (“First Sound”) is:

**Figure 9: Byzantine *Protos Echos* (“First Sound”) which relates to the ancient Phrygian mode:**



Two fixed intervals retain the intervallic distance in all the modes: the octave is a point of reference, and the interval from the fourth modal degree to the fifth is always an interval of twelve units (a whole tone) dividing the upper and lower tetrachords. The Byzantine *Plagios Defteros Echos* (“Second Plagal”) *Echos* appears as follows:

**Figure 10: Byzantine *Plagios Defteros Echos* (“Second Plagal Sound”) which relates to the ancient Hypolydian mode:**



Sometimes the theoretical system of keeping the exact intervals of a Byzantine scale in Pontic *lyra* music is often rejected by the composer or the performer. Thus, in the case of the Second Plagal *Echos*, the Pontic musician may perform the scale using a C natural note on the upper tetrachord instead of using a C# note. That brings another important characteristic in *lyra* playing; the frequent use of certain neutral intervals.<sup>28</sup>

The concept of *isokratima* (“drone tone”) in Byzantine music also applies to Pontic *lyra* music and to the musical modes for playing the instrument. A Byzantine chant is always accompanied by the *ison* (“drone”) that functions as the tonic of the

<sup>27</sup> The ascending scale and the descending scale are not necessarily the same.

<sup>28</sup> In the playing of traditional masters, in the Phrygian mode, the minor second above the tonic is often or slightly sharp, giving a small neutral second.



melody. Respectively, the “two-voice” character of the Pontic *lyra* also implies the drone. The drone tone is used for the dance repertory of the *lyra* as well, where the lower adjacent string plays the role of a drone which also introduces the harmony of the melody. The fact that the Pontic *lyra* can produce the melodic line and the harmonic accompaniment at the same time makes it an exceptional instrument for music organization and self-sufficiency.

Figure 11: The use of the drone tone in Pontic *lyra* music and its harmonic accompaniment – Performing the Byzantine *Protos Echos* from E as the tonic:

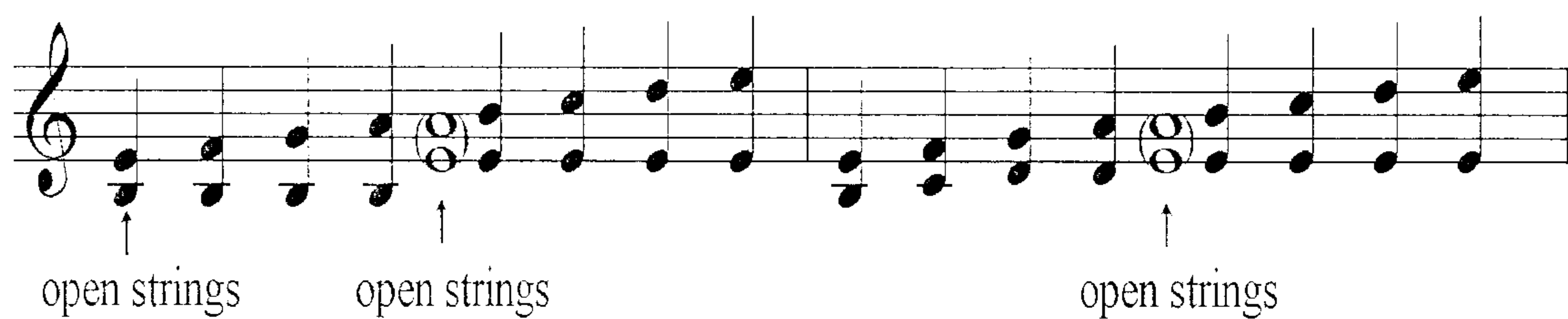


Figure 12: The use of the drone tone in Pontic *lyra* music and its harmonic accompaniment – Performing the Byzantine *Plagios Defteros Echos* from E as the tonic:

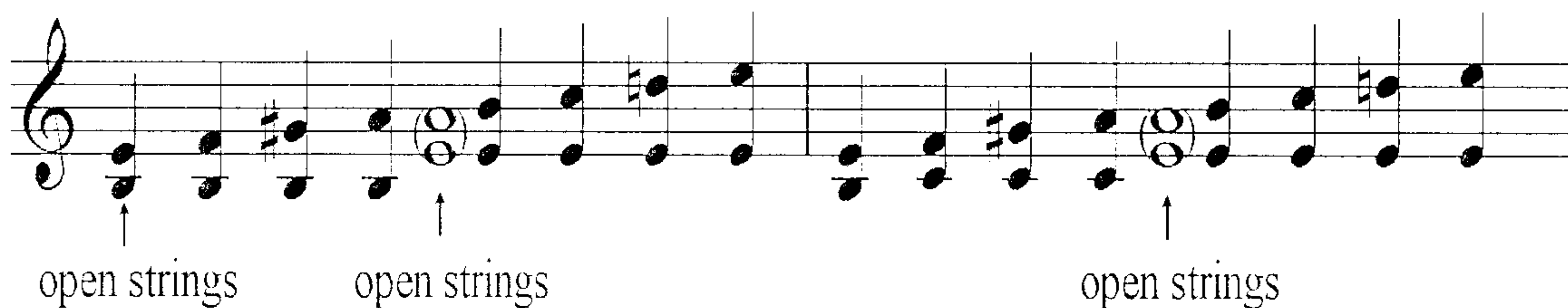
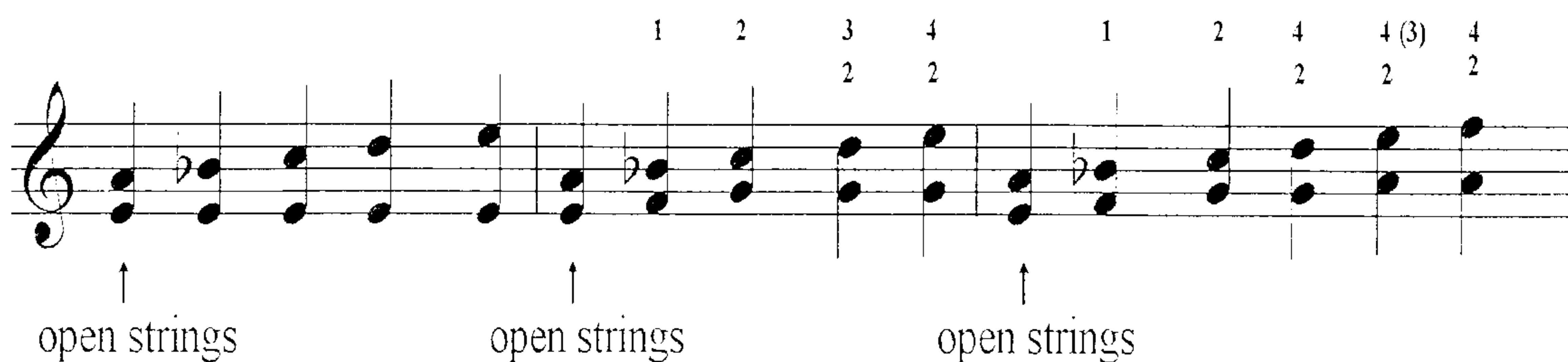


Figure 13: The use of the drone tone in Pontic *lyra* music and its harmonic accompaniment – Performing the Byzantine *Protos Echos* from A as the tonic:







dispute over the etymology of the word *rhythmos* (“rhythm”) it seems to have been consistently connected, in classical Greek thought, with human movement. The definition of rhythm given by Plato provides a classical base for a theory of the musical organisation of time in connection with dance (Kilpatrick 1980:156).

Pontic Greek music exhibits rhythms of ancient Greece (Gaitanidis 2003:25). According to Aristoxenus, who lived in the second half of the Fourth century B.C., these rhythms were combinations of short and long timed syllables (v = short, and — = long time). A result of this combination of syllables is the creation of the rhythmical units called *podes* (“metres”) Thus, we have the:

<i>Iamvikos</i>	(v —)
<i>Trochaikos</i>	(— v)
<i>Paeonikos</i>	(v v v —)
<i>Antispastikos</i>	(v — — v)
<i>Epitritikos</i>	(v — — —)
<i>Daktylikos</i>	(— v v)
<i>Anapestikos</i>	(v v —)
<i>Prokelevsmatikos</i>	(v v v v) as well as other composed rhythmical units ( <i>podes</i> ). <sup>29</sup>

The verse in Pontic music consists of *Iamvikos* and *Trochaikos* rhythmic syllables, two of the most important *podes* that are the foundation of ancient Greek poetry. The dance rhythms consist of:

a) The *Prokelevsmatikos* (v v) which forms the rhythm of **2/4** beats. A great amount of the Pontic *lyra* repertory including love songs and dances is based on this rhythm. The dance of 2/4 according to Pontic musicians’ ‘ethno theory’ is called *Omal*.

b) The *Iamvikos* or *Trochaikos* form the rhythm of **3/4** or **6/8**. These rhythms are found mainly in the wedding songs, with their ritualistic character, as well as in other Pontic music repertory. This 6/8 rhythm is often called *Tas* by Pontic musicians. The 3/4 rhythm in Pontic music is called *argon* (“slow”) *Karslidikon Omal* (“slow *Omal* dance of Kars).

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<sup>29</sup> Also see Michaelides 1982 (Encyclopaedia of Ancient Greek Music). Devrelis 1994:62-66. Kosmas, Metropolitan of Veria 1991:37-42.

c) The *Paeonikos* rhythm (*Παιωνικός*): — υ υ υ (where — = 1/1 and υ = 1/2)<sup>30</sup> which forms the rhythm of 5/8. This rhythm appears in the Pontic dance repertory and in many table songs, which are performed in a slower version of the 5/8 rhythm. Pontic musicians call this rhythm *Tik*.

d) The *Epitritikos* rhythm: — — — υ which forms the rhythm of 7/8. Very often, this rhythm is played at the end of the 5/8 dance (*Tik*) and is called *Tromachton Tik*, meaning trembling dance.

e) The *Eneasimos Tetrameris*: — — — — υ, which forms the rhythm of 9/8. This dance is a combination of *Paeonikos* (— υ υ υ) and *Spondeios* (—) rhythm. To this particular type of rhythm, which according to Pontic Greek terminology is called *Dipat*, belong the historical and mythical songs, as well as love songs. There is a faster version of this rhythm that is formed of 9/16 beats and is performed in certain dance repertory.

### 3.5 Learning to perform on the Pontic *lyra* – a personal account

My parent's house in Veria, northern Greece, is a semi-detached house (a building with two separate flats) where my grandparents, the parents of my father lived. My grandfather, most commonly known by the Pontic Greek community of Veria and its environs as 'Makos', was born in 1917 in the city of Batumi (Georgia, former USSR). His parents came from the area of Santa, south of Trabzon near the Monastery of Soumela (Holy Virgin). Right after 1914, they were forced to leave their homeland by the Turkish authorities and moved to the city of Batumi. My grandfather came to Greece with his grandparents, his mother (his father had died at the age of 29), one sister and one brother. They came by ship from Batumi to Thessaloniki at the end of 1921, with thousands of other Greek refugees from Pontos. Their new life in Greece was not easy. The refugees were generally settled in camps rife with malaria and other insect-borne diseases, and the area of Kalamaria in Thessaloniki did not offer them their basic needs and a healthy environment. So, my grandparents' family moved to the county of Imathia, west of Thessaloniki. They finally settled in the village of Mikri Santa (Small Santa), 12 kilometres away from the village of

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<sup>30</sup> Think of crotchet and quaver respectively



Georgianoï at an altitude of approximately 800 meters. All the inhabitants of Mikri Santa originated from the area of Santa in Pontos and the name given to the village was to remind them their homeland.

My grandfather started to learn the Pontic *lyra* at a very early age. How he learnt during his childhood was not mentioned to me or to my father.<sup>31</sup> But he used to say that in every house in the village (Mikri Santa), there was a family member who was a Pontic *lyra* player, a fact that explains the frequent music making and practicing in the 1930's and 1940's within the Pontic Greek community. He managed to achieve a high standard of performance and he was appreciated and respected as a professional Pontic *lyra* player by all members of the community. People invited him to play at their weddings and he was a very active musician. His professional activities brought him close to some of the most famous Pontic musicians of that time, both singers and *lyra* players, such as the *lyra* player Gogos Petrides, the singer Chrysanthos Theodorides and *lyra* player and singer Kostikas Tsakalides. Gogos<sup>32</sup> (1917-1984) (**Illustration 35**) was and still is regarded by the Pontic Greek community as *o kalyteros*, the 'best of all' *lyra* players. The same applies to Chrysanthos (**Illustration 36**) as the best Pontic singer. Kostikas Tsakalides and his innovative ideas in the performance of the Pontic *lyra* also distinguished him from other musicians.

My grandfather's close friendship and relationship with these musicians resulted in an extraordinary opportunity to learn about Pontic music. Going to hundreds of wedding parties, open-air festivals, family gatherings and social celebrations with these musicians gave my grandfather the opportunity to have 'a live experience' with them. He invited them to stay at his house and he organised informal gatherings that ended up in a *glendi* ("gathering") that lasted for many hours, even days. He also managed to get a few audio recordings from them, which we still keep in a safe place in our house in Veria. He was very well connected to these musicians' lives. This fact also helped my grandfather to become a very good Pontic *lyra* teacher. He may not have played the instrument and sang as well as them, but the experience of living such vivid moments with those musicians helped in a way his understanding

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<sup>31</sup> Perhaps I never asked my grandfather about his childhood. I was too young when he past away and we did not have the change to discuss his youth.

<sup>32</sup> A Pontic nickname for Giorgos (George).

of Pontic music performance. Many *lyra* players learned from him and they all acknowledge even today his passion and love for Pontic *lyra* music.

I came to know my grandfather when he was in his late sixties. By that time, he was still playing the *lyra*, but mainly in our house and at family gatherings. Because of various health problems his level of performance was not as it was in the past. But he was still playing the instrument with passion.

Music performance was very important in our house; it was part of everyday life. Because both of my parents had to go to work, my brother and I were largely brought up within our grandparents' house and environment. We knew all their friends and whenever my *Pappous* ("Grandfather") played the *lyra*, we came near him, listening. That was happening when I was three years old until I became nine. During this period of time, I was listening nearly every day to the sound of the Pontic *lyra*. I was able to sing from memory some of the traditional songs that my *Pappous* played and sang on the *lyra*. It was also fun to sing these songs along with my younger brother Konstantinos, who was following in the musical steps of our *Pappous*, too. My grandparents, my parents, as well as some of our musician friends, believed that our early exposure to the sounds of the Pontic *lyra* was very important in the development of our musical abilities. Through these many autobiographical memories, I came to understand the importance of what Baily calls "early positive musical peak experiences as strongly motivating factors."

These events usually occurred at home...while the child [listens rather than performing] and the child [is] alone or with a family member rather than with a teacher. In each case these conditions seem to be connected with a relaxed, non-threatening environment where nothing is being asked of the child. It seems that such an environment is necessary for music to work its strongest emotional effects on individuals (Baily 2007:7).

When my parents returned from work, they had to collect us from next door. Often, they had a coffee or even a meal with my grandparents and discussed the events of the day. Frequently, when they entered my grandparent's house, they found me and my brother singing and my *Pappous* accompanying our childish style Pontic singing with his *lyra* (**musical example 1 on audio CD**). Then, my father would take his own Pontic *lyra* and accompany us, while my mother and grandmother were clapping and giving us every support and encouragement to continue singing. This is



the environment in which I took my first musical steps and learned my first songs, an environment similar to that described for Afghanistan:

[they learn] ...“by ear”, through exposure to the sounds of music, imitation of musical performance, and individual trial and error in a social environment in which every encouragement was given by family members. There was no formal music training, no exercises... (Baily and Doubleday 1989:95).

During those years of early musical experience, I was always attracted to the sound and particularly to the performance of the Pontic *lyra*. Even if I was not able to play – I was then too small for the Pontic *lyra* – I was holding it while seated on my grandfather’s knees and I was pretending to be the best *lyra* player in the world (**Illustration 37**).

It was when I reached the age of nine that I really got into the ‘proper’ learning process and performance on the Pontic *lyra*. It was Christmas 1987 when we were all gathered at my grandparent’s house. Both my father and *Pappous* played the traditional Christmas carols on their *lyras*. Then, I took the decision to ask from my father to give me his *lyra*. I wanted to play this melody so impatiently. I recall the moment vividly. I asked my grandfather to show me how to play this piece on the *lyra*. Due to the fact that I had watched him perform on the instrument nearly every day in his house, I was familiar with the fingering and bowing positions. And it was not difficult for me to play the melody simply. I was so happy at this moment; it was a great achievement for me. I even continued performing the traditional Pontic Greek Christmas carols during the first months of 1988.

But the proudest person in the family was my grandfather. Before even I was born, he used to say to my mother, when she was pregnant, that she will be blessed to bring to life a healthy and a strong baby. And if the baby was a boy, according to tradition, he will be named Matthaïos. “My dream is for him to become a Pontic *lyra* player”, he said to my mother. Consequently, you can imagine the extra joy that my *Pappous* experienced that day when I took the Pontic *lyra* into my hands; I would be the one who will keep up the tradition and the performance of the Pontic *lyra*.

After this incident, I started taking lessons from my grandfather, and also from my father, especially when my grandfather was getting older and finding it difficult to play. My father’s *lyra* playing was not better than my grandfather’s playing but he

was able to teach me the basics on the instrument. Later on, I took lessons at a Pontic *lyra* music school in my hometown of Veria with a professional Pontic *lyra* musician. The school was funded by the Euxeine Club of Veria. This was also the time where all my family, including my mother, father and my younger brother, became regular members of the traditional Pontic choir of the Euxeine Club of Veria. The director and vocal teacher was a well known Pontic singer, Kostas Karapanayiotides, and the leading Pontic *lyra* player and teacher was Theodoros Eleftheriou, usually known as Veriotis (a pseudonym). He also was my *lyra* teacher, but only for a few lessons. The choir had eighty members of all age groups. From six-year old children to eighty years old people and approximately ten Pontic *lyra* players (I was one of them) between nine and sixty-five years old.

By that time, I was able to play a wide range of instrumental and vocal melodies on my *lyra*. The learning process with the teacher involved playing two *lyras* together at the same time, so I could pick up the bowing and the fingering movements from him. Usually, my teacher played a song or some patterns of the song. In this way, I could follow step by step the movements of my teacher. When I managed to play the tune, I received corrections from my teacher regarding the fingering and the bowing technique.

This particular learning process was based on observation and imitation, a process that I was already familiar with at home (from my father and my grandfather). Baily calls this particular learning process “imitation type two”, whereas “imitation type one” is explained as a “self-paced process of self-instruction”. Baily’s account of *dutar* players in Herat describes in detail the learning process of the instrument. The student listens to the instrument at home or in a familiar environment, but the model does not teach his playing technique to the student. When the model is absent, the student picks up the instrument from the wall and tries to imitate what his model played. A similar example of “imitation type one” is that of Gogos Petrides, the great master of the Pontic *lyra*, who never taught his technique to his three children, who are now all very distinguished players of the instrument.

This kind of imitation in music, and particularly in traditional music, is probably one of the most important ways of learning how to perform. In the past, Pontic *lyra* players used the method of imitation to a great extent, as this method is part of the oral tradition. As far as we know, the music tradition of the past was transmitted orally from generation to generation. That is how I was initially taught the



Pontic *lyra* by my grandfather and this is how Pontic music, like many others, has been preserved and survived until today. Baily considers that imitation is the main process of musical enculturation in most societies (Baily and Doubleday 1987:97).

My observation basically started at home and continued in music school where I questioned my teacher on the playing technique of the instrument. Quite often there was more than one student in my class and during that time our teacher Theodoros provided us with music scores and simple notation for the Pontic *lyra*. He was one of the first musicians to introduce western classical music notation for the instrument. I was familiar with written scores, because I was also attending music theory and practical lessons on the violin at the municipal conservatory of Veria.<sup>33</sup>

During this stage of my learning process, written scores were not much help. The elements of observation and imitation in the first years of music making were stronger than the element of formal music training and exercise. It was more interesting and challenging for me to copy a musician's playing technique using my natural hearing ability and transfer it onto my *lyra*, rather than looking at a score and trying to figure out the tiny black notes. I also learned by ear when I was listening to the audiotape recordings of Gogos Petrides and other *lyra* players in order to learn new repertory and performance techniques on the instrument. And it is this method of learning to perform that I use for the various musical instruments I play nowadays, such as the Pontic *lyra*, the violin, the Afghan *rubab* and Afghan *ghichak*, the Persian *kamancheh*, the Uzbek *ghichak*, the Arab *oud*, the Greek *bouzouki* and *laghouto* (Greek lute), the guitar and others. I have never used formal western music training and exercise in learning how to perform on these musical instruments except for the violin, which I studied for approximately eight years with a classical violin teacher.

My personal opinion, as far as the learning process of the traditional musical instruments is concerned, is that the student must have direct and immediate contact with the instrument and the teacher. I consider that the technicality of the music performance on traditional musical instruments is well connected to a 'live experience' for both performers and society. The details of the music, the emotion, the style, the fingering and bowing techniques cannot be set down on paper. For this reason, it is the culture of traditional music-making societies itself that provides the opportunities to learn 'naturally' and not 'artificially' the art of music performance.

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<sup>33</sup> During the time that I started to play the Pontic *lyra*, I also started to learn the western classical violin and take theory lessons simultaneously.

This is achieved by ‘experiencing music’ within the society in different ways; in a musical family environment, in a society where music is also connected to identity and plays an important social role, as well as in societies where there is a plethora of musicians who practice their art daily at festivals, concerts, weddings, on radio and television.

When I was confident about my music performance on the *lyra* and received good comments from my teacher, I stopped visiting him. I had taken no more than ten lessons with my first professional teacher, Theodoros Veriotis. I learned a great number of songs from him, but during that time, I was also able to teach myself, through my ability to listen to cassettes and records. I was able to utilise my auditory skills and transfer what I was hearing on the recordings directly onto the Pontic *lyra*. That musical ability started to take effect when I became eleven years old. Since then, I have used this method of learning continuously.

During the first years of my Pontic *lyra* music performance, I had to work on the dance repertory. I also needed some advice and correction on my fingering and bowing technique. At that time I visited, with my father, another distinguished Pontic *lyra* teacher, Takis Sachinides, who lived in the city of Thessaloniki. He was the person who had a large number of recordings by *lyra* virtuoso Gogos Petrides. I went to him to learn more of the dance repertory for the *lyra*, as well as to work on my left and right hand playing techniques. The method he used for teaching me it was quite simple; he used a tape recorder. Firstly, he let me listen to a recording by Gogos playing a dance piece. Then, I listened to the whole piece once again. After listening, we tuned our Pontic *lyras* according to the tuning of the *lyra* that Gogos used on that recording. Then, we listened to the dance piece phrase by phrase. Sachinides expected me to play each phrase on my *lyra* straight away. He corrected my fingering and bowing technique, until I was able to play the music as Gogos did. Then, we continued working through the same process until I could play the whole piece from beginning to end.

At the age of eleven I met my uncle Panayiotis Tsahourides, the second cousin of my father. He was not a very good *lyra* player, but he was able to explain and transmit his knowledge about the playing technique of Gogos Petrides to me. We met many times at my house in Veria where he taught me his experience of Pontic *lyra* performance. My uncle’s contribution to my *lyra* learning and musical development has been vital and invaluable. In the year of 1972-3, my uncle had been living in



Boston (USA) with his family. It was there when he met with Gogos Petrides and experienced with him what he calls ‘the best time of his music life’. Gogos was an example for every Pontic *lyra* player to imitate. He achieved the highest level of performance in his time and he is considered to be the greatest master of the instrument and its music performance techniques. He was able to achieve a full sound and complete control on the instrument’s performance.<sup>34</sup> Pontic musicians believe that if a *lyra* player manages to imitate and play the instrument in the style of Gogos, then he will learn the music on the instrument ‘properly’. What distinguished Gogos from all other Pontic *lyra* players was his musical knowledge and natural talent to play, improvise and compose at the same time, without distorting the character of the music.

Like many Pontic musicians, my uncle Panayiotis Tsahourides believed in Gogos’s musical perfection. I owe a lot to my uncle who became my ‘real’ Pontic *lyra* teacher, who helped me define the style of my Pontic *lyra* music performance. My uncle soon recognised my ability to learn by ear difficult music patterns on the Pontic *lyra*. He helped me develop all aspects of my playing technique, and transferred his personal experience of listening to Gogos Petrides into my fingering and bowing techniques.

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<sup>34</sup> More about Gogos Petrides is discussed in great detail at Chapter 5.

## Chapter 4

### The repertoire of the Pontic *lyra*

#### 4.1 Performing the traditional repertoire on the Pontic *lyra*

The traditional repertoire of Pontic music can be divided into two main categories. The first is the music that accompanies sung poetry, is not danced to and is in 5/8 rhythm at a slow and irregular tempo. It is freely interpreted by the player and the singer. In this category belong the *paradosiaka epitrapezia tragoudia* (“traditional table songs”). The second category includes music for dancing. There is a specific rhythm and the music may or may not be accompanied by lyrics. The rhythms of 2/4 beats, 3/4, 4/4, 5/8, 6/8, 7/8, 9/8 are most commonly performed in the Pontic music tradition. This category can be divided into two main sub-categories. The first sub-category includes a large repertoire of love songs, laments, religious songs, heroic songs, songs for nature, mythological songs, wedding songs, patriotic songs, calendrical songs and carols. The second sub-category includes the dances of the Greeks of Pontos. Most of the dance repertoire is usually performed by the *lyra* and there are no lyrics to accompany the music, except for a few dances that have lyrics that refer to the dance itself.

The second category, which includes the two sub-categories referred above, includes many different genres in Pontic music. Stathis Efstathiades, a researcher and writer on Pontic music who is based in the city of Thessaloniki, is the first to systematise the different categories and genres of the music of the Greeks of Pontos in his book *Ta tragoudia tou Pontiakou laou* (“The songs of the Pontic people”), where he discusses and categorises a large amount of repertoire according to its social and cultural contexts.

It is not my purpose to make a detailed analysis of the Pontic traditional repertoire. Instead, I select three examples that illustrate the categories mentioned above and explain how traditional performance techniques for the *lyra* are used in playing them. For each example there is a recording and a descriptive analysis, to show better the basic structure of the music. I will examine the performance practice



from the musician's perspective, as a matter of interest to future generations of Pontic *lyra* players, as well as those conducting research on the Pontic *lyra* and its music.

Two of the traditional examples are recordings of my own playing and the third is a rare recording of Gogos Petrides. From a performer's perspective, I have noticed that in this study I came across some remarkable 'results' of the performance experience. I have played the Pontic *lyra* player since I was nine years old, but the outcome of this research and the things that I have learned during this descriptive analysis, were new for me and very interesting to 'discover' after years of playing. I consider this analysis of the performance as a valuable source for the general performance practice of the instrument.

## 4.2 Table songs

**Musical Example no. 2 on audio CD: *Varyn logon mi lete ato* ("Don't say a bad word about my dear one").**

A special characteristic of most Pontic table songs is that the singer may sing different verses every time to the music (without necessarily using any core verse at all). The verses usually refer to love, and very often the singer will add his own verses to the well-known lyrics. The title for the song *Varyn logon mi mete ato* ("Don't say a bad word about my dear one") is known to every Pontic musician, because the famous Pontic singer Chrysanthos Theodorides was the first to record it in the period between 1962-65 with the famous *lyra* player Giorgoulis Kougioumtzides. In this example I sing three different verses:

1. Αρνί'μ το γράμμαν ντ' έστειλες και πορώ να δ(ια)εβάζω,  
και τη γεράν ντο ένοιξες, εγώ πώς να βαστάζω.
2. Ρασσία και ρασσιοκέφαλα, δώστε τ' αρνί'μ λαλίαν,  
πέτε από αναμένατο, ομάτε(ι)α σεβνταλία.
3. Θεέ'μ δώσμε υπομονήν, ντ' εδέκες με ετελέθεν,  
σ' όλα τα τέρτε(ι)α ταενέβ, σην σεβντάν ενικέθεν.

## Romanised version

1. *Arnim to gramman desteiles ke poro na devazo*

*ke ti geran do eneikses ego pos na vastazo.*

2. *Rashia ke rashiokefala doste tarnim lalian*

*Pete ato anamenato momatia sevdalia.*

3. *The-em dosme hypomonin dedekes me telethen*

*Sola ta tertia taenev si sevdan enikethen.*

### (translation)

1. My love, the letter you sent I cannot read,

and the wound you opened how can I bear?

2. Hills and hilltops, give my love a message,

say that I wait her with infatuated eyes.

3. God give me endurance, what you gave is finished,

it outdid all sorrows but by love was conquered.

When playing table songs, the *lyra* player puts in practice all the traditional playing techniques of the instrument. In this example, the three strings of the Pontic *lyra* are tuned in fourths (A for the top string, E for the middle and B is the low string). The bow touches two strings of the instrument for most of the piece. Both the first two strings A+E, and then the E+B strings are played together. It is in this repertoire that turning the body of the instrument with the left hand, in order for the hair of the bow to touch both the strings is used. This is an important performance technique for the instrument. Playing in parallel fourths is the most common practice for that particular repertoire. The intervals of fourths are executed with the first and the second fingers of the left hand when the two touch both the strings at the same time. For the *epitrapezia tragoudia*, the concept of the drone is very important. In this example, the tonal centre is the note E, which is the middle string on the *lyra*. The mode is in the Byzantine *First Echos*, similar to the ancient Phrygian mode. The note E is the one that dominates in the piece. It works as a drone and as the tonal centre at the same time, providing the harmonic accompaniment to the music. The third note B also works as a drone tone but only when played as an open string.



The rhythm of the song is in 5/8 (3+2) but the tempo is irregular. The majority of the Pontic table songs are in 5/8 beats. The bow is the tool that keeps this irregular tempo in shape by emphasising dynamically every accent. Concerning the bowing technique, the *lyra* player executes the two voice character on the instrument (two strings played at the same time). The up and down bow are equal and balanced in terms of colouring and dynamics.

As far as the left hand playing technique is concerned, the performer plays from the first position. The third finger (the thumb always supports the neck of the instrument) is not in use for this particular piece. Nowadays, there are many Pontic *lyra* players, mainly from the older generation, who often use their third finger in the place where younger players would use the fourth finger. But in this present analysis, I am examining and discussing my views of the performance according to the playing of Gogos Petrides and most professional Pontic *lyra* players who use all four fingers of the left hand, a technique recognised and accepted by *lyra* players to be the right one for the instrument's traditional repertory. The most important and characteristic playing technique of the left hand in this example is the fast trills of the second, fourth and occasionally the first finger. Trilling in the first position is perhaps the most important traditional playing technique of the Pontic *lyra*.

### **Table song**

**0:00 – 0:12 – Rhythmical improvisation**

**0:12 – 0:35 – The main melody**

**0:35 – 1:06 – Vocal part (verse 1)**

**1:07 – 1:34 – Melodic improvisation 1**

**1:34 – 2:06 – Vocal part (verse 2)**

**2:06 – 2:32 – Melodic improvisation 2**

**2:32 – 3:04 – Vocal part (verse 3) and Finale**

## Analysis

### **(Section 1 from 0:00sec. to 0:12sec.)**

This section begins with a short rhythmical improvisation. Usually, the purpose of such an introduction by the *lyra* player in every table song is clearly to introduce the mode of the piece. What is interesting in this part is that the melody is played mostly on the top string and the middle string provides the drone accompaniment (the note E). The duration of this section is short and the player introduces the main melody **(0:12sec. to 0:35 sec.)**; here, exceptionally all three strings are played constantly and the strong two-voice character of the instrument is present. Parallel fourths are to be heard only by the first and the second fingers on the middle (E) and lower (B) strings when they perform the notes FC and GD together respectively. Parallel fourths are also in use when the open strings are heard in pairs (A+E strings on the upper tetrachord and E+B strings on the lower one). Open strings are 'coloured' by the trills of the second finger. Trilling is used extensively throughout the piece.

### **(Section 2 from 0:35sec. to 0:52 sec.)**

The singer sings the first line of the first verse twice. The second time **(0:45sec. to 0:49 sec.)**, the melodic line is slightly different from the first. This is usually interpreted by the performer as a 'colourful ornamentation' in the vocal line. The second part (line) of the verse **(0:52sec. to 1:06 sec.)**, which is also repeated, is similar to the first. Again, it is towards the end of the vocal line that the singer introduces a new vocal ornamentation **(1:02sec. to 1:06 sec.)**. A similar practice takes part in all the three verses of the song.

### **(Section 3 from 1:07sec. to 1:34 sec.)**

Apart from the basic rules of melody and rhythm that apply to the traditional table song repertory of the Pontic *lyra*, elements of improvisation are important for both the *lyra* player and the singer. Generally speaking, in Pontic music every singer uses his own individual ornaments in his vocal technique. And every *lyra* player performs the music according to his perception and his ability to execute the various playing techniques on the instrument. Usually, after the end of a vocal phrase, the *lyra* player takes the opportunity to improvise a short passage **(1:07sec. to 1:34 sec)** and



(2:06sec. to 2:32 sec). This improvisation is a combination of the drone tone (in this example is the middle string of the *lyra*, which is the note E) and the different notes played on the highest string (A) with the left hand. The bow touches both the high and the middle strings of the *lyra*, but most of the played notes during that particular improvisation are to be heard on the highest string. In this example, the notes played on the high string are the A (open), B, C and D and they are performed with the first, second and fourth fingers respectively. After the end of the improvised melodic section, the *lyra* player must always return to the main melody and prepare the singer for the following verse (1:18sec. to 1:34 sec) and (2:22sec. to 2:32 sec).

### 4.3 Dance songs

**Musical Example no. 3 on audio CD: *Chamomilon* (“The little apple tree”).**

-Και ντ' έπαθες, χαμόμηλον, και στέκεις μαρεμένον;  
Γιαμ' η ρίζα σ' edίψασεν, γιαμ' ο καρπός σ' ελλάεν;  
γιαμ' ασά χαμηλόκλαδα σ' κανέναν εζαλίεν;  
-Νιά η ρίζα μ' edίψασεν, νια ο καρπό μ' ελλάεν,  
νια ασά χαμηλόκλαδα μ' κανέναν εζαλίεν.  
Εναν κορίτς κι έναν παιδίν ση ρίζα μ' εφιλέθαν,  
κι εποίκαν όρκον κι όμνισμαν, να μ' εφτάν' χωρισίαν.  
Κι ατώρα εχωρίγανε, γιάμ' έχω ασό κρίμαν;

#### **Romanised version**

-*Ke depathes chamomilon ke stekeis maremenon?*  
*Yiam e rizas edipsasen yiam o karpos elaien?*  
*yiam asa chamilokladas kanenan ezalien?*  
-*Nia e rizam edipsasen nia o karpom elaien,*  
*nia asa chamilokladam kanenan ezalien.*  
*Enan korits ki enan paedin si rizam efilethan.*  
*ki epikan orkon ki omnizman na meftan chorisian.*  
*Ki atora echorigane yiam eho aso kriman?*

(translation)

“What ails you, little apple tree, that you stand withered?  
Is your root thirsty or has your fruit suffered?  
Or are any of your low branches broken?”  
“My root is not thirsty and my fruit has not suffered  
and none of my low branches is broken.  
A girl and boy kissed by my root,  
and made an oath and vow that they would not part.  
And now they have separated should I not have blame for this?”

This love song is very popular among Pontic Greek musicians. It is perhaps one of the oldest items in the Pontic music repertory. According to many musicians, the song betrays its “Byzantine origin” because many elements of Byzantine music are to be found in this piece. As far as the performance of the song is concerned, the *lyra* player must execute all the traditional playing techniques on the instrument without adding any new playing techniques. Because it is regarded as one of the oldest songs in the Pontic music tradition, it is accepted by many musicians that the *lyra* player should perform the song in its simplest form. Here, the element of improvisation is very limited. The melody is fixed, as are the lyrics of the song. The rhythm is in 9/8 (2+2+2+3 or 3+2+2+2) and the tempo is steady. The 9/8 rhythm is called *Enneasimos* in Byzantine music terminology and in Pontic music is known as *Dipat*. Keeping the tempo steady is crucial for both the *lyra* player and the dancer. The mode is in the Byzantine *Second Plagal Echos* (see Chapter 3).

The left hand is again in the first position. In this recording I accompany with my *lyra* the singing of my brother Konstantinos. The *lyra* is tuned at a higher pitch (Bb-F-C), in order to accommodate the range of the singer’s voice. The tonal centre is the note F (on the middle string) and the musical scale follows the sequence F, F#, A, Bb, C, C#, Eb and F. The third finger is only used on the second string, where it stops the note A, the most important note of the mode. The trill of this finger is also characteristic and essential for the performance of the piece. Trills using the fourth finger are executed on all three strings of the instrument, where the second finger is only to be used on the highest and the lowest strings, when it performs the notes C# and Eb respectively.



## Dance song

**0:00 - 0:23 – Introduction**

**0:23 – 0:46 – Vocal part (Verse 1)**

**0:47 – 0:58 – Melodic repetition of the vocal part 1**

**0:58 – 1:21 – Vocal part (Verse 2)**

**1:22 – 1:33 – Instrumental section 1**

**1:33 – 1:56 – Vocal part (Verse 3)**

**1:57 – 2:08 – Melodic repetition of the vocal part 2**

**2:08 – 2:55 – Vocal part (Verse 4)**

**2:55 – 3:20 – Instrumental section 2**

**3:20 – 4:08 – Vocal part (Verse 5)**

**4:08 – 4:19 – Melodic repetition of the vocal part 3**

**4:19 – 4:46 – Vocal part (Verse 6) and Finale**

## Analysis

**(Section 1 from 0:00sec. to 0:23 sec.)**

This section is the introduction of the song. Here, I repeat four times the intro phrase. Usually, the introductory parts of the dance song repertory are performed by the *lyra* played simply, avoiding any ornaments in the music. In this way, the emphasis and the priority in the performance is given to the vocal part.

**(Section 2 from 0:23 sec. to 0:46sec.) and from (0:58sec. to 1:21sec.)**

In the vocal section, the *lyra* player is accompanying the voice; his part is to support the vocal line by playing the same melody together with the voice. Usually, the loud voice of the *lyra* becomes softer and gives the leading role to the singer. The only time that the *lyra* ‘breaths’ in this section is when it repeats the vocal phrase in the middle of the verse and allows the singer to prepare for the next vocal line (**from 0:47sec. to 0:58sec.**). The middle instrumental sections (**1:22sec. to 1:33sec.**), (**2:55sec. to 3:20sec.**) and (**4:08sec. to 4:19sec.**) have a similar function to the improvised short passages of the table songs. Usually, these improvised sections provide the *lyra* player with the opportunity to demonstrate on the instrument various

playing techniques, as well as to improvise or even to compose instantly short melodic lines that could accompany the main melody. Gogos Petrides had the ability to compose and improvise instantly on any modal or rhythmic variation.

The *lyra* player performs the trill fingering technique throughout the piece and in this way keeps the traditional character of the performance. The use of simple playing techniques in traditional Pontic music expresses the ‘beauty’ of this particular repertory. This view is shared by many Pontic musicians as a matter of respect for the old musical tradition.

#### **4.4 The Pontic dances**

The Pontic dance repertory plays an important role in the performance of the Pontic *lyra*. Ahrens has pointed out that the greatest portion of the traditional Pontic music repertory is instrumental dance music (Ahrens 1970:13). The ethno theory of Pontic musicians refers to specific names for every dance therefore, the 2/4 dance is named and known by all musicians as an *Omal* dance, the 9/8 as *Dipat*, the 5/8 as *Tik*, the 7/8 as *Tik Tromahnton*, the 6/8 as *Tas*. Musically, *Omal*, *Dipat* and *Tik* are considered the best of Pontic music and are chosen by musicians because they offer opportunities for the master *lyra* player to explore melodic and rhythmic subtleties, as well as ornamentations.

According to the second musical example above, during a musical performance at a wedding party, an open air festival or in any other venue, the singer would ask from the *lyra* player to play a series of *Dipat* dances. He would ask from the *lyra* player the actual name of the song (e.g. *Chamomilon* - The little apple tree) only if it is a request by the audience. A similar practice happens to all the other dance song repertory. Usually, when I perform the Pontic *lyra* in summer festivals and celebrations, I remember many times that the singers are asking me to open the dance with a series of either *Omal*, *Dipat* or *Tik* dances. There are also cases when the *lyra* player may open the dance with a dance tune of his preference or perform the music of a folk dance. There is a large number of Pontic folk dances that the *lyra* player must know how to perform. The names include those of: *Serra*, *Kotsari*, *Letsina*, *Sheranitsa*, *Kots*, *Kotsangel*, *Trygona*, *Sarikouz*, *Empro-pis*, *Miteritsa*, *Tas*, and others. Each one has a special way of performance, a different tempo and rhythm.



My grandfather was the first to point out to me the importance of the Pontic dance movements to the musical performance of the *lyra*. He advised me that I must continually watch the dancers for an indication of their desire to proceed to the next movement and for the suitability of the tempo and phrasing. In the same way in which textual rhythm has explained the melodic rhythm, the rhythm of much of the instrumental dance music seems to find justification in the dance rhythms.

The Pontic *lyra* player senses the development of the dance and adjusts the tempo to suit the dancers (Kilpatrick 1980:165). *Arsis* (“lifting”) and *thesis* (“placing or setting down”) were basic to the role of the Greek chorus, which embodied movement and singing or chanting in ancient Greek drama. Generally, the down beat *thesis*, as a downward movement, is an expression of the inner feelings of tension, confidence, decisiveness and grandeur. By contrast, the up beat *arsis*, as an upward movement, creates a sense of freedom, liberation and inner uplift. One could say that the down beat is the motion that reminds us of the relationship we have with mother earth, while the up beat reminds us of our longing for union with the divine.

The tapping of the musician’s foot provides an indication of the placements of the beats or accents within the measure. Foot tapping can be extremely erratic in the same way as the *lyra* player may give evidence of his concentration by moving the head from side to side (not necessarily with the beat). The tapping of the foot, then, is not at all reliable as an indicator of the meter; it would seem, even among the best musicians (Kilpatrick 1980: 42).

Through my personal experience as a Pontic *lyra* player, foot tapping plays an important role in the communication between the mind and the body of the performer. I have yet to meet a Pontic *lyra* player who does not tap his foot during a *lyra* performance. There are many players who tap their foot on the floor or the ground so loudly it creates a drumming sound. During several interviews with different *lyra* players, I came across some interesting ideas about foot tapping: a) foot tapping in general helps in the rhythmical concentration of the performer to the music; b) it works as a percussion sound, especially when the *lyra* is not accompanied by other musical instruments; c) it emphasises the dynamics of the music and the accents of the bowing in the actual performance; d) is not reliable as an indicator of tempo, but supports the ‘keeping in tempo’ practice of the performer; e) it is used in all Pontic

*lyra* repertory by the performer, but it tends to be more dynamic and energetic during the performance of the folk dance repertory.

**Musical Example no. 4 on audio CD: The *Serra* dance.**

This rare music recording is from the period between 1950-1960 when Gogos Petrides was the leading Pontic *lyra* player for the radio programmes of the Euxeine Club of Thessaloniki. During that time, radio broadcasting was an important way, not only for the Pontic Greeks but also for other traditional music lovers. Of course, there were various kinds of cultural events that were happening, such as open air festivals and celebrations where people could have immediate access to their traditional music roots. But the radio during that time was an important means of providing information about culture, education and news.

Many people loved and admired Gogos, who was regarded as the best ever Pontic *lyra* player. Chrysanthos Theodorides gave to Gogos the name of *Patriarchist Lyras*, the “Patriarch of the Pontic *lyra*”. We will hear later on in the piece that when Gogos finishes his singing part and introduces the dance, Efremides (the singer) says: ‘Oh God, take the rest of my years that have been left in my life and give them to Gogos’. It is a very symbolic and beloved verbal phrase by Efremides, showing his love and respect for Gogos and his *lyra* performance.

The *Serra* dance got its name from the River Serra, which is situated to the west of the city of Trebizond (Trabzon) on the Black Sea coast. The *Serra* dance has its roots in an ancient Greek war dance. It is believed by historians that a similar dance was performed by the Greeks when they won the Trojan War and that the dance was preserved through the musical tradition of the Greeks of Pontos. As a war dance, it is the only Pontic dance that is performed by men.

In this recording, Gogos is singing at the beginning of the performance and the singer Charalambos Efremides joins Gogos Petrides with his voice by singing the first verse of the dance. We also hear Efremides commenting on Gogos’s performance. In this rare recording, Gogos introduces the piece with a lament from the area of Matsouka (Maçka), a mountainous area in the south of Trabzon. This lament sets the mood and acts as an introduction to the dance *Serra*. In this pastoral lament, the Pontic *lyra* imitates the patterns of the *aggeion* or *touloun* (Pontic



bagpipe) and the *gaval* (wooden flute), instruments that were frequently played in the mountainous areas of Pontos. I present here a detailed analysis of the performance.

### *Serra* dance

**0:00 – 0:27 – Pontic *lyra* introduction to the song**

**0:27 – 0:51 – Verse 1 in free rhythm**

**0:51 – 1:12 – Instrumental section 1**

**1:12 – 1:35 – Verse 2 in free rhythm**

**1:35 – 2:07 – Instrumental section 2**

**2:07 – 2:31 – Verse 3 in free rhythm**

**2:31 – 2:46 – Instrumental section 3**

**2:46 – 3:11 – Verse 4 in free rhythm**

**3:11 – 3:21 – Introduction of the 7/8 rhythm**

**3:21 – 3:46 – Verse 5 in the 7/8 rhythm**

**3:46 – 4:54 – *Serra* dance and Finale**

### Analysis

**(Section 1 from 0:00sec. to 3:11sec.)**

Gogos begins the piece on the highest string.<sup>35</sup> His *lyra* is tuned approximately to G# for the highest string, Eb for the middle and Bb for the lowest string. He slightly changes the hand position on the highest string in order to reach with a trill the note Eb, an octave above the open middle string. The fast trills of the fourth finger are very characteristic especially in the notes Eb and Db on the highest string, as well as the note G# on the middle string. The second finger performs the notes F# and C# (parallel fourths) on the middle and third strings respectively. The imitation of the Pontic bagpipe or the *gaval*'s fingering technique is to be clearly heard on the highest and the middle strings (0:00-0:27sec., 0:55-1:08sec., 1:38-2:06sec, 2:33-2:45sec.).

The most important note in this introductory part of the *Serra* dance is the note B played on the highest string with the second finger, which appears in the

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<sup>35</sup> I have done this by ear and through my understanding of *lyra* technique, this is probably how he did it (Gogos) but obviously I cannot be 100%.

beginning of every verse and in the short instrumental parts after the vocal lines. The notes most commonly used in this part of the piece, beginning from the lowest string of the *lyra*, are the notes C#, on the middle string are the notes E, F# and G# performed with the first, second and fourth fingers respectively, and on the highest string are the notes G# (open string), A, B, C# performed with the first, second and fourth fingers respectively as in the case of the middle string.

The bowing movement is erratic and follows the vocal part in the song. Gogos uses a long bow in order to execute the sustaining notes in the music, such as the note C# played with the second finger on the high string of the *lyra*. What is important in this part of the music is the trill technique that Gogos uses. The speed of the trill on every finger is remarkable. It is a very good example of imitating the fingering technique of the Pontic bagpipe and *gaval*. The trills are performed mainly with the fourth and the second fingers, and less with the first finger.

In this singing section of the pastoral lament, the singer Efremides, who is inside the studio, comments on the performance of Gogos Petrides. Apart from being excited himself about the performer, Gogos Petrides, Efremides makes comments throughout the piece and expresses with his own unique way the bucolic character of the song. He plays the sheep bells and creates with his voice the sound of the sheep and the dog, giving the impression that the performance takes place in the actual mountainous area with the shepherd and his flock. He also praises the sweetness of Gogos's singing.

**(Section 2 from 3:11sec. to 3:46sec.)**

The *lyra* introduces in slow tempo the 7/8 rhythm of the dance. The *staccato* bowing is characteristic throughout this section of the dance. Gogos emphasises every single note with his heavy *staccato* bowing and he plays *forte*. Every beat pattern in the rhythm maintains the tension of the dance. The notes played are still in the same range as in the first section of the song. The function of the parallel fourths combined with the *staccato* bowing give to the dance piece a remarkable effect. Gogos performs the parallel fourths with his first and second fingers that touch every time two strings on the *lyra* simultaneously. In this part of the music, Gogos is concentrated more on the highest and the middle strings. The third string of the *lyra* is only used when the player performs the notes F# and C# (parallel fourths).



In the beginning of this section, Efremides, is obviously excited about the music performance, and this is when he says: “Oh God, take the rest of my years that have been left in my life and give them to Gogos”. Immediately he sings a small verse: “The little goat is grazing around the root of the tree, her that I love wears a belt.” It is important to mention that in Pontic singing tradition, the creation of a free improvised verse by the performer puts together different meanings relating to love and everyday life. For the pastoral tradition of the area of Matsouka (Maçka), life was connected to mountain activities. Forestry and animal husbandry were some of the main occupations for people living in the mountains. We notice that in Pontos generally, the *lyra* was more common in urban music practice, whereas in the mountain villages, musical instruments like the *aggeion* or *touloum* (Pontic bagpipe) and the *gaval* (wooden flute) played an important role in the rural music practice of the Pontic Greeks.

**(Section 3 from 3:46sec. to 4:54sec.)**

The tempo steadily increases. Efremides announces the name of the dance and he dedicates the song to the memory of Captain Eukleides and his daring men.<sup>36</sup> *Serra*, as a war dance, stirs up the *lyra* player and the audience with patriotic feelings, as well as reviving memories of the glorious past. This is how Kilpatrick describes the performance of the *Serra* dance:

As the metered music for *Serra* begins, the swaying of the torsos slowly increases and the dancers straighten to an upright position to begin the dance... Throughout the dance, sections are marked by a low leap off the floor and the bodies become straight and rigid, the hands over the heads... As the music becomes faster, the variations become more frenzied; shouts from the dancers and the audience become more frequent until a climax is reached... (Kilpatrick 1980:122).

Efremides shouts throughout the dance with encouraging and powerful words. He is over-excited and enthusiastic about Gogos’s music performance of the dance.

The distinctive feature of the music for *Serra* is the modulation, both in the rhythmic mode and in the melodic mode. The *legato* articulation of the slow tempo in the 7/8 rhythm becomes faster and more agitated. But the steadily increasing tempo

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<sup>36</sup> Captain Eukleides was a freedom fighter in the area of Santa in Pontos in the period between 1915 and 1922.

restricts the range of the melodic material. One important stylistic element in Pontic dance music is the continued repetition of the melody and rhythmic pattern over a long period. Gogos Petrides had the ability to maintain interest and excitement with a limited amount of thematic material, which is noticeable in this example.

The most important notes played throughout this fast tempo section are actually performed on the highest and the middle strings of the instrument. The two open strings G# and Eb dominate in the piece as the leading notes of this part of the dance. The fundamental trill of the second finger, which trills the note B on the highest string, combined with the continuous playing on the two open strings, form the character and the dynamic of the music. Here, it is Gogos's accurate and fast bowing technique that brings excitement to the music. The modulation in the dance comes twice at that point where the two open strings G# and Eb (high and middle) become A and E respectively, executed by the first finger (**4:12sec. to 4:27 and from 4:45sec. to 4:51sec.**) Here again, the significant bowing technique of Gogos gives a special effect to the dance and brings out the vibrant and the patriotic elements of the *Serra* dance.

As far as the Pontic *lyra* dance music repertory is concerned, one could identify certain characteristics in this performance: a) there is a single metrical structure throughout the piece; b) great economy of melodic resources; c) repeated melodic and rhythmic variations; d) the two voice character (two-part polyphonic texture) is continuous throughout the performance of the dance tune; and e) there are harmonic possibilities, though limited.

## **4.5 The contemporary music performance of the Pontic *lyra***

### **Musical example no. 5 on audio CD: Pontic *lyra* improvisation**

In my attempt to experiment with many contemporary playing techniques of the Pontic *lyra*, some of them already referred to Chapter 3, I have played a solo Pontic *lyra* improvisation. This particular piece was recorded live in November 2001 in London at MCS Studios by Kevin Delas Casas. It was the year when I first enrolled for the MPhil/PhD course in Performance Practice at Goldsmiths College. In October 2003, this recording was released by the Greek record company 'Protasis', on the



album “From Pontos to Persia”, which has a series of improvised duets between the Pontic *lyra* and the Persian *kamancheh*, with the accompaniment of Middle Eastern percussion (*daf* and *daireh*).

For this recording the Pontic *lyra* was tuned to A (top string), E (middle string) and B (lower string). I used a sustained drone tone throughout the piece based on the note B, which was the lowest string of the *lyra*. Having this tonal centre in my improvisation, I was able to get into the ‘mood’ of the tonality that I was going to improvise on.

The improvisation from B gave me a wide melodic range on the instrument. B was the lowest open string and gave me the possibility to have an octave above this note in the first fingering position. I decided to improvise in the Phrygian mode. The reason for that choice was that the Phrygian mode is a common mode for the traditional repertory of the *lyra* and it would challenge me to improvise on a traditional mode, using contemporary playing techniques on the instrument. The important Iranian mode *Shur* is also close to the Phrygian mode.

### **Pontic *lyra* improvisation**

**0:00 – 0:25 – Introduction of the improvisation on the high string**

**0:25 – 0:47 – Returning to the middle (E) and the low (B) strings**

**0:47 – 1:05 – Introducing the *ponticello* playing technique**

**1:05 – 1:33 – Introducing the *glissando* playing technique in different parts**

**1:33 – 1:38 – Modulation to the Byzantine *Plagios Defteros Echos***

**1:38 – 2:21 – Return to the original mode – *ponticello* and *glissando* partly used**

**2:21 – 3:42 – Introducing a short rhythmic section – use of traditional and contemporary playing techniques**

**3:43 – 4:25 – Introducing the *pizzicato* playing technique with a different instrument. The tonal centre now is the highest string.**

**4:27 – 5:06 – Introducing the traditional two voice character of the Pontic *lyra***

**5:06 – 6:04 – Introducing contemporary playing techniques on the *lyra* and finale.**

## Analysis

In the beginning of the improvisation (**0:00sec. to 0:25sec.**), I performed the notes B, C, D and E, on the highest string, an octave above my initial tonal centre. In the next part (**0:25sec. to 1:05sec.**), the music returns to the actual drone tone, the open third string. The main melody is played on the middle string while the third string (B) is played as an open string at the same time and provides the drone tone (**0:25sec. to 0:46sec.**). The fingering used on the middle string is in the first position. The second finger trills the note G where the fourth finger is extended in order to execute the note B on the middle string, an octave higher from the open third string. Up to this point, the techniques used are traditional. But in the end of this section, a new playing technique is to appear. The *ponticello* playing (**0:47sec. to 1:05sec.**) is performed mainly on the second string with the first and the second finger remained in the first position. In the next section (**1:06sec. to 1:33sec.**), a contemporary performance technique of the Pontic *lyra* borrowed from the western classical violin, the *glissando*, is executed on the instrument. The first finger performs the B note on the first string, while the third finger performs the long *glissando* and reaches the note G on the fourth position up the fingerboard, creating a range of nearly two octaves from the tonal centre, a range rarely used on the Pontic *lyra*. After the *glissando* playing and the excitement of reaching such high notes on the instrument, the left hand returns to the first position and from the middle string to the third string and the tonic B. A modulation takes place in the following section where from the basic Phrygian mode, which is similar to the Byzantine *Protos Echos*, we are transferred to the upper tetrachord and the middle string (**1:33sec. to 1:38sec.**). The new mode is the Byzantine Second *Plagal Echos* and the notes played on this string are E (open), F, G#, A and B performed with the first, second, third and the fourth fingers respectively. I return after five seconds of the new mode to the original tonality (**1:38sec. to 2:21sec.**). In this part, I repeat some of the music phrases introduced at the beginning of the piece, using also the same kind of the *glissando* technique. Up to this point in the improvisation, I tried to extend the range of the instrument by using long sustaining notes, as well as big intervals of sixths, sevenths and the octave. Playing close to the bridge of the Pontic *lyra* (*ponticello*) creates a new musical effect and, at the same time, a new sound for the *lyra*.



In the next section (**2:21sec. to 3:42sec.**), I introduce both traditional and contemporary playing techniques. Here, the two voice character of the instrument appears and the middle and the lowest strings are played together, creating an irregular 2/4 rhythm that is similar to the *Omal* dance of the traditional Pontic music repertory. The melody is played on the middle string in the first position and the lowest string (B) provides the drone tone (**2:21sec. to 2:59sec.**). Before the introduction of another new performance technique for the instrument, this section (**2:59sec. to 3:42sec.**) ends with some repetitive melodic patterns, played on all three strings of the *lyra* but this time without the drone accompaniment of a second string. For functional needs, in the development of the original mode I had to change the fingering position. Thus, I performed with my third finger the notes F# and E (octave) on the lowest and the highest strings respectively. The only new element in the music performance here is the slight change of the mode (**3:17sec. to 3:27sec.**).

In the following section, I introduced a contemporary performance technique on the Pontic *lyra*, the *pizzicato* playing (**3:43sec. to 4:25sec.**). I used a second instrument here, which was tuned a whole tone higher, with B (top string), F# (middle string) and C# (lowest string). The tonal centre remained the note B, but now played on the highest open string, instead of the lowest string as before. I performed the *pizzicato* playing on the two first strings of the *lyra* (B and F#). In order to create a proper *pizzicato* sound on the instrument, I had to use my thumb to pluck the strings. Although I was holding the bow with the other fingers of my right hand, I had to bring it closer to the neck and the fingerboard of the Pontic *lyra*. My thumb functioned like the plectrum of the Afghan *rubab*, where I had to execute more down strokes on the two strings. This was the first time that I tried to play *pizzicato* on the Pontic *lyra*. My left hand remained in the first position and during the performance, I felt as though I was playing a “Pontic *bouzouki*”.

In the next part of the improvisation (**4:27sec. to 5:06sec.**), still on the second *lyra* (which I used for the remainder of the piece), I introduced the traditional polyphonic character of the Pontic *lyra*. The main melody was played on the highest and the middle strings simultaneously, using intervals of parallel fourths and performed with the first and the second fingers respectively. The fingering in the first position and the trills of the first, second and the fourth fingers reminds one of the introductory theme of the *Serra* dance.

The final section of the improvisation (**5:06sec. to 6:04sec.**), is a combination of many contemporary playing techniques performed together. The two voice traditional character of the instrument is avoided and the melody is played every time on one successive string of the instrument without the accompaniment of a second string and a drone tone. The fingering position changes frequently from the first position to the second and the third. Sliding up and down notes, finger trills, as well as *glissando*, *vibrato* and *ponticello* playing are in use. A new melodic modulation (**5:41sec. to 5:45sec.**) takes part in the piece and introduces the variety and the ‘flexibility’ of the instrument to perform and execute different and contemporary playing techniques.

For the performer, the advantage of the Pontic *lyra* is the use of a flexible bowing technique and of the fingertips of the left hand in order to accomplish a variety of contemporary performance possibilities. That brings the instrument close to the violin’s performance practice. It is noticeable and obvious in the examples above that the Pontic *lyra*, according to the ability of the performer to execute a wide range of playing techniques, is a musical instrument with many possibilities.



## Chapter 5

### The Pontic *lyra* players in Greece today

#### 5.1 Fieldwork

During the time of my fieldwork research, I had the opportunity to work with five well-known Pontic *lyra* players: Yiorgoulis Kougioumtzides, Panayiotis Aslanides, Andreas Kougioumtzides, Theodoros Eleftheriou (Veriotis) and Dimitris Karasavvides. These musicians were available at the time of my fieldwork and I am grateful to them for their contribution in this study. I am also grateful to them for their wonderful hospitality and warm welcome, as well as to their willingness to share their musical experience of performing the *lyra* with me.

The fieldwork took place mainly in the area of the city of Thessaloniki, in the north of Greece. Thessaloniki is the second largest city of Greece, after Athens, with a population of approximately one and a half million people. After 1922, the city attracted a large number of refugees from Pontos and other parts of Asia Minor. Thessaloniki is considered to be the ‘capital city’ of the Pontic Greeks. In the city there is a radio station called *Akrites tou Pontou* (“Akrites<sup>37</sup> of Pontos”) that broadcasts Pontic Greek music twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. There are also many nightclubs where Greeks of Pontic origins (and other people) go to entertain themselves, to listen to their favourite Pontic *lyra* players and singers, to dance and eat traditional Pontic food.

All interviews and performances took place in the houses of the musicians except one that took place in my house in the town of Veria.<sup>38</sup> My engagement with Pontic *lyra* music and my experience as a *lyra* player made my access to these musicians easy. Knowing me as a young *lyra* player who studies in depth performance on the instrument, encouraged in a way their own interest and concerns

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<sup>37</sup> The Byzantine - Arab conflicts that lasted from the 7th century to the early 11th century provide the context for Byzantine heroic poetry written in the vernacular Greek language. The Akrites of the Byzantine Empire of this period were a military class responsible for safeguarding the frontier regions of the imperial territory from external enemies and freebooting adventurers who operated on the fringes of the empire. Source: Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopaedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digenis\\_Acritis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digenis_Acritis).

<sup>38</sup> The equipment used for the fieldwork research was a Hi8 Sony camcorder and a Sony Mini Disk recorder.

about *lyra* performance. Each of the five musicians has an individual style of playing the instrument. Their musical experiences through the years and their own perspectives about *lyra* music are discussed in great detail in this chapter and they are a valuable source for musicians today and for the future generations of Pontic *lyra* players.

Before examining the five musicians in detail we need to look at the life and work of one who is generally acclaimed as the outstanding *lyra* player of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Gogos Petrides, a name that has been mentioned at various points in previous chapters. Gogos Petrides (1917-1984) was the first to devise new playing techniques for the Pontic *lyra*. He is acknowledged by the whole Pontic music community of Greece as the greatest Pontic *lyra* player of our time, and it is for this reason that I have conducted extensive research about his music performance. I do not wish to underestimate the other Pontic *lyra* players who lived and were musically active during the same period with Gogos Petrides, but I consider him to be a point of reference and example for the contemporary playing techniques of the Pontic *lyra*.

## 5.2 A brief biography of Gogos Petrides

Gogos Petrides (**Illustration 38**) lived in difficult times and like other refugees from Pontos suffered a hard life. He was born in 1917 in Pontos in the area called Kromni near Trapezounta (Trabzon), but when he came in Greece in the 1920's, he grew up in the refugee camps under very difficult circumstances. His first exposure to music came from his father, Stavros Petrides, a *lyra* player. Gogos developed his father's style of performance under various social and psychological conditions which influenced his style of performance. Gogos was influenced by *Rembetiko*, a musical idiom that was derived from and developed among the refugees from Asia Minor. This music expressed all the difficulties of the refugees' lives, as well as feelings of pain and love. Gogos formed his music style under all these different circumstances. The refugee's songs of pain and love, poverty, the difficult times of the German occupation of Greece and the Greek civil war afterwards, played an important role in shaping and forming Gogos's musical performance and ideas.

In his music performance and playing technique, Gogos was also influenced by the famous Pontic singer Chrysanthos Theodorides. In the area of Kalamaria in



Thessaloniki where Gogos lived, Pontic Greek musicians, including Gogos's father, Stavros Petrides, performed songs from Kromni, the area of Pontos where they came from, and also other songs from the area of Santa. When Gogos met with Chrysanthos who was from the area of Kars in Pontos, he learned a new repertory on his Pontic *lyra*, the music of the Pontic Greeks of Kars. By listening to this repertory and by collaborating with many other Pontic musicians, Gogos collected a large number of songs and dances from the different regions of Pontos.

As a professional<sup>39</sup> Pontic *lyra* player and singer, Gogos played at many wedding parties, concerts and festivals all over Greece, but mainly in the northern part of the country, where most of the Pontic Greeks were settled. He was musically very active and during his travels he heard many musicians who performed on different musical instruments, like the traditional violin, the Greek *bouzouki* and others. What was remarkable and distinguished Gogos from other *lyra* players was his ability and unique talent to introduce all these musical ideas from the other traditional musical instruments onto the Pontic *lyra*. He was able to adapt the playing technique of the clarinet, the violin and the *bouzouki* to the *lyra* in a way that when it came to performance, the instrument sounded sweet and melismatic without spoiling the original sound of the *lyra*.

**(DVD no. 18)** This rare video footage was given to me in Boston. I feel privileged to own such a rare recording of Gogos Petrides and I am grateful to Mr George Panitsidis who kindly gave it to me. We know very little about this recording. It probably dates back to the late '70s or the early '80s. It is a christening party and the venue is near Veria, my hometown. The performance is supported by a sound system with speakers and Gogos plays the *lyra* using a pick-up. There is also a drummer and a keyboard player accompanying the *lyra* and the voice, but the names of these musicians are not known to me. The singer is Georgoulis Emmanouelides, from the Katachas village, in the north of Greece. The music piece that Gogos and Georgoulis perform here is not a Pontic song but a Greek traditional *Tsamikos* dance song from mainland Greece in 3/4 rhythm.

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<sup>39</sup>Gogos Petrides was also the first, together with Chrysanthos Theodorides, who brought 'professionalism' into Pontic music performance. Gogos and Chrysanthos were the first fully professional Pontic musicians. They only made their living out of their musical performances in different venues, weddings and other kinds of public performances.

### 5.3 Theodoros Eleftheriou (Veriotis) (Illustration 39 and DVD no. 19)

Theodoros Eleftheriou was one of my first Pontic *lyra* teachers. His first musical experiences did not relate to traditional Pontic music. At the age of nine his father took him to the municipal band of Veria where he learned to play the trumpet. The band performed mainly western classical music and marches. At the same time, Theodoros was going to the church and was listening to what he calls ‘The Eastern dominant’ sound of the Byzantine music. According to his opinion:

Music is the same everywhere and there is a common sound everywhere. It is the people who are different and the environment that changes. We serve music and we adapt this material of sounds according to our own expressive needs. And the next process after this, is that this particular sound material is filtered through time and we finally create different types of musical idioms. That relates to the elaboration that each human makes of that musical material he experiences though life.

An important influence on his first musical experiences came from his family. All his grandparents spoke the Pontic Greek dialect, as they originally came from Pontos. Gatherings and small *glendia* in the village of Nea Nikomedeia in Veria, together with the *lyra* players of the village, the well-known Tryfon and Themis who played in many wedding parties, all these were part of Theodoros’s first experiences of the sounds of the Pontic *lyra*. Later on, he came in touch with Pontic folk dance groups, such as the Euxeine Club of Veria, as well as well-known *lyra* players of the region of Veria, like Archemides and Tsartilos from Georgianoi, Mantis from the village of Rachia, Lazaros from the village of Patrída and Filaretos. They all played the traditional *lyra* repertory from Trapezounta (Trabzon), Santa, Kromni, and from other areas of Pontos. During our discussion, Theodoros particularly emphasised the fact that all the above mentioned *lyra* players were good exponents of their musical art but not to be considered as virtuosi.

The *lyra* player who inspired Theodoros and determined his style of playing was Yiorgoulis Kougioumtzidis (**Illustration 40**). Yiorgoulis played the instrument very clearly and for this reason Theodoros was able to understand his playing technique. Theodoros had slight problems with other players because they did not play the instrument precisely, they did not produce a clear sound on their *lyra*. They



played with fuzziness, either because they did not use the instrument properly or they were playing musical patterns on the *lyra* without a clear start or ending.

Theodoros then started to imitate Yiorgoulis's playing technique in his own *lyra* playing. He pointed out in our discussion that the particular style of a musician is established when the musician imitates the style of playing of another *lyra* player. Then, the musician adds or takes away musical ideas of that particular style of performance and creates his own musical views about the music performance of the instrument in general. He continued:

A personal performance style is also formed through time where the performer listens to other kinds of music, which later on he adapts the new ideas on the instrument and his knowledge becomes broadened. When the performer becomes mature in his playing, then he is also able to exchange musical information and ideas with other music cultures of the outside world that can be adaptable on the instrument. That also forms another type of music style in performance. Finally, the musician chooses the most appropriate musical ideas, in order to express his own unique style of playing according to his psychological status.

Theodoros is uncertain as to whether he has formed a personal style of his own performance. He plays according to his *psychologiki diathesis* ("psychological state") of the moment. Every performance of a piece depends on the moment where the performer is emotionally or aesthetically affected; if you are happy or sad, in love, secure or insecure. That is why every music piece is performed differently every time, because the performer faces a different psychological experience. When I asked Theodoros how he would play a song if he was angry, he answered that he would play the song with a hint of complaint. When I asked him again how he would play if he was in a state of anger, he said:

Because I would try to ask to myself why should I be angry? When you fall in love with somebody and that person does not pay attention to you, you will also play the music with a hint of complaint, asking your inner feelings, why is this happening to me? And through the performance, the player always waits for the expression of his feelings. That's why you will play more emotionally and through this particular emotional status, the result is a beautiful music performance. Then, the music performance is more effective in terms of power, dynamic range and expressiveness.

Theodoros believes that all forms of art, like music, poetry, painting, sculpture and others, have or should have one aim and target into our human souls. And that is

communication and expression through the art. He has some interesting ideas about how people should value music. He considers that some people 'live from music' and some 'live for music'. When we 'live for music' and we serve the art of music, then we can 'live' from music, meaning that the respect for music can offer you the essentials of life. On the other hand, the term 'living from music' is not acceptable by Theodoros, because in this case music cannot offer its spirituality and cannot satisfy the performer psychologically.

When I asked him about the great Pontic *lyra* players of the past, Theodoros's opinions were rather more cautious and realistic than the ideas put forward by some musicians. He believes that many other Pontic *lyra* players have contributed and brought a musical 'revolution' to the performance of the instrument. He refers to *lyra* players such as Aevaz, Mitias Tavrides and Apostolikas, each of whom had a personal style of playing. They were older players than Gogos and their playing techniques were not 'researched' and understood by many people of that time, because the only one who was a professional Pontic *lyra* player and was accepted by the majority of people was Gogos Petrides. Theodoros continued:

We will not throw out [underestimate] Gogos's personality, but we will value and admire his musical talent and the 'charisma' he had to form the sounds of the *lyra* in a powerful way that he could then express to us all these valuable musical ideas through his performance.

Gogos had a natural talent to perform accurately whatever he was listening to; but he also worked very hard on the instrument. Theodoros said that it is a matter of practice and exercise that counts more. Theodoros remembers what Chrysanthos Theodorides said to him in one of their discussions about Gogos. Chrysanthos lived for a short period of time at the house of Gogos Petrides, when they both used to perform professionally in public places. Theodoros asked Chrysanthos if Gogos was playing the Pontic *lyra* at all during the time he was at his own house. Chrysanthos said that:

Gogos's *lyra* was always hanging on the wall. He rarely played at home, but we were performing every day for many hours outside the house and that was his personal performance practice, live on stage.



According to the few available music recordings of Gogos Petrides, Theodoros believes that he can understand and ‘realise in a way’ Gogos’s inner psychological cosmos. People who met and lived with Gogos Petrides would describe him as a person who talked very little, he had a serious and lonely personality. While others describe Gogos’s personality like this, Theodoros on the other hand, was able to see a different view of his character through his music performance. He believed that Gogos was a very sensitive person and through his playing, showed his courage, happiness and complaints in his melismatic playing.

When I asked Theodoros what were the elements in Gogos’s playing that established him as the greatest Pontic *lyra* performer, he said that Gogos was a pioneer in various ways. One of the most important reasons is that Gogos introduced the tempered music scale intervals into *lyra* performance. Before Gogos, musicians and *lyra* players did not play the traditional repertory on the *lyra* according to the standard tempered scale of western classical theory. Gogos was a fine *bouzouki* player and the *bouzouki* fretting of the instrument gives a tempered musical scale that does not make use of “quartertones” or notes which lie between a tone and a semitone (the so-called “neutral seconds”). This was an important innovation in Pontic *lyra* playing. Gogos had the ability to switch between two tonal systems: an older Pontic *lyra* system that made some use of neutral seconds, and a newer tempered tuning system. That was one of Gogos’s main contributions to Greek Pontic music. From his experience of playing *Rembetika* music on the *bouzouki*, Gogos also introduced some *bouzouki* playing techniques onto the Pontic *lyra*. Theodoros told me that Gogos’s performance innovations changed entirely the way of playing the Pontic *lyra*. But Gogos’s new style had both negative and positive aspects.

On the negative side, we encounter several perspectives and views regarding the valuable playing technique of the older players of the instrument. These techniques were not necessarily sophisticated like those of Gogos Petrides, but they certainly represented a wide range of different styles of performance. Many *lyra* players of the past had their own unique style of performance. They did not follow one particular style of playing and every player was different from the others in terms of musical expression. Pontic musicians of the old times were not trained in music; they performed on the *lyra* according to their personal inner feelings, as well as according to their daily psychological situation. Nowadays, Pontic musicians still remember *lyra* players such as Aevaz, Papavramides, Stavris Petrides and many

others, who all had their own styles of performance. But when Gogos Petrides 'invented' new playing techniques, a large number of *lyra* players followed his style and a new musical mentality was created, a "school" was founded that was the 'paradigm to follow' for every Pontic *lyra* player. Thus, the style of playing the *lyra* in the older generation disappeared rapidly. The musical 'phenomenon' of Gogos replaced what *lyra* players call 'the old style' of performance. This demand to "play the *lyra* like Gogos", still exists today. Gogos Petrides, the so-called "Patriarch" of the Pontic *lyra*, is a music idol for most of the *lyra* players throughout Greece today.

The positive 'results' of Gogos's contribution to Pontic *lyra* music performance are many, considering the period of time when he lived and the music scene of Greece at that time. The transformation that Gogos brought to his music was perhaps inevitable. At any period of music history, the musician studies and reproduces the music he listens to, a music that is in step with that particular time. In the 1930's and 1940's in Greece the music scene was different to the music of the 1970's. Gogos was influenced by the *bouzouki* music of the *Rembetika* of that time and also by other kinds of Greek traditional music. In relation to what Theodoros says:

If we hear any music recordings of the old Pontic *lyra* players, apart from Gogos, we notice an irregular music performance by them with no steady tempo, erratic rhythms and music with no principle. This is also a characteristic of traditional Pontic music, because it's music of the soul. Older players did not play the *lyra* artistically like Gogos did. They played their Pontic *lyra* with no rules of music. And that irregular performance was a result of their psychological state at the time.

On the other hand, Gogos, as a professional musician, had to ignore most of the time his psychological state when he performed on his *lyra*. Together with the musicians that were accompanying him in a wedding party, at an open-air concert, or in another venue, Gogos had to be 'understood' by these musicians; he had to play rhythmically and in a steady tempo, in order for the drum player to follow his Pontic *lyra*, as well as to play 'harmonically' and in a 'balanced' manner for the singers to follow the music. By using all these elements of music, combined with his natural talent of improvisation. Gogos introduced an outstanding style of music performance for the Pontic *lyra*.



Gogos helped other musicians learn how to play the instrument “correctly”. He inspired many musicians with his pioneer playing technique. This standardised performance technique of Gogos was much more accessible by *lyra* players than the irregular and variable music performance of the old *lyra* players. Thus, the transmission of Gogos’s playing to other *lyra* players was easier, because of these ‘rules’ in his music performance.

As a *bouzouki* player Gogos was influenced by the right hand technique of the *bouzouki*, aspects of which he introduced to the right hand technique of the *lyra*. That is why in many of Gogos’s introductions or finale patterns, he used musical patterns and phrases of the *bouzouki* repertory. On the other hand, he did not adopt playing techniques from fretless musical instruments such as the music of the Greek traditional violin, which makes use of neutral second intervals, intermediate in size between a tone and a semitone.

Theodoros gave particular attention to Gogos’s fingering position. He told me that the older Pontic *lyra* players rarely used the 4<sup>th</sup> little finger in their playing techniques. In contrast, Gogos stressed the importance of the little finger, a technique he borrowed from *bouzouki* playing. By using all four fingers of the left hand, Gogos devised a technique that gave more musical possibilities in terms of repertory and technique.

As for the right hand technique, Theodoros told me:

The Patriarch [Gogos] used to say that in the music performance of the *lyra*, the most important thing is the bowing playing technique, the *pena* [“plectrum”], as he used to call it. If we want to see if a *bouzouki* player or a *lyra* player is good, we have to examine his right hand technique.

‘Authenticity’ in Pontic music is also an important matter. Theodoros connected the idea of ‘authentic Pontic *lyra* performance’ with the psychological state of the performer. He believed that ‘authenticity’ in *lyra* playing is connected to ‘what’ and ‘how’ the performer feels when playing. One of the other explanations that Theodoros gave me for the term ‘authentic,’ was the term ‘traditional’. He said that something ‘traditional’ is ‘authentic’, because tradition is connected with the idea of giving. The term for tradition in Greek is *paradosi* (“giving”). *Paradosi* is something that has been transmitted and given to us. Thus, he continued, *paradosi* is not ours, but it belongs to the old past, to the ‘authentic’ time. He explained to me that

‘authentic’ goes far back into the history of human beings. It is something that our ancestors realised and put into action a long time ago.

In answer to my question about his perception and view of contemporary Pontic *lyra* playing, Theodoros said that nowadays the Pontic *lyra* player is obliged to perform any kind of music on the instrument if he wants to be up to date with today’s commercial music scene. When performing on the instrument the player must also be able to express with his playing the musical ‘character’ of the *lyra* and the elements of its ‘Pontic’ playing technique. According to his opinion, the *lyra* performer should not try to imitate too closely the music of other music cultures, like the music of the Arabs or the Indians. He should perform other kinds of music according to the Pontic *lyra* playing technique. Then, the performance of that particular non-Pontic music brings out interesting playing techniques and ideas. In such a way, Theodoros believed that every musician who performs on a musical instrument the music of another culture is able to preserve and keep the ‘ecumenical’ character of the music culture he serves and was born into, and to try to avoid becoming ‘globalised’. For example, in my experience, when the Pontic *lyra* performs Afghan music, the *lyra* should not copy exactly the Afghan *rubab*’s playing technique, but must retain its music character. In this way, playing Afghan *rubab* music on the Pontic *lyra* becomes more interesting. The *lyra* keeps its two voice traditional character where the main melody is played on the first string and the second string provides the harmonic accompaniment. A more detailed analysis is provided in the following chapter.

As for the contemporary playing techniques of the Pontic *lyra* in Greece today, Theodoros believes that most of the *lyra* players nowadays are influenced by Anatolian, Turkish, Egyptian and Arab sounds, the ‘Eastern Mediterranean sound’ as he called it. It is also the fact that our music taste as Greek and Byzantine descendants, is not far away from that of the music cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Playing techniques are changing from time to time according to the music that comes to our ears every day through the media. The Pontic *lyra* player today introduces on the instrument traditional playing techniques of the violin, as well as from other musical instruments. Kostikas Tsakalides (**Illustration 41**), another master *lyra* player for example, in his attempt to play on his *lyra* non-Pontic dance music repertory, has borrowed many playing techniques from the musical instruments of the



Balkans. He was the first to introduce on the Pontic *lyra* Serbian and Bulgarian musical elements.

Another important reason for a Pontic *lyra* player to introducing these new playing techniques on his instrument is also related to the expressive needs of theatricality and of showing off to the public. Professional *lyra* players are very strict when performing traditional repertory on the instrument. It is like an unwritten law that *lyra* players must retain and preserve traditional playing techniques. But in a public performance there is also the well-known phenomenon of ‘challenging’ the other musicians by introducing a new playing technique or ‘style’ of performance.

As discussed above, Gogos Petrides was a pioneer *lyra* player who introduced a unique style of playing on the instrument. Today, many *lyra* players are following his example. When a *lyra* player comes on the stage to perform contemporary Pontic *lyra* music repertory, it is very likely that in the beginning, he will play a long improvisation in free rhythm, in order to show off his ability and virtuosity to perform difficult music phrases and patterns on the instrument, which may be borrowed either from the Greek violin or the *bouzouki* repertory or even from other music cultures and instruments. That happens most of the time during open-air festivals and concerts, or even in some music night clubs of Thessaloniki and Athens, where the *lyra* player is accompanied by other musical instruments such as the keyboard, drum kit, the traditional *daouli* (double-headed big drum) or even the acoustic guitar and the electric bass.

Theodoros believes that the contemporary playing techniques are having a negative impact on the traditional playing techniques of the Pontic *lyra*. The *lyra* has a ‘fixed’ playing technique which has been ‘created’ for its own unique music repertory by the old master Pontic musicians. When the *lyra* player performs contemporary playing techniques on the instrument, these particular techniques are usually borrowed from another musical tradition. In that case, the performer has to use a different playing technique avoiding the traditional style of playing the instrument.

#### 5.4 Giorgoulis Kougioumtzides (Illustration 40 and DVD no. 20)

Giorgoulis's parents came from the village of Kilapert from the area of Caucasus in eastern Pontos. He was born in northern Greece in 1936, in the small village of Nea Zoi, in the county of Pella. From 1938 until 1959 he lived with his parents in the village of Krya Vrissi, near the town of Giannitsa. In 1959, he moved to Thessaloniki and since 1965 has lived in the city area of Neapoli.

Giorgoulis's first musical experiences came through his father, Andreas Kougioumtzides, who was a semi-professional Pontic *lyra* player. When Giorgoulis was young, he used to watch his father Andreas performing at wedding parties and *panigyria* ("out-door festivals"). He had a '*megalo meraki*' as he puts it, a 'great desire and love', to learn the instrument. His father was his first *lyra* teacher. Through imitation and observation, combined with a natural music talent, Giorgoulis learned the *lyra* very quickly and, at the age of ten he was able to perform at wedding parties in the small village of Krya Vrissi.

It was really difficult for a young Pontic *lyra* player to learn how to perform the instrument during that time. You needed to have a very good ear and to be focused and concentrated when observing the music performance of another *lyra* player. In our village in the 40's and 50's, there were no tape recorders available. We could not practice and exercise our music by using this method of the cassette player. This way of learning the instrument was used by other *lyra* players in the 70's and the 80's. We had to learn it all from memory, and quickly.

Although his father encouraged him to play the instrument, his mother did not want him to become a Pontic *lyra* player. As Giorgoulis admitted, he preferred to play the instrument, rather than attend his school lessons every day.

After he moved to Thessaloniki in 1959, Giorgoulis became a regular *lyra* player for the live radio programme sponsored by the Euxeinos Club of Thessaloniki (formed by expatriate Pontic Greeks), which was broadcasting through the state radio of Greece, in the city of Thessaloniki. Between 1962 and 1978, Giorgoulis Kougioumtzides was performing on the Pontic *lyra* live on the Euxeinos Club radio shows with Gogos Petrides and the folklorist and researcher of Pontic music Stathis Efstathiades. He also performed in other radio programmes, such as those of the Greek Army radio station in the city.



Giorgoulis's first music collaborations took place in the city of Thessaloniki with singer Takis Sachinides. They performed together in many out-door festivals, as well as on the radio programmes of the Euxeine Club. Later on, he met with famous singer Chrysanthos Theodorides, and they started a unique collaboration, one of the most successful in the history of Pontic music. For many musicians these live recordings, as well as the studio records they made together, are considered to be invaluable teaching materials for both singers and *lyra* players.

Giorgoulis's life and music performance was much affected by his meeting with Gogos Petrides, who influenced his style of performance technique entirely. The meeting between Giorgoulis and Gogos was arranged by an electrician in 1955, who was from the suburb of Kalamaria in Thessaloniki and at that time was working at the village of Krya Vrissi, to improve the electricity network of the area. The electrician, who was of Pontic Greek origin, heard Giorgoulis's father play the *lyra* in the village and met with young Giorgoulis, who was already a fine player. The electrician was impressed by Giorgoulis's *lyra* performance and he suggested that he should go and stay with him at his house in Thessaloniki. There, he would have the opportunity to meet with Gogos Petrides. Giorgoulis stayed at the electrician's house in Kalamaria for two months and during the first days of his arrival there, the electrician took him to meet with Gogos Petrides, who was known to Giorgoulis only through his live radio broadcasts.

Sometimes, Giorgoulis used to go to Gogos's house. Gogos did not teach his playing technique directly to others, but he played the Pontic *lyra* in front of young Giorgoulis and recognised his potential to become a very good *lyra* player. Gogos used to say to his wife that Giorgoulis had a very good fingering technique.

As an active professional *lyra* player, Gogos spent most of his time away from his house. He used to take Giorgoulis with him in the taxi to the various wedding parties, dinner parties, taverns and Pontic clubs and other places where he was playing. It was during those musical occasions that Giorgoulis had the unique opportunity to watch Gogos performing on the instrument and was greatly influenced by Gogos's *lyra* performance. So, he became a 'follower' of Gogos's music *scholeio* ("school").

I liked his performance and his unique technique. I liked the way he was holding the instrument; I liked his 'European' playing. And I say

European, because of the stability of tempo and rhythm, as well as of the melodic organisation. When I was hearing Gogos and his *lyra* playing, as a *lyra* player myself, I could not resist the beauty and the influential sounds that were coming out of this instrument. It was also interesting to see in Gogos's playing how he starts a music piece. Every time he was performing it, it was different.

To my question about the new style of playing that Gogos introduced to the Pontic *lyra*, he said:

During those difficult years, Gogos could not support his family financially. He was invited to play the *lyra* once or twice a month and he was not making enough money. On the other hand, the Greek *bouzouki* music of the *Rembetika*, as well as the popular music of that time was in 'fashion'. Then, Gogos decided to play the *bouzouki*; and he managed to be a good *bouzouki* player. This was the starting point of Gogos's new playing technique. He introduced the *bouzouki*'s fingering technique on the fingerboard of the Pontic *lyra* and adopted a new right hand playing technique for a certain repertory on the *lyra*.

When Gogos started to adopt some *bouzouki* techniques in *lyra* playing, Giorgoulis had some negative views about this new style, but he soon accepted it, as many other musicians did. Giorgoulis agreed that Gogos had the ability to perform on the instrument whatever he was listening to with accuracy, an element that defined him as a unique and distinguished performer. Chrysanthos Theodorides, who gave Gogos the name *O Patriarchis tis lyras* ("The Patriarch of the Pontic *lyra*"), was one of the first musicians to recognise Gogos's unique talent and pioneer playing.

When Gogos embarked on a career as a *bouzouki* player, many of his friends were afraid that he would give up the *lyra* and devote himself to the *bouzouki*. So his friends organised music nights and *glendia* with Gogos in places like Veria, Kozani, Drama and Alexandroupolis to divert him from devoting himself to the *bouzouki* and losing his Pontic musicianship on the *lyra*. During that time Gogos improved his traditional playing techniques, while at the same time practicing his ability to play many kinds of music on the *lyra*.

Regarding Giorgoulis's own playing technique, despite being influenced by Gogos's style of performance, he managed to create his own personal style. His technique is admired by many Pontic *lyra* players who have followed his '*scholeio*' ('school'), like Theodoros Eleftheriou, who was attracted to Giorgoulis's *lyra* sounds from a very early age. His *lyra* playing is much simpler than that of Gogos. The full



sound that both strings produce when played together is also remarkable in Giorgoulis's technique, a sound which is not matched by any other Pontic *lyra* player. Many musicians used to say that when they were listening to Giorgoulis's *lyra* playing it was like listening to ten Pontic *lyras* playing at the same time. This is what every contemporary Pontic *lyra* player tries to achieve nowadays on the instrument. It is very important to make a clear and full sound, in order to achieve a traditional and colourful playing. Giorgoulis's fingering technique shows a different way of using the trill and the "sweetness" of the left fingers' trill characterises his playing technique. Giorgoulis has his own speed of 'trilling' the strings with his fingers, a technique that he considers to be one of the most important elements of the left hand. It is the technique that gives to the instrument its Pontic music character. He says:

You will notice that if I play on my *lyra* a composition, a song or a dance piece without using the trills, it will not sound like a Pontic *lyra*. It will sound like a violin or like a fiddle sound of another musical tradition. In Pontic music, we use more trills fingering than any other musical tradition. And that is what makes our musical instrument's sound unique and distinguishes it from any other traditional stringed sounds.

Giorgoulis, as one of the greatest masters of the Pontic *lyra*, has an extensive discography. He recorded 114 traditional songs with singer Chrysanthos Theodorides. These recordings are regarded by Pontic musicians as precious and historical. In addition to these recordings, made in the period between 1962 and 1970, Giorgoulis recorded several hundred other songs and dances, with almost all the professional Pontic Greek singers. He also took part in educational projects and recordings in Bulgaria and in the United States. He has visited many Pontic Greek communities around the world, such as those in North America, Australia and Western Europe.

### **5.5 Panayiotis Aslanides (Illustration 42 and DVD no. 21)**

Panayiotis Aslanides was born in 1947 in the suburb of Kalamaria in Thessaloniki. His family originally came from the area of Kromni in Pontos. From his mother's side, his great grandfather was one of the best singers and dancers of the *Serra* dance (the ancient war dance) in the area of Kromni. His mother was also a very good singer. Kalamaria was one of those places that concentrated a large population of Greek refugees from Pontos and Asia Minor. His mother was a carpet weaver in a

small factory and his father went through several jobs, such as plumber, fisherman and owner of a tavern situated opposite the church of 'The Metamorphosis of Christ' in Kalamaria.

This tavern was the meeting place of the local Pontic Greeks, as well as of the Greeks from Smyrna and other parts of Asia Minor. There were a lot of musical activities going on at this tavern. You could hear the sounds of the Pontic *lyra*, the *oud* (Arab-Turkish lute), the *kanonaki* (plucked box zither), the old songs from Constantinople and Smyrna, and even a *laterna* (barrel organ). After running this business, Panayiotis's father opened another tavern in Kalamaria, but this time it was a place where Pontic *lyra* players gathered and played. Nearly all *lyra* players from the older generation passed through, and young Panayiotis was there with his father.

I met many professional and amateur *lyra* players there. I was always attracted to the instrument's sound, until I met Gogos Petrides. Gogos, as a professional Pontic *lyra* player, was a very close friend of my father's and he was coming to our tavern very often to perform. I also met Giannis Vrastarides, [also known as] Tsanakalis. I separated these two from all the other players that I knew, because they played the instrument very well, although Tsanakalis was a semi-professional *lyra* player.

The main income for a professional Pontic *lyra* player during that time came from wedding parties and open air *panigyria* ("festivities"). Another source of income for professional Pontic musicians was when a musician was invited to perform at taverns like the one that Panayiotis's father used to own, for a private *glendi* with a few people sitting, eating, drinking and singing around the table along with the *lyra* player. Later, the night club, with amplified music and a space that could fit more than two or three hundred people, offered to the musicians a standard paid fee, but such places did not exist at that time.

For a certain period, Gogos performed every weekend at his friend's taverna where Panayiotis used to help his father after school. There he was able to listen to Gogos and the singer Chrysanthos Theodorides, whose partnership later made them a famous musical duo.

Although I intended to become a professional footballer like my brother did, my ear was stuck to the sound of the *lyra*. During that time, Kalamaria was full of refugees' houses. In our dusty and muddy neighbourhood, about thirty meters away from our house, there was a *lyra* player from the area of Caucasus in Pontos, called Pavlos Georgiades. I used to go and



listen to his *lyra* playing. Then, I started to realise that some of the *lyra* players had a remarkable playing technique. Because I had the privilege to be with Gogos every week in our tavern, quickly, I marked out his way of playing the instrument from all the other performers of the *lyra* that I was hearing. So, I said to myself that I must learn the *lyra* from Gogos only. I wanted to be closer to him, but because of his distant personality, I was not able to get teaching lessons from him. After that, as he was the best Pontic *lyra* player for me and for many others, I managed to learn the instrument from him only through the method of observation and imitation. He didn't teach me any playing techniques.

Panayiotis Aslanides used to go with his father to see Gogos in different venues, to watch the way he was holding the instrument and the bow, in order to pick up the playing technique. Panayiotis got his first *lyra* from Gogos's father, Stavros Petrides. When Stavros Petrides visited Panayiotis's father one time at their place, he saw young Panayiotis tapping his foot according to the *lyra's* tempo. He said to Panayiotis's father that this young boy will learn how to play the Pontic *lyra* very quickly. And then he brought an instrument for Panayiotis, a small model suitable for a child. When Panayiotis got to play the instrument to a good standard, he asked his father to buy him a full-sized *lyra*.

Finally, Panayiotis got his first professional instrument from a soldier who visited his father's tavern in Kalamaria. He was also an amateur Pontic *lyra* player. Panayiotis asked the soldier if he could try to play his *lyra*. From the moment he took the instrument in his hands, Panayiotis felt that this was the instrument he was looking for. His father paid a lot of money to the soldier to buy this instrument.

In my discussion with Panayiotis Aslanides about *lyras*, I noticed that throughout our interview, he was holding in his hands his own *lyra*. I wanted him to talk to me about this particular instrument, because I realised the respect he had for it. He proudly told me:

This *lyra* was made by my father. It is nearly thirty years old and is made of cedar wood. The head of the *lyra* is bigger than other *lyras*. We come from the area of Kromni in Pontos and most of our *lyra* players like the head of the instrument to be made to match the width of the soundbox. The neck of the *lyra* is also easy to hold and the performer is easily able to change the fingering position. Gogos Petrides was the one who transformed the way of making the neck on the *lyra*. He was the first to introduce the new fingering playing technique on the *lyra*. Before him, all Pontic *lyra* players used to play in the first position. Gogos borrowed this fingering technique from the *bouzouki*; he was a good *bouzouki* player.

Panayiotis Aslanides was a follower of Gogos Petrides. His vivid experience with the ‘Patriarch of the *lyra*’ was of great importance for him and his career as a professional Pontic *lyra* player. Panayiotis pointed out that Gogos was very lucky to have his first musical experience through his father Stavris.

‘Stavris’ Petrides (**Illustration 43**) was born in Pontos and was a professional musician who made his living from music only; his *lyra* playing technique was much closer to the style that our forefathers played in our homeland, Pontos. Gogos had the privilege to learn this instrument through his father’s musical experience. We are also privileged today, that this long oral tradition of the *lyra* playing was transmitted to us through ‘Stavris’ and Gogos.

Panayiotis characterised Gogos Petrides as a master of both Pontic *lyra* playing and singing. His melismatic singing combined with his dynamic and highly ornamented *lyra* playing resulted in an exceptional level of Pontic music performance.

At the beginning of his career, as far as the left hand technique is concerned, Gogos played the *lyra* in a simpler way. As for the right hand technique, he used to add more bowing, according to other *lyra* players. Later on, his *bouzouki* playing technique inspired him to invent new patterns and musical possibilities for the Pontic *lyra*. Gogos had the ability to listen to a music piece and perform it differently, adding music phrases that embellished the original melody. He also used to say to young Panayiotis that a Pontic *lyra* player can master the instrument only through playing the table song repertory. During these years, the *Pontiako glendi* was happening at the taverns, weddings or social gatherings at houses, where all participants including the musicians, sat around the table and performed the music with singing and some dancing. This was a form of music training for the Pontic *lyra* players, where they had to play for hours without amplification. Then, the musician was going through different emotional feelings, as he was entertaining both the participants and himself.

Gogos advised Panayiotis that in such a gathering, the Pontic *lyra* player may have to play with singers who sing using different vocal techniques. This is another musical element that the *lyra* player may experiment with. He must have the ability to listen carefully to every singer who participates in the event and be able to identify the singer’s characteristic vocal techniques. Thus, the Pontic *lyra* player will be able



to learn and adopt these vocal techniques on his instrument. It is probably the most effective teaching material for a *lyra* player that also applies to contemporary methods of learning how to perform on the instrument. It is always helpful when a *lyra* player is able to sing and play the *lyra* at the same time.

Professional *lyra* players today are always attracted to professional singers and vice versa. A Pontic singer enjoys performing with a professional *lyra* player when they both recognise the playing technique of the other, as well as the musical possibilities of their musical art. It is known that most of the professional Pontic singers and *lyra* players today want to have the best musical accompaniment in their music making. That makes a music performance successful, because both performers are communicating musically.

Panayiotis Aslanides is probably the professional *lyra* player who had the most experience of the musical life of Gogos Petrides. And what characterises Panayiotis's playing technique is that he borrowed many elements in his music from Gogos. There are particular songs where Aslanides imitates completely the playing and style of the 'Patriarch of the *lyra*', an ability that very few other *lyra* players have. According to his opinion, the whole Pontic *lyra* music repertory faced its biggest transformation during Gogos's era.

Gogos had the talent to be able to perform the old music repertory of the *lyra* in a more systematised way. He was the first to add an introductory section and a finale to a song, where before the melodic organisation was irregular with no specific rules. He also introduced the development of the middle section of a song, dance or a composition, with improvised patterns that are related to the original music of the piece. In a way, Gogos refined the ABA form of western classical music into the Pontic *lyra* music repertory.

## **5.6 Dimitris Karasavvides (Illustration 44 and DVD no. 22)**

After the forced migration of the Greeks of Pontos in 1922, Dimitris's parents, who were originally from the area of Kotyora in Pontos, went to the Soviet Union. Dimitris was born in 1972 in Kazakhstan and he moved with his parents to Greece in 1979. His first musical experience came from his uncle and his father, who played the Pontic *lyra*. Their *lyra* playing was influenced by Russian folk and popular music and

also by new compositions and repertory that Pontic Greek musicians created as exiles. For that reason, Dimitris considers that his first experience of Pontic *lyra* music did not relate to the traditional repertory of the Pontic *lyra*. The *lyra* music that his father and his uncle played when they arrived in Athens in 1979 was a combination of elements from Pontic music and Russian folk dance rhythms and melodies.

From the age of five, Dimitris played the accordion and the piano in Kazakhstan. He began to learn the *lyra* when he was nine years old. He was also attracted to different rhythms that he liked tapping on the table with his fingers. He got his first Pontic *lyra* when he lived in Athens. The instrument was made in Kazakhstan and it was a gift from the grandfather of Dimitris's cousin, who realised that Dimitris would become a fine player. Dimitris Karasavvides is today one of the most popular Pontic *lyra* players. His playing combines a remarkable bowing technique with a sweet and melismatic playing. Dimitris is also influenced by oriental music. He likes listening to Turkish *makam* music, as well as Arabic music, where individual musical instruments such as the violin, the clarinet and the *qanun* perform with a characteristic playing technique and a strong element of improvisation. It was really interesting when I asked Dimitris to play on his *lyra* his favourite tune. He started to improvise in free rhythm and his *lyra* sounded like the music of a traditional Greek violin.

Dimitris is very devoted to his *lyra* playing. He describes the instrument as an extension of his own body. He pointed out to me that on many occasions, when performing on the instrument, he goes into a state of trance. I have rarely heard this comment from other Pontic musicians. His love for the *lyra* has been widely recognised within the Pontic Greek community and Dimitris is considered by many professional *lyra* players as one of the promising young Pontic artists.

Regarding the Pontic *lyra* players, Dimitris believes that Gogos was the first one who put the foundations of the contemporary playing of the Pontic *lyra* in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He also believes that Gogos was not what many Pontic musicians describe him as “our musical tradition.” And he explains why:

Gogos during his era brought something new and innovative to our music. We realise and appreciate his contribution in forming the traditional repertory of the Pontic *lyra* but we should mention that he also brought tremendous changes into the instrument's performance. For me, traditional



Pontic *lyra* music is the music that our fathers and grandfathers played in Pontos in the past. I consider traditional and close to the authentic Pontic music what the first generation of Pontic *lyra* players who were actually born in Pontos played. They were the first to arrive here in Greece after the Asia Minor catastrophe. Gogos Petrides played nearly all the repertory that the first generation of *lyra* players played in Pontos, but he changed the performance of this repertory by adding an advanced playing technique, which was far ahead of its time. That's why I consider Gogos Petrides as a pioneer musician. He was ahead of his time in his performance.

As for the future of the Pontic *lyra* performance, Dimitris points out that new elements in Pontic *lyra* music that could form the basis for the development of the instrument could have been adopted or created many years ago. The reason that this did not happen before is that most of the professional Pontic *lyra* players were not trained. Gogos was the only *lyra* player of his time who knew how to play another musical instrument, the *bouzouki*, which influenced his performance style. That formed a kind of new element in Pontic music, and it was clearly a different approach to playing the instrument. The other *lyra* players during that time, even Gogos, did not have a proper musical education and they performed on the instrument according to their own musical and life experience. Thus, about fifty years ago, new ideas for performing the instrument were growing very slowly. But since then most of the Pontic *lyra* players started to educate themselves in music theory and practice, and things have changed dramatically.

Dimitris believes that the 'natural progress' of Pontic *lyra* music performance is already happening in Greece today. The *lyra* is played by musicians of non-Pontic origin and the instrument is used in many pop music recordings, as well as in recordings of world music. This natural progression and development of *lyra* playing is also followed by the musical taste of modern society. On the other hand, traditional Pontic music is preserved with respect and is taught by Pontic *lyra* teachers as the foundation of the instrument's repertory and playing technique.

### **5.7 Andreas Kougioumtzides (Illustration 45 and DVD no. 23)**

Andreas is the son of Giorgoulis Kougioumtzides and he comes from a family with a commitment to Pontic *lyra* playing over three generations. Andreas was born in the city of Thessaloniki in 1962. He spent his childhood years in the village of Krya Vrisi where his family lived and he moved to Thessaloniki when he was twelve years old.

His first musical experiences came through his father and his grandfather. But his main inspiration in the process of learning the instrument was his father. Andreas was listening only to Pontic *lyra* music at his home, from his father Giorgoulis, who was a professional and very active musician. He began learning the instrument when he was seventeen, quite old for learning a musical instrument. Andreas learned how to play the Pontic *lyra* through observation and imitation. His *lyra* playing technique is very similar to that of his father.

It was completely natural for me to learn how to play the Pontic *lyra*. I got my first musical experience through my father, although, he did not teach me the instrument on a regular basis. Mainly, it was my ear that memorized the ‘playing’ of my father and that of other players later on. That is how I learned the instrument and I am proud that I am a carrier of this rich musical tradition and I hope that my two children will keep it up.

Andreas is an active professional musician and he has collaborated with many Pontic singers. He has performed in many concerts of Pontic music, as well as in many recording sessions. His *lyra* technique is based on the traditional playing technique for the instrument. He mentions that:

During the period that I was learning how to perform on the instrument, my access to television or radio was limited. Nowadays, there is one television, radio and a hi-fi system in every room of our houses. As a result of this, when I was learning the Pontic *lyra*, I was listening to my father playing the instrument live in our house for many hours of the day and I was not listening to other kinds of music. That is why my playing technique is close to the traditional performance technique of the *lyra* and is less affected by other kinds of music and by any contemporary playing techniques.

Andreas performs the instrument with a strong Pontic flavour without introducing foreign musical elements and any other music phrases from different kinds of music. In contrast, many Pontic *lyra* players in Greece nowadays are introducing new playing techniques on the instrument, as a way of enriching the contemporary repertory. The simple Pontic playing technique that Andreas uses in his performance is characterised by a strong and steady bowing technique, an extensive use of trills with the left hand and playing mainly in the first fingering position.

Andreas considers Gogos Petrides as the ‘A to Z’ of the Pontic *lyra* music. He says that:



Pontic *lyra* music performance before Gogos's era was very different. I still remember some of the old *lyra* players before Gogos. They did not play the instrument like him. When Gogos appeared "on stage", that was the moment of the big change in the performance of the *lyra*. Gogos introduced new elements of music, as well as new playing techniques. He also had the charisma and the talent to improvise with his big imagination. His playing was unique because he had the ability to perform a song using many different variations in the music. That is why all of us are admiring his performance technique. He could play the same piece ten times without repeating the same music phrases. It is always interesting to listen to his music recordings.

### **5.8 Stathis Nikolaides (Illustration 46 and DVD no. 24)**

Stathis Nikolaides is one of the most distinguished performers of the Pontic singing musical tradition. In 1991, when I was nearly thirteen years old, Stathis took me to a recording studio in Athens and I played the Pontic *lyra* for his whole new album. I owe to him my deep appreciation and respect for trusting me as a performer and for giving this great opportunity to a young Pontic *lyra* player. The time I entered the music studio with Stathis was one of the most important musical experiences of my life. Since then we have maintained a close friendship.

Stathis is one of the very few professional Pontic singers who also plays the Pontic *lyra* himself, but when he sings in public concerts or open-air festivals he is accompanied by a professional *lyra* player. As a *lyra* performer, he is an amateur. He plays the instrument only at home and at private moments. But, because Stathis is a much respected Pontic musician, I would like to bring to our discussion the matter of being a professional Pontic singer and an amateur Pontic *lyra* player together. It is interesting to hear his point of view about Pontic *lyra* playing.

Stathis's parents were born in Sokhumi, Georgia. His grandparents were originally from the area of Kounaka in Matsouka (Maçka) and from the city of Rize in Pontos. His grandfather, Kyriakos, moved to Sokhumi in 1917 and he worked there as a baker. During Stalin's Communist era, his parents were sent to the city of Tashkent in Uzbekistan as political refugees (1949). Stathis was born in the village of Lichofka in Kazakhstan, approximately ninety kilometres away from the city of Tashkent.

Stathis's father was a professional Pontic *lyra* player and a fine singer himself. He played at many Pontic Greek weddings in Kazakhstan and his mother was also a singer. In the former Soviet Union, young Stathis remembers, there were many

occasions when a Pontic music *glendi* and other music gatherings took place in their own house, as well as in the houses of relatives and friends. Music was an important factor in bringing the little community of Pontic Greeks together in that area. These vivid occasions were the first musical experiences for young Stathis.

The dream of returning to Greece for the exiled Pontic Greeks of the former Soviet Union was always alive in their community. At the age of seven, Stathis was singing a verse that related to that dream:

*Epoultsa t' aspron t'alogon, epemnen i forada,  
tin forada pa tha poulo kai pao sin Elladan.*  
(I sold the white stallion, only the mare is left,  
I will sell the mare and then I can go to Greece).

Stathis remembers that his mother used to have two jobs at the same time and she bought once a radiogram that played LP records. Music was always present in their house. His relatives from Greece used to send them Greek music records. Stathis learned many songs from his father and mother and he loved singing from a very early age.

Young Stathis remembers vividly when his father played the *lyra* for him and his other friends to dance in their house in Athens. Stathis began singing Pontic songs when he was still living in Kazakhstan. In Greece, when he was still young, he liked singing the songs of Stelios Kazantzides, Manolis Aggelopoulos and other popular singers of that time in Greece. Stathis learned the Pontic *lyra* from his father. In the beginning he started learning the *bouzouki*. But because his *bouzouki* teacher left for another place to work, Stathis stopped playing the instrument. Then, one day at his house, he asked his father to give him the *lyra* that was hanging on the wall and show to him how to tune it. That was the time when Stathis learned how to play his first tune on the *lyra*.

As a *lyra* player, Stathis Nikolaidis does not have a great technique. He accompanies himself only when singing Pontic songs and when composing new pieces. His Pontic *lyra* playing is characterised by simple melodic phrases. The bowing technique is simple and rhythmical, ideal for accompanying the singing and keeping mainly the drone and the basic harmonic accompaniment. As for the left hand technique, Stathis plays the instrument by using the standard playing techniques



such as simple trilling, playing on the first position and moving the fingers in a slower dynamic.

This Chapter featured some of the most important musicians of the Pontic musical tradition in Greece today. Aspects of their performance are discussed in the appendix and demonstrated in the examination recital.

In concluding, the views of these Pontic musicians about the technical developments brought by Gogos Petrides have a common ground and are very pertinent to the reception of this work. They all accept that Gogos was the only professional *lyra* player at that time and they all admire his musical talent and charisma he had when performing the instrument. Gogos introduced the tempered music scale intervals into *lyra* performance and he borrowed playing techniques from other Greek musical instruments, mainly from the *bouzouki*. In this way, he stressed the importance of the little finger (left hand) and introduced a new right hand technique. Gogos introduced a standardised performance technique for the instrument and many *lyra* players still follow his example. He was the first to introduce a new fingering playing technique to the Pontic *lyra* beyond the first position, a technique he gained from his *bouzouki* experience. According to the views of the musicians in this Chapter, it is Gogos's contribution to the *lyra* music that the traditional Pontic music repertory is performed in a more systematised way today. And the most important element of his contribution to the performance of the Pontic *lyra*, is that he inspired many musicians to learn the performance of the instrument and keep the *lyra* 'alive' within the Pontic people.

## Chapter 6

### Performing Afghan music on the *lyra*

As part of my research on performance techniques for the Pontic *lyra* and ways of extending them, I have studied the performance of Afghan music and considered the issues raised by adapting Afghan music to be played on the *lyra*. Goldsmiths Department of Music has the unique presence of Professor John Baily, Head of the Afghanistan Music Unit. John Baily is a specialist in the music of Afghanistan, and has been performing it since he started his fieldwork in Afghanistan in 1973. His wife Veronica Doubleday is also a noted authority on Afghan music, and is a singer of Herati folk and popular songs and player of the *dairah* (frame drum).

### The meeting

In 1997, during the second year of the BMus programme at Goldsmiths College, I took the opportunity to study Ethnomusicology as an optional course, because I was interested in world music generally. One day, I took my Pontic *lyra* and went to meet Dr John Baily, who was Reader in Ethnomusicology at that time. I wanted to play the Pontic *lyra* to him and introduce myself and my general interests about world music and ethnomusicology. I vividly remember that he was very busy on that particular day, but I insisted that he should listen to the instrument. Since that first meeting with Baily, I began to pay attention to his activities as a researcher and lecturer, as well as attending the various performances of Afghan music that he gave at Goldsmiths.

My engagement with Afghan music began in the year 2000, when I enrolled as a full-time student for the MMus programme in Ethnomusicology at Goldsmiths. Until then, I knew very little about Afghan music, but I was attracted to the sound of the Afghan *rubab*, the national instrument of Afghanistan. During various seminars, presentations and concerts of Afghan music, I became quite familiar with this music culture and its musical instruments. But there was something special about the *rubab*, which later became one of my favourite instruments.

In the year 2000, Professor Baily founded *Ensemble Bakhtar*, a group of musicians from the Department. The group was created to accommodate me and my



*lyra*. We all gathered on a weekly basis every Wednesday and performed Afghan music. The name *Bakhtar* refers to the historic area of northern Afghanistan known in English as Bactria. This area was conquered by Alexander the Great in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. and subsequently became a Greek colony for some 300 years (Leeming and Omrani 2007), a place where Central Asian and Greek cultures intermingled. That fact made me feel a close link between the traditional music of Afghanistan and Greece.

The varied musical traditions of Afghanistan are described by Danielou as:

...a veritable museum, in which we discover in a fresh and living state some forms of music which have disappeared elsewhere and which throw astonishing light on many obscure aspects of the history of Eastern as well as Western music. We find here, in their original form, often admirably preserved, elements of ancient Indian, Iranian, Turkish and old Russian music, as well as vestiges of ancient Greek music. We find here, too, some musical forms which are curiously close to European music of the Middle Ages – along with archaic styles, very similar to Rumanian and Gypsy folk music (Danielou n.d.).

While Danielou's claims are somewhat fanciful it is the case that some genres of music in Afghanistan seem significantly different from those of neighbouring countries, especially with regards to tonal system, which is remarkably like the diatonic system of some musics in Europe.

The musical instruments used in *Ensemble Bakhtar* are the Afghan *rubab*, a plucked lute with a short neck, with three main strings and sets of drone and sympathetic strings, the long necked plucked lutes such as the two-stringed and the fourteen-stringed *dutar*s, the Indian harmonium, an instrument that is widely used in Afghanistan, the Pontic *lyra*, which introduced the Greek element in the ensemble, the Indian *tabla*, one of the main percussion accompaniment instruments in Afghanistan, as well as the various types of *daireh*, the frame drum. In due course the ensemble became a quartet.

The main vocalist of our ensemble is Veronica Doubleday, the wife of John Baily. They spent two and a half years researching music in the city of Herat in western Afghanistan, and their expertise in Afghan music is that unique and special element that underlies the ensemble. The third member of the group is Yusuf Mahmoud, a celebrated *tabla* player who comes from a traditional musical family of Afghanistan. My part in the group is mainly to accompany and play the Pontic *lyra*

along with the *rubab* and the *dutar*. But recently, after several years of practice and performance, I got to have a leading role in some of the pieces we perform and I am able to put in practice various improvised melodic patterns on the *lyra*. Yusuf and I are professional musicians who depend upon music for our living. John Baily and Veronica Doubleday consider themselves semi-professionals.

*Ensemble Bakhtar* is an ensemble that is part of the Department of Music at Goldsmiths. It does not perform very often nowadays and sometimes when it does, it is for charity (work without payment). But the group performed in the past in various venues in the United Kingdom. Perhaps the most prestigious engagement was at Palermo's Opera House in Italy in February 2002. The Opera House's own magazine, *Avidi Lumi*, published a long article about the concert, along with a covermount CD of the programme. This CD has been re-released by John Baily and Veronica Doubleday's on their *Bolbol* label, for publicity and fund-raising purposes (**Illustration 47**).

As a university ensemble, *Ensemble Bakhtar* is one of the best kept secrets in the world music scene, specialising in the classical and traditional music repertory of Afghanistan. The plucked sound of the Afghan *rubab*, together with the bowed sound of the Pontic *lyra* form a special combination of sounds. The different colouring and the dynamic effect of the two stringed instruments results in a rich combination of sounds when playing together. But bringing together plucked and bowed lutes in *Ensemble Bakhtar* is not something new. There is a similar practice in traditional Afghan music ensembles, with the combination of the *rubab* and the *sarinda*, or the *rubab* and the *ghichak*, or the *rubab* and the *delruba* playing together. Thus, the sound of the Pontic *lyra* is not out of context in the ensemble (**Illustration 48**).

One of the first issues I had to confront was the modal system used for the music of Afghanistan. The question of the modal system is complicated by a number of factors. At least three types of art music are known in Afghanistan which have been brought in from outside. These are the art music of North India (including Pakistan), Iran and Uzbekistan. Of these, North Indian music is the best known and most important in Afghanistan. North Indian art music was introduced to Afghanistan in the 1860's when a number of classically trained musicians from the Punjab were brought to the Kabul court by Amir Sher Ali Khan. The *rags* (melodic modes) of North Indian art music as performed in Afghanistan do not correspond exactly with current Indian practice (Baily 1981). At the same time, there were some similarities



with the modes of Pontic music. I was also struck by the metres of 6/8, 2/4, 4/4, 7/8, which occur in both Afghan and Greek music. Geographically, there is a long distance between Greece and Afghanistan, but the historical connection during the Hellenistic period forms a strong link.

## 6.1 Baily's research on two Afghan lutes

As part of his research on music in Herat and Kabul, John Baily learned to perform music on two very different lutes, the Herati *dutar* and the Afghan *rubab* (Baily 2001:85-98). It is necessary to go into some detail here in order to clarify my own experience in adapting Afghan music to the Pontic *lyra*.

The Afghan *rubab* (**Illustrations 49, 50, 51**) is a short-necked double-chambered plucked lute with three main strings tuned in 4ths. It has four frets that give twelve semitones to the octave, two or three long drone strings and up to fifteen sympathetic strings; it is played with a small wooden or horn plectrum (*shahbaz*), which is held between the thumb and the forefinger. Traditionally, the *rubab* player plays the instrument sitting cross-legged on the floor.

The Herati *dutar* (**Illustration 52**) is a long-necked plucked lute from western Afghanistan. The two strings are usually tuned a fourth apart and only the first string is stopped; the second serves as a continuously sounded drone. A note a fifth above the pitch of the open first string serves as the usual tonal centre. The word *dutar* means literally “two-strings” and that was the original form of the instrument. The Herati *dutar* had recently undergone significant morphological changes.

The number of strings was increased to three (**Illustration 53**) (giving one melody string and two drones); the material of the strings changed from gut to thin steel; the number and placement of frets was changed to give a ‘gapped chromatic scale’ of whole-tones and semitones; and a metal plectrum worn like a thimble on the first finger of the right hand was now used to strum the instrument. As these structural changes took place the *dutār* was adopted as an instrument of urban music making (In its original two-stringed form the *dutār* was played by rural amateur musicians) (Baily 1988:31).

Finally, a third kind of *dutar*, the 14 stringed *dutar* (**Illustrations 54, 55, 56**) was to be found in the Herat region by the 1970s. According to Baily, the motivation

driving these changes in the *dutar* was the result of the impact of Kabuli popular radio music in Herat.

The invention of a new instrument is a matter of great interest, particularly when examined in terms the “man/instrument interface”. It allows one to look at the inter-relationship between instrument morphology, human movement, and music structure in closely related contexts, where a change in one parameter, such as morphology, affects the others (Baily 1995:12).

In part, the invention of the 14 stringed *dutar* was motivated by the wish to adapt the instrument so it could play the instrumental art music of Kabul. As Baily puts it:

The 14 stringed *dutār* was the creation of a Herati musician, Mohammad Karim Herawi (also known as Karim Dutari, “Karim the *Dutār* Player”). Its invention did not happen in Herat at all, but in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. He experimented with changes to the *dutār* so as to enable it to take its part in the ensemble more effectively as a melodic instrument. He made the *dutār* larger and added sympathetic strings to increase its loudness. He added more frets to allow it to play the melodic modes used by musicians in Kabul. An important model for these innovations was another plucked lute, the *rubab*, the national instrument of Afghanistan. The changes made to the *dutār* enabled it to play the repertory of classical pieces for the *rubab*, and to employ a special right hand technique in which the shortest sympathetic string is used in isolation as a high drone. This technique is called *simkari*, “metal string work”, and is reminiscent of *jhalla* techniques for *sitār* and *sarod* in India. In this way Karim upgraded the *dutār* to give it the musical possibilities and status of the *rubab* (Baily 1995:19).

Baily’s work showed how the traditional repertoires of the *dutar* and the *rubab* were adapted to the layout of note positions. The traditional music for both instruments has melodic movement which is largely step-wise, avoiding large melodic leaps.

**Figure 15:** Diagram representing the neck of the two stringed *dutar* and the note positions.

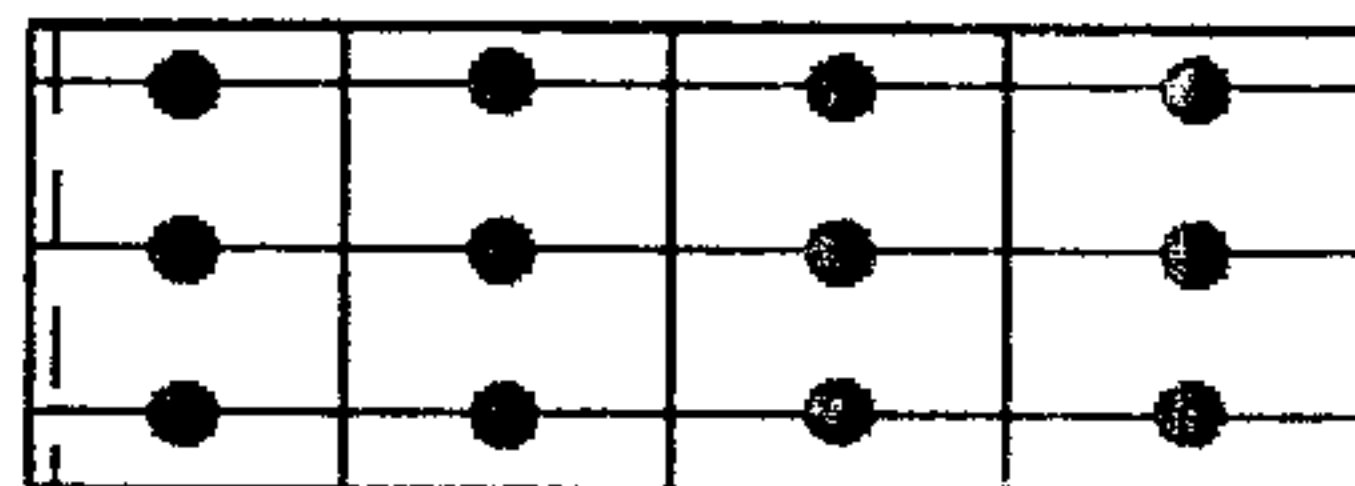


The *dutar*, with its linear array (● = note positions), was used in the past to accompany a song style that was tetrachordally based. The intervals given by the



fretting of the two stringed *dutar* of Herat is similar to the Iranian mode called *Shur*, to which the Heratis later applied the name *Bairami* (Baily 1988:45). In detail, the interval between the tonal centre and the second above is a small neutral second; the interval between the second above and the third above is a large neutral second; the tetrachord above the tonal centre is the focal point of melodic activity; the second below the tonal centre has importance as a starting point for ascending melodic phrases. Baily showed why the melodic configurations built upon these note positions fit very well onto the linear array, minimising excessive hand movements and emphasising finger movements from a usually descending series of hand positions.

**Figure 16: Diagram representing the neck of the Afghan *rubab* and the note positions.**



The *rubab*, with its tiered array (● = note positions), is an instrument played in many parts of Afghanistan, for a number of different regional repertoires. The music of the *rubab* is structured as a scalar melodic movement within the octave and is not based on tetrachords. The two genres of instrumental art music of Kabul played on the *rubab* that Baily has specialised in are the *naghmeh-ye kashal* and *naghmeh-ye klasik*. The term *naghmeh-ye kashal* means the ‘extended instrumental piece’ and consists of three main parts: the *shakl*, an extempore exegesis of the melodic characteristics of the mode, in free rhythm; the *astai*, the main composition, repeated many times with rhythmic variations; and the *antara*, a series of short compositions played several times each, with gradual acceleration towards the end of the piece (Baily 1988:66-67). The performance of *naghmeh-ye klasik* consists of two main sections, the *shakl* in free rhythm, without *tabla* accompaniment, and the *naghmeh* itself, the fixed composition, usually in a rhythmic cycle of 16 beats (*Tintal*).

## 6.2 Learning to perform Afghan music

There have been two parts to my learning process of Afghan music. First, I learned how to play the *rubab*. I have learned several examples of *naghmeh-ye kashal* and a

number of Herati folk tunes as played on the *rubab*. Secondly, I have transferred some of the art music repertory of the *rubab* to the Pontic *lyra* and also some of the folk music repertory of the *dutar* to the *lyra*. These two repertories pose very different challenges.

My learning process consisted of two main aspects: a) the aural memory and; b) the motor memory. The first was when I was able to remember and perform the tune that my teacher played on the *rubab* with my ear, while the motor memory was when I remembered the hand movements of my teacher on the *rubab*. According to Baily:

Playing from memory must be the predominant mode of performance throughout the world. We can identify two kinds of musical representation at the cognitive level, an auditory representation in which musical patterns are recalled and configured as auditory phenomena, and a spatio-motor representation in terms of which movements are planned and experienced in auditory, visual, kinaesthetic, and tactile terms in relation to the physical structure of the instrument. Sometimes you can only remember the tune after running off the motor pattern – an example of motor memory (Baily 2007).

In my experience of learning to perform Afghan music, particularly on the *rubab*, the aural memory was stronger than my motor memory. The later was more present during the first two or three lessons where I had to pay attention to my teacher's posture and the way his body related to the morphology of the instrument. But later on and until now, my trained ear is the 'tool' that guides and teaches me how to transfer different 'sound messages' directly on the instrument.

### **6.2.1 Learning *dutar* tunes on the *lyra***

I did not have much difficulty when I tried to play traditional Afghan song tunes on the Pontic *lyra*. The pieces that my teacher usually played on the Herati *dutar* tended to be in a very restricted number of modes, like the traditional repertory of the Pontic *lyra*. The two most popular modes on the Herati *dutar* were also those most frequently played on the traditional Pontic *lyra* repertory. The *Bairami* mode was similar to the Byzantine *First Sound* and the *Jog* mode was similar to the Byzantine



*Second Plagal Sound*.<sup>40</sup> The use of the two voice character of my *lyra* playing was accepted by my teacher because the second string on the *dutar* is a drone, as on the *lyra*. Thus, the concept of the drone was present and the acoustic result of the overall sound was richer and in some parts it was very close to the traditional sound of the Pontic *lyra*. This fact ‘pleased’ my personal taste in Afghan folk music. It sounded very similar to Pontic music and I could perform this particular Afghan music repertory straight away and with my own personal ‘Greek taste’ (**Musical example 25 on DVD**). Veronica Doubleday’s participation in *Ensemble Bakhtar* and her knowledge of the Herati songs was crucial for my learning this music (**Illustration 57**). Though her special singing of Herati folk tunes I was able to learn in greater detail the ornaments of the voice and make my *lyra* performance sound closer to the Herati style.

### 6.2.2 Learning *rubab* tunes on the *lyra*

When I started to learn how to perform Afghan music on the *rubab*, I was already playing other similar plucked lutes such as the Greek *bouzouki* and the Turkish *oud*, instruments that have a similar playing technique to the *rubab*. On the Greek *bouzouki*, the player holds the *penna* (“plectrum”) and most of the time uses equal up and down stroke patterns. A similar practice applies to the Turkish *oud*. The *mizrab* (“plectrum”) held by the player moves up and down with more or less equal force. But in the case of the Afghan *rubab*, the down stroke is the most important one. The pieces that I have learned on the *rubab* have been notated by Baily (1997) but I preferred to learn them by ear rather than from the notation. My *rubab* repertoire also includes some popular song melodies, sets of dance pieces in the *Pari* and *Kesturi* modes, and some other special compositions.

During my first lessons of Afghan *rubab* music, I concentrated on my teacher’s hand movements, especially those of his left hand. First of all, I wanted to be able to learn the main melody and play the most important notes of the music. That is my own strategy when learning a new piece. The focus is on that hand and those fingers that create the melody of the piece. I was aware of the whole performance of the piece at a later stage, where the importance and the dynamics of the right hand

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<sup>40</sup> In Chapter 3 there is a detailed analysis of these two Byzantine modes.

technique played a significant role. The learning process of the *rubab* was similar to the process of learning the Pontic *lyra*. “Type II Imitation”,<sup>41</sup> is used through direct observation; the teacher demonstrates on the instrument a certain phrase or pattern of the song and then the student repeats the same pattern after, for the teacher’s assessment.

The only difference was that, when I learned the *lyra* from my grandfather and my father, I was already familiar with the sound of the *lyra*. But in the case of the *rubab*, the acoustical sense was different. I had to experiment here with a plucked sound instead of the long sustained notes, which were easy to remember and keep in my mind. As a Pontic *lyra* and violin player myself, I was familiar with the use of the bow and when I wanted to learn a new piece, the bowing came naturally to my hands. I was able to execute every single bow movement on the *lyra* and give more emphasis to the left hand, where I was concentrated and paying more attention to the melodic pattern. But the use of the plectrum and especially the right hand playing technique of the Afghan *rubab* was quite new for me. Even though I am used to playing the Greek *bouzouki*, also played with a plectrum, the upstrokes and downstrokes on the *rubab* have a different sonic significance.

Sometimes, the learning process was even more difficult when my teacher played the whole music phrase to me without dividing it into small parts. For my own perception of this new kind of music, it was a difficult moment. I could not work out the music step by step, a method that could help my understanding of the hand movements. Also, the speed of the right hand movement was even more complicated and confused my concentration on the music performance.

### **6.3 The transfer of *rubab* music to the *lyra***

A basic tuning for the three main strings of the *rubab* is B, F# and C#, where B is the highest string, F# is the middle string and C# is the lowest string. This standard tuning takes D as the tonal centre and the note D is also the main drone on the instrument. The tuning in fourths of the *lyra* is not standard like that of the western classical violin (E, A, D, G) and the instrument has a flexible range of different tunings; but the most common tuning for the *lyra* is in fourths. The Pontic *lyra* can

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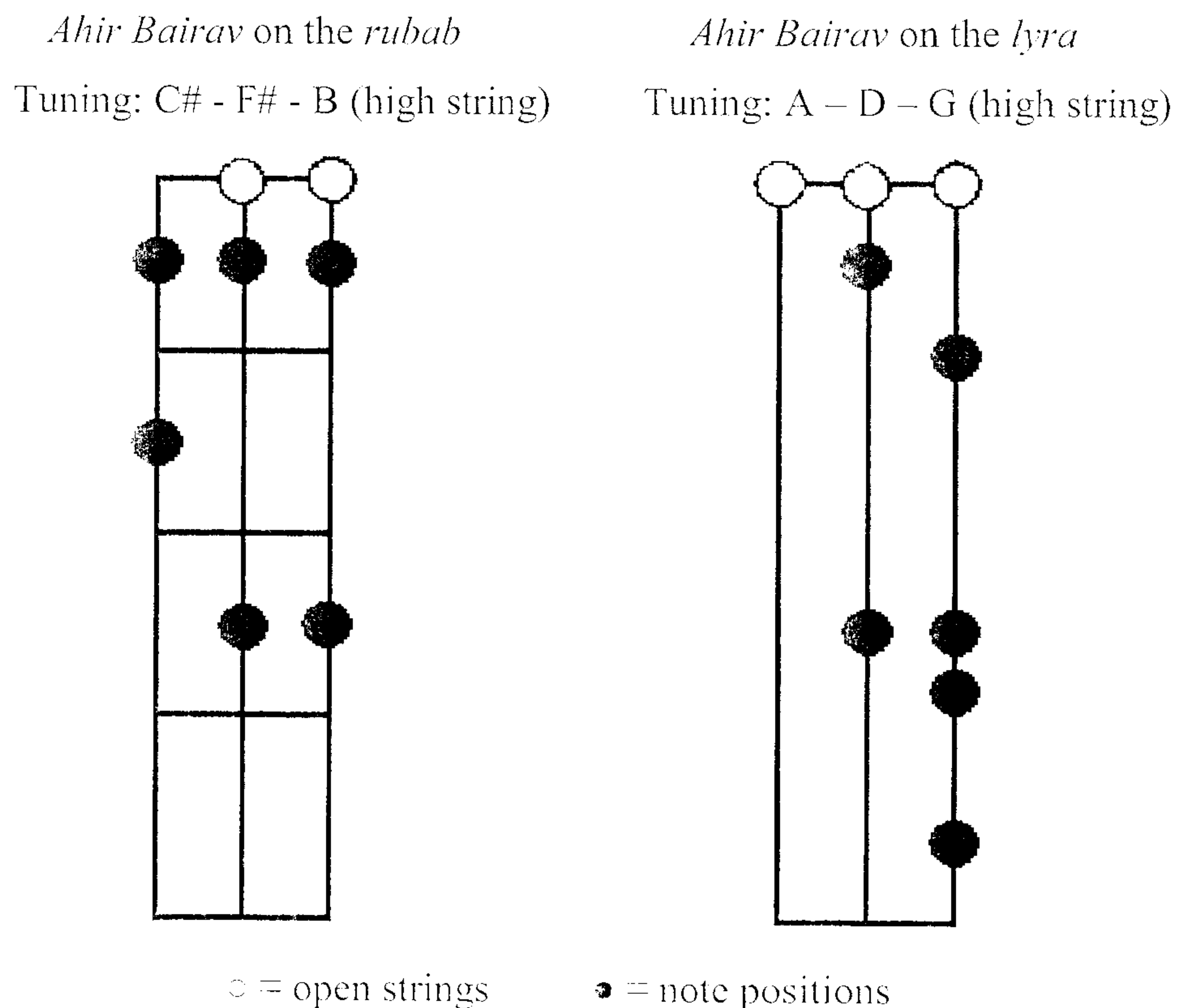
<sup>41</sup> A term recently invented by Baily, in order to distinguish the two types of imitation through the learning process. See more on page 64.



also be tuned to B, F#, and C# respectively, like the *rubab*. It is a very common tuning, used especially by *lyra* players to accompany the voice of a singer or to play the various dance tunes that are performed by traditional folk dance groups. This particular tuning provides a *dinati foni* (“loud voice”) to the instrument and it is preferred by many *lyra* players when performing the Pontic dance repertory.

But in fact, when the note D is the tonal centre on the *rubab*, I tune my *lyra* to G-D-A and I use the note D on the middle open string for convenience (see diagram below). In this way, when we perform in the ensemble certain Afghan modes, like the *Ahir Bairav* mode from D, I can play the note C on the third low string of my *lyra* where my teacher has to make an octave transposition in order to reach this note. *Rubab* players often make octave transpositions especially when performing the *shakl* section (the free melodic improvisation played at the beginning of a piece).

**Figure 17: Different *lyra* tuning in order to use the note D as an open string for the *Ahir Bairav* mode.**



Sometimes, the use of the same tuning system for the Afghan *rubab* and the Pontic *lyra*, made my learning process of Afghan *rubab* music easier. So, when my teacher demonstrated a music phrase or a pattern to me on the *rubab*, I did not have to

transpose that particular phrase on my *lyra*, but I could play it directly by using the same fingering position. We should mention at this point that in the case of the Afghan *rubab*, the distance between the fingers when placed on the fingerboard of the instrument is greater than on the Pontic *lyra*, due to the longer string length; but concerning the fingering position when playing Afghan music on the *lyra*, it is very similar to the *rubab*. Thus, during the learning process, I noticed that I could use the same fingering patterns as my teacher did. Whenever he used his first, second or third finger (the thumb always supports the neck for both the instruments), I ‘copied’ his fingering movement on my *lyra*. The only difference that I noticed in the fingering technique of the *rubab* was that the performer uses mainly the first and the third fingers of the left hand and rarely uses the little finger, while the Pontic *lyra* player uses all four fingers of the left hand for both traditional and contemporary repertory. But, when we perform at various concerts with *Ensemble Bakhtar*, it is more comfortable for me to tune the *lyra* differently (as shown on the diagram above), because in this way the performance of the *rubab* music on the *lyra* works better for my playing.

The left hand performance technique on the *rubab* is similar to the left hand technique of the *bouzouki* and the *oud*, where the fingerboard lies more or less horizontally in front of the performer when sitting. In the case of the *lyra*, the fingers are placed vertically, according to the position of the instrument. That was the first significant change that I noticed during my *rubab* lessons. Also, the distance between the fingers of the left hand and their position on the fingerboard on the instrument was slightly affected by the length of the strings. But, placing the fingers on the fretboard was comfortably enough to execute the melodic phrases and patterns. I have to admit that my experience of performing other instruments with a similar holding position made the learning process easier.

The Afghan *rubab* suggests a very effective fingering technique because of its four frets. But, it invites the player to experiment with the unfretted range of the instrument. Changing the “position” on the Afghan *rubab* is another important playing technique of the instrument, used mainly in the classical and contemporary music repertory of Afghanistan. Musicians like Hodayun Sakhi and Ghulam Hussain use the unfretted part of the *rubab* extensively in their playing.

During my Afghan *rubab* music practice, I noticed that there was another similarity, regarding the fingering position in the music repertory of the two



instruments. Traditionally, when the two instruments perform folk repertory, the fingering position remains closer to the first position. Alternatively, the classical and the contemporary music repertory demand a different and extended fingering position.

#### **6.4 The melodic organisation of the *rubab* and the Pontic *lyra* music – a comparison.**

Baily (1981) has proposed an underlying tonal framework that readily accommodates the melodic modes most commonly used in Afghan urban music. The layout of notes on the fingerboard of the *rubab* suggests a certain tonal organization in which the three main modes of Pashtun music, *Kesturi*, *Pari* and *Bairami* are easily played. There are also other Hindustani type modes like *Asa* and *Kumaj* that apply on the common tonal framework, as well as others like *Pilu*, *Yemen* and *Kausieh*, also Hindustani type modes, which deviate slightly from the common tonal framework. The *rubab*'s scalar music system is framed within the octaves rather than the tetrachord. Some of these scale types are challenging because they are different from the usual configurations of *lyra* music. In this way, when I performed some of these scales on the Pontic *lyra* I had to play beyond the first position (**musical example 26 on DVD**).

Melody on the Afghan *rubab* is played *punteado* (i.e. only one note is sounded at a time), whereas on the Pontic *lyra* the melody can be played either on one string or on two strings at the same time. Usually, the melody is played on the highest or the middle string and the middle or the lowest strings provide a drone and a harmonic accompaniment respectively. The concept of the drone also exists in Afghan *rubab* music, evident when the performer plucks the two/three long drone strings during a musical performance or strikes across the sympathetic strings. In addition, the shortest sympathetic string on the Afghan *rubab* is raised by a small protuberance on the bridge of the instrument. This allows it to serve as a high drone, which is struck in alternation with the main strings in complex right hand patterns (Baily 1987:203).

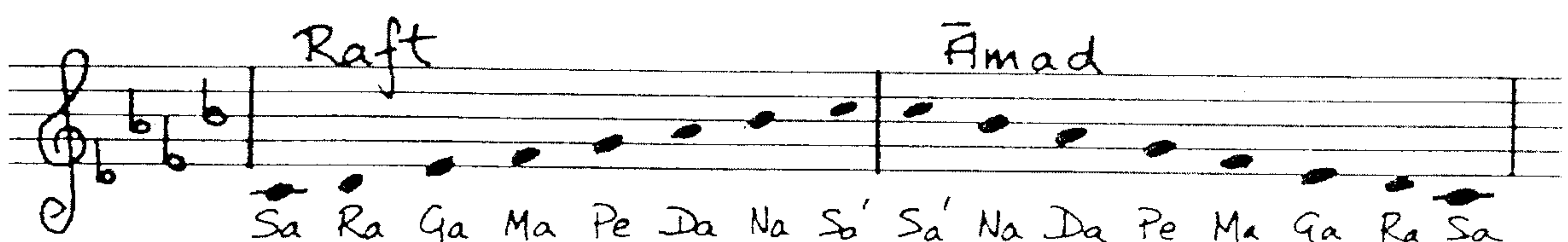
What was interesting and new for me was the melodic development of the music. The scale system used in Afghan music and the way the notes succeed one

another during a performance is in contrast with the Greek melodic organisation that I was familiar with. One of the first Afghan tunes that I learned to play on the Pontic *lyra* was in *Rag Bhupali*, a pentatonic scale. The pentatonic scale exists in the musical tradition in the North-West of Greece, in the region of Epirus, where the clarinet is the main musical instrument. But in Pontic music tradition the use of the pentatonic scale system does not exist. Consequently, it was understandable that I should introduce this form of music practice into the playing technique of the left hand of the *lyra*, in order to be able to perform the whole range of the Afghan music repertory.

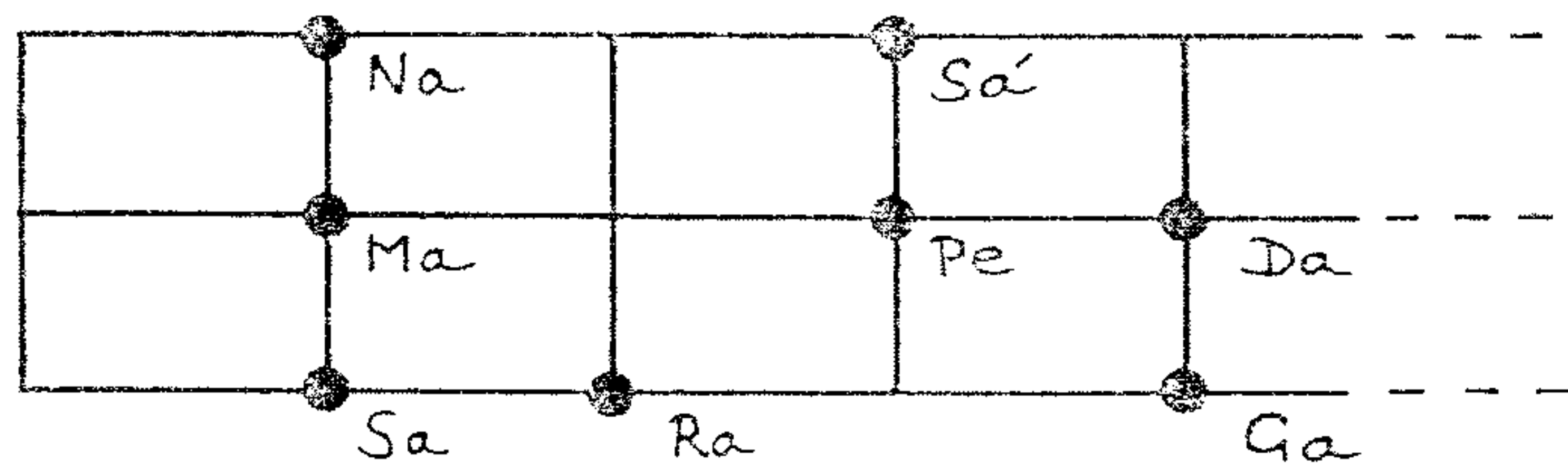
When I first tried to introduce Afghan music repertory on the Pontic *lyra*, I have to admit that the *lyra* sounded like ‘another instrument’. Until that time, I had heard many jazz and Indian classical violin compositions where the music was based on pentatonic scales, but when it was put in practice on my *lyra*, it sounded different. The sound was ‘similar’ to the violin, and there was one element that formed an unusual colour in the sound of the Pontic *lyra*. When playing Afghan compositions on the *lyra*, I had to avoid the use of the two voice character. In order to give a clear acoustic result to the music repertory, I had to avoid using a second string as a drone. Instantly, the traditional sound of the Pontic *lyra* disappeared. It sounded like a ‘vertical violin with a deeper sound’.

At this point, I would like to discuss the similarities of a common mode that both the Pontic *lyra* and the Afghan *rubab* share in their repertory and in their musical performance. This common music scale is the Byzantine *Protos Echos* (“First Sound”), which is similar to the ancient Greek Phrygian mode and coincides with the Afghan *Bairami* mode (**Illustration 58**). *Bairami* is the most common mode in Afghan music (Baily 1981:15).

The *Bairami* mode followed by the *rubab*’s fingering chart as illustrated by Baily (1981).







The *naghma-ye kashal* in *Rag Bairami* is well known and played by many musicians. However, the *Bairami* scale does not fit comfortably onto the *rubab* fretboard. Thus, one solution to this problem when performing *naghma-ye kashal* in *Rag Bairami*, is to transpose *Bairami* up by a whole tone. In this case, if the *rubab* is tuned to B, F#, and C# where B is the highest string and C# the lowest one, the *Bairami* mode may be performed either from the note E as the tonic or from the middle note (F#) as the tonal centre. The *naghma-ye kashal* in *Rag Bairami* is usually performed from E, while the F# tonal centre is used when folk music repertory is performed on the instrument; in this case, the range of the notes is limited compared to the *naghma-ye kashal* in the *Bairami* mode. In the musical examples that follow, I demonstrate on the *rubab* an *antara* section of *Rag Bairami* from the note F# as the tonal centre and later on, it will follow the same piece exactly, but this time performed on the Pontic *lyra* (**musical example 27 on DVD**).

By examining the performance of both the *rubab* and the Pontic *lyra* in this musical example, we notice how close the Afghan *Bairami* mode and the Greek-Byzantine *First Echos* are. Although the timbres and note durations of the two instruments differ, the notes are the same, following an exact sequence.

The second DVD musical example of sharing a common modal practice in the performance of the two instruments refers to the Pontic *lyra*. At this point, the *lyra* performs a Pontic song. The first part is a melodic improvisation in free rhythm in the style of Gogos Petrides, followed by the melody in the Byzantine *First Echos*. Then we have the same piece, but this time performed on the Afghan *rubab* (**musical example 28 on DVD**).

When looking into the performance of that piece played by two different musical instruments, it is interesting to hear the two common sounds, which produce two different timbres at the same time. By examining the *rubab*'s performance technique here, we realise the difficulties arising from a plucked instrument when it tries to perform and produce a bowed instrument's sound. I could not use the 'two voice' character of the *lyra* on the *rubab* because the morphology of the *rubab* does

not allow such a practice. The difficulty I had was mainly with my right hand, where I could not transfer some of the *lyra*'s bowing phrases. In order to manage this, I had to use more upstrokes on the *rubab* than I usually do when I perform Afghan music on the instrument. Still, the acoustical result is similar for both the instruments. The Byzantine *First Echos* of the *lyra* fits comfortably onto the fretboard of the *rubab* because of the same layout of notes.

When performing the piece on the *lyra*, it was comfortable and easy, as this was part of my own musical tradition. When I changed the *lyra* and I took in my hands the *rubab*, I felt a total change in the movements of my hands.

### **6.5 Right hand stroke patterns on the *rubab* – right hand bowing of the Pontic *lyra*.**

The art of *rubab* lies in the right hand technique. The *rubab* player holds the plectrum between the forefinger and the thumb, where the other fingers are flexed and tucked into the palm. The forearm rests near the bottom of the body of the instrument to provide support for the hand, and the wrist is sharply flexed. The movement of the plectrum is brought about by rotation of the wrist. The downstroke is physically more forceful than the upstroke (Baily 1989); the hand hits onto the skin belly and in this way adds a percussive component to the sound of the stroke. A specific stroke sequence produces a particular rhythmic pattern. There are many right hand rhythmic patterns that the performer may play, and some are easier than others. For example, stroke patterns that contain an upstroke at the beginning of a rhythmic unit are difficult to perform because the melody may require a change of string between a V (downstroke) and the succeeding  $\Lambda$  (upstroke), a movement which is not easy to coordinate.

Following the same practice as above, in comparison to the Pontic *lyra*'s right hand playing technique, there is a similar and significant role for the right hand. Gogos Petrides, the great master of the Pontic *lyra* used to say that, "most of the time, a *lyra* player's performance is successful when there is an accurate and precise bowing on every musical phrase or pattern." When Gogos himself liked the performance of a *lyra* player, he used to say of this particular performer *echei kali penna* ("he has a good plectrum"), meaning a good bowing and a good right hand



playing technique). Gogos was a fine *bouzouki* player himself and was referring to the term *penna* as the ‘bow’ of the *lyra*. Many *lyra* players today believe that Gogos’s right hand playing technique was very much influenced by his *bouzouki* playing.

In Pontic *lyra* music performance, the player uses both the up  $>$ <sup>42</sup> and the down  $<$  bow equally and with similar movement and dynamics every time, while in the case of the Afghan *rubab*, the downstroke is more forceful than the upstroke. I have heard many times from my teacher that the *rubab* is considered to be a downstroke musical instrument by Afghan musicians. There are of course *lyra* pieces where more attention is given to the up or the down bow respectively. But generally speaking, in the case of the *lyra*’s right hand performance practice, the up bow continues the movement of the down bow more or less equally.

The *toksari* (bow) of the Pontic *lyra* is that tool which can create either a perfect or an imperfect musical performance. That is why the player gives particular attention to the overall performance technique of the right hand, where he has to combine a certain amount of dynamics in the bowing.

The bowing is ‘heavier’, as many Pontic musicians describe it, when performing traditional repertory. Most of the time, the bow touches the two strings and emphasises the important and various dynamics of the left hand. Light bowing may be used in a certain repertory of contemporary Pontic music, where there are more improvised sections with long sustaining notes. Fast bowing is also very characteristic of Pontic dance music; but whatever the bowing dynamics and playing techniques are, it is still a form of creativity in movement, a dance of the hand, as Baily (1987:212) puts it.

The duration of every single note played on the *rubab* was longer when it was performed on the *lyra* because of the bow. The right hand of the *lyra* could not produce the direct sound of the Afghan *shahbaz* (plectrum technique). As a result of this, when the *rubab* and the *lyra* played together in *Ensemble Bakhtar*, I noticed surprisingly that the *lyra* was completing the sound of the *rubab* by extending the duration of the *rubab*’s melodic strokes. In this way, the overall sound of the ensemble was this special combination of plucked and bowed sounds.

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<sup>42</sup> The instrument is held on an upright position and the bow crosses the body of the instrument. The sound is produced by moving the bow to the right direction or to the left. In this case, from the performer’s point, the left to the right movement of the bow is considered to be as an up bow. Consequently, the right to the left movement of the bow is the down bow.

As far as the bowing technique is concerned, I had to use simple up and down bowing with a standard sequence that helped me follow and perform the main melody that I was hearing from the *rubab*. But what was more difficult for me to perform with the bow was the complex right hand rhythmic patterns of the *rubab*, because the extra high drone string does not exist on the *lyra*. In that case, I was able to perform very simple right hand *rubab* patterns on my *lyra*. For example, the  $\vee \wedge \vee$  (down-up-down) strokes on the high drone string on the *rubab* were transferred to a  $> < >$  (right-left-right) bowing movements on my *lyra* (**musical example 29 on DVD**).

The playing technique that I had to use on the Pontic *lyra* was slightly different from traditional Pontic performance technique. In this particular musical example, I had to use *staccato* bowing in order to perform the piece and to be able to play all the fast notes of the *rubab*'s right hand strokes. Although the technique of *glissando* is not applicable on the Afghan *rubab*, I had to use this playing technique in order to be more flexible when I moved my left hand on the neck of my *lyra* and be able to play the melody of the *rubab* even on the second or the third position of my *lyra*. The use of the drone tone on the Pontic *lyra* was also present. It was not disturbing my music taste, because I was keeping the same tonal centre as the *rubab*, the note F#. I performed the main melody on the first string and the open middle string provided the drone occasionally.

I also noticed that when playing *naghma-ye kashal* on the Pontic *lyra*, my bowing technique and especially the movement of my wrist was slightly uncomfortable. I could perform every single note of the piece accurately, but in order to do so, I had to put in practice a strict bowing movement sequence for the right hand. A reason for this is the tempo change of the *naghma-ye kashal* in *Rag Bairami*, where I had to adjust my right hand bowing technique according to the *rubab*'s up and down rhythmic strokes and patterns (as in the *antara* section of **DVD example 27**). On the other hand, as mentioned above, in the case of performing traditional Afghan music on the Pontic *lyra*, the bow functions in a similar way, as in the *lyra*'s traditional right hand playing technique. Thus, less effort is demanded for the right hand bowing.



## 6.6 A comparison between the *naghma-ye kashal* of Afghanistan and the contemporary Pontic art music of Greece.

The *naghma-ye kashal* or the ‘extended instrumental piece’, is the only genre of contemporary instrumental art music specific to Afghanistan. The *naghma-ye kashal*<sup>43</sup> is performed as a solo piece on the *rubab* and on other plucked lutes of Afghanistan such as the *tanbur* and *dutar*.

As a music form, the *naghma-ye kashāl* consists of three main stages: *shakl*, *âstâi* and *antara*. (1) The *shakl* is an exploration of the melodic possibilities of the mode, in free rhythm (approximately equivalent to an *âlâp* or *taqsim*). (2) The *âstâi* consists of a fixed composition in *Tintâl* (16-*matra* metric cycle), often composed over two cycles of the *tâl*, played with drum accompaniment provided by *tabla* or *dohol*. The *âstâi* composition is played many times over, with rhythmic variations. (3) The *antara* consists of a series of short compositions, also in *Tintâl*, played at a fast tempo, which can be repeated and sequenced at the discretion of the musician. Overall, the *naghma-ye kashāl* is a vehicle for rhythmic rather than melodic improvisation (Baily 1997:118).

Considering contemporary Pontic *lyra* instrumental music, we find a type of instrumental piece in some ways not unlike the *naghma-ye kashal*, which in Greek terminology I would call: *synchroni pontiaki mousiki techni* (“contemporary Pontic art music”). In my opinion, the founder of this new kind of performance practice for the Pontic *lyra* was Gogos Petrides. As discussed in Chapter 5, the performance practice of the Pontic *lyra* before the ‘Gogos era’ was highly variable. The performance was based on the repetition of the main musical theme with occasional elements of improvisation and unusual development of the main theme. The mature musical experience of Gogos Petrides, combined with the natural talent he had as a performer, introduced a new method of musical performance for both the traditional and the contemporary Pontic *lyra* repertory. That is why Gogos’s contribution to Pontic *lyra* music is considered to be of great importance.

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<sup>43</sup> The term *naghma-ye kashāl* was often called *naghmeh-ye chahārtuk* in Kabul, a four-part instrumental piece. Ustad Mohammad Omar of Kabul gave the name of *naghmeh-ye chahārtuk* to his *rubab* class for amateur musicians and he tried to simplify this form of extended instrumental piece somewhat (Baily 1988:67).

The *synchroni pontiaki mousiki techni* (“contemporary Pontic art music”) created by Gogos, consists of the following parts:<sup>44</sup> (1) *eleftheros aftoschediasmos*, an “improvisation in free rhythm” where the *lyra* player introduces the mode of the piece with various melodic possibilities, (2) *kyria melodia*, which is the “main composition”, usually a fixed melody and (3) the *anaptiksi mousikou thematos*, “the development of the musical theme”. In this part, it is very common for the performer to introduce an improvised musical version of the piece based on the original fixed melody. But in many cases this process is an opportunity for the creation and development of a new composition by the *lyra* player. The later case comes into practice during a solo Pontic *lyra* piece and it usually happens during the beginning of a musical performance. Here, it is the opportunity for the performer to show off his ability to compose a melody and combine a number of different playing techniques in order to please the audience. In such a performance, the *lyra* is often accompanied by the *daouli*, the big double-headed drum, which is the main percussion accompaniment in Pontic music, as well as by other musical instruments that may provide both a harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment. In the *anaptiksi mousikou thematos kai finale* (“development of the music theme and finale”) the discretion of the musician plays a very important role. The *lyra* player may perform a different combination of compositions, as well as various improvised melodic patterns leading to the end of the piece. In most cases, after this section, the performer would return to the original melody *kyria melodia* which was played at the beginning, followed by the end of the performance.

In all these three steps that form contemporary Pontic art music, improvised melodic lines play a significant role. The performer could modulate briefly to other modes. There are specific rules that apply to this process. In a rhythmical or a non-rhythmical improvisation, when the performer introduces the mode of the piece, this particular mode may change for a short period of time. As shown in **example 17 on DVD** (modulation in contemporary Pontic *lyra* performance) my tonal centre is the note E and the mode used is the Byzantine *Protos Echos*. During the modulation, I move to the upper tetrachord, where my tonal centre is the note A. From the note A, I improvise on a different mode, the Byzantine *Plagios Desteros Echos*. This kind of

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<sup>44</sup> I have given these names to these parts in order to follow the procedure of the new form of contemporary Pontic art music. These terms are familiar to Greek musicians and they are part of their general musical vocabulary.



modulation applies in many improvised instrumental sections not only for the *lyra* music, but also for other Greek traditional instruments, such as the violin and the clarinet.

Although there are many similarities between the *synchroni pontiaki mousiki techni* (“contemporary Pontic art music”) and the Afghan *naghma-ye kashal* (“extended instrumental piece”), there is a major difference. The *naghma-ye kashal* of Afghan music is largely a vehicle for rhythmic improvisation where the *synchroni pontiaki mousiki techni* is a form for melodic improvisation and less emphasis is given to the rhythmical patterns of the music. Here, it is the melody that forms, constructs and conducts the rhythm.

The experience of learning how to perform Afghan music on the Pontic *lyra* had a big effect into my own interpretation in the performance of the instrument. The ‘Afghan musical experience’ has brought new ideas into my music and up to a certain degree, it has influenced my overall performance on the *lyra*. I am now able to move from the third lower string to the highest first string and use intervals of sixths and sevenths into my contemporary performance, where before I was not used to playing in this way. I considered the use of such big intervals as inappropriate for the musical performance of the Pontic *lyra* and its contemporary repertory. I saw the contemporary performance of the instrument from a different perspective, a perspective where only the western classical and non-western violin techniques like the slides, the *ponticello* playing, moving positions or the *glissando* playing were the most appropriate techniques that could be applied to contemporary *lyra* performance. But now, performing on the Afghan *rubab* and transferring its repertory and playing techniques onto the Pontic *lyra* has broadened my imagination and my musical creativity in playing the *lyra*. The experience of Afghan music performance on the *lyra* will certainly play a very important role at the examination recital.

## Conclusions

This practice-based project provides unique and invaluable focused-documentation of an immensely rich musical tradition from the perspective of the author, a ‘culture bearer’ who is both a first rate performer and a highly committed and enthusiastic promoter of the Pontic *lyra*. The DVD, which accompanies the dissertation, provides an informative record of a range of traditional and contemporary performance techniques, and documents experiments with adapting Afghan performance styles to the *lyra*. It also records the performance styles of a number of leading Pontic *lyra* performers, thus serving as a valuable resource from a range of perspectives. Similarly, the Audio CD examples provide rich additional material, especially listened to in the context of reading the analyses in Chapter 4 of the dissertation.

This primary objective of this research was to study the performance practice of the Pontic *lyra* and to explore ways of extending its performance techniques. My reasons for undertaking this research were to improve my own performance as a full-time professional musician in the London, Greek and World Music scenes.

In Chapter 1 I describe the history of the Pontic communities and their exile after 1922. The strong influence and presence of Greek culture and civilisation in the Black Sea region and particularly in Pontos, from antiquity until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, created and formed a culture with a unique musical tradition. The main musical instrument of this tradition, the Pontic *lyra*, has become an important symbol of Pontic identity wherever communities of Pontic Greeks have settled. This in part explains the relative conservatism of *lyra* players in maintaining the traditional style and repertoire of the instrument.

In Chapter 2 I discuss the *lyra* as an artefact, an object of material culture, a unique type of bowed lute. I look in detail at its history and conclude that it is Byzantine and European, rather than Middle Eastern in origin, being related to plucked and bowed lutes of the medieval period. My main arguments for supporting the European origin of the Pontic *lyra* rely clearly on the construction of the instrument, the similar shape of the stringholder, as well as the curved soundholes on the table of the instrument. The fact that similar musical instruments are held and played by the musicians of the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium and Europe as shown in the illustrations, represent many aspects of common practice and relation



with the Pontic *lyra*. Elements of polyphony in the traditional repertory of the *lyra* are also of great importance, regarding the European origin of the instrument.

The discussion of the technical aspects of *lyra* performance in Chapter 3 is particularly valuable; it is something which does not find its way into enough ethnomusicological studies in my view, and helps justify a practice-based approach. In this Chapter, I discuss in great detail the traditional and contemporary playing techniques on the Pontic *lyra*. Many of the new techniques I employ have been borrowed from the violin. Through the comprehensive description and demonstration of these contemporary performance techniques, I show that the Pontic *lyra* is a highly developed stringed musical instrument with many musical possibilities. The various musical examples included in the accompanying DVD inform the reader of this thesis about the contemporary performance techniques of the instrument, both visually and acoustically. As someone pushing the boundaries of *lyra* techniques to create a new style of playing, I would confidently call the Pontic *lyra* as ‘a three stringed vertical violin’, an instrument that has the potential to employ traditional and contemporary violin playing techniques.

The contemporary performance of the Pontic *lyra* and that of Pontic musicians is much in demand nowadays and the process of extending the playing techniques of the instrument by its performers is inevitable. The musical awareness of musicians today, in order to produce a new music repertory for traditional instruments in Greece and elsewhere, brings a need for a new element of sound, a fresh ingredient that will satisfy our modern-day musical understanding and taste. In this study, I have tried to demonstrate the possibilities of the instrument to generate new sounds and techniques that could satisfy the demands of the contemporary music scene.

An important part of my research has been to compare the *lyra* with other similar stringed instruments. As a result, I have adopted many playing techniques of the western classical violin and demonstrated them on the Pontic *lyra*. During this experimentation on the instrument, I have discovered new positions and body movements that actually brought to me some interesting psychological connections with the instrument. I could easily connect this outcome to my personal relationship with the Pontic *lyra*, which I consider it as an extension of my own body.

In Chapter 4, I discuss some aspects of the traditional performance repertory of the *lyra*. Performing table songs on the instrument is what many teachers and master musicians of the Pontic *lyra* consider today as the most important music for

the instrument. The artistry of a *lyra* player is clearly shown when he performs the *epitrapezia tragoudia* (“table songs”). The dance song repertory represents different melodic and rhythmic variations. The analysis of the *Serra* dance performed by Gogos Petrides shows the way the Pontic dance repertory is performed. The elements of fast bowing and fingering movements are important and form the basis for the performance of this particular repertory. I also analyse a contemporary performance of the *lyra* performed by myself, which puts in practice some of the most important contemporary playing techniques discussed in Chapter 3. The musical examples referring to the repertory of the instrument are presented in audio compact disk format.

Chapter 5, the central part of the thesis, includes much information about Gogos Petrides (1917-1984) and his contribution to the performance of the Pontic *lyra* music. The ‘Patriarch’ of the Pontic *lyra*, as Chrysanthos Theodorides and all Pontic musicians call him, was the first to innovate contemporary performance techniques for the instrument. Several Pontic *lyra* players inform us about their personal musical experiences with Gogos and give their own perspectives on how the performance of the *lyra* was transformed from an irregular manner of playing to a highly sophisticated performance technique.

My approach and interest in performing the music of other cultures on the Pontic *lyra* brought me to the interesting area of the music of Afghanistan and particularly to the performance of the Afghan *rubab*. In Chapter 6 I discuss the experience of learning how to perform the music of Afghanistan on the Pontic *lyra* and on the *rubab*. The difficulties arising from the learning process are also discussed in great detail in this Chapter. My personal interest regarding the performance of the Afghan *rubab* through my teacher Professor John Baily brought me even closer to another aspect of the contemporary performance practice of the Pontic *lyra*. I introduced new and challenging playing techniques for the instrument that sometimes take its performance possibilities to the limits.

The conduct of this research has made me aware of some important issues regarding the contemporary performance practice of the Pontic *lyra*. Looking at and introducing some of the contemporary violin playing techniques on the instrument, as well as the study of the playing of Gogos Petrides and his contribution to the Pontic *lyra* performance, achieves the aims of this research. The view of the different Pontic *lyra* players that provided all their personal experience of playing the *lyra*, gave to



this study a better approach for the performance of the instrument. Examining different aspects of contemporary performance and taking Afghan music as an example for the extension of the musical possibilities of the Pontic *lyra*, gave me another perspective on the performance of the instrument today.

The popularity of the instrument and the expansion of its music through the internet and the world music scene have resulted into the breaking of many cultural barriers. The most significant is this with the Turkish musicians, especially those who perform the Pontic *lyra* (*karadeniz kemence* = Black Sea lyre) in the Trabzon area of Turkey, the only area outside Greece where the instrument remains important both as a symbol of cultural identity and as a performing tradition. The contemporary performance of the Pontic *lyra* brought a huge interest between Greek and Turkish Pontic musicians in order to exchange musical information, music repertory and performance ideas on the instrument. These links between musicians already existed in the past but the amount of the commercial recordings, as well as the direct communication between them was limited. Nowadays, there are a dozen projects and collaborations involving Greek and Turkish musicians due to the easy access through the internet.

This particular thesis and my own work on the contemporary performance of the Pontic *lyra* in the last ten years, also brought a 'healthy' music competition and new interests to the young *lyra* players. Going away from the traditional performance of the instrument and bringing a new element and consequently a different performance style on the *lyra*, brings excitement, attention and at the same time awareness to the Pontic *lyra* players. They will listen, examine, experiment and even perform the new playing techniques on the instrument. Some of them will accept the new ideas with positiveness. These are the young musically educated *lyra* players who are aware of the contemporary performance of the Pontic *lyra* and some who have already tried to introduce these new ideas into their *lyra* performance. The feedback that I receive from the young musicians about my work when I perform in Greece and abroad is positive and rather encouraging. There are some who admire the new performance techniques and possibilities on the instrument and accept it as a new era for the performance of the instrument. A positive reaction to this new style and to the idea of promoting new performance possibilities for the *lyra*, also comes from a large number of mature professional musicians who want to see the future progress of the performance of the Pontic *lyra* as a growing and established reality.

On the other hand, I believe there are still a few hardcore opinions between Pontic musicians who do not accept the contemporary performance of the instrument. According to my experience, as an active Pontic *lyra* performer in Greece and worldwide, I would attribute this negativeness into two different groups of Pontic musicians. Those who really support their old hardcore opinions that the instrument should perform the traditional repertory only and that any new element would spoil the traditional performance (the number of these musicians, both professionals and amateurs is very limited) and to these musicians who want, but do not have the ability to perform these new playing techniques on their Pontic *lyra* (also a limited number of professional and amateur musicians).

I am pleased that the negative opinions are limited to a small number of professional and amateur Pontic musicians. The positive reaction of musicians about my personal work on the contemporary performance of the Pontic *lyra* and their willingness to support the idea of new playing techniques is what will keep me aware in the future and will give me the strength to continue my research both as a performer and as an academic on the contemporary performance and the new musical possibilities of the Pontic *lyra*.

I believe that this study would be a model for many musicians to follow, not only those of Pontic origin, but also for musicians who perform non-western traditional musical instruments and want to take the performance of the musical tradition they serve even further, outside the cultural borders. This study could be an initiative for similar practice based projects in non-western musical traditions.



## Appendix

### Planning the examination recital

The most exciting part of this research is the examination recital, a challenge for me to demonstrate on the Pontic *lyra* the results of this study. My enthusiasm and eagerness for the final stage of this thesis will be reflected in the performance of new techniques for the *lyra*, an approach and at the same time an experiment. I have prepared the programme in advance and that is what makes this performance different from any others, as explained below. The order of the pieces will follow the ‘flow’ of my analysis of the contemporary performance techniques of the Pontic *lyra* in Greece.

What is so special about this performance is that under normal circumstances, I would never perform these pieces in this way to a “normal” audience. I do not usually prepare a list of the pieces that I am going to perform and the decision of the order is taken according to my discretion at the time. But for this recital I even have to think how to organise an improvisation that will demonstrate some of the contemporary techniques on the *lyra*, and to plan an improvisation in advance is outside my usual performance practice.

Musical examples of the traditional repertory will also be performed at the examination recital. The exegesis of the melodic and the rhythmical variations of Pontic music, as well as a selected repertory that represents different aspects of the traditional performance of the instrument, are necessary in the examination recital performance for one particular reason: to emphasise the clear differences between the traditional and the contemporary styles of playing the *lyra*. If we compare the numbers of traditional performance techniques and contemporary techniques used on the instrument, one can realise that the uniqueness and the ‘solid’ character of the old techniques is limited in number, in comparison to the contemporary playing techniques. Another important element regarding the music performance of the two styles is that in the traditional way of playing the instrument things seem to be simple for the performer as he is restricted to the first fingering position on the left hand, which performs mainly trills and double-stops. The right hand is restricted in its fast

movements and the bowing is more energetic and powerful by touching two of the strings of the instrument simultaneously and for the whole duration of the piece.

On the other hand, contemporary performance of the Pontic *lyra* requires a different combination of left and right hand playing techniques. The left hand moves to different fingering positions on the neck of the instrument and executes a number of different techniques, such as *pizzicato*, *glissando*, *ponticello* and others. The bow is less tight and more relaxed in its movements. Whole bowing is used here where in the traditional bowing the performer uses only half or three quarters of the bow's length.

These extended techniques for the instrument are considered to be a big step forward for the performance practice of the Pontic *lyra*. The instrument can achieve astonishing performances and include a repertory of well known music pieces of other genres and music cultures. The concept of performing world, pop or classical music repertory as on the Pontic *lyra* changes the balance of the different views and opinions among Greek musicians.

My long experience of performing the instrument in a multi-cultural urban environment like London gave me the opportunity to collaborate with musicians from other music cultures. Through these regular meetings for discussion and playing with English, Irish, Afghan, Persian, Turkish, Indian, Arab, Ethiopian and other musicians, I realised something very important. I noticed that when I tried to approach musically another music culture with my Pontic *lyra*, it was difficult to communicate and collaborate with the musicians when playing traditional Pontic style. I appreciated their efforts to understand and respect the traditional performance of the instrument but the musicians of these other cultures found great difficulty in following the music of the *lyra*. Thus, it was very complicated for us to make music together. I suppose that the polyphonic structure of the music of the *lyra*, combined with the parallel intervals of fourths and the intervals of fifths gave to the non-Pontic musician the impression of the unknown, beautiful, but at the same time creating a strange feeling of trying to understand the basic structures of the Pontic *lyra* music.

The opposite reaction took place when I performed some of the contemporary playing techniques on the *lyra*. Now I had to avoid the two-voice character of the instrument and play the music on one string only. The use of *glissando* was familiar to the musicians and their response to my playing was immediate. Consequently, we could all find a direction and understand the basic structure of the music. The collaboration then created an amalgam of two music cultures. I also noticed that when



I used more violin techniques on the Pontic *lyra*, the other musicians were impressed by the sound of the instrument. The production of such a sound from an unusual musical instrument was fascinating and admirable for them. My ability to perform a selected repertory of the music of such countries also brought an enthusiasm and created a positive energy towards our musical collaboration. Such collaborations included world music festivals, professional recordings, concerts, BBC radio performances and CD productions. One of my recent experiments with the extension of the musical possibilities of the Pontic *lyra*, as well as its collaboration with other music cultures, is my CD 'From Pontos to Persia', a collaboration of music played on the Pontic *lyra* and the Persian *kamancheh*, a musical meeting of two cultures where the element of improvisation is dominant in the whole album.

# PROGRAMME

## PART ONE

### How I performed the Pontic *lyra* before I come to London

Although I have performed these particular pieces on the audio CD that accompanies the thesis, this will be a different approach to performance. In the recording, I played the songs inspired by the social and psychological diathesis at that time. It was a “context driven”, unpredictable, fluid performance.

In the recital I will demonstrate the playing techniques that I used on the *lyra* before I started to develop contemporary playing technique. This part of the performance will consist of three traditional pieces that demonstrate traditional techniques. Playing in first position and the use of trills will dominate.

#### 1) Traditional table song

**Mode:** Byzantine *Protos Echos* (“First Sound”) which relates to the ancient Phrygian mode.

**Metre:** 5/8 at irregular tempo.

1. Αρνί’μ το γράμμαν ντ’ έστειλες και πορώ να δ(ια)εβάζω,  
και τη γεράν ντο ένοιξες, εγώ πώς να βαστάζω.
2. Ρασσία και ρασσιοκέφαλα, δώστε τ’ αρνί’μ λαλίαν,  
πέτε από αναμένατο, ομάτε(ι)α σεβνταλία.
3. Θεέ’μ δώσμε υπομονήν, ντ’ εδέκες με ετελέθεν,  
σ’ όλα τα τέρτε(ι)α ταενέβ, σην σεβντάν ενικέθεν.

#### Romanised version

1. *Arnim to gramman desteiles ke poro na devazo*  
*ke ti geran do eneikses ego pos na vastazo.*
2. *Rashia ke rashiokefala doste tarnim lalian*  
*Pete ato anamenato momatia sevdalia.*
3. *The-em dosme hypomonin dedekes me telethen*  
*Sola ta tertia taenev si sevdan enikethen.*



(translation)

1. My love, the letter you sent I cannot read,  
and the wound you opened, how can I bear it?
2. Hills and hilltops, give my love a message,  
say there await her infatuated eyes.
3. God give me endurance, what you gave is finished.  
It outdid all sorrows but by love was conquered.

## 2) Traditional dance song: *Chamomilon* (“The little apple tree”)

**Mode:** *Byzantine Plagios Defteros Echos* (“Second Plagal Sound”) which relates to the ancient Hypolydian mode. **Metre:** 9/8.

-Και ντ' έπαθες, χαμόμηλον, και στέκεις μαρεμένον;

Γιαμ' η ρίζα σ' edίψασεν, γιαμ' ο καρπός σ' ελλάεν;

γιαμ' ασά χαμηλόκλαδα σ' κανέναν εζαλίεν;

-Νιά η ρίζα μ' edίψασεν, νια ο καρπό μ' ελλάεν,

νια ασά χαμηλόκλαδα μ' κανέναν εζαλίεν.

Εναν κορίτς κι έναν παιδίν ση ρίζα μ' εφιλέθαν,

κι εποίκαν όρκον κι όμνισμαν, να μ' εφτάν' χωρισίαν.

Κι ατώρα εχωρίγανε, γιάμ' έχω ασό κρίμαν;

### **Romanised version**

-*Ke depathes chamomilon ke stekeis maremenon?*

*Yiam e rizas edipsasen yiam o karpos elaen?*

*yiam asa chamilokladas kanenan ezalien?*

-*Nia e rizam edipsasen nia o karpom elaen,*

*nia asa chamilokladam kanenan ezalien.*

*Enan korits ki enan paedin si rizam efilethan.*

*ki epikan orkon ki omnizman na meftan chorisian.*

*Ki atora echorigane yiam cho aso kriman?*

(translation)

“What ails you, little apple tree, that you stand withered?  
Is your root thirsty or has your fruit suffered?  
Or is any of your low branches broken?”  
“My root is not thirsty and my fruit has not suffered  
and none of my low branches is broken.  
A girl and boy kissed by my root,  
and made an oath and vow that they would not part.  
And now they have separated should I not be blamed for this?”

### **3) *Serra* dance**

In this performance I will play the dance in the style of Gogos Petrides. The *Serra* dance is one of the oldest examples of Pontic *lyra* music and dance. It is also called the *Pyrrychios* dance and is described by Xenophon in his work the *Anabasis*. This dance is loosely maintained by Greeks in one form or another throughout Greece. According to folklorists and researchers, the Greeks of Pontos have maintained it to this day as it was described by Xenophon. In order to have a more precise performance in the style of Gogos Petrides, I had to listen to the recording of Gogos many times and study in detail the elements of his unique style.

### **4) Experimenting with the styles of different *lyra* players.<sup>45</sup>**

#### **a) Theodoros Eleftheriou**

**Traditional table song from the area of Santa in Pontos, performed in the Byzantine *Plagios Defteros Echos* and played in the irregular rhythm of 5/8.**

The style of *lyra* playing and singing of Theodoros Eleftheriou is influenced by the older Pontic musicians. The performance of this particular song is very close to the old performance practice, where the instrument simply follows the voice and the

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<sup>45</sup> Most of these songs like examples a, d, e, and f have no title names and Pontic musicians know them by the names of the different areas of Pontos.



vocal ornamentations. The accompanying character of the *lyra* shows simple playing techniques with continuous trill fingering. The left hand remains in the first position. The important fingers used on this piece are the first and the third fingers, while the second and the fourth support the performance by playing mainly trills.

### **b) Giorgoulis Kougioumtzides**

***Seranta mila kokkina* (“Forty red apples”). Traditional love song performed in the Byzantine *Protos Echos* in the 2/4 dance rhythm called *Omal*.**

Giorgoulis Kougioumtzides is probably the most celebrated Pontic *lyra* player after Gogos Petrides. He created his own style of *lyra* playing. The main aspects that form this special style are (as stated by many Pontic musicians) his steady, controlled and sometimes rhythmically “heavy” bowing technique. This results in a full sound, created by emphasising the two voice character of the instrument. Giorgoulis produces this full sound on his Pontic *lyra* because he plays both strings with equal dynamics. A steady tempo is also important in this piece.

### **c) Panayiotis Aslanides**

***Moskov*. Traditional dance in Byzantine *Plagios Defteros Echos* performed in 2/4 rhythm followed by the 7/8 rhythm.**

Panayiotis Aslanides is well-known for his bowing technique. Nearly all Pontic musicians in Greece recognise his unique right hand performance practice. The speciality of Panayiotis Aslanides when playing is the point where in rhythmical and fast tempo dances he adds extra bow phrasing on every single beat of the rhythm. Sometimes, this practice results in a feeling of irregular timing in the music and creates a sense of being out of tempo. But Panayiotis keeps a steady tempo in his playing and that is what I will experiment with in this example. As far as his left hand technique is concerned, it is rather simple and the two voice character of the instrument is used less than in Giorgoulis’s playing. What was interesting for me to experience during the interview with Panayiotis was his body and particularly his head movement when he performed. For the whole duration of the *Moskov* dance, he turned his head towards the left side. I noticed that it was the mirror he was looking at

and I did not want to interrupt his mood. He probably liked watching himself when he played his *lyra*, which inspired his mood of playing.

#### **d) Dimitris Karasavvides**

**Traditional love song from the area of Galiena, near Trabzon. Performed in the Byzantine *Protos Echos* mode in a regular 5/8 danced rhythm (*Tik* dance).**

Dimitris Karasavvides is considered by many to be a promising young Pontic *lyra* player. His experience of listening to different kinds of music has influenced his style of performance. His fingering technique is characterised by many *lyra* players as “sweet” and his bowing technique performs the music with “synchronization and symmetry” of movement. Dimitris plays the instrument with passion and this can be realised by the way he moves his shoulders and his head when he plays the *lyra*.

#### **e) Andreas Kougioumtzides**

**Traditional dance song in 9/8 rhythm (*Dipat* dance), played in the Byzantine First *Echos* (Phrygian).**

Andreas Kougioumtzides plays the Pontic *lyra* like his father, Giorgoulis. The experience that Andreas had when listening to his father in his youth shaped his style of performance. Andreas is one of the very few Pontic *lyra* players in Greece today who performs the instrument using mainly traditional playing techniques. Trilling and fingering on the first position are the main elements in his performance. The trills of the fourth (little finger) and the second finger are significant and I will perform this *Dipat* dance in the style of Andreas’s playing.

#### **f) Stathis Nikolaides**

**Traditional nostalgic dance song in the rhythm of 2/4 (*Omal* Dance).**

Stathis Nikolaides is a professional Pontic singer and not a *lyra* player. His *lyra* playing is quite simple and accompanies his voice. When I listen to his *lyra* performance, I realise that he is out of practice. The finger trills are performed at a slower speed compared to all the other players and the bow touches smoothly the



strings without producing a full and loud sound on the instrument. But this smooth accompanying character of his *lyra* gives space to the beauty of his talented voice. I will perform this particular piece by emphasising the accompanying role of the Pontic *lyra*.

Those six examples of the above named *lyra* players are based on their performance on the DVD. It is an unusual process for a performer to try and imitate the style of other players. However, I am confident that a positive and enjoyable reaction would come from these players if they were to watch me demonstrating their techniques. This process will also show the uniqueness of every *lyra* player in performing the traditional repertory in their own style. To imitate their styles of playing the instrument is not an easy process. But through my performance experience, I will adopt elements of their special techniques and demonstrate them through performance. Notice that in some of these examples I use the same tuning on my *lyra* as that used by the players being imitated.

#### **5) A *zeibekiko bouzouki* dance song performed on the Pontic *lyra*. The *bouzouki* influence in Gogos's *lyra* performance.**

This example will reflect Gogos's *bouzouki* style of playing the *lyra*. I will play and sing a *zeibekiko* dance song on the *lyra* and experiment with some of the *bouzouki* techniques that Gogos introduced to *lyra* performance. These new playing techniques transformed the playing of Gogos Petrides. It was the first attempt by him to bring a contemporary element to the performance of the instrument and from then a "new era" began for Pontic *lyra* performance. It is clearly noticeable that the traditional two-voice character of the *lyra* is not used and the main melody is played on one string only.

## PART TWO

### **Learning to perform Afghan music as part of extending the playing techniques of the Pontic *lyra***

In this part of the recital I will perform on the Afghan *rubab* some of the classical and traditional pieces that my teacher, Professor John Baily, taught me on the instrument. The experience of playing another musical instrument, a different one from my first study (the Pontic *lyra*), has brought to my performance new ideas and perspectives already discussed in the last chapter. Yusuf Mahmood, a celebrated Afghan *tabla* player will accompany my *rubab* playing.

Performing Afghan music on the Pontic *lyra* requires a specific playing technique on the instrument. What was interesting in this particular research was that the performance of Afghan music repertory on the *lyra* gave me the chance to experiment with a combination of both traditional and contemporary playing techniques on the instrument. In the examination recital, I will play some Herati *dutar* pieces, where the traditional playing character of the Pontic *lyra* has some connections with *dutar* playing. Examples of Kabuli classical music will also be performed at the examination recital on both the Pontic *lyra* and the Afghan *rubab*. The actual extension of the musical possibilities of the *lyra* takes place at the point where the instrument performs the Afghan classical music repertory. The bowing shows a specific playing technique with continuous bowing patterns in the same direction, as well as the use of the *staccato* technique.

On the other hand, the practice of playing Pontic music on the Afghan *rubab* is also challenging for the performer and tests his ability to execute different performance techniques on the instrument. The difficulty at this stage of the performance is the application and response to the different body movements. When I play the *rubab*, during the performance I have to be more concentrated on the right and left hand movements, as well as taking care of holding the instrument properly. The Pontic *lyra* and the way I am holding the instrument works differently, as I consider it a natural extension of my own body. Of course, the years of experience play an important role here, and I feel confident when performing the *lyra*'s repertory. But on the Afghan *rubab*, I am still not confident with the instrument and



its playing techniques. To put it in a different way, I would say that I do not know the ‘secrets’ of the instrument.

#### **6) *Naghma-ye kashal* (“extended instrumental piece”) in *Rag Pilu***

This instrumental piece is in the Afghan (and North Indian) mode named *Pilu*. The 32-beat rhythmic cycle consists of two rounds of the 16-beat *tin tal* cycle, which is a feature of this type of classical piece. These pieces are designed to warm up the instruments, the players and the audience.

#### **7) Afghan dances**

Unknown instrumental melodies in 6/8 rhythm that I have learned from John Baily.

#### **8) *Mullah Mohammad jan* (“Dear Mullah Mohammad”)**

This Herati love song is well known throughout Afghanistan. It is in 4-beat *gedeh* rhythm and is in the *Shur* mode.

### **Afghan pieces performed on the *lyra***

As discussed in the last chapter, the performance of the *lyra* varies when it plays classical and traditional repertory. In the first example, I have to avoid the traditional two-voice character of the *lyra*, as well as the traditional playing techniques like trill fingering. On the other hand, in order to perform the *naghma-ye kashal* in *Rag Bairami*, I have to introduce new techniques in the *lyra*’s performance. These include playing in different position on the neck of the instrument and *glissando* playing.

### 9) *Naghma-ye kashal* in Rag *Bairami*

This extended instrumental piece is performed as a solo piece in Afghanistan on plucked lutes such as *rubab*, *tanbur* and *dutar* or as a group instrumental piece by a typical urban band (singer accompanied by harmonium, *rubab*, tabla and with other chordophones). The *Bairami* mode is the most popular mode and can be played at any time of day or night. This performance is played by Pontic *lyra* and *tabla*, an unusual combination.

### 10) *Bibi Gol Afruz* (“Shining Flower Lady”) – Herati folk song

This is a traditional Herati love song performed as an instrumental improvisation by Pontic *lyra* and *tabla*. An introduction in free rhythm introduces the character of the mode, which is traditionally used in both Greek and Afghan music (it is the *Bairami* mode, which relates to the Byzantine *Protos Echos* and the ancient Phrygian mode). The *tabla* enters in the second half of the piece with increasingly decorative material and an *accelerando* towards the end.

### 11) A Pontic melody played on the Afghan *rubab*

In this example I will experiment with and extend in my own way the musical possibilities of the Afghan *rubab*. The thesis discusses the new playing techniques of the Pontic *lyra* but here the challenge for me is to play a Greek melody on the *rubab*. I chose the *Bairami* mode which is common to the Pontic *lyra* music repertoire.

### 12) Pontic *lyra* improvisation (Extending the musical possibilities of the Pontic *lyra*)

In the final piece of the recital I will put in practice both traditional and contemporary playing techniques on the *lyra*, but in an extreme manner of performance. It will be an experiment in extending the musical possibilities of the instrument in real time. All these techniques referred in the thesis will be utilised. I will have to be super-conscious and prepared to improvise and use each contemporary playing technique to its best and maximum effect in this “new” composition.



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# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration 1: The Greek colonisation, 750-550BC.



Illustration 2: The Greek world, 750-300BC.



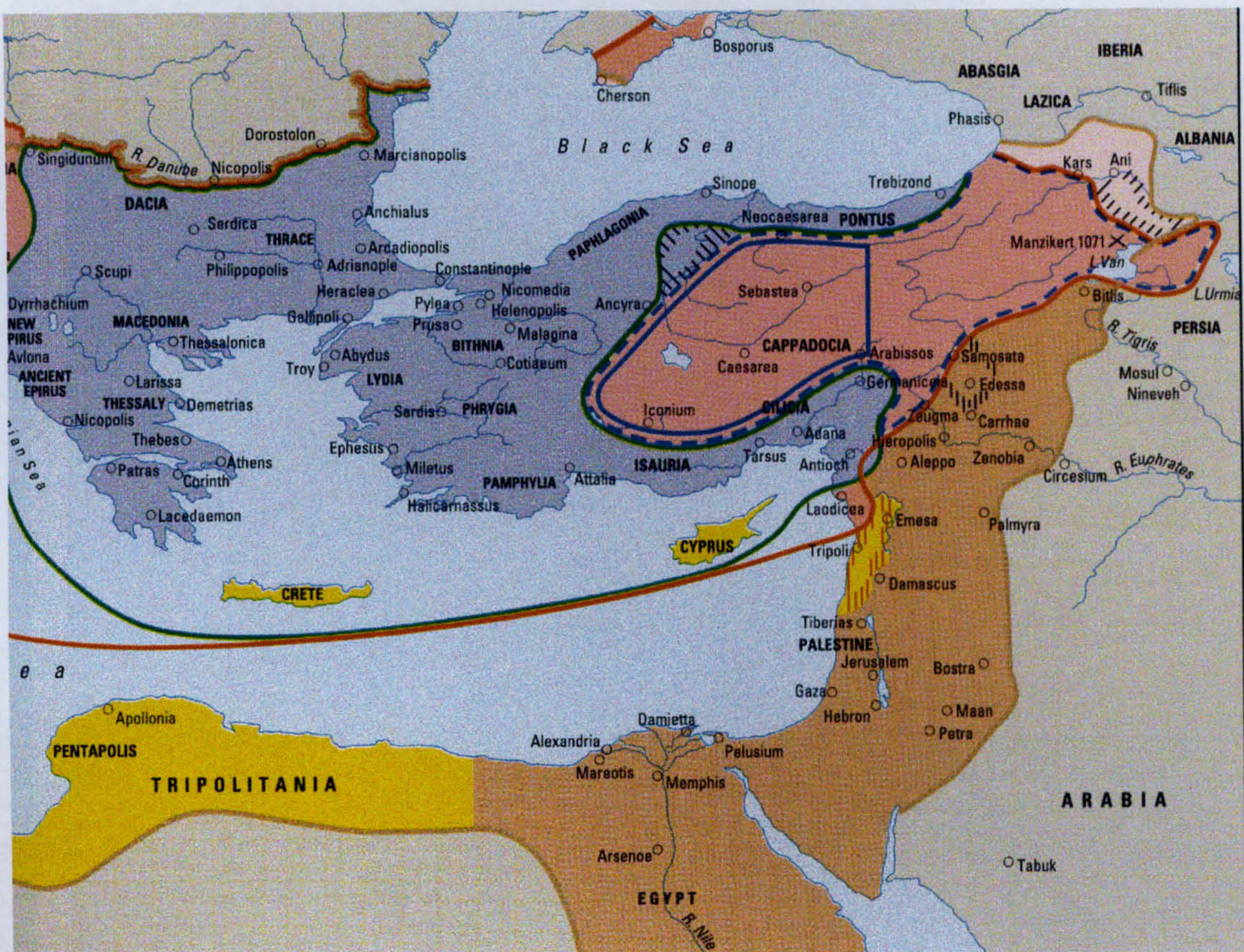
● = extent of Greece 750 BC    ● = coast under Phoenician influence



**Illustration 3:** Detailed map of the region of Pontus.



**Illustration 4:** The Byzantine world, 610-1453AD.



● = the Byzantine World ● --- = Seljuk Turks ● ● = to Arabs after 641AD



**Illustration 5:** The Eastern Mediterranean at the time of the later Crusades.



**Illustration 6:** The Ottoman world, 1300-1699AD.



● = The Ottoman world ● = Venetian Territories ● = Vassal States 1512



Illustration 7: Map of the Vilayets of Pontos.



Illustration 8: Map of the Pontic Diaspora.

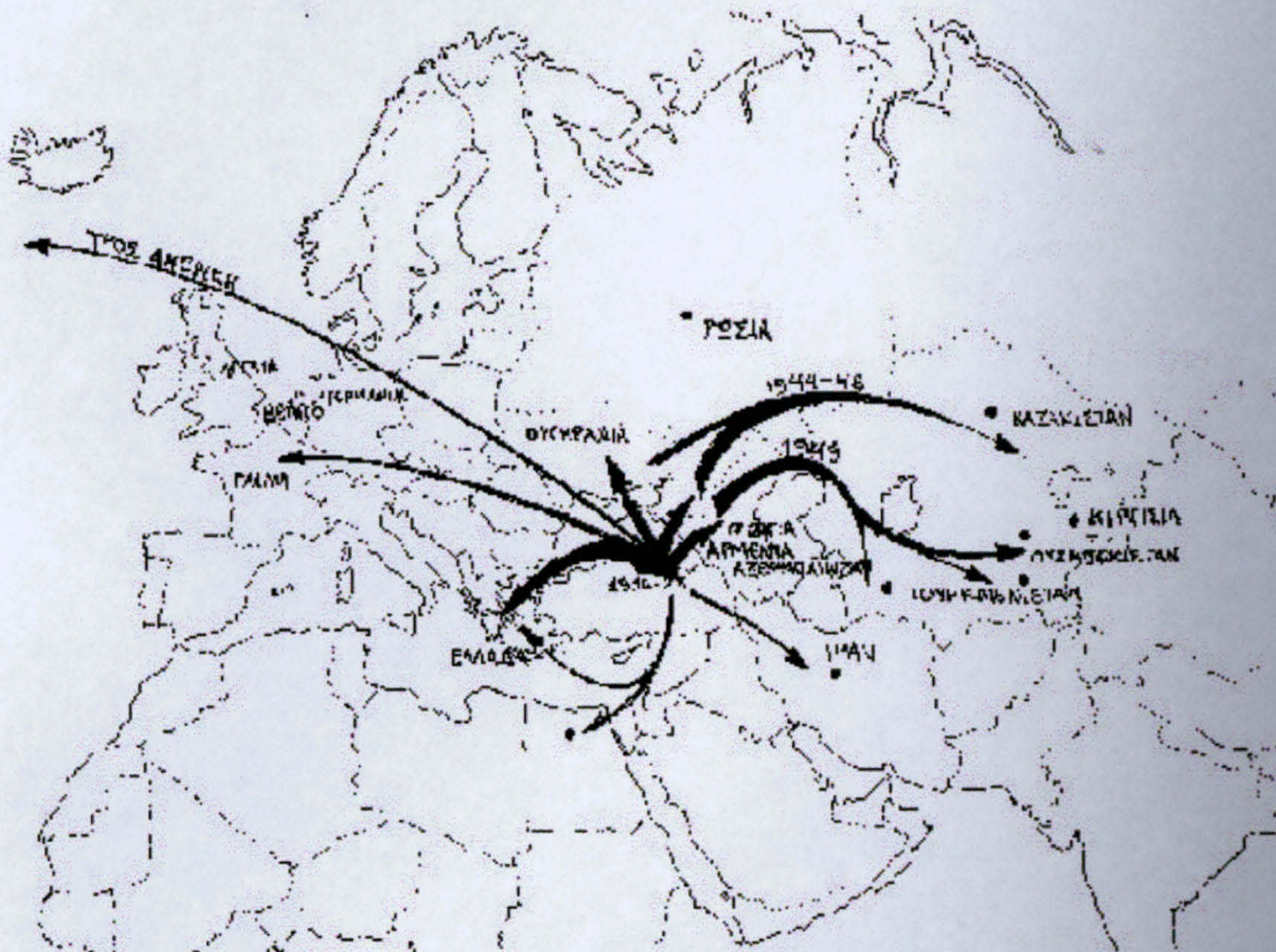




Illustration 9: The Pontic lyra.

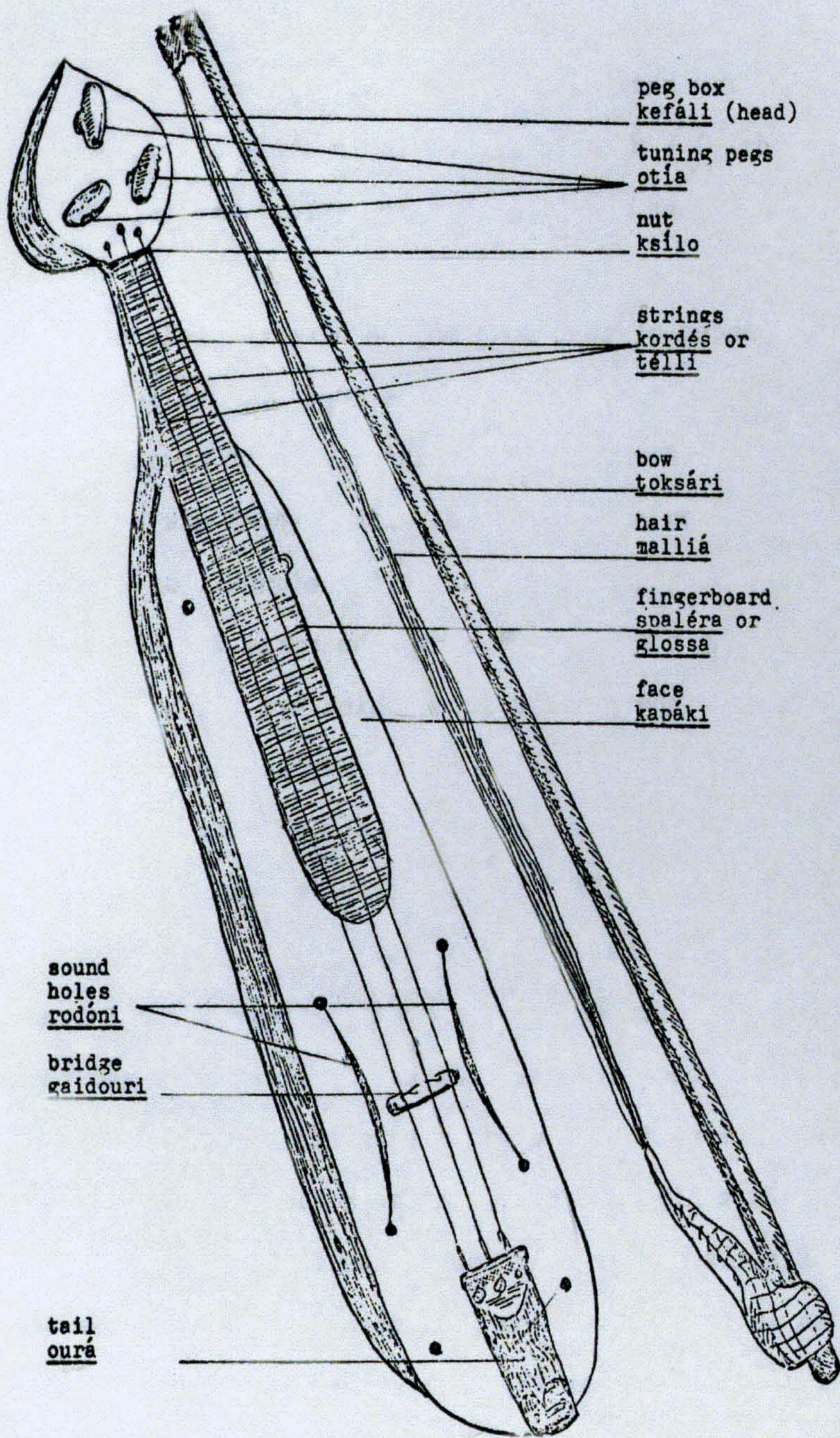
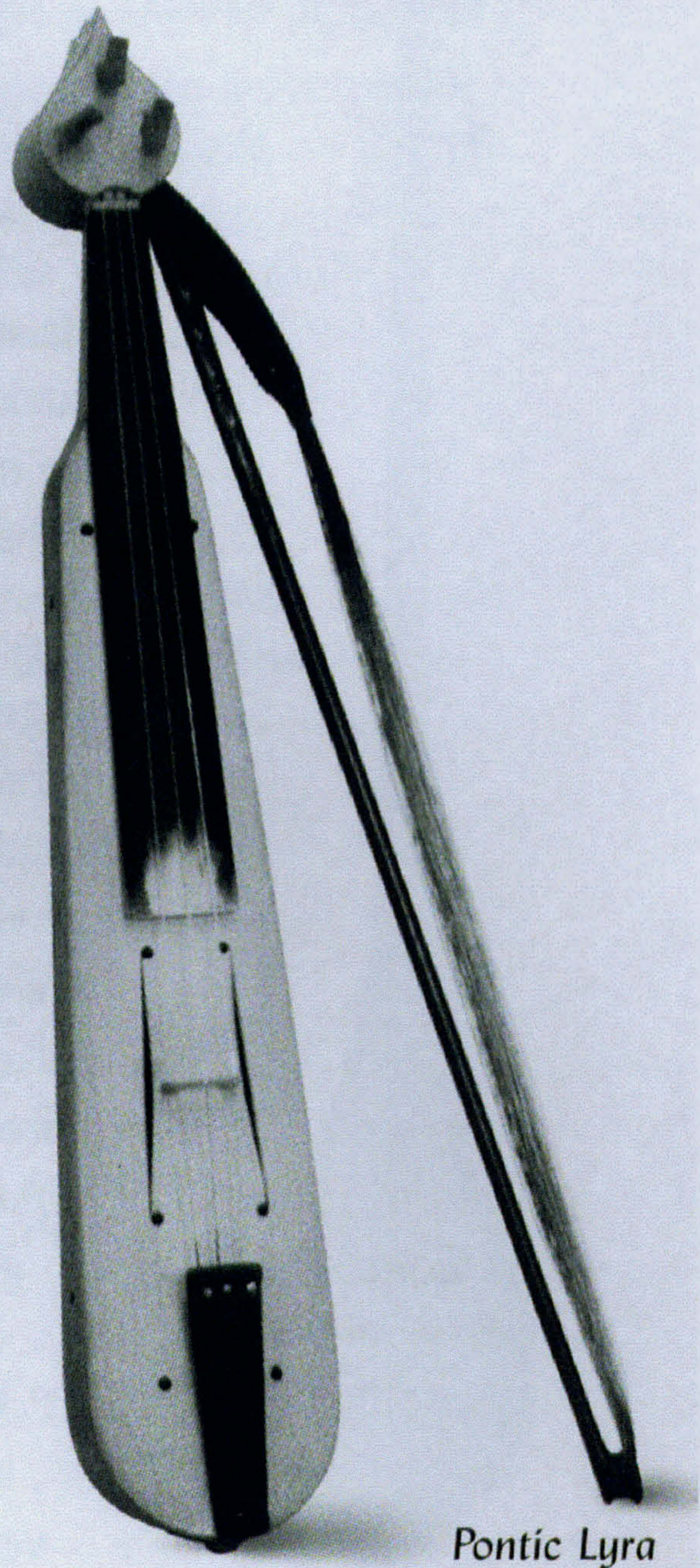


Illustration 10: My Pontic lyra made by Andreas Tsanasides.



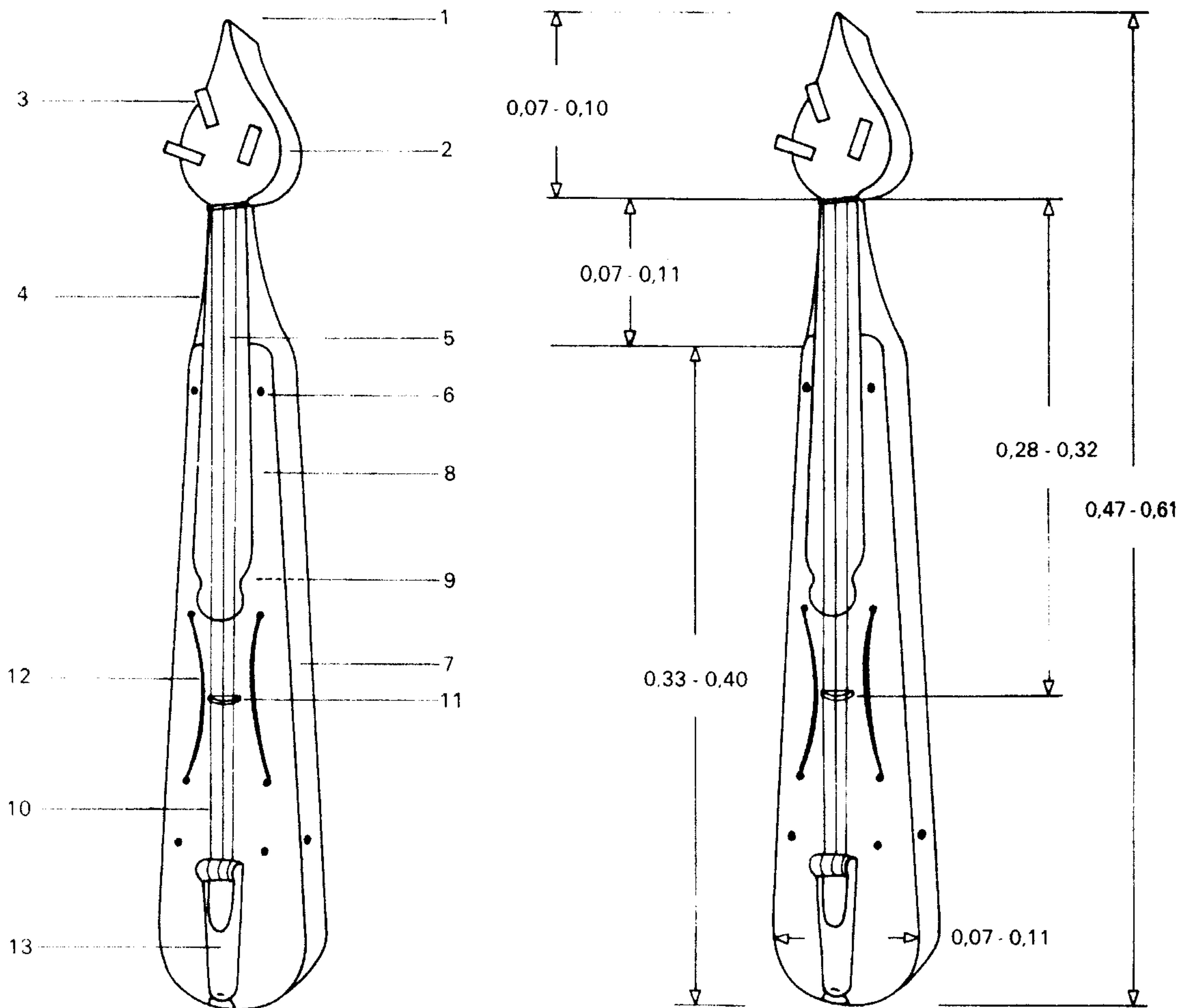


**Illustration 11:** The pear-shaped *lyra*.





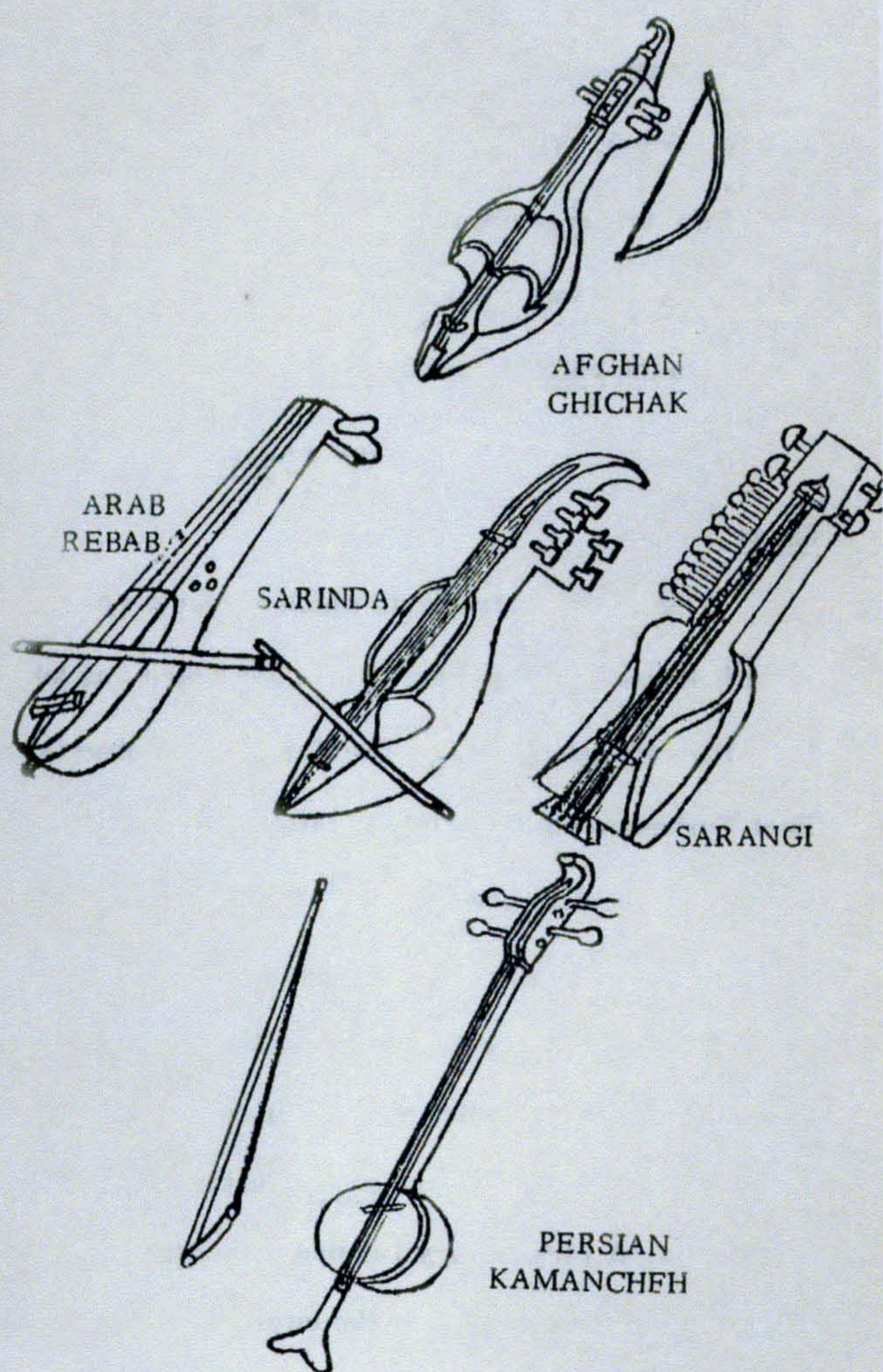
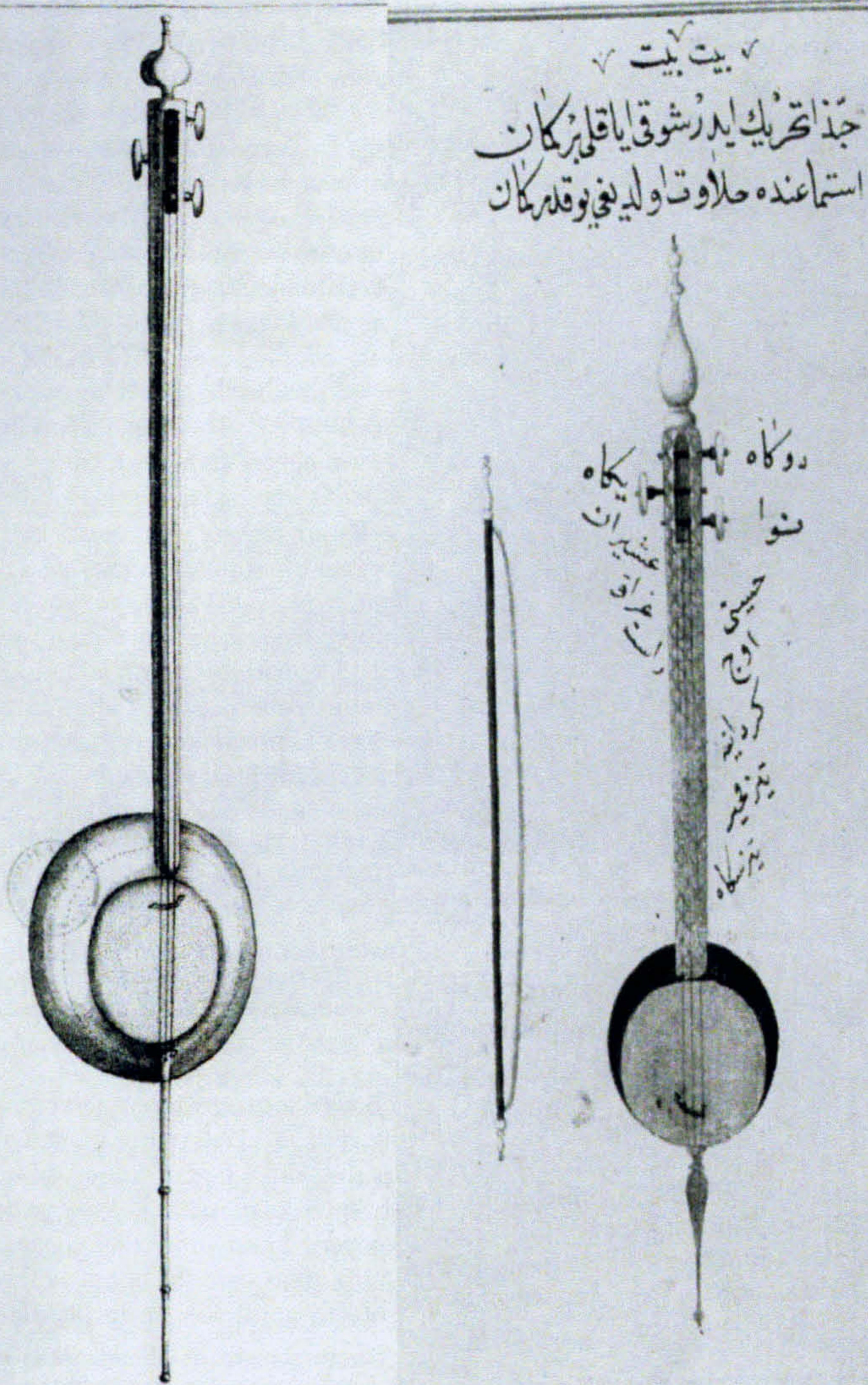
**Illustration 12:** The construction of the Pontic *lyra*.



1. The 'top'. 2. Head ("to kiphál"). 3. Pegs ("ta otia" = the ears). 4. Neck ("i ghoúla"). 5. Fingerboard ("i ghlóssa" = the tongue). 6. Small soundholes ("ta tripia" = the holes). 7. Ribs ("to mágh'lon" = the cheek). 8. Soundboard ("to kapák" = the cover, table). 9. Soundbox ("i rácha" = the back). 10. Strings ("ta kórdhas"). 11. Bridge ("o gháidaron" = the donkey). 12. Curved soundholes ("ta rothónia" = the nostrils). 13. Stringholder ("to palikár" = the stalwart young man).



Illustration 13: Spike fiddles and other types of Asian bowed lutes.



Ardeshir Kamkar playing the Persian *kamancheh*.



Arab *rabab* player.

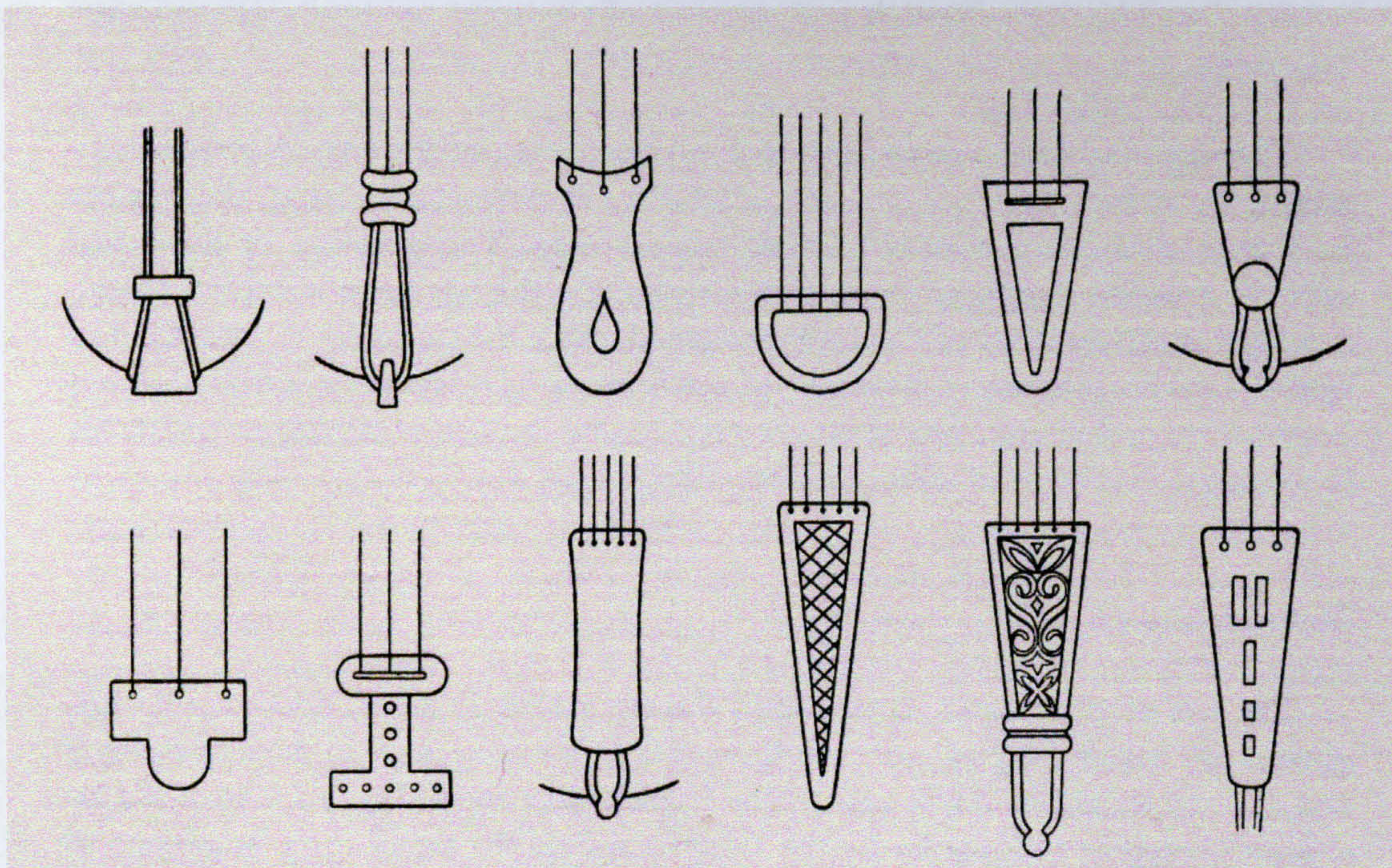




**Illustration 14:** *King David with musicians.* Detail of a Byzantine miniature from a Greek psalter manuscript, Vatican Library, MS. graec. 752, fol.23v. 11<sup>th</sup> century (Bachmann 1969, Plate 4).

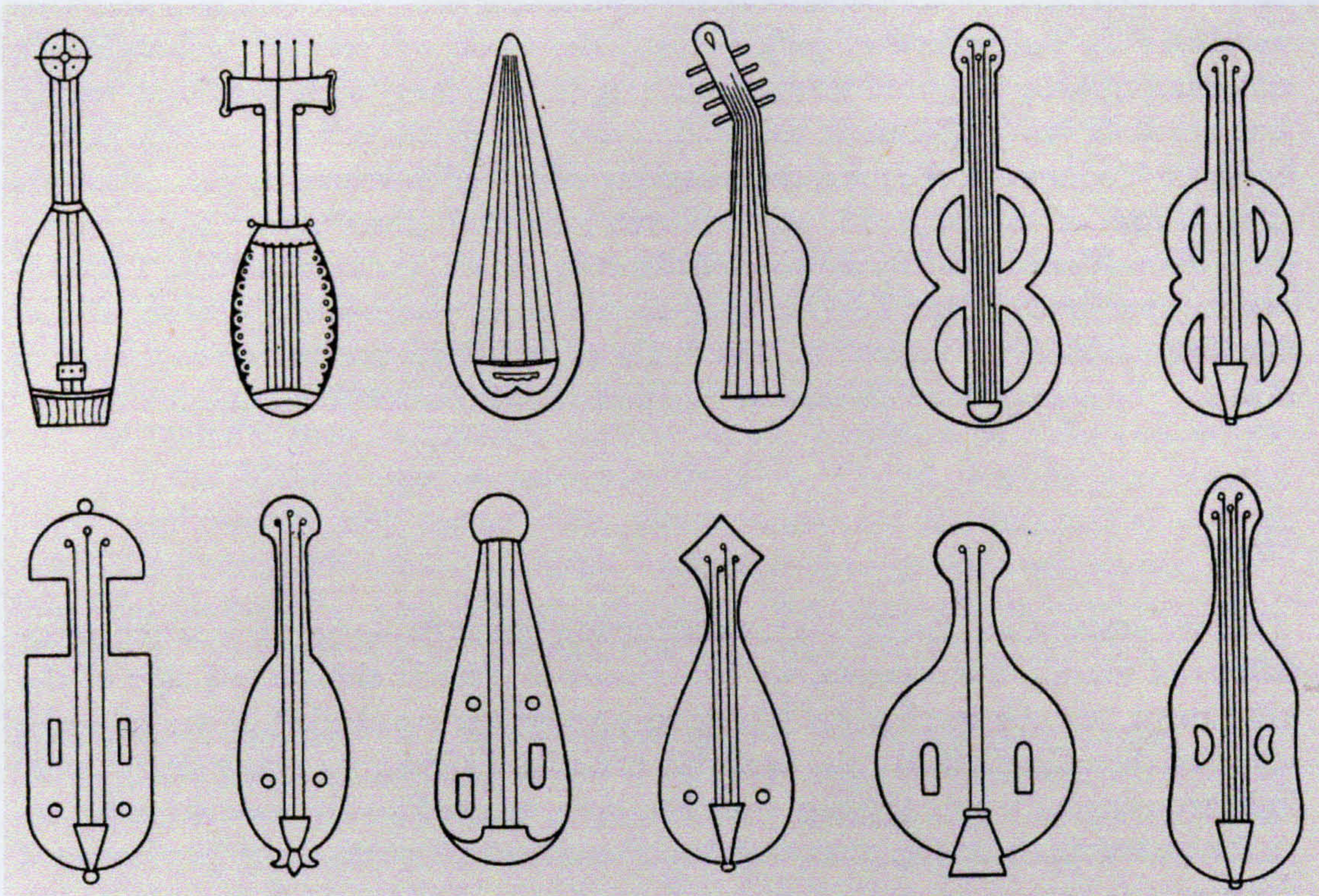


**Illustration 15:** Methods of attaching the strings in European bowed instruments (Bachmann 1969:77).

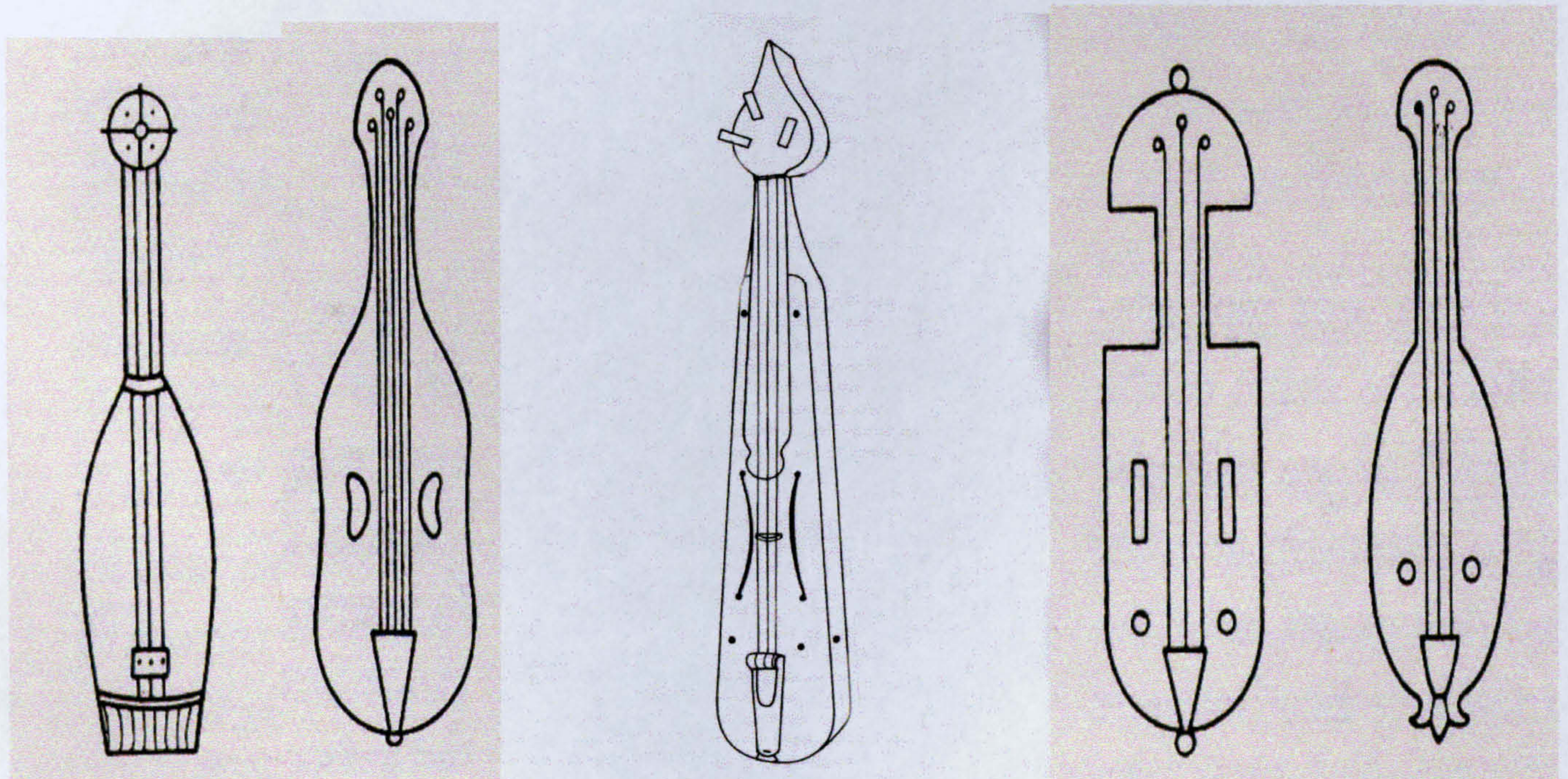




**Illustration 16:** European bowed lutes (Bachmann 1969:74).

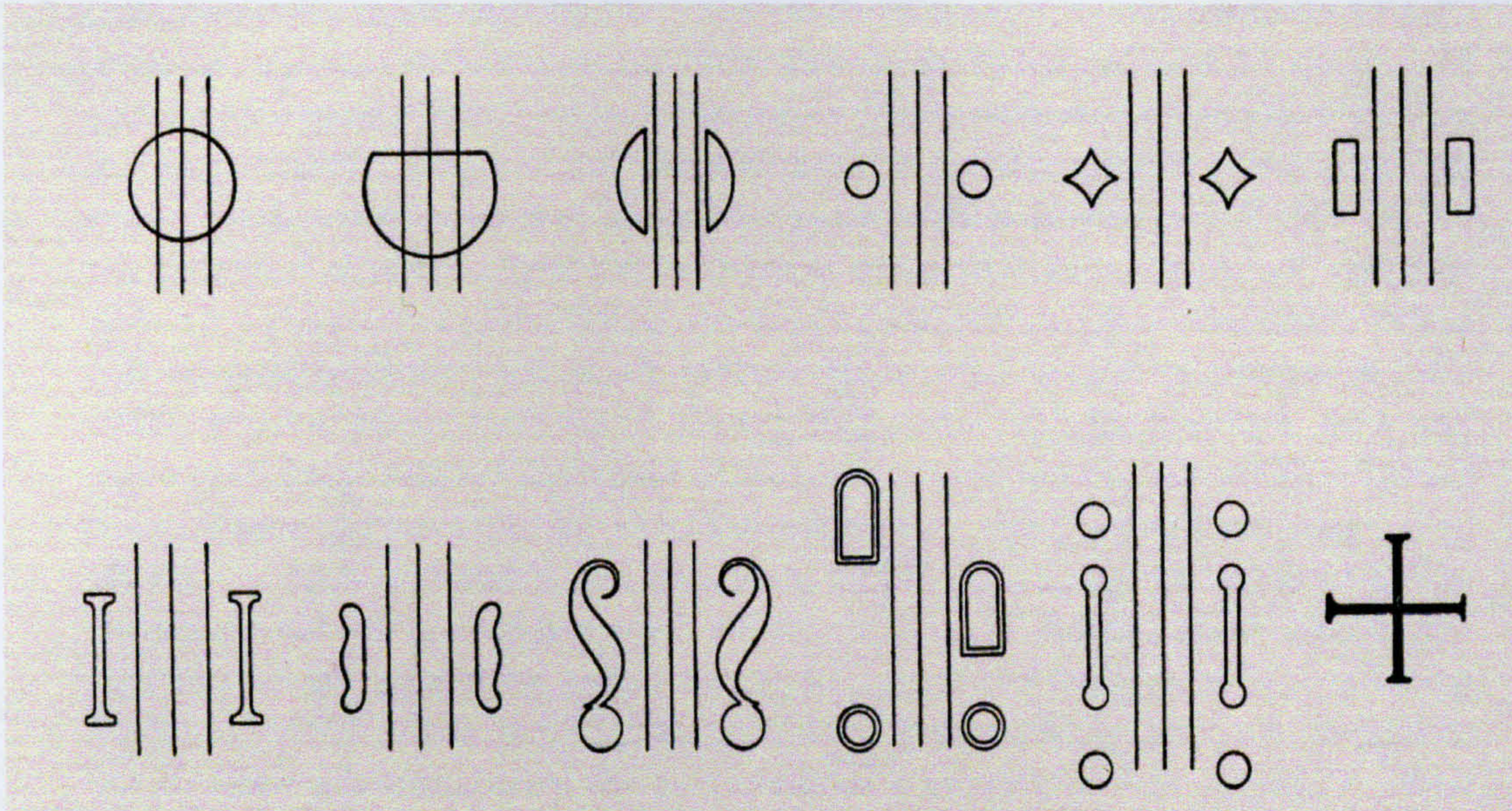


**Illustration 17:** European bottle-shaped musical instruments and the Pontic *lyra*.

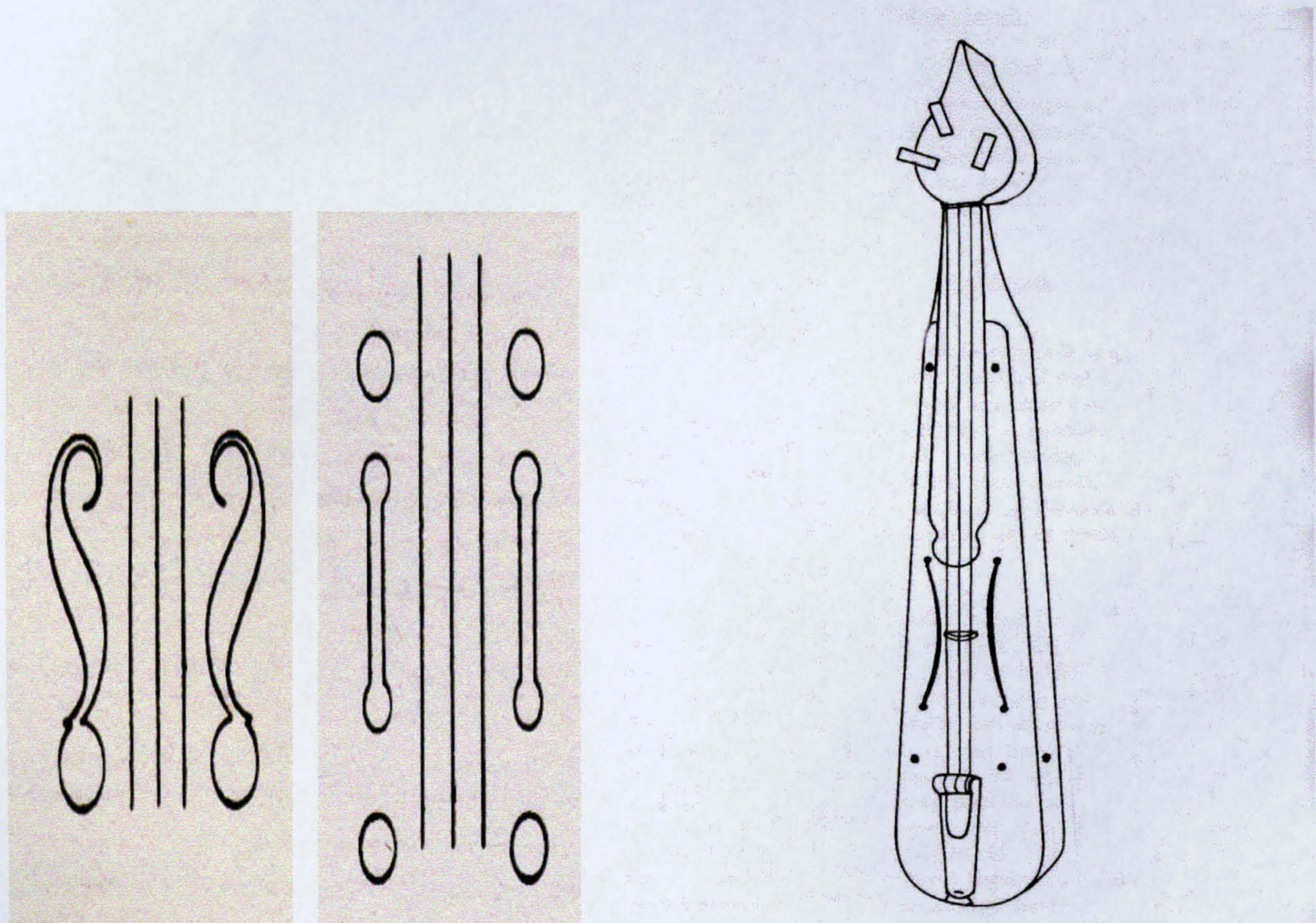




**Illustration 18:** Shapes of sound holes carved on the table of European bowed musical instruments in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries (Bachmann 1969:76).



**Illustration 19:** Detail of the sound holes carved on the table of European bowed instruments. A comparison with the table of the Pontic *lyra*.





**Illustration 20:** King David carving a violin type instrument with a knife. The instrument looks very similar to the Pontic *lyra* (Braun 1980: 312-327).



**Illustration 21:** Boy on an acanthus leaf. Relief on a Byzantine ivory casket, Museo Nazionale, Florence, Coll. Carrand, No.26. 10<sup>th</sup> or early 11<sup>th</sup> century (Bachmann 1969, Plate 9).

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**Text cut off in original**



**Illustration 23:** *Corybants making music.* Detail from a representation of the birth of Zeus. Byzantine miniature from the Pseudo-Nonnus Commentary, Patriarchal Library, Jerusalem, Codex Taphou 14, fol.310v. 11<sup>th</sup> century (Bachmann 1969, Plate 10).



**Illustrations 24:** *Apocalyptic Kings.* Detail from the tympanum above the main door of the Church St. Pierre in Moissac, c.1120. From F. Marcou, Musée de sculpture compare, Vol. I, Plate 19 (Bachmann 1969, Plate 43). **25:** *Musical instrument held by one of the Apocalyptic Kings* (Bachmann, Plate 44). **26:** *Apocalyptic King* (Bachmann, Plate 45). The instrument shows a remarkable similarity with the Pontic *lyra*.

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**Illustrations 27:** *King David*. Capital of a pillar in the Cathedral at Vienne (France) (Bachmann 1969, Plate 46).  
**28:** *King David*. Miniature from an English psalter manuscript. Library of St. Godehart, Hildesheim, Albani-Psalter, fol.56v. St. Alban's Abbey, early 12<sup>th</sup> century (Bachmann, Plate 54). **29:** *King David*, initial D. Bible manuscript, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS. lat. 11509, fol. 5r. 12 century (Bachmann, Plate 63).

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**Illustrations 30:** *Musicians*. Detail from a scene representing the worship of a golden statue. Miniature from a Catalan Bible, in the Vatican Library, MS. lat 5729, fol. 227v. Originated in the Monastery of Santa Maria in Ripoll at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. (Bachmann 1969, Plate 22). **31:** *Angel with hurdy-gurdy*. Detail from a painting on an Aragonese reliquary triptych in the Academia de la Historia, Madrid. 14<sup>th</sup> century. Note the head of the instrument and the similar pegs to those of the Pontic *lyra*.

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**Illustration 32:** The 84 years old Fatme from the village of Ishkender in Tonya (north-east of Turkey), when she was asked by a Turkish woman journalist working for the magazine “Aktuel”: “Who are you, what are you?” Fatme’s answer was: I don’t speak Turkish and the *Roméika* [the Greek Pontic dialect] I speak I haven’t learned them from the ‘air’ (wind). (Source: *Kathimerini Epta Imeres* newspaper 1996, p.32).





**Illustration 33:** *Lyra* player Alekos Akrivopoulos.



**Illustration 34:** Ardeshir and me during the rehearsals in central London.



**Illustration 35:** Gogos Petrides with the singer Kostakis Karapanayiotides.





**Illustration 36:** With Chrysanthos Theodorides (Χρύσανθος) after an interview. Chrysanthos was special to every Pontic Greek musician. He was admired like no other singer for his vocal art. I was one of the few privileged musicians to perform the *lyra* for him and accompany his unique voice.



**Illustration 37:** Me on the knees of my *Pappou* (grandfather).





**Illustration 38:** Gogos Petrides, the greatest of all Pontic *lyra* players in Boston (USA) in November 1971. Next to him is Stathis Panitsidis from the Pontic village of Koilada, Kozani (northern Greece). Stathis lives permanently in the United States like many other Pontic Greeks who migrated to the U.S. in the '60s. I owe my special thanks and appreciation to his son George Panitsides for providing me with the photographic material of Gogos Petrides, as well as many of his personal and rare audio recordings of Gogos that date back to the early '70s.



**Illustration 39:** Theodoros Eleftheriou



**Illustration 40:** Giorgoulis Kougioumtzides





**Illustration 41:** Kostikas Tsakalides



**Illustration 42:** Panayiotis Aslanides



**Illustration 43:** Stavris Petrides in the centre.



**Illustration 44:** Dimitris Karasavvides





**Illustration 45:** Andreas Kougioumtzides



**Illustration 46:** Stathis Nikolaides



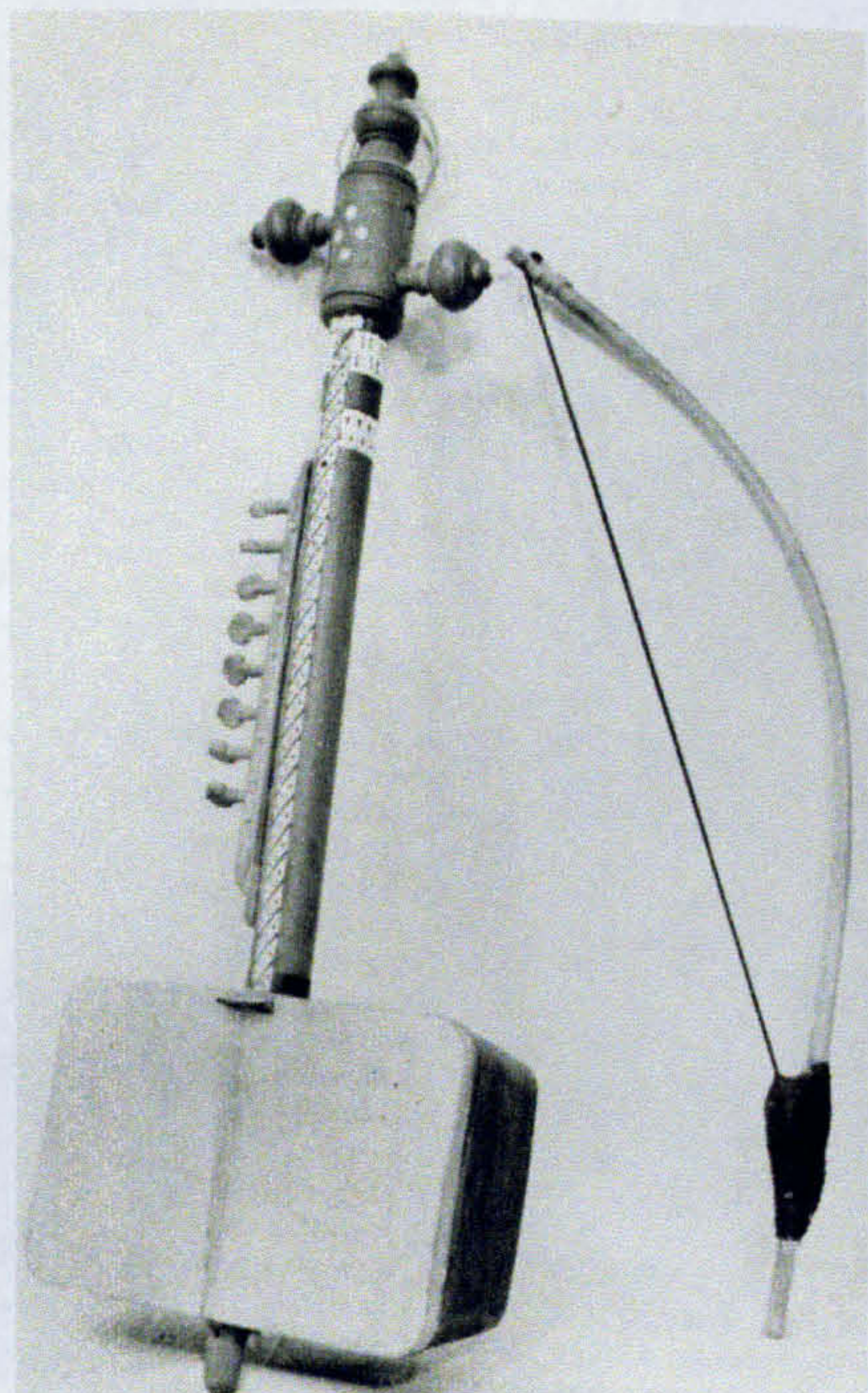
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**Illustration 48:** Afghan bowed lutes and the Pontic *lyra*.

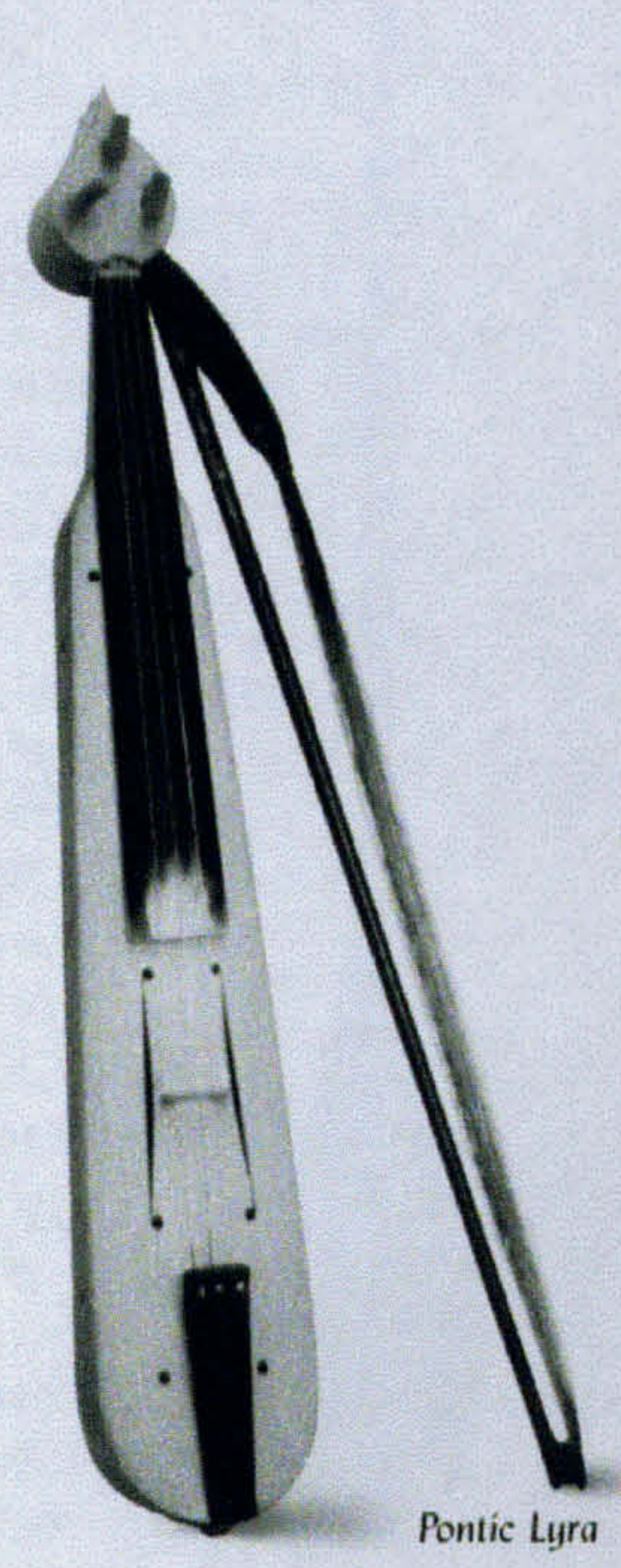
The new style Afghan *ghichak*.



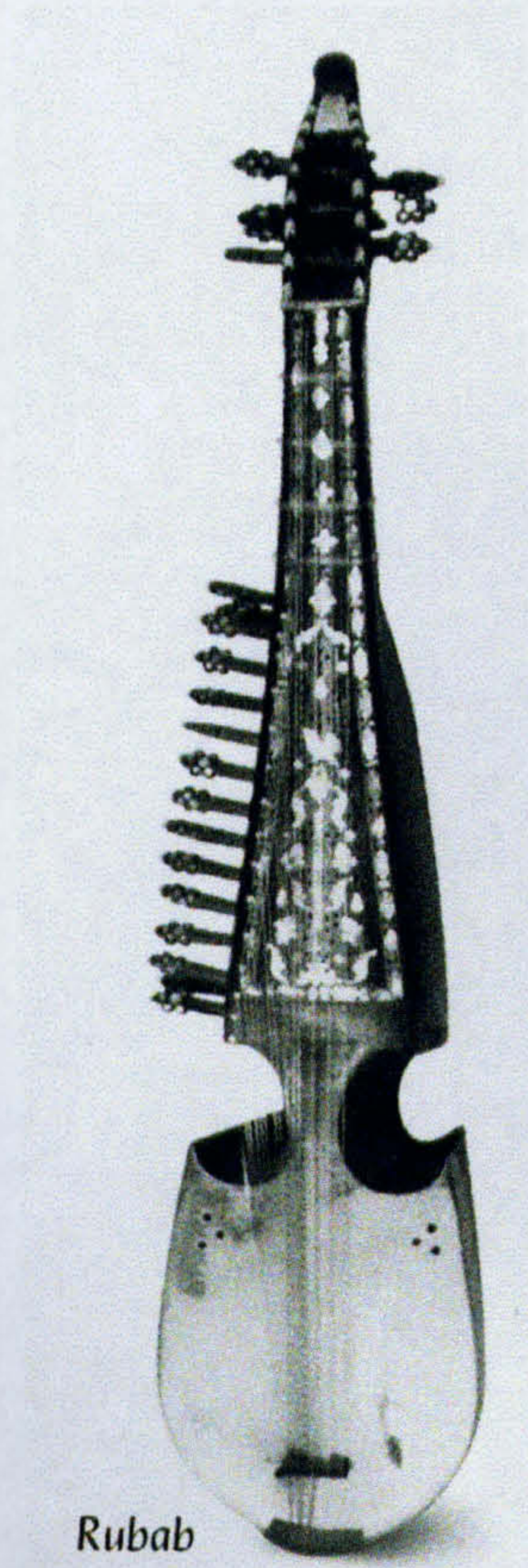
The *sarinda*.



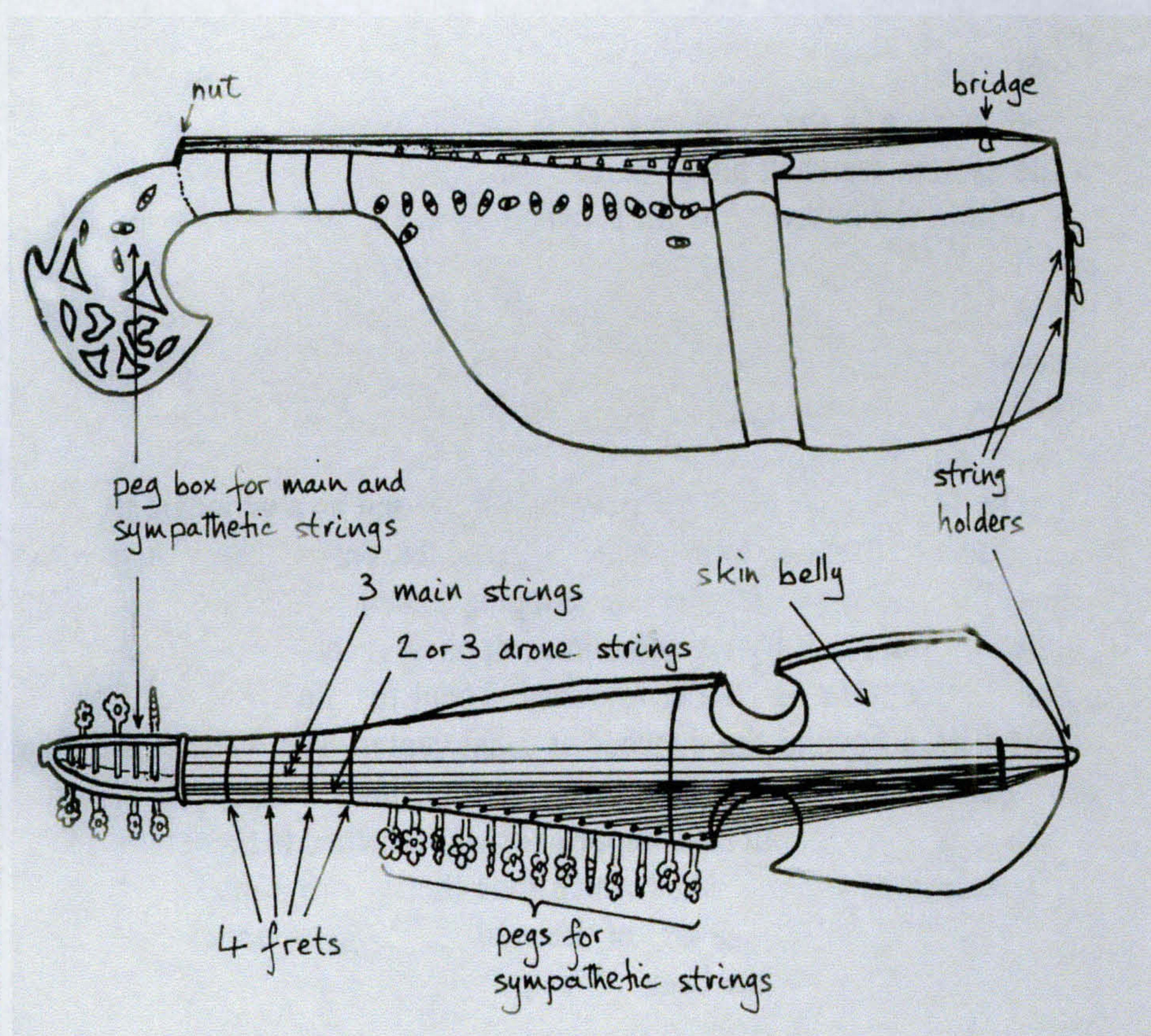
The Pontic *lyra*.



**Illustration 49:** The Afghan *rubab*.



Rubab





**Illustration 50:** Professor John Baily tuning the Afghan *rubab*.



**Illustration 51:** Performing on the Afghan *rubab*.

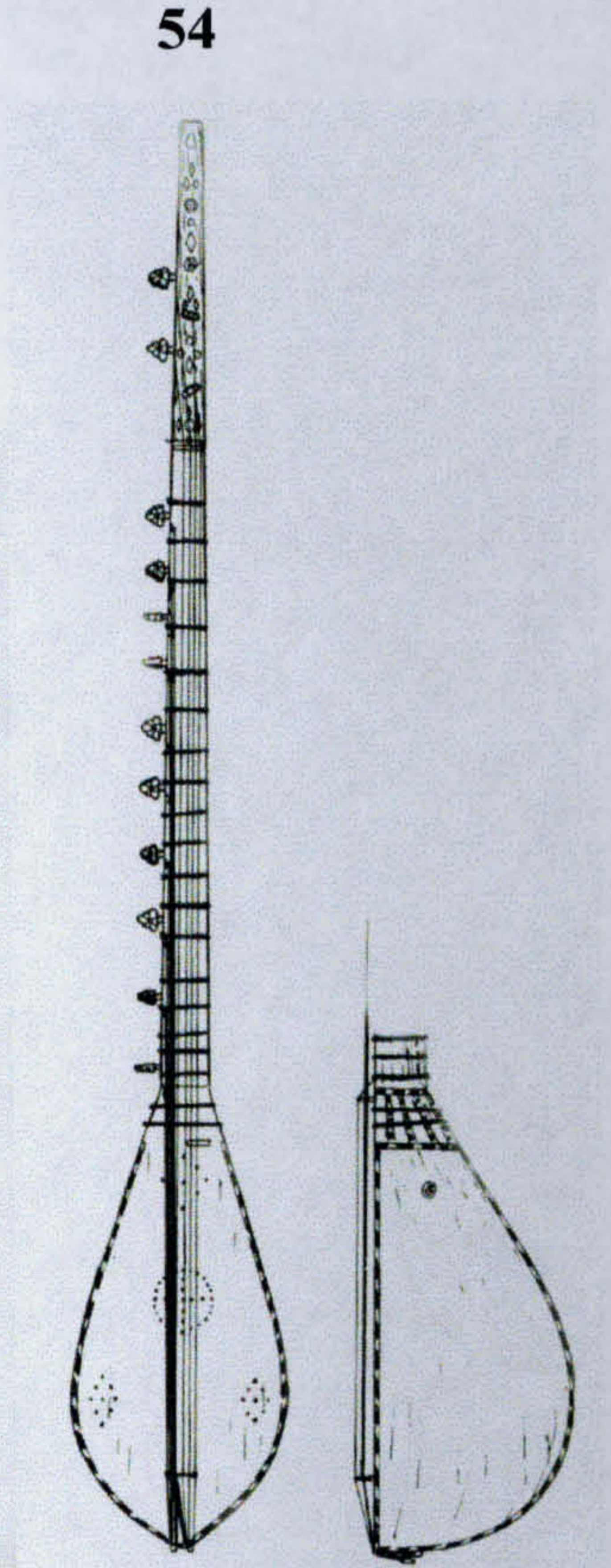
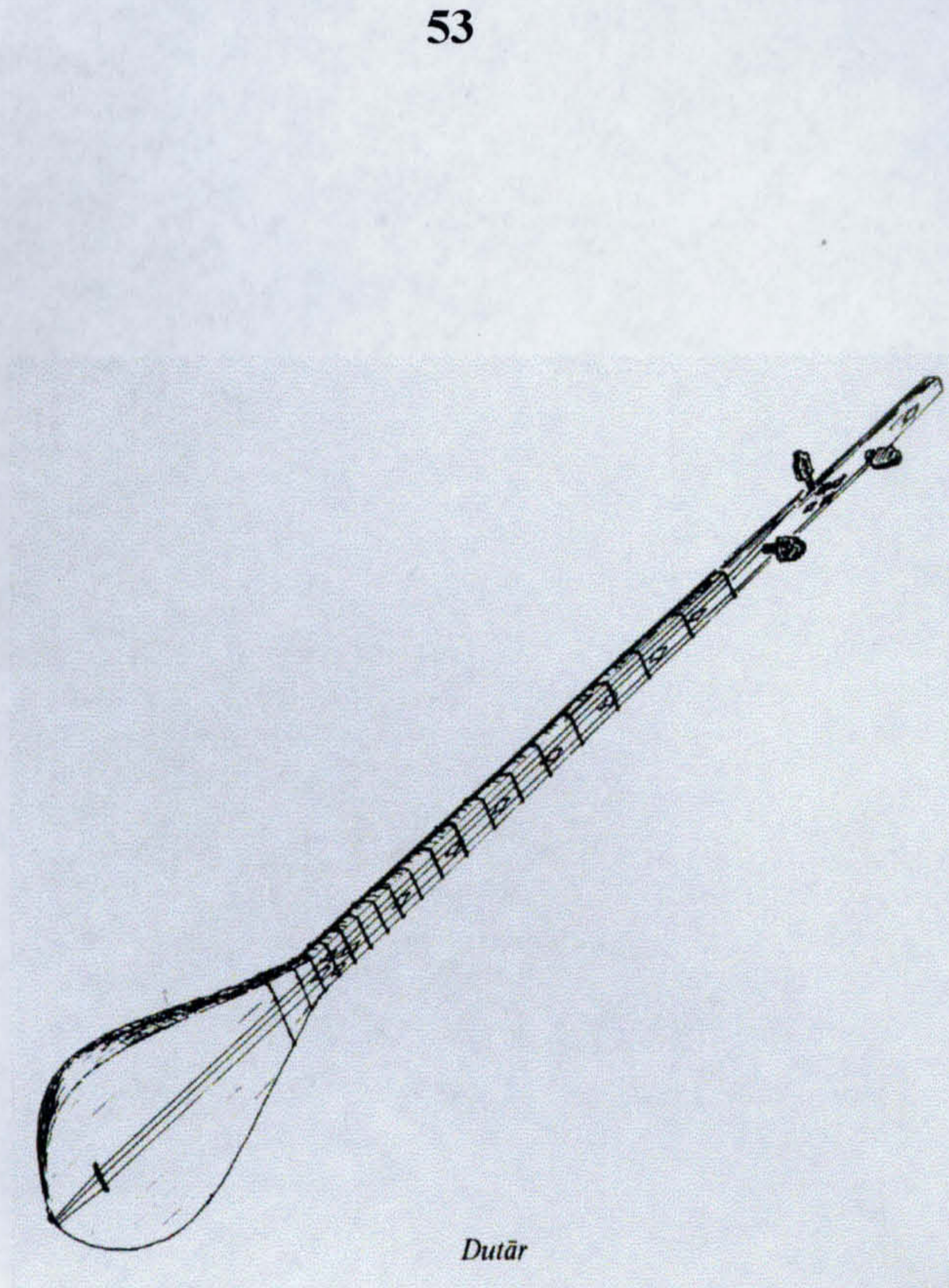
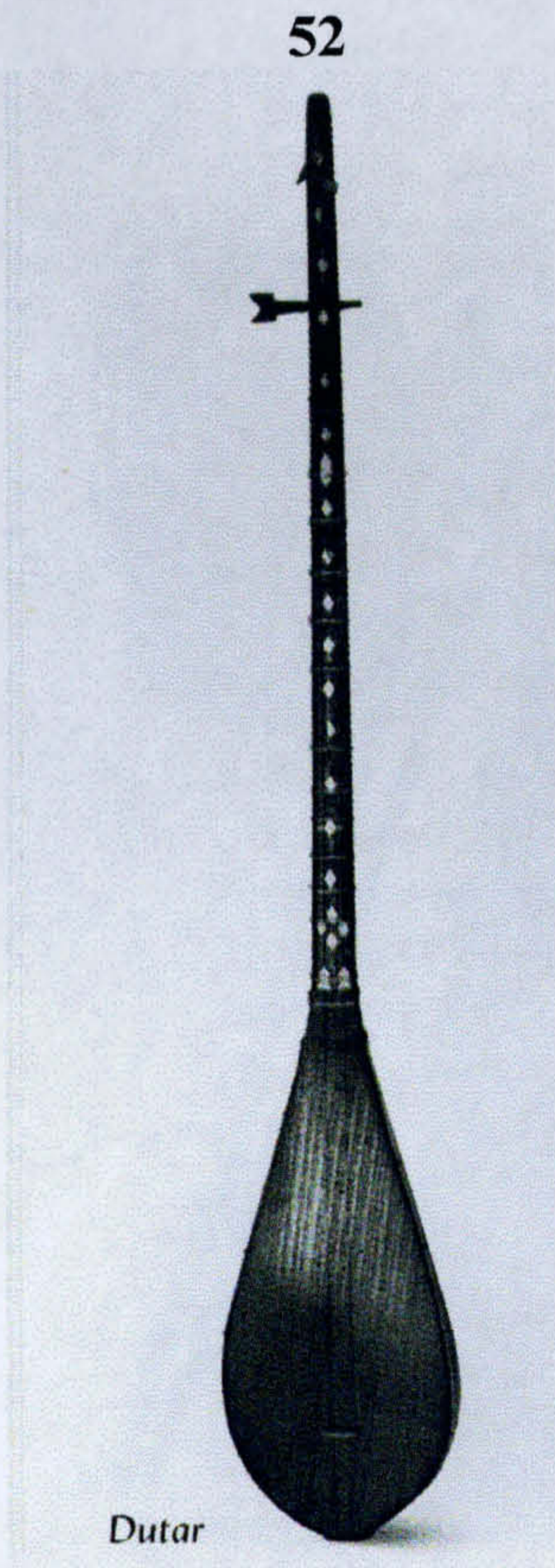




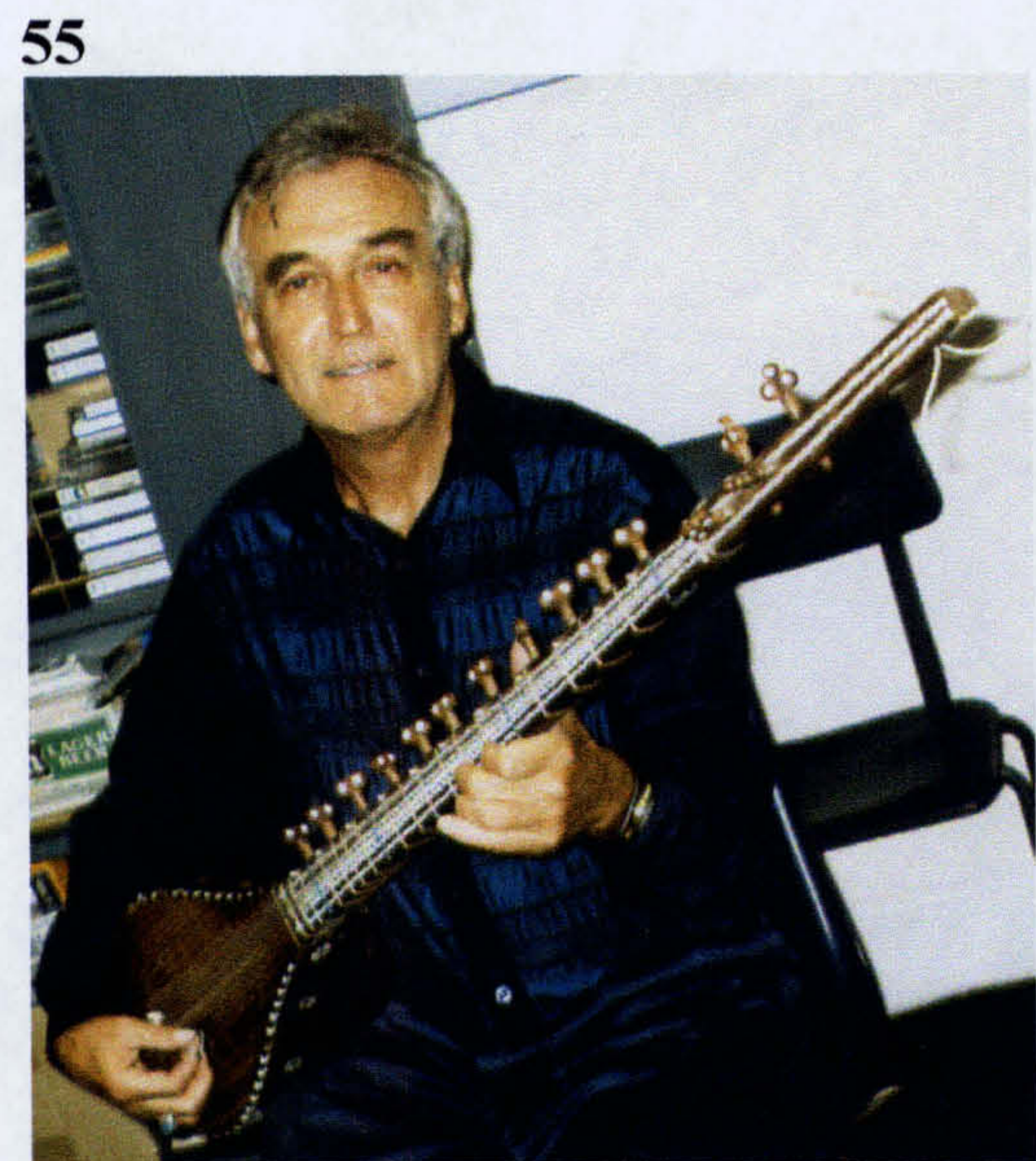
**Illustration 52:** The two-stringed *dutar*.

**Illustration 53:** The three-stringed *dutar*.

**Illustration 54:** The 14 stringed *dutar*.



**Illustrations 55, 56:** Professor John Baily playing the 14 stringed *dutar* in his study at Goldsmiths.





**Illustration 57:** Veronica Doubleday and John Baily performing Afghan music.

